

Ceremonial Speaking – a short guide

Unless public speaking is a central part of our professional role (such a teacher, litigator, political figure, etc.), a ceremonial speech may be one of the most common types of speaking we might be called upon to do. This guide is designed to help you in preparing a speech of introduction (e.g., of a speaker), a speech to present or accept an award, a speech to honor or appreciate a person, organization, or event (e.g., a eulogy, dedication, or tribute).

In ancient Greece, Aristotle categorized speeches as falling into three main types: **forensic rhetoric** (for the law courts, focused on justice or injustice), **deliberative rhetoric** (for the legislature, focused on persuading in favor or against a particular course of action), or **epideictic rhetoric** (for ceremonies, focused on praise or blame). In contemporary society, we may too often think that “a few ceremonial remarks” need not have much substance, but ceremonial rhetoric can be both very important and quite powerful. The values communicated in ceremonial speeches can set the foundations for grounding future attitudes, behaviors, and courses of action.

For example, think about how a speech of tribute for a new student leader can highlight what could be a few key leadership qualities that will benefit their term of office. Or, consider how a eulogy recognizes the great sadness and loss of a human passing *and* moves the audience to honor – and even seek to emulate – significant characteristics or contributions of the person’s life. An effective eulogy moves listeners from past and present toward the future.

Suggestions:

1. Brevity is a virtue. Unless you are the main speaker for the event, two to four minutes is sufficient. (Don’t give a speaker’s talk in your introduction! That’s their job!)
2. Do your homework to gain a sensitive understanding of the person, subject, and occasion. In the case of a speaker introduction, the speaker, agent, or sponsoring organization may provide biography.
3. As you consider what qualities or virtues to praise (honestly, we have few ceremonies in which “blame” is the focus), do not extend beyond the facts . . . overblown praise can detract from the occasion’s (and your) credibility.
4. Ceremonial occasions often require a style of language and a delivery that is more formal (perhaps more “elevated”) than the everyday informative or persuasive speech. As a result, speakers may choose to deliver from a prepared text rather than an outline or notes. (Note: a page of standard, double-spaced printed text generally takes two minutes to deliver effectively to an audience. See notes about text on page 6 below.)

On the following pages are a few short examples of ceremonial speeches from my Puget Sound experience, the third of which is annotated. - Kris Bartanen, Professor of Communication Studies



Center for Speech
and Effective Advocacy

Example 1: Race & Pedagogy National Conference Celebration
November 30, 2018

Kris Bartanen, Provost
Upper Marshall Hall

Thank you for the opportunity to add my voice to this ceremony of celebration, tribute, and thanks.

Some of us recently have been involved in reading a challenging book about higher education that closes with questions about what makes a university wise.¹ The authors are interested in this topic in hopes of our preparing a wiser society.

In thinking about what to say today, I reflected back to what I said in welcoming the opening plenary of the first Race and Pedagogy National Conference in 2006. The plenary speaker was Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum, president *emerita* of Spelman College and author of the celebrated *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria and Other Conversations about Race*, a book re-issued in 2017 on its 20-year anniversary of publication.

Not long before the 2006 RPNC, President Tatum had hosted a special conference for college faculty, staff and administrators on wisdom. The thesis question for that conference was:

“What if we just took a 48 hour pause from our daily work to consider the question of how colleges might best inspire their students to attain the balance, integrity, vision, a clear sense of collective responsibility, and ethical leadership needed for wise stewardship of the world?”

Among the many conferences in which I have participated over the past 40 years – excepting, of course four RPNC’s – the Wisdom Conference remains one that I continue to consider particularly important.

The leadership of Race and Pedagogy – Professors Dexter Gordon, Grace Livingston, Nancy Bristow and Carolyn Weisz – joined by² the many and growing number of compatriots (too many to name, but you know who you are), compatriots who have served on steering, planning, and implementation teams; and joined for this conference by Professor LaToya Brackett, Dean Michael Benitez, and Program Assistant Tina McLeod; and sustained by the loyal and wise Community Partners Forum and energized by the new leadership of SARPI (Student Association for the Race and Pedagogy Institute) . . . all of these leaders and partners have enabled us now, *four incredible times*, to pause for 48 hours from our daily work to consider big and powerful questions that center on how we as individuals, we as teachers and schools at all levels, and we as a nation can become more wise in stewarding the educational work of campus, community, and world.

For those 192 hours – plus all the preparatory discussions; the staff and faculty workshops; the youth, parent, achievement gap, and planning summits – I am personally and, for Puget Sound, immensely grateful.

From a first brown bag lunch at the (then) Center for Writing and Learning to a “campus day of learning” streamed far and wide, we have had our moments of struggle and achievement, understanding and misunderstanding, exhaustion and exhilaration. All that said, I know that I am not alone in being able to affirm that we have learned, we have been inspired, and we have become more wise thanks to the Race and Pedagogy Institute leadership team . . . wise enough to know that the work is not done, that the journey continues . . . but a little wiser; a little more willing to fail and try again; and a little more willing to turn a constructively critical eye on this place, our history, our ways of working, and our ways of being. For all of that, for all of you, I offer my sincere thanks.

¹ Lukianoff, Greg and Jonathan Haidt, *Coddling of the American Mind: How Good Intentions and Bad Ideas are Setting Up a Generation for Failure*, Penguin, 2018.

² I have underlined some examples of stylistic repetition to illustrate rhetorical figures of speech that elevate style.

Example 2: Welcome for Pierce County Cancer Survivors' Conference
September 13, 2014, 2:45 pm

Kris Bartanen
Schneebeck Hall

Good afternoon. I am Kris Bartanen, Academic Vice President and Dean of the University of Puget Sound. On behalf of all who teach and learn at Puget Sound, I am honored to welcome you to the campus. I hope that your day has been productive and that you have been able to enjoy the beauty of this very special place.

There are a variety of themes that might be highlighted on this afternoon and for this gathering: The themes of inspiration and teamwork stand out strongest in my mind. You are an inspiration, each in your own right for your perseverance in your cancer journey, but also – along with those who give love, support and care – you are a team with and for one another. We know it takes a team to beat this disease; we know it will take a team to cure this disease.

I am inspired, too, by the students who study, live, and dream here. We lost a student to cancer 2.5 weeks ago, an extraordinary young woman leader, just three courses short of completing her degree. And – there is always an and in teamwork – on Thursday afternoon this week all of the students who completed summer independent projects in the sciences presented their posters in the courtyard just next door.

Some of them are doing cancer research here: for example, on identifying a novel gene with a potential role in cancer (part of a National Institutes of Health grant led by Biology professor Leslie Saucedo); on proteins to inhibit prostate cancer cell-induced bone lesion development (in collaboration with Michigan's Van Andel Institute); and on beta-blocking inhibitors for ovarian cancer cell lines (in collaboration with Indiana University School of Medicine). The passion, commitment, and teamwork of these students is inspiring and, as they go on to careers in research in medicine, they will make a difference.

We are all inspired by the life and work of Gordon R. Klatt, M.D., Fellow of the American College of Surgeons, and Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters from Puget Sound, 2008. A portion of the citation for his honorary degree captures a portion of his distinguished career as a colorectal surgeon on the staff of St. Joseph's and Tacoma General Hospitals:

You were named president of the medical staff of Tacoma General, president of the Pierce County Medical Society, and Medical Director of the MultiCare Regional Cancer Center. . . . your commitment to medicine and to civic leadership . . . earned you the Medical Directorship for the Franciscan Health System and a place on the board of the Northwest Physicians Network.

Doctor, but dreamer, too. Not content to heal the diseased body, you dreamed of defeating the disease itself. That dream put you into one more race. On the last weekend of May in 1985, you came to this place, Baker Stadium at the University of Puget Sound, to raise money for the local American Cancer Society by running a marathon. You ran and walked around the track again and again, for 24 hours, logging a total of 83 miles and raising \$27,000 for the cause.

While running, you dreamed again, this time of running this race every year: not just here, but everywhere; run not just by you, but by thousands. That dream began Relay for Life, now an international phenomenon and the signature fund raiser for the American Center Society. Since 1985, your dream, and your race, Relay for Life, has raised over 3 billion dollars to find the cure for cancer and to provide education and care for cancer patients. (*Citation crafted by the Office of President, University of Puget Sound*)

Inspiring in its own regard, Dr. Klatt's too-short-life also inspired teamwork – and a team that continues today in all of us. Peoples of the world run in Gordy Klatt's footsteps, and Relay for Life now has raised over 5 billion dollars to educate, to provide care, and to find the cure.

We are also inspired by **Gretchen Schodde** (note: pronounced Shawdaw), who I have the honor to introduce to you.

Gretchen is a family nurse practitioner, a former University of Washington Assistant Professor, and one of the first nurse practitioners in the State of Washington. She co-facilitates retreats on the sacred Isle of Iona in Scotland, is a founding member of VOICE for Healers in Healthcare, and is a certified facilitator and nurse educator.

Gretchen is the founder and executive director emerita of Harmony Hill Retreat Center in Union, WA. After attending a retreat at St. Andrew's House in 1986, Gretchen decided to open a small retreat center and wellness community nearby. In 1994, she founded the Harmony Hill Cancer Program, and she has been part of almost every Cancer Program workshop and retreat offered at the center, which serves some 1200 people per year. In short, she has helped to facilitate thousands of individuals through their cancer journeys. (*Note: biographical text provided by the event planners*)

Like Dr. Klatt, Gretchen Schodde is a team leader who brings dreams to fruition. The focus of Gretchen's presentation this afternoon will be stories from the Harmony Hill book: *One Hill, Many Voices: STORIES OF HOPE AND HEALING* by Donna Cameron and Kris Leathers.

Please join me in welcoming Gretchen and thanking her for her ongoing work.

Example 3: Trimble Hall Dedication
September 27, 2002

Kris Bartanen
Dean of Students

On May 10, 2001, when we broke ground for Trimble Hall, we celebrated vision – generosity – commitment – and community. We return to those values today.

Commented [KB1]: Introduction quickly previews the overall structure and values of the speech. (See comment on conclusion below.)

Trimble Hall represents a significant step toward the **vision** of enabling at least 75% of the student body to benefit from a residential college experience. It is, however, more than a beautiful structure with 184 beds. In this location – near the academic center of the campus – Trimble Hall is a building that bridges the academic-residential experience. Its public spaces have already hosted student resident staff training, faculty adviser training, Ideas as Work and Play orientation dinners, the Summer Science Research symposium, class sessions and committee meetings, just to name a few of the events of recent weeks. The hall's private community spaces extend classroom and co-curricular conversations, host community standards discussions among Trimble residents, and provide bright corners with beautiful views for relaxation, study and reflection.

Commented [KB2]: This was important to the location and design of the building – and setting off with the “m-dashes” for pause and emphasis – allows for emphasis in delivery.

We honor today the **generosity** of the Bob Trimble who envisioned with us both those important community spaces and also the prospect of visiting scholars sharing conversation with students and the opportunity for faculty colleagues to mentor students and nurture residentially-based academic conversations. That generosity enables the work of Mark Harpring, Assistant Professor of Spanish, who is living in the hall and planning programs – including, I just learned, a series of African Dance lessons for Trimble residents; the work of the Asian American theme group, advised by Mikiko Ludden, Instructor of Japanese; the work of the Technology and Society theme group, advised by Professor of Mathematics and Computer Science Bob Matthews; and the work of those students, faculty and staff who will follow in the years ahead with events and programs we have not yet imagined.

Commented [KB3]: Goal: Not just celebrating what has been done, but giving foundation for motivating good work ahead.

As we dedicate this building, we also honor the **commitment** of students and other colleagues who are supporting a significantly expanded theme house program; who are mentoring Humanities, Languages and Cultures, Transfer, and Social Justice residence programs in other halls; and who are serving as faculty associates to traditional residence programs.

As Trimble Hall was being planned and constructed, we have also planned and implemented *Project Ensemble* on this campus. We know that an artistic ensemble builds **community** in rehearsal together. We know that the artistry of the ensemble grows in an environment that nurtures creativity, risk-taking, and intellectual and personal challenge. Trimble Hall is a wonderful place for ensemble-work, for building on Puget Sound's long-standing commitment to excellence in teaching by nurturing more integration of in-class and out-of-class learning. This is a **boundary-crossing building** and – to extend the dramatic metaphor – it provides the scenographic support for **boundary-crossing work now and in the future**. We look forward to learning from the ways in which this building fosters both education and campus community.

Commented [KB4]: Important sub-values that support community.

Commented [KB5]: Many years down the road (2019), this may not seem so important, but it was so at the time: Putting community spaces **open to the public** into a residence hall was very distinctive and required design accommodations for privacy and safety. Hence the emphasis.

In preparing for our Student Affairs staff retreat last week, I looked back at my notes from our retreat of September 1999. There, under a list of goal statements for the future, was a little question: Build a residence hall, question mark? **Commitment** by a talented team of people brought us forward from that question mark to this day: from programming and proposals, through bond approval to “topping off” celebrations, through selection (finally!) of a brick palette to the counting of towel bars, through rainy

winter construction to “as if it’s always been here” landscaping, and from groundbreaking to installation of dedication plaques. Thank you, everyone.

Commented [KB6]: Please see suggestions on speaker notes below.

Also, Bob, I invite you back up here on behalf of the Trimble Hall team. I hope that when you place this token of remembrance [present gift] in an important space in your life, you’ll always know how much we all value your vision, generosity, and commitment to this community.

Commented [KB7]: Note repetition of key themes to close the speech.

We are now adjourned for tours of C. Garnet Trimble Hall and celebration with the Trimble Family.

Speech text vs. speaker manuscript or notes:

I would not deliver any of these speeches from text as printed here. My manuscript (which only I would see) would be **double-spaced**, would only have words on the **upper two-thirds of the page** (otherwise eye contact starts to shift away from the audience and down to the manuscript/podium), would **use white space** to facilitate ease of delivery, and would have **pen or pencil marks** for pause, emphasis, or whatever other prompts I needed (based on practicing the speech in advance).

For example, just looking at a single paragraph:

In preparing for our Student Affairs staff retreat last week, I looked back at my notes from our retreat of September 1999. There, under a list of goal statements for the future, was a little question:

Build a residence hall, question mark?

Commented [KB8]: I needed to say “question mark” not just inflect my voice.

Commitment by a talented team of people brought us forward from that question mark to this day:

- from programming and proposals,
- through bond approval to “topping off” celebrations,
- through selection (finally!) of a brick palette to the counting of towel bars,
- through rainy winter construction to “as if it’s always been here” landscaping,
- and from groundbreaking to installation of dedication plaques.

Commented [KB9]: This sentence is way too long as written. The list of items, however, can be delivered clearly and with emphasis by adjusting the speech text for ease of presentation. (And the “finally!” was a bit of internal humor that key players would understand without the broader audience being left out.)

Note also the repetition of structure that recognizes milestones (and, indirectly, all the people involved in those various stages) while also building from start to finish: “from . . . through/to . . . through/to . . . through/to . . . and from [ideas] to [dedication]”
With that recognition, the “Thank you, everyone!” is inclusive and meaningful.

Thank you, everyone!