



## *Interim President Dr. Matthew Giordano*

*Interim President Acceptance Speech, Delivered May 23, 2018*

Thank you, everyone. I am truly honored that the Board of Trustees has entrusted me with this enormous responsibility. I don't know that everyone in this room knows the level of commitment our Board has shown over the last year or so, and particularly over the last few months. They have put in an immense amount of time and have been diligent about making sure that this decision was made with integrity and with the seriousness it deserves. Thank you to all of our Board members for their service and commitment.

I received a call from Catherine Cooley, the chair of the Board, around 9:30 last Thursday night informing me of the Board's decision. I can already feel the weight of the position settling in on me. It's truly unfathomable to me that Sr. Marcella has been shouldering this weight for 40 years. Over the weekend, I was reflecting a little on my personal journey at Villa, and especially on my relationship with Sr. Marcella. It began 13 years ago, with an interview and with Sr. Marcella calling me to offer me the job as a full-time faculty member. Since then, she and I have been through a lot together. Sr. Marcella, thank you for all you have taught me, for your confidence in me, and, most importantly, for leading Villa Maria College so successfully for so long. No one can fill your shoes.

So many of you sitting here today have been partners with me in helping to write Villa's story for the last several years. I sincerely value and appreciate your encouragement and support, collegiality and camaraderie. Being Vice President for Academic Affairs is such a rewarding experience. I enjoy working so closely with the faculty and the academic affairs administrators and staff members, with the President's Cabinet, and with Dr. Hartnett and Michaelene Karpinski, my administrative assistant. If, ultimately, I return to the VP role, I'll do so with a smile on my face. It's a great job.

Today, though, we begin an important transition. Change is here. Like all periods of significant change, this transition will be filled, at times, with excitement

and hope, and, at others, with nervousness and anxiety. I know some of you are probably more enthusiastic than others about me taking the reins for this interim position. I know there are questions about me, things that I have to prove. All I can say right now is that I pledge to work as hard as I can on behalf of this special college, that any mistakes I make will not be due to lack of effort or dedication, and that I intend to do right by you and our students as we work to fulfill our mission.

This college does so much good, does so much so well, to educate and transform lives. We must protect that and build off of that. At the same time, we face very difficult challenges, challenges that you are all aware of. We have many critical decisions to make, and no time to waste. We must act, and act with urgency. For however long I have the privilege of serving as president, I intend to work collaboratively with the Board and the Cabinet, the faculty and the staff, to move this college towards a brighter future, to realize our potential, to proceed with conviction and foresight. You will not like or agree with every decision I make, but know that I will always make each decision with one thing in mind: what is in the best interests of Villa Maria College, its mission, and its students?

And so for the next few weeks I look forward to talking to many of you, to hearing your thoughts about what is best for this college. Make no mistake: for the next month, Sr. Marcella is still the President. It is only on July 1, after Sr. Marcella hands me the nuclear football and informs me that Dave Wisner from maintenance is really a secret service agent, that I assume the office.

What we do at Villa is far bigger than any of us individually. While today marks an important change, the work of Villa Maria College as a ministry of the Felician Franciscan Sisters, inspired by Blessed Mary Angela, and the inheritance and legacy we take from Sr. Marcella, continue on. Over the next year or so, we will preserve and protect this legacy, while also engaging in the hard work, day in and day out, of becoming the very best we can be.