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Remarks of Peter S. Hoff on September 11, 2001

Peter S. Hoff

University of Maine

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CONTACT INFORMATION

5703 Alumni Hall
Suite 200
Orono ME 04469
Phone: (207) 581-1512
Fax: (207) 581-1517

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Speeches and Reports

September 11, 2001

Remarks of Peter S. Hoff President, The University of Maine

On the Mall at the University of Maine

September 13, 2001

I want to express my deepest sympathy for the victims of this outrageous attack, my sympathies to their families and those who knew them.

I understand the range of emotions you have all been through -- I have felt them too: Disbelief, shock, numbness, sorrow, anger.

I applaud all who gave blood, helped with contributions, and provided aid to those in need.

This is a moment for reflection on the meaning of the event, and how it relates to us and our lives, especially to the university:

The attack was an attack on everything a university stands for: reason, civilization, civilized behavior, humanity and humane values, knowledge and understanding based on fact and on a civilized value system.

We cannot let this attack weaken our resolve to go on standing for those things. We cannot let it make us unduly afraid. And we certainly cannot let our fears debase our humane values and our civilized behavior. We must go on doing what we do best - promoting learning, understanding, the rule of reason, fairness, and civilized law, and a value system based on rational principles. Yes, we are more passionate than ever to make sure that justice is done and that those who perpetrated this inhuman act be held fully accountable. At the same time, we cannot let the attack cause us to imitate the worst traits of our attackers - we cannot allow it to cause us to cheapen or devalue the sanctity of human life and the process of duty constituted law. We cannot let it cause us to turn our anger on innocent people at home and abroad who, like us, are doing nothing more than seeking to live their lives in peace and live according to a code of behavior that is grounded in humane values.

Most important, here at home, we need to let our civilized values shine most brightly. The University of Maine is an international community. Everyone who studies and works here is equally a part of that community - dedicated to learning and the pursuit of truth. Our international students and employees are our guests,

and they are also fully a part of our community. No matter where they came from, they are a part of us. I expect that we will all treat them as we would treat the most honored guests to cross our thresholds, and we will treat them as part of our family. Honor and respect in the way we all treat each other is the very best way we can honor those who lost their lives. It is the American way; it is the Maine way; and it lies at the very core of what universities are about.

Please join me in dedicating yourselves to reflect on what we stand for as a university and as a community of learners. Only by upholding the highest and most civilized of ideals can we respond properly to the tragedy we have all experienced.

Please join me in writing on the board a message for those lost and left behind.

Please join me in observing a moment of silence.

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