President Corey’s Opening Remarks: 
Imagination Summit, 3/12/10

Welcome to the first of what may become an “Imagination Summit” iSummit for those of you who are more Apple oriented…to the core! Today will be a day when we can think about the future, dream about the possibilities, and try to wrap our heads around what it will mean to be a university in the second decade of the 21st century.

Thank you to all the speakers, faculty, staff, and students who have made it out this morning. A summit isn’t a summit unless there are people willing to bring their individual thoughts and ideas to a collective table. So thank you for being here. I think this will be a valuable day for all of us, and maybe a day we will look back on in years to come as one of the watershed moments when we at Biola University stretched our imaginations toward the world the ideas in how we think about the use of new media and emerging technology in the long-term fulfillment of a Biola University education.

When we talk about harnessing new technologies at Biola, I want to make it clear that we are not talking about replacing anything we already do as much as we are talking about enhancing it, helping us as educators to better educate our students, both within and outside of the classroom. Both on this campus and around the world.

A little over two years ago in my installation address, I gave as one of our aspirations that we would be a university with a wide-ranging impact, saying:

*The tectonic plates are shifting in the world of higher education. Building from our strength and striving toward our vision, we must commit to new and strengthened academic programs with a sense of focus and urgency, asking ourselves, “do we understand these changes, and are we ready?” This means an openmess led by good research to imagine new ways of fulfilling our time-honored mission*
through collaboration with other organizations, advanced learning technologies, accessibility for students and new degree programs to meet the changing educational needs of our constituents.

Technology is important. We must not underestimate its role in shaping our society. But neither should we overestimate its ability to be our go-to default for the challenges before us in contemporary higher education. This would be antithetical to a Biola University education.

I was recently interviewing a faculty member for tenure, and he told me, “When I think about becoming a better teacher, I don’t think about Powerpoint. I think about humility.”

Technology cannot replace those priceless, “mind and character building” interactions between professor and student in the classroom, or among students in a residence hall lounge, that are the foundation of what makes Biola University tick. There are some things in the world that machines, bytes, and binary code cannot figure out. And we must be careful to not forget this fact.

A few months ago I heard an interview on NPR with a security consultant at Logan Airport in Boston. The man, named Rafi Ron, was commenting on the failures in airport security that, for example, allowed the Christmas Day Nigerian terrorist to make it on to the plane in Amsterdam with explosive materials.

He mentioned that the failure of the system was that airport screeners have become too reliant on technology and have lost the ability to use their own human judgment to assess threats and suspicious activities in qualitative ways that machines are incapable of.

Rafi Ron said this: “What we’re doing right now is actually we are running machines and people are there to operate machines. In other terms, people support technology. I say technology should support
people. And it should be skilled people at the center of our security concept rather than the other way around.”

Technology should support people. It should not be the other way around. This has got to be our understanding as a university. Simple efficiency is not enough for Biola. We are not a factory, corporation, or assembly line. Technology is crucial to what we do, but it must never be merely a means to a quicker, easier, more convenient end. It cannot simplify the rich complexity of the spiritual, intellectual, and relational struggles we all go through. There is no app for things like that. At least I don’t have one on my iphone!

Technology shouldn’t replace. It should enhance. It’s an opportunity to open up new possibilities for teaching and learning, new avenues for communication. It’s about possibility, and it’s why we have gathered here today.

So, to what end should we strive to leverage educational technology at Biola University? Rather than doing it to “catch up” or “be on the cutting edge?” I think we need to think about it always in terms of how technology can improve what we already do—making education and services to our students more engaging, interactive and effective.

To do this effectively, we will need university buy-in. We will need a core group of leaders and faculty champions who will take the reins and are empowered to dream big but also dream practically, making concrete recommendations about how to better use new media at Biola. My hope is that out of this Imagination Summit, we will be able to commission a task force of leaders who can thoughtfully and strategically push Biola forward in this arena. With technology, the name of the game is not “prolonged discussion” as much as it is “thoughtful expediency.” Technology is by nature a fast-moving, ever-changing entity, and to approach it effectively is to approach it nimbly, willing to adapt and act quickly, even when it might be risky. We will fail to move forward with
relevance in a global world if don’t think courageously and wisely about what higher education might look like in a mere ten to twenty years.

A few nights ago I had dinner in LA with Al Weiss, president of worldwide operations for Walt Disney Parks and Resorts. When I asked him about his job description, he basically said that he is responsible for imagining where Disney will be in the next generation, then build a team and cast a vision to lead it there. To think this way means understanding the times and trends and making what may even seem to be counterintuitive decisions to get there. Al’s job is to imagine where Disney will be, then build a team and cast a vision to lead it there.

This is an imagination summit when we are imagining the future for us at Biola University. Ideas shared today may frighten some and mobilize others. Not all of the suggestions will work, but I wanted a day like today to provoke us to think about what is coming and to make sure we are not, in the words of Tim LaHaye, left behind. We must be nimble and always forward looking.

But we will not be so focused on our future that we neglect the core of who we are as a biblically-centered university, educating students in mind and character to impact the world for Christ.

For a large institution like Biola, the temptation is to overly-bureaucratize things and to impose unwieldy top-down strictures for the sake of order. But with technology, it would be a fatal error to approach it in a micro-managed, top-down way. We can’t be too worried about control. We have to let it happen in a more bottom-up manner, allowing for creativity and innovation to bubble up organically, across the spectrum of the University—from students to faculty to staff.

That’s why I’m excited about events like the Imagination Summit, which invites the whole campus community to enter in to an action-
oriented, practical conversation about technology and how we might employ it in the service of our mission.

The landscape of the academy is rapidly changing, and technological infrastructures are adjusting accordingly. In order to stay competitive and attractive in the minds of potential students for whom new media is second nature, Biola University must constantly be aware of what’s going on in the tech and media industries, always thinking and learning about the ongoing transformation of technology and learning.

Some of the most exciting possibilities of new media for Biola have to do with the development of unprecedented opportunities for getting our intellectual property out to the public. Biola University is a wealth of resources—a creative hub wherein ideas, theories, arguments, art, and other important work is produced. There is a lot of world-impacting thought and work that comes out of Biola University, but unfortunately much of it never reaches beyond our offices or classroom walls or bordering streets.

I’m not interested in Biola being a self-serving institution that learns and creates merely for itself. We are one university, yes, but we are also part of a much larger networked world, full of schools and individuals having many of the same conversations we are having here. We need to be outward and partner-minded in our conception of “serving the world”—not just in serving the world on mission trips or through service projects, but by resourcing the world of ideas by making available the knowledge advances and intellectual discoveries we have made here. I see that happening in many places already. Through our spiritual formation, film and apologetics programs and Torrey Honors Institute faculty…through faculty we will hear from this afternoon like Joanne Jung and David Bourgeois, who are providing resources through technological deliveries.

Speaking of technological deliveries, two days ago, thanks to our ingenious team in IMC, we launched Biola’s new iPhone app.
Our IMC staff is also hard at work developing Biola’s presence on iTunes U, and its launch is imminent.

We have tremendous potential university-wide in our faculty and our staff, including the gifted men and women of our I.T. department, and we will need the synergy of this entire university as we take bold steps turning imagination into reality.

So as we utilize new media resources like iTunesU, perhaps we make our class lectures free and available to the public…so that a budding scholar across the world might gain from the wisdom of a professor she might otherwise never have the chance to learn from. Perhaps we think about how we can leverage new communication technologies to make one of our strongest intellectual assets—biblically-integrated thinking across the disciplines—accessible to non-traditional students and non-degree seeking groups. What can we offer Christian students of higher learning in India or China, and how might a university in Indonesia or South Korea inform our thinking? Biola needs to have a global presence in this area, and “global presence” has never been more within reach than it is now. Let’s figure out how to seize the opportunity to impact the world for Christ in a broader way than we ever have before.

This is a watershed moment for Biola to build on our strong network of relationships cultivated over the years and to embark globally on bold initiatives and collaborative ventures, grounded in the Great Commission’s mandate to make disciples. But we cannot allow this to be a one-way street when we talk about impacting the world for Christ. We must also ask the question, how is the global world impacting our own university life and thought?

A little over a year ago I was at Apple’s corporate headquarters in Cupertino with a room full of California independent college and university presidents. A brilliant young Apple leader in charge of iTunes U and mobility in Apple’s Educational Division made a
presentation to us about the emerging uses of technology for institutions of higher learning. We were all profoundly impressed with his clarity and knowledge. At the end of his presentation, one of the presidents there asked him where he went to college. He answered, “I am a graduate of Biola University.” I sat up a little straighter at that moment. Jason Ediger is one the leaders presenting to us today. Biola alum Jason Ediger, director for iTunes U and Mobility in Apple’s Education Division, Jason will give us an overview of what’s new and radically changing university education.

Our conversation today will be led by other thoughtful leaders whose vocations are immersed in new media or have thought about its impact and possibilities at length. A few months ago over lunch at Ruby’s, I invited nationally syndicated radio show host Hugh Hewitt to join us. Hugh will help us understand the information Reformation that’s changing our world. Walt Wilson, Founder and Chairman of Global Media Outreach and author of *The Internet Church* will examine the new media possibilities for the realm of evangelism and outreach. And finally, Dr. Promod Haque, venture capitalist and Biola University trustee, will look at 21st century learning from the perspective of a global corporate leader.

Promod, Hugh, Walt and Jason, thank you for your willingness to fertilize our imaginations and inspire our ideas and ideals today. We are honored that you have carved time out of your extraordinarily busy schedules and traveled some distance to share with us at our inaugural Imagination Summit. Thank you also Irene Neller and your team for all the work you put into this event, and the University Initiative Planning committee—Gary Wytcherley, Roy Allinson, Greg Leith, Brian Miller, Andre Stephens, Rod Vliet, Brian Phillips, and Michael Anthony—charged with leading this campus community in discussions about the use of new media and technology like we are doing today.
Throughout the day we will elicit everyone’s input as well, as we collaboratively put our heads together to imagine the possibilities for the future of Biola University in our rapidly changing world.

This is exciting, Biola!

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