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President Comstock Summarizes Six Priorities for University's Direction

Winthrop University

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President Comstock Summarizes Six Priorities for University's Direction

Quick Facts

- In this climate of dwindling state support, Winthrop will need to shape a culture of philanthropy to fulfill the institution's pledge to maintain affordability and other measures. Already, Comstock said, the Dare to Rise fund, a special initiative announced just seven weeks ago, has brought in more than \$1.1 million from 258 supporters.
- A number of initiatives will help Winthrop move from its Top Ten rankings in U.S. News' public colleges in the Southeast to the Top Five. Winthrop will need to raise its retention rate to at least 82 percent and its graduation rate to 68 percent, both of which are average rates for the current Top Five institutions.



President Jamie Comstock

ROCK HILL, S.C. - Winthrop University President Jamie Comstock outlined six key priorities in remarks at her **March 28 Investiture Ceremony** that will allow the university to deliver quality and access in a singular institution.

"We will challenge the well-prepared student and support the challenged student," Comstock said at **Byrnes Auditorium**. "And, in so doing, we will create transformative experiences for all of our students."

Her speech capped a week of inaugural activities that celebrated the university, academics, student achievements and Comstock's leadership as **10th president of Winthrop**.

The university's six strategic priorities for the next five years are:

- To promote access and degree attainment for increasing numbers of diverse traditional, post-traditional and graduate students.
- To continually enhance to the quality of the Winthrop Experience for all students.
- To forge new and to solidify existing government, organizational and business partnerships for mutual benefit.
- To create a "Great Colleges to Work For" campus culture characterized by collaborative decision making, transparency, civility, fair wages and investment in the professional development of faculty and staff.
- To uplift the institution's profile regionally and nationally in ways that support the value of a Winthrop University education.
- To cultivate a "culture of philanthropy" that will enable the university's rising aspirations.

Winthrop has arrived at a "**strategic inflection point**," Comstock said, and will increase enrollment by at least 1,000 students by fall 2018.

To accomplish this, she said Winthrop will need to **expand its student housing options, create**

accelerated course offerings and provide convenient facilities and services for adult students, deliver more on-line and technology-enhanced courses, and package the university's degree offerings in a vision-driven, market-smart program mix at all levels.

Meanwhile, in this climate of dwindling state support, Winthrop will need to shape a culture of philanthropy to fulfill the institution's pledge to maintain affordability and other measures. Already, Comstock said, the Dare to Rise fund, a special initiative announced just seven weeks ago, has brought in more than \$1.1 million from 258 supporters.

Comstock noted that Winthrop is bolstered by its largest single known gift in its history – just over \$2.2 million – received in December 2013 from the estate of the late **Dr. Ann Coleman Peyton**, a Florida Atlantic University professor of English who has family ties to the Carolinas and had a cousin who attended Winthrop. The gift will support scholarships for theatre majors.

A number of initiatives will help Winthrop move from its **Top Ten rankings in U.S. News' public colleges in the Southeast** to the **Top Five**. Winthrop will need to raise its retention rate to at least 82 percent and its graduation rate to 68 percent, both of which are average rates for the current Top Five institutions.

Comstock noted that many Winthrop students in good standing academically drop out after their sophomore year, citing that they can't afford to stay in school. "That is an unnecessary loss of human potential that I simply cannot abide," she said.

So, solving this issue will require "**an unprecedented focus on increasing affordability**," she noted. "We envision a future at Winthrop where students gain access and attain a degree based on their ability to learn, not on their ability to pay."

Winthrop's 10th president outlined other initiatives for the university:

- Starting next week, Winthrop will begin a Lumina-funded 18-month project called **RISE: Realizing Investments in Student Engagement**. It will provide intensive academic counseling and career mentoring for first-generation students and deliver alternative programming of high-impact practices. Winthrop will augment this initiative with special efforts to increase collaborative research, study abroad and service learning to help deepen students' critical thinking skills.
- Winthrop has joined the **Generation Study Abroad Commitment effort** by the Institute of International Education. This will help Winthrop triple the number of students who study abroad from its current 7 percent. Already the university has launched a new **Global Ambassadors Scholarship program** to recruit out-of-state students and support them in study abroad experiences.
- Winthrop is focusing on what Comstock called "**CommUniversity**" **partnerships** through the **Office of Community Engagement and Impact**. This effort will encourage more collaboration with government, business, educational and not-for-profit organizations for mutual success.
- Winthrop is participating for the first time in the Chronicle of Higher Education's "**Great Colleges to Work For**" survey. Results are expected in August. Already, the **Division of Student Life** was selected as a national "**Top 30 Promising Places to Work in Student Affairs**" through a collaborative project between the American College Personnel Association and Diverse Issues in Higher Education.
- Comstock has joined the leadership group for a program called **Liberal Education and America's Promise**, or LEAP, to encourage the recognition of the value of the liberal arts.

Comstock called on Winthrop constituents to face the currents rocking higher education with a resounding, collective voice. "Together we will steward this institution onward and upward ... to ensure that the 'best is yet to come' for Winthrop University," the president concluded.

For more information, contact **Judy Longshaw**, news and media services manager, at 803/323-2404 or e-mail her at longshawj@winthrop.edu.

About Winthrop and the Inauguration of 10th President Jayne Marie Comstock

The March 24-29 Inauguration of Jayne Marie (Jamie) Comstock as Winthrop's 10th president signals a new era in the history of this top-ranked regional public comprehensive university. Comstock has charted a bold course for Winthrop's future, redefining public higher education by prioritizing both quality and access in a single institution. Serving more than 6,000 students, Winthrop blends liberal arts, professional programs, global understanding, and civic engagement in a diverse community of learners. Students leave Winthrop prepared for successful careers, engaged in a democratic society, responsive to local and global concerns, and grounded in values that give meaning to their lives. Comstock's vision for Winthrop will ensure that all students – regardless of demographic category or life experience – have access to an exceptional public higher education.

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