



ROANOKE TIMES

President Charles W. Steger

Today, our university community, indeed the entire nation and people from many other nations, come together to mourn and to grieve, all the while hoping that we will awaken from this horrible nightmare.

In the last day, I have expressed my horror and shock, but there are no words to truly express the depth of sadness that we all feel.

It is overwhelming, almost paralyzing, yet our hearts and our minds call us to come together, to share our individual attempts to comprehend the incomprehensible, to make sense of the senseless, and to find ways for our community to heal. And, slowly and painfully but inevitably, to begin to heal and to again move forward.

We are very grateful that we do not have to travel this path alone.

The expressions of sympathy and support that have poured in from all corners of our nation and from around the world have touched us, have helped us cope with this incredible tragedy, and have reaffirmed our basic belief in the goodness of people.

We want to thank all the members of local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies, especially Virginia Tech Police, Blacksburg Police, and Virginia State Police, and all emergency responders who rushed to our aid, who continue to monitor our campus, and who have the additional horror of investigating this catastrophe. We cannot thank them enough for their bravery and their assistance.

We are extremely grateful that you here in attendance

today have come to help us and to help each other. We are thankful for our students and their friends and families who have offered solace and comfort to one another.

In fact, the Student Government Association and the student body have organized a candlelight vigil that will take place on the Drillfield near the War Memorial at approximately 8 p.m.

As I have mentioned previously but want to emphasize, there is counseling available for all members of the university community. Counseling for students is available at the McComas Center and for faculty and staff at Squires in the Brush Mountain Room.

This afternoon, during this Convocation, we see further testimony that the events that occurred in our community yesterday had an impact not just on friends and families, but on millions and millions of people.

To help us mourn and to begin to heal, we have with us, of course, President George W. Bush and First Lady Laura Bush; Virginia Gov. Tim Kaine and First Lady Ann Holton; all of the Virginia members of the U.S. Congress; the Honorable Bill Bolling, lieutenant governor of Virginia; and Virginia Attorney General Bob McDonnell; members of the Virginia General Assembly, as well as members and former members of the Virginia Tech Board of Visitors. We also appreciate having with us members of the Blacksburg Town Council and other local officials.

We deeply appreciate their care, concern, and compassion. □