Most of us have had those dreams in which we find ourselves in a setting where we are expected to perform but are hopelessly unprepared to do so. Mine place me in a middle school math exam typically, usually taken in my underwear. But recently I had a dream in which I found myself the new preacher at a country church just as services were about to begin, realizing that I had done not a bit of preparation for my first sermon. As I sat alone near the pulpit, aware that I was dressed rather informally for my role, I tried vainly to use the technique of pointing randomly to a passage of scripture for inspiration, but there was none. The texts I touched were all dull—begats or technical detail. It did not help matters that our provost and his wife were among the twenty or so worshipers in the small audience. Finally, I realized that it was time for services to begin, and the job was up to me. Attempting to postpone the inevitable by leading a hymn, I announced that we would sing #192 and picked up a hymnal. But somehow its numbers were missing from the pages, and besides it was stuffed with single sheets of songs that made it impossible for me to locate #192. Ultimately, I was rescued by someone else who led a hymn, and as the time for me to speak arrived, I awoke and happily declared that dream to be at an end.
I will leave it to the psychologists to parse the meaning of that dream, but I venture to say that it has something to do with change. **Change.** “We live in a time of change.” How often we have heard those words, cliché though they may be. Who can deny that they describe the current reality at Schreiner and, indeed, of higher education nationally? Let’s face it--contemplating change leaves almost all of us with the uneasiness and near panic that seized me in that pulpit searching desperately for something to say (OK, it may be difficult to imagine me without something to say). Change can be frightening, because it can be disruptive and even suggest disorder and chaos. And you are probably aware that there are critics of higher education who claim that American higher education, like virtually all institutions, is so badly messed up that it needs disruptive change, needs to start over from scratch.

Well, I don’t buy that theory. There is far too much good in how the educational enterprise is carried on at Schreiner for me to believe that it requires disruption. At the same time, profound change is occurring in education as it is in other areas such as health care, communications media, religion, the military and just about any profession you could name. And it is not finished. Our option is not to choose between a changing world and a fixed one. Rather, it is a **choice between using our wisdom to manage inevitable change rather than becoming a victim of it.**
case you aren’t sure, at Schreiner we are committed to doing our utmost to read, interpret and manage change intelligently rather than sit still and let it drive us where it will. **We intend to have both oars and a motor in our boat as we navigate the stream of change.** Our board of trustees expects that of us, and when I say “us,” I do mean us all. So I propose that we banish the adjectives, “disturbing” and “frightening” and all their cousins when we discuss change and replace them with words like “stimulating” and “challenging,” to show that we have the confidence to deal with change effectively. Viewed this way, change becomes **development**, a desirable condition. Oh, yes, we will make mistakes and make some wrong calls, but they will not leave us daunted. A key to addressing change, I believe, is to have a **solid anchorage** from which to operate and maneuver.

We have that in the words of a mission statement that has grounded us for several years: we are here to provide an “**education that prepares students for meaningful work and purposeful lives in a changing global society.**” That is as good a nutshell expression as we could provide. If anyone asks you what your purpose at Schreiner is, you can do a lot worse than to reply, “I am here to play my role in helping prepare students for meaningful work and purposeful lives in a changing global society.” And that is true whatever your job title and tasks may
be. Perhaps we will feel more comfortable with the concept of change if we pause a moment to appreciate some of the ways that we are currently thriving by responding intentionally to changing external conditions. Let me remind you of a few:

- **Learning**: I have been powerfully impressed by the way that this university has addressed our learning program. Keep in mind that there are plenty of critics out there who claim that most students learn little in college. We KNOW that we cannot simply tell the world, “Trust us. We do a good job.” First of all, our entire campus has embraced seven student learning outcomes, and we have set ourselves to the task of implementing these outcomes in our undergraduate program. Certainly the most profound step to that end has been the creation by our faculty of a new core curriculum, not merely a reshuffling of general education courses, but a redefinition that both ensures that students will complete courses which seriously incorporate those outcomes and also that their course of study will leave room for areas of minor study. Other examples come to mind. Those of you who have worked with David Reast, our coordinator of meaningful work, know that we are revamping work study and other student employment to ensure that our students reflect on what they have learned in those roles.
Gini Norris-Lane and Noelle Avenmarg, our new coordinator of purposeful lives, are helping revise our service learning program and the ways in which we engage our students in discerning their own sense of purpose and calling. And Dr. Sonja Lind, coordinator of global society initiatives, and others are giving muscle to our commitment to provide a richer international context and study-away experiences. All of these elements of what we call The Schreiner Experience are changing the shape of undergraduate education at Schreiner and uniting us in awareness of the way we impact it whenever and wherever we contact students. It is exciting change too!

• **Learning II:** One year ago we made a commitment that is coming to reality this month that reflects a different form of learning change—that of how we deliver education. Online learning is not new here: it is part of our graduate education degree and the total delivery system for our MBA. But it has played a much smaller role with undergraduates. Challenged by our consultant Credo to find a way to serve an adult education population consistent with our mission and strengths, we committed last year to develop an online RN to BSN program. This program addresses an audience around the state who may never actually set foot on our campus. These are
licensed RNs, working full time, who recognize that their professional futures will be greatly enhanced by completing a baccalaureate degree. And professional associations have told medical facilities that by 2020 80% of their nurses should be BSNs. So Schreiner’s heritage of turning hope to achievement in this area can have a major impact on this population even as it provides the possibility of decreased pressure on undergraduate tuition. In the process, the university has the opportunity to demonstrate that it understands that the delivery of learning must come in diverse forms.

• **Student Success**: This category is intimately linked with learning of course, but the twin challenges of retention and graduation have their own special claim. At the heart of all our work is the necessity of demonstrating to the world that we at Schreiner are a premier place of learning, and an essential measure of such a place is how well it succeeds in graduating its students. Certainly our five years of Title V funding (with year two starting in October) offers a major opportunity for change for the better. Our increased attention to the first year experience, enriched student support services, and facilities to foster more creative teaching all represent a purposeful response to change. Keep in mind that we qualified to submit a
Title V grant proposal because our Hispanic student population exceeded 25% of the whole. We received a Title V grant because we submitted an excellent proposal showing how we will enable not just our Hispanic but all of our students to succeed at a higher rate.

- **Recruiting**: Although all of us truly are part of the recruiting process, because all of us impact those who visit the campus virtually or in person, perhaps only those in admission and financial aid appreciate how profoundly the complex world of recruiting students has changed in recent years. If there ever was a time when one could review three to five years of admission data and safely predict the results of the current year’s work, that time is no more. Perhaps this is a good place to apply that observation to this year. Unfortunately, this summer, and in particular the last two weeks or so, we have witnessed an exceptional melting not only of committed freshman students, but also of registered continuing students. It goes far beyond what past experience prepared us for. The result is that we are facing lower than anticipated or budgeted enrollment, perhaps an overall flat enrollment rather than a 3% increase. Very briefly, the bulk of the revenue reduction will be handled through our budgeting of depreciation and the consequent funds available for capital needs, but
some of it must be absorbed in operating reductions. Our priorities at present are to minimize the decline and to manage our response so as to retain funds budgeted for salary adjustments. We will not have final numbers, of course, until the twelfth class day, and we will keep you apprised of those results. The larger point here is that recruiting and retention operate in a world dramatically impacted by economic conditions. We are still learning about just where our price point exceeds what our recruiting pool will pay, how best to use our financial aid, and how most effectively to reach out to prospective students. But I am struck consistently by how ready our admission and financial aid staff are to learn and adapt as well as how effectively they work with marketing staff, with all available data, and with our consultants and others to seek the answers to a continuously shifting puzzle.

- **Fundraising:** You know well that no university, even one that is tuition dependent, can operate on what students pay for tuition, room and board alone. Return from even our modest endowment covers nearly 10% of our operations, and our annual fundraising another 6%. In addition, gifts and grants are the overwhelming source of funds for construction of new facilities. You can imagine the impact of the recession on our advancement
activities. VP Mark Tuschak and his team took the opportunity to audit their operations and make a variety of adjustments in personnel assignments, operating procedure and especially use of technology to upgrade data access and flow.

- **Campus and facilities**: Accomplishing long held facility goals for our campus has resulted in changes for the better that we can all celebrate. It is a delight, for example, to contemplate an academic year with full use of the Loftis Laboratory and Observatory. An attractive and efficient Delaney Residence Hall will enable us to better serve students. Welcoming our athletic and event center in December will mark a major step forward for Schreiner. Even the drought does not conceal the value of the renovation of our inner campus through completion of academic quadrangle improvements this summer. That project included provision for wireless access across the quad, a reminder of improvements in Internet access and use across the campus. And we are seriously at work to raise funds for Dietert and Rex Kelly repurposing for campus ministry and our music program. Those of us who have been at Schreiner a good while have to remind ourselves of how dramatically change in the physical campus has
represented the development of a superior place for our students to study and live.

I hope this summary has helped us all appreciate change as a word we can and should embrace. (There are many more examples we could cite—what Ron Macosko shared with you earlier about our men’s golf team dramatically illustrates how effectively change has been handled, competitively and academically in athletics in recent year. And the enthusiasm with which our early arriving students have greeted our book concierge service provides further illustration of the value of thoughtful change.) We have done so too successfully to regard change as an enemy. Yes, it can have negative implications, but it the heart, as long as we hold to our core purpose, it shows us how we can do things we love and value better than we have in the past. After all, our enterprise is not for the faint of heart in the first place! Let’s remind ourselves of some fundamental points that give context to the array of change we have been illustrating:

- The gloomy critics say that higher education is not doing its job and will not be recognizable in a few years. More particularly, they claim that small,
independent colleges who lack a large endowment, a highly selective student body, and a broad national reputation face a bleak future.

- We say “no” to both predictions, because we believe that those of us in higher education can learn and turn necessary change into meaningful development. More particularly, we say that we can be thoughtful and creative both in the way we provide the revenue to operate our enterprises and in the way we spend that money on our educational efforts not only to survive, but to actually thrive in the future.

- We acknowledge that becoming such a thriving place will require adjustments in how we do our work and in some of our attitudes toward that work, but we are capable of adapting, because we believe that what we are doing is fundamentally worthwhile. We are capable of being an exceptional learning community and ready to demonstrate that fact. So let me conclude by holding up this copy of a book that your senior administrators have read and adopted as an excellent point of reference in defining those traits that distinguished the smaller colleges determined to set the pace for others in best practice and overall health. It is the product of years of experience of our consultant Credo in working with hundreds of colleges of our type. We will be providing copies of the book not only in the
library but for all departments across the campus. We will hold sessions this year to discuss its concepts and their application to Schreiner. Credo staff will come to Schreiner in October to work with our board of trustees and also to speak campus-wide on its premises. You are part, a valued part of a small university which is determined to be a model for showing others that there is a role for quality residential places of learning which are prepared to interpret their mission in the climate of the 21st century. We are not intimidated by change because we see its potential.