

Inaugural Address
The Spirit of Hamline University
Dr. Linda N. Hanson
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Thank you Chairman Woodrow. I am grateful to you for your leadership and support throughout all of the months leading to this day.

Thank you for your greetings Senator Anderson, Bishop Dyck, Tamika, Professor Bonilla, Sharon, Shanelle, and Pa Nah Vang. Thank you also trustees of Hamline University and distinguished delegates representing sixty colleges and universities. Thank you Hamline alumni, faculty, staff, students and friends of Hamline, who have assembled to join in this celebration of Hamline University. It is a privilege as well today to share this stage with former presidents of Hamline University, Dr. Charles Graham, Dr. Jerry Gaff, and Dr. Larry Osnes. Thank you for joining us today.

I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to join this exceptional community, and I joyfully accept the office of president. With me today are members of my family: my husband Laird, our son Pierce, my mother Miriam Brinson, brothers Roy Nesbitt and Glenn Nesbitt, sister-in-law Suzi Nesbitt, nieces Meaghan Nesbitt and Meredith Atwood, along with her husband, Jason Atwood, and my mother-in-law, Marjory Hanson.

A few weeks ago, in preparation for the inauguration, I retreated for a few days to think about what I would say on this day. And the more I thought about it, the more it was clear that I would first share some personal reflections with you of what is in my heart and on my mind on this occasion; second, that you would join me in honoring Hamline's extraordinary contribution to higher education in

Minnesota and the world beyond; and third, that we together might imagine a future that extends the spirit of Hamline in new and compelling ways.

The first thing I wish to share is that I would not be accepting the presidency of Hamline University were it not for the power of education and the encouragement I have received throughout my life. As a young girl, growing up in Savannah, Georgia in a family with three brothers, I often found myself sitting out on our front porch with my dad just talking. We talked about all sorts of things, much of it about what I wanted to do when I grew up, but the conversation always concluded with Dad putting his arm around my shoulder and saying, “Honey, remember, you can do anything you put your mind to.”

I recall when it was time for the senior speeches at high school graduation, and although I had the qualifying grade point average, I didn’t plan to join the competition to be named senior speaker. When I shared this with my older brother Raymond, he rightfully chastised me and encouraged me to write the speech—naturally, he was proud the day I gave it. Later, when I found myself in a small liberal arts college 1200 miles away from home and struggling with trying to figure out my major in college, my faculty advisor, Professor Ruth Vaughn, pushed me to consider pursuing all the courses I was interested in for one semester and sure enough, a strong direction emerged that guided me to major in English. Many years later, when I thought about pursuing my masters and doctoral degree while serving Seattle University as a vice president and balancing my role as wife and mother, my husband Laird and son Pierce said, “Go for it! We’ll be here for you.” In fact, I remember many Sunday afternoons when Pierce would come into my study, fall down on the floor and say, “Mom, I have so much homework.” And I’d fall right down beside him and say, “Me too!”

The power of education: I could go on citing many times in my life in which I have been blessed to have people around me who believed in the power of education. Today is a deeply personal occasion, for I recognize that my family

and the mentors who encouraged me to pursue my education, and the professors and universities who educated me have made it possible for me to accept this extraordinary opportunity to lead Hamline University. And so, on this day of my installation as president of Hamline, it is a time to celebrate the “power of education” and the “spirit of Hamline.”

As we gather to celebrate, with those of you who have lived for generations in Minnesota and those of you who have come from afar, it seems most appropriate that I speak with you about the most palpable characteristic of Hamline that can be defined as its ethos or its essence, but its more common name is “spirit.” When thinking about the word, “spirit,” images of what spirit means immediately come to mind: spirited fans at an athletic event; a spirited “hello” greeting passed between people walking across campus; a spirited discussion in a classroom among students on just about any subject from Plato to the war in Iraq; or perhaps a spirited singing of a hymn or chant as an expression of a religious tradition.

Hamline is a university that is distinguished by its collective spirit, by its institutional will to thrive in ways that promote our most cherished ideals of intellectual inquiry, individuality, community, diversity and service. Hamline’s tradition is rooted in the wisdom of John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, who believed in the sacredness of inquiry and that “people are equal before God and each person is entitled to an education. . . .Methodist schools were built to educate . . . people who were hungry for learning—male and female, rich and poor, country and city” (Mason 2002).

Hamline University’s founding was also rooted in the earliest days of Minnesota. From its beginning in 1854, as Minnesota’s first university, Hamline’s Methodist founders envisioned that Hamline would be a place of higher learning that was inclusive and connected to the communities of Minnesota by educating the teachers, lawyers, and others for lives of service. When the charter was signed

on March 3, 1854 by William Pitt Murray, a Saint Paul lawyer, Methodist, and territorial legislator, it was significant in two ways: the charter insisted that no religious tenet would be required and that “the school would be co-educational, revolutionary for the time when major eastern universities were exclusively male” (Vane 2004).

As most of you know, the original site of the university was in Red Wing and named for Methodist Bishop Leonidas Hamline. The three faculty, thirty women and forty-three male students comprised the entire university which five years later, produced its first graduates, Emily and Elizabeth Sorin. In the 151 years since its founding, 25,860 alumni have graduated from Hamline University with 50 percent living in the Twin Cities, 8 percent in greater Minnesota and 42 percent living elsewhere in the United States and abroad. Today, 4540 students attend the College of Liberal Arts, the Graduate School of Education, Graduate School of Management, Graduate School of Liberal Studies or the School of Law.

As Hamline University has lived its mission, it has educated generations of Minnesotans whose professional and personal lives have been influential in creating the quality of life we have in Minnesota today. Hamline’s history is entwined with communities throughout Minnesota and is expressed through the lives of the teachers, public officials, business men and women, lawyers, psychologists, social workers, scientists, writers, artists, inventors and entrepreneurs. If we were to gather them all together, they would tell us similar stories of their experiences at Hamline.

There would be a theme that starts with their connection to their teachers. Parker Palmer, one of the most thoughtful and insightful educators today in his essay, “The Heart of the Teacher,” explains that teaching is more than mastering a subject and learning techniques to manage a classroom—it is opening up the “inner landscape of a teacher’s life.” Alumni of Hamline recall professors who

opened up their hearts, their identities and vulnerabilities to connect with students in powerful ways. As teachers, they exhibit Palmer's belief that

They are able to weave a complex web of connections between themselves, their subjects, and their students, so that students can learn to weave a world for themselves. . . . The connections made by good teachers are held not in their methods but in their hearts—meaning heart in its ancient sense, the place where intellect and emotion and spirit and will converge in the human self. (1997, 16)

The spirit of Hamline permeates Hamline's approach to teaching and learning and under girds the "Hamline Promise" of a substantial and culturally broad liberal arts education. The spirit of Hamline is consistently intense and personal; it supports independent thinking and student/faculty research. It is infused with a charge to return something to communities where its graduates live and work through civic engagement.

Students and alumni both agree that Hamline University's culture of intellectual inquiry and its profound respect for individual differences distinguish Hamline as a university that inspires individuals to develop an acute social conscience and to live by ethical principles that improve our society. Hamline students actively engage in programs to aid the homeless, to tutor elementary children, to promote understanding among ethnic groups, and to encourage voting and civic action. Hamline students are also engaged in personal growth through judicial advocacy programs for children and families; through studying abroad in Africa, Asia and Europe; and through participating in music, theater and cultural events in the Twin Cities.

In fact, there is a long and distinguished record of students who found that their individuality would not only be recognized at Hamline, but that they would also be challenged to develop their intellect, skill, and passions for useful and productive

careers. Last year, during the 150th anniversary celebration, Hamline published a book titled, *One Hundred and Fifty Lives That Make a Difference*. In it, the university honors individuals such as Joe Hutton, legendary basketball coach at Hamline for thirty-five years from 1931 to 1965 who garnered nineteen conference titles and three national championships. Scores of Hamline alumni credit their experiences with Coach Hutton as transformational in their lives. He was a great coach, but more important, an individual who expressed the Hamline spirit of achievement, self-worth and excellence.

Another individual who has become one of Hamline's most prominent philanthropists is Bob Klas, class of 1952. Bob was inspired to give to others by his mother, who as a mother of nine during the Depression years, fed and clothed the needy who came to their door. Bob met his wife Sandy in 1950 and they lived in campus housing. When their first child was born with developmental disabilities, Sandy became a tireless benefactor to assist others with similar challenges. Bob went on to launch a company called Tapemark, which provided the means to support their generous donations for developmentally challenged children and for Hamline. Recently, Hamline dedicated Klas field, and we all delighted in Bob's response as Hamline won its first conference football game at home in several years. Together, Bob and Sandy are two individuals who have unselfishly supported Hamline.

Other stories abound of how just one person at Hamline, whether in the college, one of the graduate schools or the law school, changed individual lives. For instance, School of Law alumna Tanya Bransford admires Professor Cathy Deal as an absolutely wonderful professor. Professor Deal was her moot court coach who helped plant the seed that being a judge was something to which she could aspire. Children are at the heart of Judge Bransford's work today. As a district court judge for Hennepin County District Court in the Juvenile Division, she is constantly energized by her work in advocating the "need to focus more on juvenile court and on children, to prevent the problems that lead to children later

graduating to adult criminal court. Long before the slogan ‘leave no child behind’ was in political vogue, Tanya was doing the hard work of advocating justice for children” (Hart 2005, 176). When Judge Bransford received a Distinguished Alumni Award from Hamline University in 2000, she credited the Hamline University School of Law for the strong legal foundation she received.

Hamline—where individuals inspired others and where individuals found inspiration that changed their lives.

The spirit of Hamline is never more clearly expressed than when speaking of the Hamline community. The faculty and staff are colleagues who work intentionally to create an intellectual community where ideas are treasured, freedom of expression is uncompromisingly protected, and personal growth contributes to the common good. Hamline University is a healthy community that honors people leading balanced lives and encourages its colleagues to be well physically, emotionally and spiritually. Hamline University is inclusive, reaching out to students of widely-differing backgrounds because it is the right thing to do, and because with diverse perspectives in the classroom, active and enduring learning will occur.

As a result of Hamline’s commitment to community and diversity, the university is well positioned to rise to the challenges of a changing scene for higher education. By the year 2015 demographers “have predicted that the traditional college-aged population will grow by 16 percent. . . and that of these potential new students, 80 percent will be non-white and nearly half will be Hispanic” (Butler and Kirwan 2002, 13). Educators at Hamline recognize that diversity matters in three significant ways: diversity benefits society; diversity benefits learning; and diversity benefits business and the economy. There is evidence that students who encounter racial, ethnic, and cultural differences in the classroom are better prepared to be contributing members of a democratic society. Students who are exposed to others from a wide range of backgrounds

are “better critical thinkers and also show greater social and interpersonal development than students with less exposure to diversity” (14). Graduates of Hamline University carry over into their work environment, their businesses and vocations, an ability to think critically and to appreciate different points of view. As such, they add value to their employers and benefit the national economy, but as important they are good parents, good neighbors, and good citizens.

The spirit of Hamline University has been demonstrated by serving others through collaborative projects such as our Hancock-Hamline University Collaborative Magnet School that serves neighborhood schools as well as teacher training programs. Other hands-on projects such as exploration of the Mississippi River and learning about watersheds throughout the nation are offered through the Graduate School of Education’s Center for Global Environmental Education. These types of programs put students in K-12 schools in direct contact with the environment, resulting in lifelong and treasured memories. Hamline’s approach to service aligns with Richard Florida’s description in his book, *The Rise of the Creative Class*, where people live “a creative life packed full of intense, high-quality, multidimensional experiences.” He goes on to assert that even the most computer savvy students “have interests extending well beyond the virtual. More than anything, they crave intense experiences in the real world” (2002, 166-167).

In myriad ways, Hamline offers these intense experiences in the real world: participating in resolving conflict through our programs in alternative dispute resolution; being of service to the State of Minnesota in investigative forensic cases; producing the latest edition of *Waterstone*, the nationally recognized journal of creative writing produced by the Graduate School of Liberal Studies, and observing state government in the Minnesota legislature, where numerous Hamline graduates of the public administration program serve the public interests. We need only look around us to see the lasting impact of so many

Hamline graduates who are working hand-in-hand with those in the public and private sectors to make Minnesota, and the world beyond, a better place.

One might legitimately ask the question “What will make the world a better place?” In recent weeks as a nation, we have been called to examine the very principles of generosity, compassion, and citizenship that frame our society. As we have watched in disbelief the incredible paths of destruction wrought by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita on the people, economies and culture of many Gulf Coast communities, one commentator mused that perhaps it was simply a “lack of imagination” that led to our being unprepared for anything this catastrophic in America. Similarly, the 9/11 Commission findings on the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 identified many of the events leading up to the disaster and cited that, as a nation, we had “a lack of imagination” that something as shattering and horrific as 9/11 could actually occur in America.

This is the world into which Hamline graduates and the graduates of all private and public colleges and universities will go. This is the world in which a new generation of leaders will emerge. This is a world in which events, shifts in world-wide societies and values can scarcely be imagined now. As Hamline educators, we believe that the same spirit of Hamline that has produced able leaders, compassionate citizens, and global thinkers throughout its 151 years will insistently call us again to imagine a Hamline that prepares students to meet the greatest challenges of our time. There are four reasons to believe this is true.

First there is the power of place. Hamline has taken its place among the top comprehensive universities in the Midwest as a university that delivers exceptional experiences and personal attention to its students. Hamline is situated midway between the centers of Saint Paul and Minneapolis, and as such, is a powerful bridge between the people who live and work in these communities. As a state, Minnesota has a long tradition of education excellence and civic minded people dedicated to public service. Hamline’s growth has

paralleled the growth of Minnesota from a territory to its stature today as having many of the most livable communities anywhere. In addition, Hamline has been recognized by *U.S. News and World Report* as the top comprehensive university in Minnesota. Hamline—the power of place.

Second, Hamline is preparing students to meet the greatest challenges of our time through its ability to produce leaders that impact the community. There are executives of Fortune 500 companies who are alumni of Hamline or trustees of Hamline or donors of Hamline or, to the delight of this president, all three. There are legislators who are governing; there are entrepreneurs who are creating jobs; there are teachers who are improving our schools; and there are judges and lawyers who are keeping our families safe. By instilling a desire to lead and by providing opportunities to do so, Hamline develops an insatiable appetite for leading among its students that matures and flourishes throughout their vocations and careers. Hamline—the impact of leadership.

Third, Hamline is preparing students to meet the greatest challenges of our time because we encourage talent and release the energy of our students. John W. Gardner, one of the most astute thinkers on leadership, writes:

Talent is one thing; its triumphant expression is quite another. Some talents express themselves freely and with little need for encouragement. Leopold Mozart did not have to struggle to uncover buried gifts in little Wolfgang. But generally speaking, the maturing of any complex talent requires a happy combination of motivation, character and opportunity. *Most human talent remains undeveloped.* (1990, 158)

The Hamline University community is full of energy, and from this energy, flows renewal and new ideas to continually create a better Hamline. On any given day there are forums and lectures, concerts and teach-ins; athletic competitions and spiritual services, which are all designed to release the talent and energy that

continuously renew the spirit of Hamline. There are intuitive relationships between faculty and students that foster a lifelong thirst for discernment and equip them to navigate the most complex situations, no matter how long it takes or how difficult the journey. Hamline—releasing talent and energy, both individually and collectively, continuously renews its community.

Fourth, Hamline is preparing students to meet the greatest challenges of our time because as educators, we are committed to developing cultural competency, which we define as the ability to work with integrity within many different cultural contexts. That means we expect students to acquire an ability to think critically, communicate clearly and compellingly, and interpret the vast amount of information we receive daily in the mass media through a critical and incisive lens. We believe that understanding languages, visual and performing art, politics, social structure and a host of other experiences leads students to develop a “worldliness” that extends beyond the place in which they grew up or the religious or cultural tradition they have known. Hamline graduates have a grounding, a start toward becoming informed citizens of the world.

And so, through the power of place; the impact of leadership; the release of energy and talent; and the development of cultural competency, Hamline exhibits no lack of imagination to demonstrate its commitment to make the world a better place, starting right here at home.

We imagine transferring the spirit of Hamline to each new generation of students as the connective tissue that binds us together as a community and with those who have led us to where we are today.

We imagine strong and lasting partnerships between Hamline and companies, organizations, and neighborhoods where we will nurture relationships and promote changes that benefit the Twin Cities and Minnesota.

We imagine that Hamline's reputation for innovation in conflict resolution will be recognized throughout the world and that Hamline's reputation for educating community leaders will grow at home.

We imagine a Hamline that is culturally distinguished by the richness of experience that an ethnically diverse student body, faculty and staff create for all members of the community.

We imagine new collaborations between undergraduate and graduate programs that elevate Hamline as an innovative incubator for developing new knowledge and opening up new career paths.

We imagine a Hamline not bound by conventions, but rather inspired by our Wesleyan tradition and pioneering spirit to explore new ways to educate students.

The power of education. As a young girl sitting on the porch with my dad and thinking about the life before me, I never would have imagined this day. But there were teachers and mentors and family who recognized the power of education. Every day, as educators at Hamline University, we imagine the lives before our students and we encourage them to use the power of education.

To the students of Hamline who are here today, I invite you to look around you to see the strong network of teachers and mentors and community who will do for you what others have done for me, and I am confident the same is true for the faculty, trustees, alumni, and staff who are assembled here.

The spirit of Hamline. Alumni describe it as a connection, a grounding, a commitment to intellectual inquiry, individuality, community, diversity and service. And, since 1854, although perhaps invisible, and in many ways elusive to

describe, the spirit of Hamline is that gentle companion, ever present and reliable, inspiring Hamline students today and graduates over many decades to make our world a better place.

Thank you for this opportunity to join Hamline University as its nineteenth president.

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