

# President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President  
September 11, 2006

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It seems difficult to believe that it has been five years - September 11<sup>th</sup>, a day seared in our national consciousness. Each of us can remember where we were and what we were doing when we first learned about the unthinkable events unfolding in New York, Washington, DC and then later in Pennsylvania. Many knew people in the buildings or on the planes that day.

In the weeks that followed September 11<sup>th</sup> I found myself visiting the New York Times "Portraits of Grief" page, reading the stories of those who perished. I remember reading the story of Nicholas Brandemarti, perhaps attracted to it by the subtitle, "A Believer in Teamwork." Nicholas worked on the 89<sup>th</sup> floor of 2 World Trade Center, the South Tower. The second plane struck just five floors below where he worked and only 18 people escaped from the 30 floors above this crash zone. Reading his tribute, I discovered he had been a star fullback at West Deptford High School in New Jersey, a little over a block from where my parents live, and where I graduated nearly thirty years before him.

Beyond those who worked or were visiting the buildings, we came to admire the police, fire, and emergency squads who rushed up the stairs, moving directly into harm's way. The firefighters' pictures are gathered together on a single New York Times page, entitled "A Nation Challenged: Those Who Answered the Call." Words from this page vividly describe the emotions and the scene -

*For thousands of horrified office workers who fled the terrorist attacks, the most remarkable sight during their descent was the wave of determined firefighters advancing toward the burning sky.*

*"One fireman stopped to take a breath, and we looked each other in the eye," said Louis G. Lesce, who was on his way down from the 86th floor of 1 World Trade Center, the first tower hit. "He was going to a place where I was damn well trying to get out of. I looked at him thinking, 'What are you doing this for?' He looked at me like he knew very well. 'This is my job.'"*

*In all, 343 firefighters were reported missing or were identified among the dead. The number of casualties was staggering. Entire companies were lost. The previous biggest loss of life for the Fire Department was in 1966, when 12 were killed in a fire on East 23rd Street.*

*But the numbers tell only a fraction of the story. The faces and names say far more. A father and son. A chaplain. A commander. A rookie. Strangers to most of those they passed on Sept. 11, but heroes to them all.*

This summer I watched and read as the New York Times published oral histories collected from emergency workers who survived that day. They describe firsthand the chaos and the fine line between life and death.

On September 11<sup>th</sup>, our world changed as we know it, as terrorism moved to our shores and became a part of our lives. In the aftermath, on campuses and in communities nationwide, people came together, mourning those who were lost and expressing the solidarity of a nation united in response to those horrible deeds. There was a strong wave of patriotism, a renewed call for civic engagement, and a celebration of the freedoms upon which our country is based. The American Democracy Project grew from these roots and now is a part of over 200 college campuses nationwide.

One of the many activities of the American Democracy Project is a celebration of the U.S. Constitution, which was signed on September 17<sup>th</sup>, 1787. Our University is an active participant in the American Democracy Project and has organized a series of events on our campus for Constitution Week, which begins today. These include a speech by William Strauss in Williams Auditorium on Tuesday evening.

The Declaration of Independence and the Revolutionary War secured liberty for our nation. However it was left to the Constitution and the Bill of Rights to create a government based on democratic principles, to build a foundation that would enable our country to survive, endure, and flourish, and finally, to protect the freedoms we enjoy today.

Today is a time to think back, to remember the heroes of September 11<sup>th</sup>, and to celebrate lives ended on that bright September morning. As we remember those who died on this day, it also seems fitting to celebrate the freedom and principles upon which our nation was founded, and which we are so very fortunate to enjoy each and every day.

David L. Eisler,  
President

September 11<sup>th</sup> resources from the New York Times

A Nation Challenged: Those Who Answered the Call -

<http://www.nytimes.com/library/national/091101rescuers.html>

Oral Histories from September 11<sup>th</sup> -

[http://graphics8.nytimes.com/packages/html/nyregion/20050812\\_WTC\\_GRAPHIC/met\\_WTC\\_histories\\_full\\_01.html](http://graphics8.nytimes.com/packages/html/nyregion/20050812_WTC_GRAPHIC/met_WTC_histories_full_01.html)

Portraits of Grief -

<http://www.nytimes.com/pages/national/portraits/index.html>

American Democracy Project

American Association of State Colleges and Universities -

<http://www.aascu.org/programs/adp/>

New York Times - <http://www.nytimes.com/college/collegespecial2/>

Ferris State University (includes Constitution Week Schedule) -

<http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/administration/academicaffairs/ADP/>