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Lynn urges new grads to be inspired by their alma mater

By Karen Eldridge

Maryville College

Calling her address not just a graduation speech but also a tribute to her alma mater, Dr. Naomi Burgos Lynn, chancellor emerita of the University of Illinois at Springfield, urged members of Maryville College's Class of 2010 to draw courage from the traditions and history of the 191-year-old institution and do what is just, right and fair. She entitled her address to approximately 225 graduates who participated in the ceremony "Proudly Stands Our Alma Mater," drawing inspiration from the first stanza of the college's 69-year-old song. Lynn, who graduated from the college in 1954 and currently serves on its Board of Directors, was awarded an honorary doctor of humane letters degree during the ceremony, which was held inside Boydson Baird Gymnasium because of inclement weather. Also during the ceremony, Maryville College President Dr. Gerald W. Gibson was recognized with an honorary doctor of liberal studies degree and was named "president emeritus" of the institution. Gibson, the College's 10th president, is retiring this summer after 17 years of service. In her address, Lynn talked about the legacy and compassion of the "Maryville Spirit" and shared stories of the college's past heroes and heroines: Thomas Jefferson Lamar, who reopened the college after the Civil War; Kin Takahashi, the Japanese student who organized the first football team and spearheaded the building of Bartlett Hall in the late 1800s; and Margaret Henry, one of the College's earliest fundraisers. "We are counting on you who are graduating today to tell new generations about one of Maryville's golden eras — the Gibson years. We are counting on you to enrich, ennoble and bring distinction to this college. We are counting on you to live the life of service, courage and faith that is such an essential part of the Maryville tradition," she said. "The historian Stephen Ambrose reminds us that 'Love of the past implies faith in the future.' And we have faith in you. Always, always remember that 'Proudly stands our Alma Mater, Noble, Grand and True.'" Gibson's honors, voted on by the College's Board of Directors, were not announced prior to the ceremony and were a surprise to the outgoing president. "Under Dr. Gibson's leadership, Maryville College completed two major campaigns and is about to complete a third, crowned by the dramatic rise of the magnificent Clayton Center for the Arts. The College also constructed six new buildings and renovated 12 others," Dr. Dorsey D. "Dan" Ellis, Jr., chairman of the College's Board, said during the presentation. "President Gibson raised faculty and staff salaries to a competitive level, appointed outstanding new faculty, increased the size and academic quality of the student body and elevated the stature of the College to the highest level in its long history. During commencement exercises, recognition was also given to faculty and staff members for outstanding service during the 2009-2010 academic year. Dr. Mary Kay Sullivan, professor of management and the Joe D. Eakes Chair of Business, was recognized for her retirement and election to the status of "professor emeritus" at the College. She was also recognized as runner-up for the Outstanding Teacher Award. "Dr. Sullivan came to Maryville College in 1989 and has continuously contributed to her field of study ever since," said Dr. Jeffrey Fager, vice president and dean of the College. "Through presenting papers at conferences, leading workshops, publishing articles, serving on an editorial board and organizing dozens of meetings with leaders in the business world, she advanced our understanding of finance and organizational management. "Of course, the

hundreds and hundreds of students who passed through her classroom received the benefit of her unending search for truth and growth in wisdom," he added. The Outstanding Teacher Award, the recipient of which is nominated by juniors and seniors at the College, went to Dr. Margie Ribble, associate professor of mathematics. Ribble, a 1961 graduate of the College, also joined the faculty in 1989 and is retiring this year. In presenting the award, Fager described Ribble as a "go to" teacher because of her reputation for patience and persistence. "Receiving the Nancy B. Hunter Outstanding Staff Award was Bonnie West, administrative assistant in the Division of Education. Eddie Lovin, residence life coordinator, was named winner of the Martha Hess Outstanding Administrator Award. Director of Information Technology and 1998 alumnus Mark Fugate was presented the Sharon A. Murphy Crane Distinguished Service Award. Charge to the Class of 2010 Following the awarding of degrees, Gibson gave his charge to the Class of 2010, in which he told graduates to put their Maryville education and their gifts, insights and abilities to work to make the world a better place.
