

Remarks prepared by Danielle Laraque-Arena, MD, FAAP for University Hill Corporation Annual Meeting Dec. 1, 2015.

Dear Colleagues and friends,

I am excited to join the Syracuse and Central New York Community as the President of SUNY Upstate Medical University. That excitement has not waned since my appointment in September, but has deepened as I learn more about the multifaceted components of this area, the many challenges, and the necessary vibrancy of our response to those challenges. Over the past weeks, I have come to Syracuse to listen and learn by meeting with the multiple stakeholders with a stake in the future of Upstate and the region as a whole. I have appreciated those conversations, and believed that continued conversation will be necessary, as well as moments of conscious reflection, to arrive collectively at solutions that bring us forward. One simple concept shared with me during the many conversations is the question of the structure, process and the relevance of our outcomes. Let me explain.

Most of us are clear in the day-to-day workings of WHAT we do – our direct responsibilities, our place in the hierarchy of actions and our professional titles. We are usually also clear on HOW we accomplish what we do. The process of getting delivery of health care services, the process of education, and the nuts and bolts of the research enterprise – e.g. in the University realm. The fundamental question then becomes WHY we do what we do. This is where I have found that we spend little time and this neglect reflects back on WHAT and HOW we accomplish our various tasks. So, I thought I would take a stab at that conversation today.

Let me first begin with my brief understanding of the University Hill Corporation; then share with you a little bit of the WHY in my career trajectory as a pediatrician – the reasons that I have made the decisions and choices that have led me to this leadership position; and perhaps end with discussing preliminarily how together we proceed with addressing the WHY question.

My understanding of this organization is that University Hill Corporation represents the collective efforts of the member organizations with a vested interest in our communities – extending from its culture, its built environment, the intellectual, business, technological, creative, scientific and academic talents –to name a few. I am happy to join you for this luncheon to participate in the dialogue of how together we can make a difference. A common theme is breaking down of the internal and external silos represented by the broad participants at this meeting– e.g. the silos that divide on the basis of WHAT and HOW various institutions, professions of medicine, nursing, numerous health professions, graduate and undergraduate studies, business, art, do what they do locally and globally.

Let me begin with what has brought me to Syracuse. My own professional life originated, similarly to many of yours, with a love of science – chemistry to be exact. Growing up in Queens NY, (having come from my birth place at an early age), elementary, middle and high school were enveloped with academics, poetry, literature and politics. My parents left Haiti due to the bitter dictatorship there. The history of that small country is rich - the first Black Republic born of the revolution of slaves in the Caribbean – freedom won prior to the Civil War in this country and the Emancipation Proclamation. In the early sixties – after the ruling of Brown vs. the Board of Education – the US was rapidly changing – I reflect back when coming to the US, being told about greats such as Marian Anderson, Paul Robeson, James Baldwin, Langston Hughes many more - AND the rule of law -in the face of great contradictions of this wonderful democracy. At the root of our discussions in my family throughout my childhood was the issue of social justice. I chose my path in medicine – not unlike many of you in the hope of doing good and to be engaged in an intellectual enterprise that would be fulfilling. Merging these two pursuits brought me to Fordham University, University of California at Los

Angeles – from which I obtained my BS in Chemistry and then began my career in pursuing Medicine. I was fortunate that in this public institution –while having literally zero money –I received a full academic scholarship – 1977-81 – without which I might not be here before you. Los Angeles and its surrounding communities were certainly dealing with many of the upheavals of the country at that time – real disparities in care and economic opportunity. The Compton and Watts areas were part of my clinical experience as a 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year clerk. I learned the best of medicine from such greats as Joe St. Geme Senior, Robert Schlegel in the Harbor-UCLA and Martin Luther King Hospitals, respectively – and the best of quaternary medicine at the main campus in Westwood – with surgical theaters unlike any I had seen then or since. I went on to the University of Pennsylvania, Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia which abutted West Philadelphia – one of the poorest areas in the city. The five years spent in Philadelphia were rigorous and intellectually stimulating with some of the giants of emergency medicine, ID, child abuse and community pediatrics. A colleague of mine – Arthur Cooper – a pediatric surgeon –knowing my love of New York – told me that the only place I could come to in NY was Harlem Hospital – with a full academic appointment at College of Physicians & Surgeons at Columbia University – and this choice would be mirrored in my other career choices. That is, the marriage of academics and service – or science and service – the new term being used now is translational research. While offered other positions in NYC the combination of Central Harlem – and Columbia University to me seemed perfect. I had trained with the explicit goal of going back to an underserved area –one facing difficult health challenges such as represented by CH in 1986 – the height of the crack epidemic, the HIV/AIDS epidemic and the epidemic of firearm injuries. The next ten years would prove to be academically and personally challenging – but I loved it – I would be part of the transformation of that community. The following decade at Mount Sinai School of Medicine would also prove to be challenging building training programs in clinical research, health services research and primary care research. Obtaining grants, scientific writing and advocacy work would continue to shape my career locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. I could go on ....

So, WHY do I share this history with you. Well, one is to help share with you my motivation to be here in Syracuse, NY and to recruit your help in answering the WHY question. The WHY question to me is the following: We do what we do, in the way we do it, in my view – for one purpose - to have our actions make a difference in people’s lives and to address the issues of social justice and simple fairness. In my journey through medicine, from one coast to another – and through travels globally – I am convinced that zip code/geography should not determine the fate of a newborn baby’s life. Who we are and what we become as children and adults should be supported collectively by the vision that we aspire to – that is, a just world, where the rule of law establishes basic principles, and the policies of our system allows every human being to achieve her or his potential –in fact, part of the definition of health of the World Health Organization.

So why Upstate Medical University? Why Syracuse? Upstate Medical University is a remarkable institution - an example of a publicly funded system that is accessible to all and has the right mission to serve the community through the best science, education and health care. The resources of the institution are broad and can be outlined in two areas of Health Services and Education. These two areas if linked appropriately have the elements for transformational change in the present healthcare environment and can deliver on the intrinsic goal of health improvement of individuals throughout their lifespan and of the populations of Central NY. It is not insignificant that Upstate in delivering its mission as the largest employer in Syracuse contributes to economic vitality of the region. As you know, Upstate is composed of

- A Downtown campus, the Golisano Children’s Hospital, the Community Campus, the Cancer Center representing the continuum of care. Each of the four colleges: Medicine, Nursing, Health Professions and Graduate Studies are home to Basic Science departments and clinical departments - and with bold leadership and transdisciplinary approaches, these can work in concert to achieve both individual health and population health.
- The university system is partnering in leading a six-county effort through the State’s Delivery System Reform Incentive Payment program, better known as DSRIP - In

conceptualizing DSRIP, the State made a very conscious effort to move the worlds of clinical medicine and primary care and the worlds of public health and community medicine closer together. Upstate is perfectly positioned to make remarkable advances in improvement of health over the lifespan of individuals by engaging in a comprehensive plan that looks for both short term and long term metrics of success across generations.

- Upstate also boasts a regional poison control center and a regional trauma center system critical to address some of the leading causes of morbidity and mortality in the region.
- The Center for Global Health & Translational Science is multidisciplinary, an applied research center that can link basic science, clinical investigation, and faculty development to address global health care delivery problems.
- The CNY Biotech Accelerator stands out as a model for linking scientists and industry which has the

**MISSION:**

- Incubate and accelerate university-industry partnerships that discover, design, develop and deploy innovative products for bioscience marketplaces.
- Provide growth-oriented companies essential business acceleration services and access to industry-specific development resources.
- Collaborate with domain experts/mentors in creating comprehensive systems and teams that potentiate success.
- A department of Bioethics and Public Health and Preventive Medicine which is integral to the public health efforts and offers the potential of becoming a school of public health –focused e.g. on rural health.

What is increasingly clear to me, however, is that we cannot achieve the potential of all of these activities without doing it TOGETHER. The choice of strategies that we take must leverage the remarkable strengths of Upstate university, our many other institutions and our region as a whole. The choice of strategies must leverage our collective strengths in

transforming our city and our region into the most vibrant community that leaves no one behind. In fact, it is essential that we address disparities in care, disparities in education, disparities in basic opportunities – because not to do so will leave us the poorer for it. We must CONNECT in fundamentally different ways to achieve our goal of economic vitality. In a video featured on the University Hill Corporation website – Bruce Katz described the development of Innovation Districts throughout the US coalescing physical, economic and networking assets. As a health sciences center Upstate Medical University’s contribution is to be part of this evolving network – combining innovation with humanism – the care of individuals.

So, reflecting back to WHAT and HOW we must do what we do – it must be grounded in the WHY we do things. My function as a University President is to lead the way to

- Transform Education – exemplified by Tele-Education – distance learning and a Hub/Spoke methodology to expanding subspecialty expertise to neighboring urban and rural areas
- Translate Research – from T1-Basic Science Discovery – T2 –Clinical Insights- T3 Implications for Practice –to T4 Implications for Population Health and ultimately Improved Global Health
- And thus, Transforming Care and achieving the outcomes possible –leads us to the HEALTHIEST populations – achieved through engaging the recipient of health care in defining those outcomes most important to them. (PCORI)

We must reflect that in the face of concentrated poverty in the city of Syracuse (and elsewhere), we must address the issue of POVERTY in Syracuse with our science, our enterprise, our collective will to make a difference. Julius Richmond – pediatrician and Dean of the School of Medicine at Upstate in 1967 –and later the 12<sup>th</sup> US Surgeon General – the person credited with creating Head Start – understood that to make an impact we need the triad of: scientific knowledge, social strategies, and political will. That political will I believe must have the following 3 elements:

- A collective agreement on the WHY question

- An answer to the question -Are we all at the table? Because to leave anyone behind leaves an incomplete solution– a checklist
- An answer to the question -Are we CONNECTED for a joint purpose?

My message to you today is certainly, we cannot do it alone and as leaders of this community we must apply our efforts to the collective good. This collective good must be rooted in the four principles as enunciated by the World Health Organization when referring to the type of health care to which people have a right, from both an individual and a collective standpoint: that is, **quality, equity, relevance and effectiveness**. Together we must set aside differences, form an effective network and pool our efforts to make substantive difference in the health of our communities. The metrics of health –we can itemize –e.g. ability to recruit and retain talent in the region; reducing the mortality of the leading causes of death for children and adults in the region; increasing the diversity of our workforce to meet the needs of our community; sustaining our environment .... We must evaluate what we do – but first we have to agree to do it together. Our strategic mapping must utilize data strategies to create a learning environment with continuous rapid cycle improvement. We must do this with our best technological tools, our industries, our science, and our passion. I am truly happy to be here with you to begin this journey. Thank you.