Thank you, Bill.

Thank you for being here, Annabelle.

Last spring when Lee West quietly told me that I would be the recipient of the Underwood Award I was elated.

Lee had stopped by my classroom while I was proctoring an exam. As a few students continued to complete the test we talked about advising difficulties with some biology classes -- then -- rather casually, she said "by the way you're the Underwood lecturer for next year".

Lee followed her announcement with some words of advice and, of course, some obligations.

"Don't tell anyone." I didn't, except my family.

"Keep the fall lecture brief -- talk about something related to your discipline."

Bill Miller called a bit later -- he congratulated me -- asked some questions and gave me some suggestions.

"What are you going to talk about?"

"Keep it short."

"Talk about something in your field."

Jim O'Grady, the third member of the selection committee, stopped by a few days later.

"Talk about something geologic."

"Keep it brief."
The last few months have been memorable. Many friends have tried to help me choose a topic, such as "The Great Expanse of Geologic Time--Five Billion Years of Physical and Biological Events". How can that be brief?

or

"The Work of Running Water"-- sculptor of landscapes -- evaporation -- condensation -- coalescence -- precipitation -- sheet wash to rill -- rill to stream -- stream to river -- ever working -- leveling -- brief but available from I.R. in a twenty minute film

or

"The Drifting Continents"-- plate tectonics -- a revolution in the earth sciences -- Pangea, a supercontinent 200 million years ago breaking up -- ripping along a seam that is now the Atlantic Ocean -- twisting -- parting -- colliding -- causing earthquakes, volcanoes, mountains.

Certainly these are worthy topics, but somehow not appropriate for me.

My children tried to help -- "Dad, talk about the Grand Canyon." I've done it. "Dad -- you never have trouble talking -- you can't call the dog without giving a lecture." "Jeez Dad, you've never been brief."

Early on I responded to my many advisors with "don't worry, I'll wing it" or "when I get that podium, I'll say something I always wanted to say."

I began to worry last May -- June brought an increase in my concern. I visited the library and listened to previous Underwood lectures. Certain patterns emerged from listening to former lectures -- most expressed nervousness -- most used some quotations and most had some story to tell about David Underwood.
I will not break with any of those traditions.

I am nervous.

I will quote others and I will tell a story about Dean Underwood. In fact, I can't help but reminisce about past year.

Remember -- Joe Cosand the district's founding president. Each year at this time he would stand behind this podium -- look around the theater and talk about the "Basement of McCluer".

Or the year President Stith used dramatic techniques and unspeakable words to emphasize the reality of student activism.

I even found a September 1969 copy of the student newspaper -- then called the Norstar. Former Dean of Students, Dr. Cassidy Riggs, wrote a welcome to students. It seemed humorous then -- especially with President Harris's reference to the flagship campus. I'll just read a few paragraphs.

As you enter this new phase of your education, your experiences will somewhat resemble embarking on an ocean cruise. Your ship has been fitted out with some of the most modern educational buildings in the country and is rigged with equipment for both fair and foul weather navigation.

Her course has been set, not only through the well-charted oceans of transfer education, but also along the rocky reefs of basic remedial courses, and into the rich and exciting seas of technical training for high priority positions in business and industry. Your
captain is Mr. Raymond Stith, President of the College, and your mates are Mr. David Underwood, Dean of Instruction, and me, Cass Riggs, Dean of Student Services.

Your officers are "salty" from many previous voyages and are resolute in their determination to make this a most productive adventure. They are assisted by literally scores of lieutenants, noncos, and able semen. (Semen was spelled s-e-m-e-n.)

Obviously, reminiscence alone doesn't warrant an Underwood lecture.

The topic I want to talk about is my summer vacation -- my wife and I abandoned our children and spent a month in Europe. Most of the time was spent outside cities in the countryside.

Each day was exciting, we hiked up mountains, across glaciers, we found old inns that offered views and meals at reasonable rates. We visited some cities and enjoyed museums and galleries. We even suffered the shock of being pick-pocketed on the Paris Metro.

But each night after the lights were out I felt the weight of August 23. It wouldn't go away. Each day it came closer.

Finally, in the little Alpine village of Murren, I sat down and said today I'll choose my topic and write the lecture.

I struggled -- I wrote, I walked to the balcony and looked at Eiger, Monch and the Jungfrau, the highest of the Bernese Alps. I watched a cable car
come up from Steckelberg. It was so quiet I could hear the faint roar of Tamelback Falls across the valley.

After eight pages and two hours of writing, I was reminded of Robert Frost's famous lines --

The woods are lovely, dark and deep
But I have promises to keep
And miles to go before I sleep
Maybe I have miles to go before I can limit myself to a topic.

The topic isn't going to be geologic, or totally Florissant Valley reminiscences and it won't be my summer vacation -- and the speech will be brief.

I really won't use this opportunity to rail about my pet peeves -- such as why we can't have a photocopy machine in our building. My topic will be about teaching school at Florissant Valley. That's what I do -- I've done it more than fifteen years -- I enjoy it -- I think I do it well.

More accurately my topic is my perception of the college from the perspective of a Science teacher.

You have all heard the story of the blind men describing an elephant. I won't repeat it. But I want you to know that I am aware that my personal perspective may be unique. But maybe some of my perceptions will be similar to yours. Certainly my view of the college would be different if I taught composition, nursing, data processing or a host of other topics. Another influence on my views are my co-workers. The Biology, Physics, Geology Department includes
twelve full-time faculty. All but three have an association with the college of more than my fifteen years. Only one has been here less than thirteen years.

The campus statistics reflect a different profile -- more than one-third of the faculty have been here five years or less.

My remarks about the past and my perception of the present may have little meaning to some of you.

This last Friday I attended the morning session of New Faculty Orientation. As in previous years an "old" faculty member (Rolland Haun this year) and a somewhat new faculty member (Carol Berger) were asked to say a few words to the incoming faculty. They both did a beautiful job. Their advice was similar. Both delivered testimony directly correlating to segments of the rough draft of this lecture. Both Carol and Rolland spoke of the services available at Flo Valley.

These services are superb. I've never worked anywhere or been associated anywhere or heard of any place where the services to teachers were more complete or more appropriate.

The divisional office staff accurately and neatly complete every task -- typing, filing, record keeping. Maybe I'm spoiled, but I don't believe the experience in our office is unique.
Florence Burnett in the bookstore won't let me forget to order books and supplies. In her own sweet way she reminds me of what and how many I need.

Joy Barnett and her staff of Roger Schnell, Herb Niemeyer, Charles Rock, Dick Teneau, Len Kroesen and a cast of thousands arrange a sound and visual festival for each teacher that can dial 501.

The Library, the Print Shop, June McCullough in Word Processing, all contribute to my rather simple mission. Counseling, Registration and Admissions get the students into our classrooms.

Here I'll reminisce again. I remember registration when I was an undergraduate at a midwestern university.

The procedures were the final screening device for those desiring a baccalaureate degree. ACT, SCAT, and SAT were not required or needed. If you could survive registration you were certified as able.

More than twelve thousand students will register for this semester with a minimum of hassle to students and teachers.

I don't mean to leave out any of the service areas -- thank you, Counseling -- thank you, physical facilities -- thank you, Florence Ragainsi and staff. Someday I'll figure out requisitions, contracts, payroll and budget printouts -- until then I appreciate your continued support. These services undoubtedly influence my perspective. Most of these services have been here since I've been here. Someone, or some group, planned well for our needs.
The fundamental mission of the faculty hasn't changed either. It is to teach our assigned courses as well as possible.

But a number of things have changed. Enrollments have changed -- financial resources have varied. Administrative philosophies and styles have changed. Our focus within departments has changed and will continue to change. Most of us realize that we're not Harvard University. We know we are involved in mass education and that our jobs are on the assembly line.

A better analogy may be that we're not Nieman Marcus or even Famour-Barr. We may approach Venture or K-Mart -- great variety, good prices, crowded parking lots and, if you look, our quality in staple goods is excellent.

My one fear in using this analogy is that we may, because of financial concerns, real or imagined, slide toward the Quick Shop or 7-11 category. Long hours, limited selection, transient part-time help. We haven't slipped yet, but change has taken place.

Once, at least in the sciences, we accommodated nearly every student request. Our enrollments were low. We tried independent study, special problems, we even contemplated "Dial a Professor".

Many attempts were at least temporarily successful. We designed new courses, science for non-science majors, with little math and no laboratory work. They are courses that, at one time, made up the bulk of our teaching loads.
Today in most science courses we are not concerned with a minimum number enrolled/section but with maximums. I'll spend the next week saying to students "I'm sorry, but there just isn't room in Engineering Physics, there isn't room in Anatomy/Physiology, and all places are taken in Microbiology". I'll counsel them to enroll early next time.

Physics, Biology, Chemistry, Math and, I assume, Data Processing and others will teach in excess of 100% of their listed capacities. We can no longer accommodate because of sheer numbers. In the sciences a central core of traditional laboratory courses are now the most popular.

Don't misunderstand me -- this enrollment trend is welcomed and embraced by science faculty. But the effects are great. Real Chemistry, Real Physics, Real Biology are more expensive to teach than last decade's popular non-laboratory courses.

They also require greater intensity of preparation, eroding available time for innovation, contemplation and accommodations. The personal reward to faculty of providing a high quality product is evident.

It's a return to tradition in sciences -- a return to basics. An abandonment of sugar coated science -- a return to "real" science. Probably not a permanent condition, but welcomed.

We as educators didn't create the change -- we have only responded to it. A number of quotes come to mind. When Henry Ford was urged to vary the color of his cars, he responded "any color they want as long as it's black". But
one thing I'm certain of is that changes will continue and we'll be asked to respond.

Maybe we, as teachers, should control the changes. In the decades of the 60's and 70's the student was in control. He still is -- in the community college. The student votes on courses and curricula -- he votes with his feet -- when he walks into our classrooms he has voted -- no matter how capricious his decision is made. He has registered his vote and we respond -- slowly sometimes, but we must use caution. We respond by opening more sections, cancelling low enrollments, finding more part-time teachers, broadening our own specialties to teach new or different courses.

Institutionally we have attempted to predict the enrollment changes and occasionally defy them. We've responded with an assortment of techniques, some short lived -- participatory management, charettes, behavioral objectives, and assorted committees.

Some institutions can and do control the change. Those that have been successful have financial resources, an excess of incoming students and prestige that exceed those of a community college.

What should we do? I think we should respond -- with caution. To respond too rapidly could cause that slip toward the quick shop of education. We must realize our obligations to provide a comprehensive community college.

Certainly the nation's economy is creating our current enrollment changes in the sciences and engineering.
Draft laws caused changes once. So did the G.I. Bill and returning veterans.

Maybe the demographers' predicted enrollment declines will finally arrive. If they do, we will respond.

I feel like I've preached a minute man philosophy with a Boy Scout motto.

Be Prepared -- React

Now I want to preach caution. Several years ago we suffered through a painful policy called Reduction in Force. It was a policy brought about by temporary enrollment change.

This policy created great individual damage and a lasting damage to personal relationships, professional relationships and faculty-staff morale. The damage far outweighed any slight financial benefit to the district.

We mustn't respond to every symptom of change.

The twenty-some years of district existence has begun to be recognized in the community. We don't have to explain ourselves nor should we apologize. We have evolved from 270 Tech -- the high school with ashtrays -- to a teaching institution whose facilities and staff excel as a community resource.

My lecture's almost over -- just a few more things. For more than twenty years when my wife and I are happy but maybe a little confused, we have a little verse we're reminded of. It's from a poem by Theodore Rhoetke and
describes how I feel about today and how I feel about Florissant Valley:

"What's the weather in a beard
It's windy there and rather weird."

The other item was to relate to you one of my favorite experiences while working here.

I believe it was 1969 - about October. I wanted to take a group of students on an extended field trip to the Grand Canyon. I wrote a course outline, made reservations, an itinerary, and documented all expenses. The trip would be supported by student assessments and my salary would be covered by the then inadequate independent study formula.

After collecting all my information, I called Dean David Underwood's secretary and asked for an appointment. I'd been here only one year and had never had a private meeting with Dean Underwood. I was aware of the deep respect everyone had for him.

He met with me. He listened, he talked about teaching. Told me to go ahead with the trip -- but with a few changes. He would supplement my operating budget to reduce the cost to students and he felt that the trip warranted regular summer pay. I left his office -- with a feeling that he was the most gracious man that I had ever met. He wanted me to teach as well as I could and he wanted to help me do it. I had several other meetings with Dean Underwood on a variety of topics. Always, he was supportive.

The attitude of support still persists on this campus. Thank you.