

Statton Learning Commons Dedication

Statton Learning Commons Dedication Ceremony, Juniata College, October 20, 2023

Jim Watt

Jim Watt is the Vice President for Advancement & New Strategic Initiatives at Juniata College.

I want to welcome you here today. This is a special day. Legendary Coach Chuck Knox once said: “They say that breaks even or they say that breaks even up in the long run. And the trick is to be a long-distance runner.” Now, you may look at the building behind me and you may feel the rain and you may be a little chilly. You might want to say, oh, this is a tough break. I wish it was sunny. I wish we were further along. Right. But I am going to tell you something. There is a pause. There is a shining glimmer of hope. Here we go. Ready? I’m here to tell you that Juniatians are long distance runners.

In 2026, we will proudly mark our 150th anniversary, a significant milestone that reflects our enduring presence. As the wise Shirley Knox once said, “Some of us are fortunate to reach a point where rushing becomes unnecessary.” Indeed, rushing is not the Juniatian’s way; we prioritize quality over speed. I want to acknowledge the dedicated individuals driving our projects forward: architects Copan and Mark, construction company Paul Anderson led by GC Phil Weller, project managers Avis Inyang and John Colvin, and our facilities team under the guidance of Tristan delGiudice. They are an exceptional team, working diligently from the early morning hours to ensure our community receives a project executed with precision and excellence. Their efforts extend beyond this project, overseeing three significant renovations across Juniata College, including the business incubator and the Halbritter Performing Arts Center. The latter is already accessible for those curious about progress, thanks to the generosity of Barry and Marlene Halbritter.

Today, we come together to celebrate the Tim and Kathy Statton Learning Commons. At Juniata, we don't simply construct buildings or monuments; we build structures that profoundly impact the lives of those within our community. This building will be no exception, embodying our values of leadership, meticulous planning, and high standards. Our vision for the future is shaped by the intersection of our past and present. The completion of this space will echo the values instilled by the dedicated team working tirelessly to deliver an exceptional environment for our students. In a moment, you will hear directly from this talented team as they share the story behind the Tim and Kathy Statton Learning Commons. Now, let's explore the vision, strategic planning, our historical roots, our future aspirations, and the intricate connections between all these elements. It is my pleasure to introduce President Jim Troha of Juniata College to elaborate on these crucial aspects.

President Jim Troha

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Jim Troha is the President of Juniata College.

I find myself at a crossroads of emotions right now, unsure whether to burst into laughter or cry. Here we stand, perhaps not as far progressed in this project as initially envisioned. Memories of past commencements, Dr. Bowen, echo in my mind as we debated outdoor versus indoor ceremonies out on the quad. Nevertheless, we are here, and we are committed to seeing this through, rain or shine. My sincere gratitude extends to everyone who played a role in making this day possible. While I will mention specific individuals shortly, I want to express my thanks to all who have joined us. Your presence on this, what I believe to be, an extraordinary day means a lot.

To provide some historical context and emphasize the rarity of such moments in a college's history, I will share some insights. The journey of this project spans eight years, navigating through the leadership of three board chairs. Regardless, it all began during the tenure of chair Bob McDonnell. As we contemplated the need to focus on our library, the baton passed through Tim Watts, Tim Statton, and the project was approved at a humble \$6 million. The ultimate cost of this building remains undisclosed, considering the complexities and compounding costs over eight years, which included the unforeseen obstacle of COVID, delaying us for three of those eight years. Here we stand today, about to go check out the hard work that has been taking place inside the building and the work that has been taking place prior to this construction. Which means, our friends, our alumni, our donors that allowed this to come to fruition.

First and foremost, I want to spotlight and express gratitude to Tim and Kathy Statton. Yes, they took a bold step, a risk eight years ago by investing in Juniata. I want to express my heartfelt thanks to them for being the lead donors for this pivotal project. They believed, especially Kathy, that we would reach this point where we can step into this facility and witness how learning will unfold for our students in a modern and contemporary setting.

A special thank you also goes out to the other generous donors present today, even those who could not make it. I want to convey my deep appreciation and gratitude for their support. Several reunion classes have made Statton Learning Commons a focal point of their contributions. I want to give a shoutout to the Class of 1969, who named the Academic Resource Center, represented here today by Janine Katona and Bonnie McClure, their legacy gift chairs. Also, a nod to the Class of 1972, Tim and Kathy's class, and the quiet reading room provided by other members like Guy Croix, Chuck Danziger,

Joan Ingle, D Ambrosia, and the upcoming 50th reunion Class of 1974, actively fundraising under the leadership of Bruce Moyer, Dave Andrews, Mike Lague, and Mike Jay Blonsky.

Thank you to all these reunion classes for their unwavering commitment to this project. Our students, particularly our graduating seniors, have also played a crucial role by contributing their own dollars. The Class of 2018 named the experimental classroom, the Class of 2020 designated the Meditation Room, and the Class of 2022 named a patio outside the facility. Let's give a round of applause for these students who stepped up.

I have already acknowledged some of our board members, but I want to reiterate my gratitude, especially to Bob McDonnell, Tim and Mary White, our current board chair, Carl Glazier, our vice-chair, and all our trustees who believed in and stuck with this project. Their patience has been commendable throughout this period. Thank you, board, for your enduring support; I know it has been a lengthy journey.

I want to say thank you, and you will soon hear from him to former state senator Jake Corman for spearheading the support of \$4 million from the state of Pennsylvania. Jake, your remarkable leadership in securing these funds deserves immense appreciation.

Mike Keating, who prefers to remain low-key, authored and continues to oversee the grant. As many are aware, navigating the grant process is no small feat, and Mike has guided it from the application submission to the \$4 million approval. Mike, we could not have achieved this without your dedicated efforts, so a heartfelt thank you for all your hard work.

A special acknowledgment to all our elected officials present today, including Representative Ervin and Commissioner Scott Walls. Your role in shepherding support for this facility is invaluable, bridging our town with this remarkable space. Our deep thanks go out to you.

Jim Watt has already mentioned some key contributors, and I want to express my gratitude to our architects, construction company, project manager, and particularly to Dr. Lauren Bowen, our provost, who played a crucial role as the key liaison to much of the space you are about to explore. Special thanks also to our Chief Information Officer, Justine Black, the director of our Statton Learning Commons, Trystan del Judice, and our director of facilities, along with all our faculty, staff, and students who contributed to the planning process. Thank you all for bringing us to this momentous day.

I am going to end by sharing the story about when we ceremoniously broke ground on this facility a year ago in April. The excitement surrounding this project is palpable, envisioning it as a new focal point for contemporary learning among our students. However, as we explore the history of this place, we are reminded of its humble beginnings—an unassuming library with a handful of books situated on 14th and Mifflin over 150 years ago. The journey continued with a modest library in a potato patch, which eventually became Founders Hall. Our first president, Jacob Zook, placed a few books on a shelf,

marking the evolution of our second library. Students Hall, though no longer standing, became the next custodian of these books. Upon its demolition, President Meg Brumbaugh sought the support of Andrew Carnegie, a name now synonymous with libraries, to fund what is now our Juniata College Museum of Art.

From 1907 until the opening of the New Beeghly Library in 1963, the torch of knowledge was passed through various locations, with Calvert Ellis and others physically carrying books from one site to another. Reflecting on this journey—from a small bookshelf to the collaborative space we stand in today—underscores the continuous adaptation and evolution our institution has undergone. In a world of changing industries, jobs, and environments, our students transform, demanding that we evolve alongside them. This facility, generously made possible by Tim and Kathy, propels us forward into a new economy, providing the necessary space for critical thinking and world-changing endeavors.

Our mission is clear—to change the world—and this building lies at its core. I feel profoundly blessed and honored to be present at this historical juncture, celebrating the fruition of a monumental project. Gratitude abounds for everyone who played a role in making this vision a reality, with special acknowledgment to Tim and Kathy, who we will hear from shortly. Jay Carman, please join me on stage, as your instrumental contribution of \$4 million played a pivotal role in turning this project into reality. Jake Corman, your friendship and support have been indispensable to Juniata College, Huntingdon County, and this region. Thank you for making this dream a reality.

Jake Corman

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Jake Corman is a former Pennsylvania State Senator.

As a retired legislator, I must confess that invitations do not come my way as often. So being invited to speak here today is both an honor and a thrill. I want to express my gratitude to my partner in the General Assembly representing Huntingdon County, Rich Urban. Rich and I have collaborated on various issues for our county, and this project is one of them. Rich, thank you for your contributions, congratulations, and well-done work.

Why does the government get involved in projects like this? In Pennsylvania, we have witnessed a transition from the industrial age of the 20th century to the 21st century, where manufacturing remains crucial, but we have significantly shifted toward a meds-and-eds economy. Pennsylvania's academic institutions of higher learning, whether private, public, or community colleges, are invaluable assets throughout the Commonwealth. They not only provide opportunities for young people to receive

education and enhance their lives but also serve as economic engines for communities. You cannot travel far in Pennsylvania without encountering another higher education institution, each contributing to the economic vitality of its community.

This project has a substantial impact on the Huntington County community and the Juniata Valley. Supporting these institutions is crucial as we navigate a challenging time, anticipating a population decline and increased competition for students. You know, when the 2008 economic collapse hit, we were not producing children at the rate we once were. This is a real competition. For higher education schools, like this to survive, they need to provide amenities. You need to provide things that students are going to want to come here to Huntington, Pennsylvania, in Juniata College.

As a father of three, with two currently in college, I can attest that today's students enjoy far better facilities than I did. A building like this, offering resources for students to thrive, is immensely important. I've always believed that if you want others to invest in Pennsylvania, you must be willing to invest in yourself. This project is a commendable investment by the Commonwealth in the future of Pennsylvania. Congratulations, and God bless. Thank you.

Tim and Kathy Statton

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Tim Statton'72 is former chair of Juniata College Board of Trustees. His wife Kathy is also class of 1972.

Can you all hear me? Okay, good. I do that not because of you, but because I have been urged by Kathy to get a hearing aid. I stood behind him by 20 feet. I said, "Can you hear me?" Nothing. Ten feet. "Can you hear me?" Nothing. Five feet. "Can you hear me?" Nothing. I got up and whispered in ear, Can you hear me? She said, for the fourth time. Yes! Thank you. I've got some other good news for you. I'll be brief. I want to make three points today. One is thank you. Second is, what is a learning center? And third is what makes Juniata so special; why is it so special?

First of all, thank you. I think we have already acknowledged many of the donors, so I won't go through all that again. Thank you to everyone who made this possible. Not just donating money, but donating time, vision, and belief. Because it is about belief in this project. There will be more thank-yous, I believe, when we finish this spring, hopefully. Yes, this spring more. Thank you to all who made this happen in many ways. This is very important because it puts us in a different competitive position, a position that we heard from our legislator that we need to be in if we're going to compete in the next generation of learning.

Second thing is what is a learning center? Students learn differently today than when I was here. Students collaborate today in their learning. We went to our rooms. We went to a quiet place in the library, or some people did, and they learned that way. That's how we learned; students collaborate today. This is a collaborative place. This is also a place where students can come and get help because they need help a lot of times in getting through this quagmire called education. It's also a place of state-of-the-art technology. I think you all will be amazed when you look at the state-of-the-art technology here. And I owe a lot of this understanding of what Learning Commons is. I had no idea. I talked to Provost Bowen, who explained to me what a Learning Commons was, and talking with her last night, she said, you know, technology has moved way beyond when we first envisioned this building and is going to continue to change, and we'll stay with it. So that's important as well.

What makes Juniata special? Well, after I left college a few years, I decided I needed an engineering degree and went back to school at night for four years, traveling, raising a family, and went to engineering school. We had an annual student drive in engineering school, and they drove four or 5% of the students out every year. That's how it was done. You washed out, and it was a wash-up program—not Juniata. At Juniata, a place that really tries to encourage and bring students along to be the best potential that they can be, starting with the faculty. The faculty care for the students is phenomenal. They know all their students. They care about those students. They want them to get through and do well. The administration, you wouldn't see this building. This building is about students, and it came from a vision of the administration of this and all the things that we have here fundraising, right, Jim Watts? That makes this whole place happen. But it even goes down to the staff. The people serving food every day know our students. They talk to our students and make them feel comfortable here. Well, that was the case when I was here and sort of been in honor of that. There was a person here who's joining us today who helped a bunch of us, Waveland students along, who didn't quite know what they were doing and who kind of fathered us. And that would be our Blair who's here with us today. I'm so pleased to have them here. And Blair, in recognition of what you did and of what all Juniata does, faculty, staff, administration, we have a bench over here with your name on it, and that should remind us of all of what Juniata means and what it does and what our competitive advantages are, and we're going to continue that. So again, I want to say thank you to everyone, and I will end it there. Thank you.

Jim Watt

All right, everyone! To conclude our event today, are you excited? We are now going to proceed with a quick ribbon-cutting ceremony to celebrate the potential of what this facility is going to become. After

that, I have a surprise for you because the building is not finished yet. We are going to do something unique.

There is a main support beam that the construction team has not enclosed yet. Behind me, there's a table with markers. I would like each of you to sign the beam. If you have a class here, sign your class year alongside it. Years from now, when future Juniata students renovate this place—maybe in 60, 100, or even 200 years, depending on how well Provost Bowen designed it—they will open it up and know that we were here, not just building a monument to the past but leaving a mark for the future of Juniata.

Please join me up here as we begin the ribbon-cutting: Justine Black, Jay Corman, Lauren Bowen, please come on up, and of course, Tim and Cathy Staton, President Jim Troha, Jennifer Troha, Mary White, Representative Ervin—come forward. We will cut this ribbon, and then you can all come inside before the rain starts. One, two, three. Thank you very much!

Provost Lauren Bowen

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Lauren Bowen is the Provost and a Professor of Politics at Juniata College.

Good evening. It is wonderful to stand before you tonight. Dedicating the Statton Learning Commons has been a long time coming! We gather in a spirit of eager anticipation and of celebration. Sharing a fine meal is a meaningful way to celebrate, so let us express our appreciation to Parkhurst. I firmly believe in the power of ceremony to honor major milestones and that does not happen without a great planning group. Props to Justine Black, Beth Homan, David Meadows, Mat Stoudnour, Jim Watt and the entire advancement and marketing team, with extra special props to Sam Watters.

Thinking about what I wanted to share tonight has prompted lots of reflection and some specific memories that have punctuated this journey. Perhaps the most salient and crispest one comes from an unexpected source. When I hired Kathryn Blake as our art museum director in 2015, she said something in her interview that crystallized for me our broader vision for a contemporary liberal arts education – that she wanted a museum to be audience-centered rather than object-centered – the art was not merely to be collected and curated and preserved. What mattered was how patrons engaged with artistic works; how they experienced them and interacted with them. That orientation radically changes the frame of how we engage with spaces as well as all the objects and artifacts that make up a college (books, journals, computers, lab equipment, and furniture).

In other words, our overarching goal and purpose as educators in the tradition of the liberal arts has become being learner and student centered rather than teacher or curriculum or text centered, to focus

on outcomes instead of inputs, to engage in active learning instead of dynamic teaching, and to think of success as the logical outgrowth of access. That is the essence of the learning commons movement and the physical spaces that we call learning commons. It is a shift in our frame so that we can adapt and so that we anticipate the skills and resources that students need (and those include human and technological as well as physical resources). It underscores the primary purpose of libraries as fostering information fluency and literacy – how do you evaluate data? Evidence? Information? Arguments? News?

This adaptation has been necessitated by social and economic and technological shifts – or the rise of what we understand as the knowledge economy which has certainly displaced our industrial economy (which of course displaced an agrarian economy). A knowledge or information society focuses on intellectual capital and intangible assets such as critical thinking and problem-solving skills with human intelligence being the key catalyst for development. The rise of the information age demands that our education change fundamentally if not radically. Yet, there are vestiges of the agrarian economy (the 9-month calendar) and the industrial/factory economy (classrooms with rows of seats and one instructor to maximize efficiency) that remain. Our challenge and opportunity, then, is to transform the college to reflect and anticipate better a 21st century society and beyond. My team has been reading *The Great Upheaval* by Arthur Levine and Scott van Pelt (published in 2021) which has been affirming and provocative as they write “The most fundamental change, which deceptively sounds like a rhetorical flourish, would be a shift from teaching (the process by which we educate) to learning (the outcomes of the education) ...” That is the purpose of constructing the Statton Learning Commons.

We began this work seven or so years ago with great energy and enthusiasm – with the vision and commitment to build on our considerable strengths as a nationally ranked liberal arts college and with what we thought was the luxury of the long view – retaining our values and ethos and commitments while anticipating what the world would need from our graduates. It is heady stuff, right?

Quite a lot has transpired in the past seven years to strain that unabashed optimism. The global pandemic, the looming demographic cliff, and the profound economic, social, and technological disruptions have underscored the crucial need for a forward-looking vision in liberal arts education. This vision aims to equip students for a knowledge society while igniting their moral imagination. These challenges have intensified the work, lending it greater urgency and relevance. It has given the work greater urgency and intensity and relevance and yet it has been anchored by hope, a sense of joy, and an abiding faith in the power of what we do as educators. I am appreciative that we had the vision and fortitude to launch this effort in anticipation of challenges rather than in response to them. It is part of the reason we have withstood the upheavals of the past few years as well as we have.

That, of course, is testament to the power of community. Efforts like this just do not happen without an engaged and supportive community. There are so many people to recognize who have

contributed to this journey and who have embraced this paradigm shift. Thank you to the many donors and to the Board of Trustees for their faith and commitment...and especially to Tim and Kathy Statton for their generosity – in terms of philanthropy, of course, but also their generosity of spirit. Tim took a leap of faith as board chair and gave my teams several opportunities to articulate a vision for student learning that was tied to a renovated space that would transform the academic library into a learning commons. I cannot say that he always waited patiently for our progress, but his challenging and not always gentle nudging was always matched by his exuberance and his unwavering support – it kept us focused. I am eternally grateful to him for his passion and commitment and his confidence in us.

I also want to honor the committees who designed and vetted and sharpened our focus. We were clear from the outset that we had three major goals: to revitalize the library as an academic hub (with increased emphasis on electronic resources and digital learning to expand information/technological fluency); to enhance access to academic resources that would engage all students (like holistic advising, tutoring, skill building in a writing/speech center), and we would better coordinate functions that help students fully engage with their academic experience (such as access to high impact experiences like internships and community based learning). As the first planning committee wrote, “We want students to be able to imagine what is possible, think creatively about what they want for their education, and feel empowered to take responsibility for making it happen.” I want to give special recognition to Anne Wood, our Chief Information Officer, for her engagement and investment. She understood the centrality of technology to this movement from the outset. I would be remiss if I did not also mention her ability to manage a project, lead a lively group, and articulate a map that continues to undergo so much of this work.

My memory of our first presentation to the board in February 2016 is especially vivid. Not only due to the board's positive reception and enthusiasm for our programmatic vision, coupled with the prospect of integrating it into an innovative new space but also because I departed that meeting in haste, rushing to drive to a hotel near the Dulles airport. I was chairing the search to identify our Vice President of Student Life and Dean of Students and we were interviewing semi-finalists outside the District of Columbia. We wanted someone who could be a true partner in executing on this promise of providing all students with the resources and opportunities to be successful – to connect rich experiences out of the classroom with the foundational knowledge and skills being developed in the curriculum. We found it in Matthew Damschroder; his programmatic imagination and his sophisticated understanding of student development has reinforced our commitments and ensured the inclusion of the Student Life team.

This clearly does not happen without leadership – certainly Tim Statton and the board, and the senior team, but I also want to give a special shout out to our president. President Jim Troha let a new provost (and still encourages this not so new provost to) imagine and create (and not merely manage and

maintain). I was able – with the support of a receptive and often eager faculty – to initiate lots of projects that were all connected to this significant shift from an industrial society to a knowledge society and accordingly, an expression of liberal arts education that is learner centered. Jim gave me a long leash but always kept me tethered to a sense of “thoughtful urgency.” We have done a lot to reimagine all of academics in the past decade in anticipation of and in conjunction with the emergence of this space whether it was:

- Articulating ILOs to emphasize curiosity, ethics, and citizenship
- Revising our general education curriculum to make sure students could question how they knew what they knew and how they wanted to engage in the world
- Developing new programs at the undergraduate and graduate level to give students the context and frame to explore new arenas
- Being purposeful about how we teach so that we foster a sense of belonging for all students in and out of class
- Expanding experiential opportunities to translate theory into practice
- Pivoting instruction to embrace technological innovation hastened a bit by a pandemic

All these initiatives have contributed to establishing an environment where students, staff, and faculty can come together, thrive, question, create, and collaborate. What we are previewing tonight is the realization of these efforts, featuring experimental classrooms, collaborative study rooms, a meditation room, an extensive writing/speech center for refining various communication forms, state-of-the-art digital learning spaces, an National Endowment for the Humanities-funded archives and special collections suite, and equally significant, a welcoming 'living room' (complete with a fireplace) that offers an informal gathering space. We are not done. This reimagined space of the Statton Learning Commons will now be our standard. We will work to redefine classrooms, labs, residence halls and all the campus spaces that can and should also be transformed to enhance learning consistent with contemporary and future needs.

One of the most gratifying parts of this work has been the enthusiasm and adaptability of the faculty in partnering with students to construct knowledge – develop the kind of information fluency that allows them to ask good questions, solve relevant problems, anticipate societal challenges. I am very pleased to introduce Dr. James Tuten to you to offer a faculty perspective. Jim is the Charles and Shirley Knox Professor of History – winner of the Beachley, Eagle Advisor, Fulbright advisor extraordinaire. He is in my judgment our finest public intellectual.

Dr. James H. Tuten

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James H. Tuten is the Charles and Shirley Knox Professor of History.

We are just a few years away from Juniata College's Sesquicentennial (that is 150 years) and during that time students have required resources for the learning they pursue outside of class or lab. From a small library in Founders Hall to the Carnegie Library, to Beeghly Library, and now the Statton Learning Commons, a campus requires that nerve center.

Before the internet, that nerve center focused both on spaces to study and resources for studying. Thirty years ago, CERN (the European Nuclear Research center) built the first webpage and while it took years, a generation later we teach born-digital students who expect that most information may be found online and for what appears to be free. Learning and information, however, do not really work quite like that.

Many of us were born paper natives, yet we had to be taught how to pursue information to create knowledge. When I was in college, just a few years prior to the first web page being built, I recall that the first computer I ever used was in my college's library. Libraries have long been places for new experiences; you see. I remember getting through freshmen year using some library resources and that marvelous computer's guidance on what was in the building and where to find it. In my sophomore year, though, I stepped up to history classes that had higher expectations. I still vividly remember going into the kiosk where the computers sat and looking up a research term. I am pretty sure it had to do with rice. The screen told me that the books I sought resided in something called Special Collections. I had seen that title over the giant glass doors on the third floor, but what was that? It is another name that colleges use for their archives, of course. I sat there staring at the screen and glancing over to the reference desk where a librarian sat. For some minutes I considered approaching the librarian, but in the end, I chickened out. My conclusion was that whatever it was librarians did, they surely were not there to help sophomores and whatever the purpose of Special Collections was, it could not be to welcome students like me into new realms of knowledge.

I tell this story because it reminds me of what I did not know. I did not know what a college library or learning commons was for. It could have held the content of Alexandria's Great Library, but without an understanding that it was for me I would not access it. Without engaging with the human talent who knew the codes, had the keys so to speak, the best I might do was stumble around in the dark hoping for a good result.

I tell my students that story often and I conclude by saying that asking questions of a librarian, an instructional technologist, writing center tutors or an academic coach is brilliant. Every time they will help you catch some of the fish you are after today, and every time they will teach you how to be better at catching fish for all the future oceans of knowledge you encounter. If my college faculty or the library itself had ever communicated those things, I might have learned wonderful stuff. No Juniata student will make that mistake because we partner with the Librarians, the Writing Center and more to send that message, early and often.

The Statton Learning Commons will house knowledge. We will take care of and organize the college's history and more unique elements in the charge of the archive just as the National Endowment of the Humanities and our many donors are trusting us to do.

This building, having come into its renaissance, possesses a single, standalone archive area. That is quite a change from the old model with a vault and some archival space in the basement, an archival work area on the second floor and a treasure room on the third floor. Thanks to our grant from the NEH and donors we walk into a new era. The archive represents a team, too. I think of it as a highly unusual team. Our new archivist Shane Moran will curate, organize and preserve what is part of our cultural patrimony. He will train students in archival methods. Students will use the archive for research projects. Shane, I look forward to teaching our archive class in that space in the future. But the archive team is not only here now, it is a longitudinal team. We who work with Juniata's archive today or donate to it are on a team with Henry Boyer Brumbaugh, with Earl Kaylor, with Don and Hedda Durnbaugh, John Mumford and Jacob Gordan and with Abraham Harley Cassell. To use a biblical metaphor that would not be lost on our Brethren founders, I think of the Archive as a Cloud of Witnesses.

But more than all else, the Statton Learning Commons will be a place of connection. Students will connect to our crucial pool of talent. They will be connected to vital information and skills that they desire and need. And students will connect with each other here. They will connect over group projects. Relationships will emerge from work in the Writing Center. Academic coaches will build bonds with their students. They will discover technological solutions they didn't know existed or they may be inspired to invent ones that are needed.

This building is a vote for the future. Pursuing it was a choice to believe in Juniata's future. The resulting ideas, projects, businesses born out of such things cannot be foretold now. Neither can friendships be predicted. It is entirely possible that decades from now some alumnus might say, we met in the Statton Learning Commons on the first day of classes in freshmen year not so unlike Tim and Kathy.

Provost Lauren Bowen

Tonight, as we celebrate the learning commons, we especially celebrate the phenomenal staff who will animate that vision on a daily basis with their work in the space: the library services, digital learning, learning services/student success, writing/speech center teams. There is one more person that I wish to thank and recognize and honor this evening. Justine Black is the Inaugural Director of the Statton Learning Commons. She is our future. She provides the imagination, dogged determination, and energetic commitment to ensure that broad vision becomes actionable with a special focus on digital learning and cutting-edge technology. It should come as no surprise that she will help lead the conversation with the trustees tomorrow morning about Artificial Intelligence. Her exquisite attention to detail is matched by her bold entrepreneurial spirit and her genuine kindness and concern for each student and her colleagues – which makes her a rare leader. She is just getting started. I cannot wait to see where she takes the programming of the learning commons in the next few years. I invite her to preview it for you now.

Justine Black

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Justine Black is the Director of the Statton Learning Commons at Juniata College.

Tonight, we gather in the spirit of gratitude and celebration, I am honored to have the opportunity to share with you the next chapter for the Statton Learning Commons - one that would not be possible without your unwavering support and generosity.

In 2016, Juniata College embarked on a mission to reimagine our library, now known as the Statton Learning Commons, into a new intellectual hub of our campus community. While we are celebrating this transformation tonight, this project gives us an opportunity to reflect on the impact our institution has had on countless lives, including my own as a proud Juniata College alumna. This renewal is a symbol of progress, reminding us that Juniata is dedicated to innovation, while also reaffirming the institution's longstanding commitment to changing the lives of students through educational excellence. Tonight, I am deeply honored to address you as the inaugural director of the Statton Learning Commons, and I'm privileged to be part of this significant moment in our institution's history.

As Juniata embarks on this journey, we are inspired by the generosity of Tim and Kathy Statton, whose profound commitment to education resonates deep with our vision to create an inclusive and dynamic environment for students, faculty, and staff to connect and engage. Through the Statton Learning Commons, we will seek to empower members of our community,

encouraging them to learn, grow, challenge conventions, and dare to dream on a grand scale.

As I recall my time as a student, the library remains etched in my memory. The book stacks and limited collaboration spaces of the era seem frozen in time. Yet, the transformation of the Statton Learning Commons will shatter those hushed tones of the past. Within the walls, we envision a thriving hub of intellectual exchange, filled with rich academic lectures, captivating presentations, and vibrant gatherings.

The Statton Learning Commons is not merely a construction project, but a shift in Juniata College's academic experience. This project epitomizes the spirit of progress championed by Juniata College, our amazing donors, and the Statton family. It serves as a reminder of our dedication to academic distinction as we boldly step towards this new model for providing support to the Juniata community. However, a space alone cannot nurture greatness; it's the people within it that truly make the difference.

The Statton Learning Commons will be home to important pillars of our community:

- Our librarians, Lauren Everett-Hayes, Elainie Jury, and Shane Moran will serve as partners to our students as they navigate our wide range of resources. They will foster critical thinking and scholarly distinction. Through our new Archives and Special Collections suite, they will help students access historical documents, rare manuscripts, and Juniata's institutional history.
- The Digital Learning Team, led by Tom McClain, will work to further incorporate technology into our curriculum, ensuring that our students are prepared for the challenges of the 21st century and our faculty are leveraging modern pedagogical approaches.
- The Writing and Speech Center, led by Carol Peters, Hannah Bellwoar, and Sarah Worley will provide guidance and inspiration to students as they foster their writing and communication skills.
- The Academic Resource Center, led by Blair Cutright and Brian Baker, will offer support, tutoring, study sessions, and workshops on essential academic skills – and provide tools to students to excel in their coursework and beyond
- Our newest team member, Beth McNerlin who will help keep our operations running smoothly.

As we acknowledge these contributions, it's equally essential to recognize the unique role that student employees play within the new facility. While a student here, I had the privilege of holding a student manager role at the Technology Solutions Center. This hands-on learning experience not only enriched my academic experience but also imparted invaluable real-world skills that have proven indispensable in my professional career. As the Statton Learning

Commons seeks to re-define how we can enhance learning in our campus community, our student employees will be given even more opportunities to flourish and gain unique sets of skills that will help them succeed after graduation.

Working alongside our dedicated staff our peer-to-peer mentors who will be instrumental in enhancing the learning experience for all students. Students will learn from one another, forging bonds that transcend the classroom. Peer tutors in writing, speech, media production, information and digital literacy, and content tutoring will guide and inspire their peers, sharing knowledge, wisdom, and a sense of belonging. This mentorship program is deeply rooted in our commitment to experiential learning and will showcase the spirit of community that defines our college. I am passionate about continuing to contribute to the program's legacy and ensuring that it thrives in its new environment, allowing future students to benefit from the same enriching experiences that I and many others have.

At the heart of the academic experience is the faculty, who will become key users of the Learning Commons and instrumental to referring students to our doors. This semester, Dr. Alison Fletcher is teaching "Engineering, Empire & Environment", a new history course that is exploring the profound impact of British engineering projects on ecosystems and local populations. For their final project, students began their research journey with our library team to gain insights into the rich historical and environmental resources available for their chosen topic. Later in the term, they will gather with a Writing and Speech Center tutor where they will work on developing and practicing their podcast script explaining the significance of the project. Finally, the students will work with the Digital Learning Office, where they record and edit their podcast and create a 3D artifact of the engineering feat. With the support of the Digital Learning Team, they upload their podcast onto a Microbit, equipped with an attached accelerometer. This Microbit will then be attached to the 3D artifact. When the artifact is lifted, the accelerometer will trigger the podcast to play, offering an engaging and interactive experience.

The collaborative efforts of students, faculty, and staff in these endeavors demonstrate the interconnectivity of the Learning Commons' components. The co-location of these services within the Statton Learning Commons is paramount in fostering this dynamic synergy. Projects like this will breathe life into the Learning Commons, and the physical proximity of resources and expertise ensures that students, faculty, and staff can seamlessly navigate between different stages of their projects reflect a true holistic learning experience.

And at the heart of vision is Provost Bowen, whose dedication and visionary leadership paved the way for this extraordinary new facility. Lauren's commitment to fostering innovation, nurturing our intellectual community, and enriching the educational journey of our students

has set this remarkable endeavor in motion. I have been fortunate to have Lauren as a mentor during my professional career at Juniata. It's a privilege to acknowledge that the Statton Learning Commons is a result of her visionary idea and guidance.

I appreciate President Jim Troha his resolute faith in my abilities as director and strong vision for the countless opportunities that will thrive in the completed Statton Learning Commons. It takes a community to build a dream and an inspiring leader to see it through.

I'd also like to express my heartfelt admiration to Anne Wood for her pivotal role in my professional growth at Juniata. Anne's vision and unwavering dedication to this project, coupled with her extraordinary mentorship, have been instrumental. Anne's influence has been a bedrock in my journey, and I am sincerely grateful for the enduring impact she has had on my professional development.

As we celebrate the Statton Learning Commons, it serves as a testament not only to the hard work and dedication of individuals like Provost Bowen and Anne Wood but also to Juniata College's unwavering commitment to academic progress and innovation. This milestone is more than bricks and mortar; it symbolizes the collective vision and dedication of our community. We are excited to embark on this journey and anticipate the profound impact this project will have on our student body in the years to come. Your gifts and unwavering belief in the Statton Learning Commons vision and your commitment to Juniata College have made this possible. You are the pillars of our success, the driving force behind this transformation, and the champions of a brighter future for our students and our college.

Let us take a moment to embrace the words of Lin-Manuel Miranda's 'Hamilton' and recognize that "It's not a moment, it's a movement." These words remind us that change is not confined to fleeting moments; it is a continuous, forward-moving force that encompasses the past, the present, and the future. Through your support we have begun the next chapter in our story in shaping a better tomorrow. Thank you.

Provost Lauren Bowen

This perspective from Janet Napolitano, written in 2015 when she was the leader of the University of California system, anchored our work as we started, and it resonates still: “Higher education in this country is in motion and it always has been. Higher education evolves as knowledge expands, societies change, and new technologies are introduced. This does not mean we should relax; there should be no comfort in maintaining the status quo.”

We are in motion, but we are not devoid of direction. Our purpose is – and has been since our founding - to provide students the agency and acumen to ensure their success. It has always been

grounded in substance (their Program of Emphasis) and curriculum) and it is increasingly attentive to developing the skills to navigate a rapidly changing world. One of those key skills is working with others to navigate a complex terrain. We seek to collaborate because of our shared humanity. As we adapt and anticipate economic, scientific, political, and technological changes, we must do so mindful of that fundamental value of a liberal arts education, which is to interpret the human experience in ways that allow us to appreciate our differences while acknowledging what we have in common simply by virtue of being human.

In celebration of this moment and anticipation of the opening of the Statton Learning Commons, I am sensitive to the reality that in many parts of the world all that we have described tonight are not the material conditions for many. Yesterday I was part of a national conversation with presidents and provosts to talk about how to lead our communities in dialogue considering the horrifying events unfolding in Israel and Palestine. The philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre was paraphrased to say this about our obligation as higher education institutions: Colleges provide local forms of community in which civility and the intellectual and moral life can be sustained. I am not going to close this evening by suggesting a renovated library is a panacea for all the world's ills – that is pretty lofty even for this academic. Still, I think perhaps the greatest legacy of the learning commons movement and the promise that our Statton Learning Commons will make manifest is our embracing of MacIntyre. I am convinced that the collaborative invitation to work with peers, faculty, and staff (instead of in isolation) will be among its most profound impacts.

That sense of community and collaboration includes you all. I am so appreciative of you all and your support and commitment and I am so very grateful we could welcome you home this weekend, and we could reconnect at this event. I look forward to seeing you tomorrow at all the festivities of Homecoming Weekend. Good night.