

Spring 3-13-2016

Being Here Feels Like Coming Home

Jerome A. Gilbert PhD
Marshall University, gilbert@marshall.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://mds.marshall.edu/gilbert_presresearch

Recommended Citation

Jerome A. Gilbert, "Being here feels like coming home," *The Herald-Dispatch*, March 13, 2016.

This News Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Jerome A. Gilbert, Ph.D (2016 - present) at Marshall Digital Scholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in President's Research and Writings by an authorized administrator of Marshall Digital Scholar. For more information, please contact zhangj@marshall.edu, martj@marshall.edu.

Jerome A. Gilbert: Being here feels like coming home

Mar 13, 2016

I am truly honored to lead Marshall University and become part of the fantastically rich tradition of this institution and this community. It is indeed difficult to express the overwhelming excitement my wife Leigh and I feel as we start to become part of Marshall and Huntington.

I already have found that one of the most compelling things about our university is the hope, love and unity of spirit embedded in the refrain "We Are Marshall." I knew from my first visit to campus last October that phrase was an inclusive one and that the word "we" really reflects acceptance and respect - a family. Marshall is a special place and I feel like I have come home.

I am blown away by the world-class facilities, the talented and passionate faculty, and our outstanding students. I'm equally impressed by our alumni, many of whom are incredibly successful.

Just as extraordinary is the connection between the university and the Huntington community. It is unlike any "town and gown" relationship I have ever seen. The resiliency and optimism I have found here are inspiring.

I have already come to love Marshall University and am committed to seeing it develop into an even more highly recognized and revered university. Remarkable strides took place at Marshall over the last decade or so and all the pieces are here to take us to the next level and, at the same time, bring significant economic development growth to the entire region. Together, we will become even stronger and better.

I believe that by carefully blending Marshall's traditional focus on the liberal arts with its emerging strengths in high-tech fields and the health professions, we can carve out a real niche as an outstanding comprehensive university that truly transforms our students and helps them become leaders for the 21st century.

My initial goals begin with the desire to grow Marshall in both size and prominence. Recruiting and graduating more students - not having to continually cut programs and services - will be the keys to addressing the ongoing decline in state funding for higher education.

I would also like to look at perhaps expanding our portfolio of Ph.D. programs and encouraging more research and other creative activities by our faculty and students. Both these elements will be crucial to our future success as we identify opportunities for external grants and contracts, and seek to partner with other universities and private industry.

We need to be deliberate about our growth, though. With that in mind, I will be asking our provost and faculty to lead a strategic directioning process to determine where we are going and how we get there over the next few years.

Fundraising will be another of my top priorities. I have some aggressive goals in this arena and will be spending a great deal of time cultivating donors and seeking private money. I have already started reaching out to our alumni and other supporters to seek their partnership to enhance Marshall.

Another important element in our future success will be enhanced marketing of Marshall. We need to sharpen our image and play up our strengths, and reach out to a broader, national market.

Developing a five-year salary plan for faculty and staff also will be part of the strategy to raise our national stature. To be a great university, we need the very best faculty and staff we can get. To maintain and increase our academic quality, we are going to have to have more competitive salaries. It is a critical need.

In closing, I want to thank you for welcoming me to the Marshall family with open arms. I am extremely proud to be here and look forward to working with our students, faculty, staff, alumni and community to do everything we can to make Marshall even better.

Jerome A. Gilbert, Ph.D., is the 37th president of Marshall University. He took office in January 2016.