Dr. Cowan, my colleagues in Administration and in the Faculty, and students of the University:

More years ago than I like to admit, when I was in high school, I read a novel of which few of you will have heard because it was, as a matter of fact a rather disingenious piece, written by a novelist of little standing. The work was entitled No Other Man; the author was Alfred Noyes. It was a story of the great cataclysm brought on by two super-powers which destroyed mankind. The reader learns initially that one man has survived who suspects himself the only survivor of humanity. But then he discovers that another person, a woman, has also escaped the holocaust; he finds her, for whatever reason, in the Louvre. I spare you the names of these two individuals, though you will find their names mentioned in the first chapters of Genesis. In search of other survivors, our blest couple comes to Italy -- where else but to Italy? -- and so to Assisi. An there at Assisi, our wanderers encounter survivors who, by a telepathy that is never really explained, have congregated in the City of St. Francis -- there, in the peace and the solitude of the Umbrian Hills to renew civilization. I am quite confident that few of you who have had any experience of the core curriculum at this institution will want to suggest that the novel to which I allude should become standard fare in the Literature curricu-
But wait. The novel is not altogether a failure and the novelist not totally without intuition. Long before I set foot in Italy or cast eyes on verdant Umbria, I was fascinated by the vision of a place of silence, of contemplation, where civilization is re-begotten, true culture renewed, and creativeness that springs both from a sense of sin and of gentleness is re-kindled. That mankind on the brink of being extinguished by its own folly should symbolically begin anew in Assisi is a vision not to Mr. Noyes discredit, whatever the merits of his work as a whole.

It may seem fatuous to jump from Assisi to Irving, and from the thought of a remnant of humanity seeking its rebirth to those who are part of this academic community; but I ask you to indulge me, because I suspect there is an analogy to which I should like to attend. The analogy turns upon the idea of Pax, of that peace which so characterized the life of Francis of Assisi and of which his city is redolent; and not only of peace, but of solitude, of leisure, and of the creativity and understanding which together they engender.

University education currently has lapsed into a period of meaninglessness, brought on by what one writer describes as "intellectual utilitarianism." The educational enterprise, because it acknowledges no inherent value to education, but only a utilitarian one, is hyper-active -- its flurry of activities helping only somewhat to screen its underlying vacuity. If this seems harse, then consult the Yellow Pages
Latin). "Leisure," as you know, does not mean spare time or a period when you are free to do nothing, or a mere stopping of frenzied tempo, or a few moments when you can think about nothing at all. Leisure is rather akin to contemplation, to intellectual receptiveness, to stillness wherein vision can begin and, just possibly, wisdom.

I put it to you that true education is concerned with the utility of the useless -- with the value of realities beyond the immediately practical and expedient. What is set before our direct experience -- I mean the practicalities of life -- are not the parameters of being or of what is true. Romano Guardini has observed that, with the birth of the modern world, "man lost his living contact with real things; he became a man of the towns, of ideologies, of formulas. The whole of existence became artificial. The profound order of life was turned upside down....(He) could no longer perceive the message of things.... he could only see them now in the light of brute matter, as objects of pursuit and possession, of commerce or research."

If this is true, does it not mean that we have lost the sense of wonder, of awe, of the mythical, of the symbolic? Have we not substituted pursuit and possession and brute matter for the leisure that will afford the enlargement of the mind and the imagination, of intuition and feelings? Have we not, in short, lost the very idea of true university education? I submit that we have. Inside and outside the university's walls, our populace is expecting the merely utilitarian
the next time you are in Washington and quickly catalogue the educational organizations which office in the nation's capital; or try, even here at home, to estimate the weight of the reams of paper which issue from those offices. And, indeed, if my statement seems harsh, consider the number of conventions to which educators are annually summoned, or the plague of new institutions of higher learning (I use the phrase loosely) which government constructs at an enormous rate -- they rise, I fear, faster than McDonald's golden arches -- for a declining population across the land; or the burgeoning unions for teachers which are claiming so many of today's headlines as they seek not so much the betterment of education but a greater slice of the tax dollar. Then, reflect on the number of small private schools, usually of a liberal arts bent, which have closed during the past few years. And, mostly, consider the pressure that is placed on educational institutions from so many quarters -- not all of them governmental -- to become arms of the government in its press for egalitarianism -- the levelling equality in every phase of human existence of every person within the citizenry.

Such utilitarian concerns destroy, I would argue, the very purpose of the Academy. Those of you who have studied, or who will shortly study, Josef Pieper's Leisure, the Basis of Culture, will find the argument that runs counter to intellectual utilitarianism better understood and more ably discussed than I could possibly contrive. Notable is his observation that the English word for school derives directly from the Greek and Latin words for leisure (SKOLE in the Greek, Schola in
higher education. The President of the United States gave voice to this expectation last year in an address at Ohio State University -- an address notable for its insistence on career education, technological training, job preparation for every citizen.

In the June issue of Texas Monthly, one article presented profiles of graduates from Texas colleges in 1975. What were their expectations? Permit me a few quotes: "After I graduate, I'll go to medical school in Arkansas. When the economy crashes people are always going to need doctors...I want to have a family and be relatively self-sufficient, a little land, a few animals -- I'm going to marry a non-liberated woman who won't mind tending them" (Rice University). "I wouldn't say everybody's in a panic over jobs, but there's a little concern you know. I'd like to be raking in big money, laying back, just sitting back, going to a job every day, coming back home, lazy time, working time, and just live my life on out..." (Prairie View A&M). "After I graduate I'm going to a dental hygienist school. I think I'll enjoy the work. You get to know a lot of rich doctors and dentists..."(Blinn Junior College). "Most of my friends are education majors, and they're really worried about jobs. Me, I want to help people. I'd like to work for Dr. DeBakey so that if anything happened to my Daddy, Dr. De Bakey could fix him" (Southwest Texas State University). "Three or four years ago I would have gone off to New York to become a dancer, but now I'm scared to do it. I don't feel so impulsive. I feel more of a need for security. Five years ago, a lot of
people wanted to go out and conquer the world. Now people feel more practical about their lives. School offers a lot of security" (University of Texas, Austin).

Would you not agree that all of these statements express rampant pragmatism? I do not sneer at practicalities. I am no Manichean. I am not unfeeling about the importance to the individual student of a career and of security. Still, where is the relationship between such sample observations as I have cited and the great tradition of university education which formed Western Civilization? Do I exaggerate in affirming that the tradition should be on the list of imperiled species? I fear that I do not.

The Roman statesman and author of the sixth century, Cassiodorus, wrote of the "vast leisure of the cloister," and it was that leisure, as one contemporary author has suggested, which educated and civilized Europe. Out of those cloisters grew the monastery schools; and from the monastic schools sprang the universities of the West. A casual acquaintance with the history of those universities reveals that their primary purpose was not the pursuit of profit, or possession, or pleasure, but the fostering of the humanities, that is, of the developing disciplines of the mind which are attempts to see reality, and to see it whole, to develop, as Dr. Cowan has put it, "a habit of soul that seeks not to master but to submit to all experience and to become part of it." Dr. Cowan may be surprised to learn that he is an Aristotelian. God help us, he may even be a Thomist! For did not both Aristotle and Aquinas argue that
the mind of man becomes, in a sense, all that it knows? In the becoming, the mind -- by which is meant intellect and will and emotions -- is perfected in the only process that it most characteristically, most engagingly human. This is the process that is rightly called "the utility of the useless." For one ought to seek understanding, knowledge, the submission to the real, not for the purposes to which one might then turn such achievement, but for the purpose of being turned by it -- of being transformed, enabled, of becoming integral. It is the wholeness, the integrity, of the human personality which is the fundamental purpose of university education. To be sure, there are other purposes; but these can succeed only in him who is a man of integrity. As St. Augustine has it, "He leads the just and holy life who judges all things with integrity;" that is, and may we not re-write his statement to read, "He leads the successful professional life, he enters profitable upon a career, who judges all things with integrity"?

But let me return to my metaphor. Irving is not, indeed, Green Umbria, although Lyle Novinski, and Father Fischer, and Herb Bowles have gone far to lessen the dissimilarity; and we are not gathered here to inaugurate a new family of man. Yet there is an analogy. The students and faculty who begin this institution's twentieth year, do not represent even one percentage point of the numbers of faculty and students across the land. No matter; we are here in the hope that university education might be reinvested with right purpose. Together with only a handful of other Assisi's, we address ourselves to the task of learning, set against intellectual utilitarianism,
trying to re-establish SKOLE, leisure, as the basis for true culture in our day.

The task is difficult. Some of us are like Jeremiah the Prophet; we are not all that excited about the task to which Providence has called us. And some of us may even be like Jonah sitting outside Nineveh, nursing a grudge against God because of what he expects. We are tempted to be impatient about the absence of niceties -- an unfinished University Center without air conditioning, rickety minibuses, waving Johnson Grass, crowded laboratories, and, mainly, the privilege of being a nay-sayer when one deals with colleagues or fellows of other institutions. But most of us, surely, are committed to the tradition of WEatern learning, at some personal sacrifice, accepting the discomforts that always belong to the remnant.

Before I conclude, permit me one corollary. What we undertake here is a corporate venture. It cannot succeed if we are isolated cells. We must performe labor to become an academic community. In this context, I torture Eliot's lines, "What life have you if you have not life together? There is no life that is not in community, and no community not lived in praise of God." If we are but individuals, then we are set over against one another and we become mutually menacing. If, on the other hand, we are unselfconsciously supportive of those who share our task, then our work shall be love's labor; and it will thus succeed.

May that be so. I welcome you to this academic year. May it be for each of us a year of leisure, rightly understood, a
profitable quest for integrity, a season when we shall each be enlarged in mind and heart through true learning, a moment in history when we shall be for others an Assisi for the rediscovery of true culture.