

A legacy of excellence 150 years strong



PHOTO BY RON WURZER

UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES, TAKING OFFICE AS PRESIDENT OF AN INSTITUTION AS THOROUGHLY EXCEPTIONAL AS THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON would be a tremendously exciting and humbling experience. Having the first months of my tenure coincide with the kickoff of the University's 150th anniversary has only magnified those feelings and given me occasion to reflect on the distinctive history of this extraordinary University and its legacy after a century and a half of service to the citizens of Washington and students worldwide. The more I learn about the generations of students, faculty and staff who have made the University what it is today, the more impressed I am by the remarkable vision and tenacity that went into creating what has become one of the truly great public research universities in the world. I am proud to be a part of it.

As the United States was plunging into civil war—the most tumultuous time in American history—the idea of starting a fledgling university in a barely established village took root. A rough-and-tumble frontier community, Seattle had a population of around 250 settlers, some of whom were still living out of the backs of their wagons, having yet to build their own homes. Perhaps they were inspired by the majesty and grandeur of the nature that surrounded them, but they had a vision of what a university could mean for the community they were trying to establish and the audacity to think that in that mud-soaked settlement, they

could actually wish a university into being. Little could they foresee that ultimately, their dauntless faith in the value of higher education would become the cornerstone of a gateway to the world.

By the time Washington officially became a state in 1889, the University had outgrown its original downtown campus (today's "Metropolitan Tract"), leading to a move in 1895 to the site of today's Seattle campus, a hefty four miles away at a site overlooking Lake Washington. Of course, it all appeared quite different then, an oasis on a woody hill noted as much for its isolation as it was for its natural beauty. It turned out to be a stroke of genius, providing ample space for growth and development. The Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition of 1909 was a turning point, not only for Seattle but for the growth of the campus, leaving as its most enduring legacy a stunning and unique sylvan landscape. From the spectacular vantage point of Rainier Vista to our iconic westward facing statue of George Washington, we are surrounded by reminders of the heritage from which this great University sprang and which informs our view of the UW we know and love today.

Along the way, there were a number of momentous developments that would help shape the University we see today. The year 1909 was key not only for the AYP Exposition, but it also was in that year that the Department of Oriental Subjects was established, paving the way for the University's deep interest in Asia and what would eventually evolve into today's Jackson School of International Studies and our stellar Department of Asian Languages and Literature. Some decades later, another monumental deci-

sion was made that perhaps more than any other would shape the future of the University: the establishment in 1946 of the School of Medicine. Today, UW Medicine and its fellow health-sciences schools constitute one of the nation's strongest collections of health education,

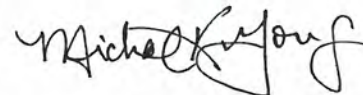
“From its humble beginnings as a frontier university, the UW, now three campuses strong, has risen to take its place as one of the 20 best universities on the planet. Unquestionably, we are the global gateway envisioned by our founders...”

research and patient care anywhere. Then in 1975, the University took yet another step into the future by establishing the Department of Computer Science, a far-sighted step that would attract some of the world's best computer scientists to Seattle. In 1989, the first of the University's six Nobel Prizes was awarded to physics professor Hans Dehmelt, and the world sat up and took notice. There are many other great moments in the history of this exceptional University, many of which we will be celebrating in the coming year.

The University's founders dreamed big, and it paid off, for the state and for

the University of Washington. From its humble beginnings, the UW, now three campuses strong, has risen to take its place as one of the 20 best universities in the world. Long the nation's top public university at winning federal research funding, our faculty and researchers explore creative, boundary-defying solutions to the most complex problems of our day. They actively engage students in this work, teaching and mentoring them in a culture that values innovation, diversity, collaboration, discovery and creativity. Ideas, inventions and perspectives from the UW impact people in our own community and across the globe every day.

While I have been at the University for only a short time, I understand and marvel at the legacy that has been passed down from those early settlers of the Washington Territory—the Dennys, the Terrys, the Landers and the Mercers. I understand it because of the incredibly warm and gracious welcome my wife, Marti, and I have received from this remarkable community. Everywhere we go, we meet people who are passionate about the University of Washington. They tell us wonderful, awe-inspiring stories about the impact the UW has had on their lives, and because they understand the power of the University, they are helping it to continue its transformative work for future generations. Marti and I are delighted and thrilled to join you and contribute in our own small way to the enduring legacy of this great University, its next 150 years.



MICHAEL K. YOUNG, *President*