Thank you, Annvi, for that introduction, and thank you, Headmaster Chambers, for the invitation to speak with you today. You have accumulated an impressive list of speakers over the past 21 years.

As you probably know if you've been reading the newspapers for the past few months, it's been difficult for me to hide lately. When I talk about the economy and the unique relationship between the University of Georgia and its community, people accuse me of being pro-business and anti-neighborhood. If I talk about the need to be inclusive in our admissions process, people accuse me of being anti-white and anti-female. And if I talk about the football team . . . well, I better not even start that conversation.

At the current time, you'd have to stand in line to sue me.

I know that today I'm running a great risk as I stand before a mixed-gender, mixed-age audience to talk about a group that was, as recently as August of last year, a protected class in the admissions process at the University of Georgia. While our efforts to increase minority enrollment, and specifically African-American enrollment, have attracted a lot of media attention and a lot of lawyers, that's not the group I want to talk about today.

No, I want to talk to you about young males and education.

Last fall, I announced that we would no longer consider gender as a factor in making admissions decisions on the final 15-20 percent of applicants to UGA. I must admit to you that I was surprised at how little attention was paid to that decision, which I think has long-term ramifications not only for higher education but for all of this society. A number of factors have combined to lure many young men away from higher education, creating, I fear, an opportunity gap that may impact American society negatively for decades.

Some of the young women in the audience today may not like my choice of subject and I respect that, but I'm beginning to wonder who you'll talk to, who you'll socialize with and, if you're so inclined, who you'll marry. Because if the current trend continues, according to an article in "The College Board Review," the last male college graduate will receive his bachelor's degree in the year 2067.

I've been led in the past few years to confront the issue of gender in education — especially high school and college — and to wonder what we as a society are — or are not —doing to imbue our young men with a sense of and appreciation for the value of education. I've taken into account my own childhood here in Georgia and the fact that my wife and I have raised two sons, one of whom is in law school at UGA and one of whom is an undergraduate at Emory.

Nationally, however, my sons are exceptions to the rule. College campuses today — including the University of Georgia— are 55 percent female, and that percentage is increasing. At the University of Georgia, graduate school enrollment is almost 60 percent female. Even within the traditionally "male" areas of agriculture, forestry and law, women are seeking advanced degrees and the rewards that come with them.

If education equals opportunity, as I believe it does, should we be concerned about an uneven distribution of opportunity? Certainly the distribution was uneven when I attended college in the late 1960s. The unfair and unfortunate reality then was that women went to college to become teachers or nurses. Over the course of three decades, those artificial barriers have been demolished. Women today enter any academic field they choose. That is as it should be, and I applaud the efforts made over the years to make such educational opportunity a reality for women as well as men.

It is quite fitting that I am delivering this speech here at Athens Academy, an institution that is widely recognized and acclaimed for its commitment to academic rigor. As you'll see, there are a lot of questions for which I have no ready answer. This is the beginning of a thought process for me and, attuned as you are to the challenges facing the education of young people today, I would welcome your thoughts and comments about this issue. My topic might serve well as a topic for class discussions and I would be interested to learn what you have to say.

Young men continue to perform better on the SAT than their female counterparts.

Nationally in 1999, the average male SAT score was 1040; the average female SAT score was 997. Women, however, reported higher class rank and more honors courses than men. What is it, then, that motivates young women to go on to college? What is it that keeps young men from doing the same?

I grew up like most kids in Georgia in the 60s -- I went to school, I went to church, I played football and baseball and basketball. In those days, though -- and this is a critical distinction -- our games were organized by the kids, managed by the kids, refereed by the kids. There was not an adult in sight when the neighborhood eight- and nine-year-olds played baseball. The game was over when our mamas started calling us to supper.

My parents were clear about one thing, though. I could not go out and play baseball until my homework was done. My mother was valedictorian of her high school class, but could not go to college because of World War II. Education was a precious treasure to her. Many times the eight-year-old Mike Adams fussed at his mother because she said he couldn't go play baseball with his friends until he had done his math problems. I can still recall sitting in my room, furiously scribbling on my paper, the sounds of the neighborhood baseball game distracting me. My priorities were set -- and enforced -- by my parents.

But I not only did what I was told to do, I did what I wanted to do. In the organized, structured, scheduled, planned life that children live today, are 18-year-old men finally saying, "I've had enough of being told what to do"? Are we moving boys at such a pace that they have no down time from the time they're five years old until they graduate from high school? It doesn't take detailed and complex academic research to find the concern about this issue, either. A recent article in *Better Homes and Gardens* put it this way: "Some experts fuel our anxiety by telling us, for example, that it's too late for our kids to start music lessons -- and get the most out of them -- past the age of six. Just letting kids play in the backyard seems tantamount to negligence." Michael Skube, a columnist for the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, wrote that children "don't know how to do anything spontaneously. Instead of play they have 'activities,' which usually means Mom taxiing them to ballet or soccer or baseball practice. And if nothing's scheduled they'll sit passively in front of the television, eyes glazed, or lose themselves in cyberspace."

I want to be honest with you up front: This may be a speech that asks more questions than it answers, a speech that looks at a problem without offering a solid solution. For this is an issue that comes from my heart and my vocation, and it arises out of deep concern for America's young men and, indeed, American society.

Earlier I cited statistics showing the increasing enrollment of women in college over the last 30 years or so. If you'll bear with me, I'm going to dig into that number and talk about some specific trends that concern me. I hope that the visual aids I have brought will help you follow along.

Since 1960, more girls than boys have graduated from high school in this country every year except 1992. In 1960, almost 55 percent of high school graduates were female. That gap has closed considerably -- in 1996, the last year these numbers are available, 51.2 percent of high school graduates were female.

In 1960, even though males were only 45 percent of high school graduates, they made up 54 percent of the total college population. And while females made up 55 percent of the high school graduate population, only 38 percent of female high school graduates went on to college.

1974 was the first year in which there were more women in college than men, by the narrow margin of one-tenth of one percent. 1974 was also the first year that fewer than half of the male high school graduates went on to college. Young women, then, are by 1972 closing the gaps that existed in 1960: more of the women who graduated from high school were going on to college, and the percentage of women on college campuses was increasing.

During the period 1960-1996, the total number of high school graduates increased 58 percent. Male high school graduates increased by 71 percent; female high school graduates increased by 32 percent. In other

words, the rate of male high school graduation has increased more than twice as fast as the rate of female high school graduation. Most of the increase in male high school graduation took place during the 1960s, and while I can't prove it today, I believe that the Vietnam War and the draft deferral that came with both college acceptance and staying in high school played a role in the increase.

Here's where I begin to get troubled. We've looked at the numbers and the trends that show the progress we've made as a nation in opening the doors of higher education to women. At the same time, while young men are more likely to graduate from high school than they were in 1960, they are less likely to go on to college today. In fact, while the number of male high school graduates has increased 71 percent, the percentage of male high school graduates going on to college has increased only eight percent -- less than one-fourth of one percent per year. On the other hand, while the number of female high school high school graduates has increased at less than half the rate of males, the percentage of female high school graduates going on to college has increased almost 32 percent -- four times as fast as males.

I hope there are no statisticians or mathematicians in the audience today, for what I'm about to say will probably make them cringe. But what these numbers and trends say to me is this: While a high school diploma has clearly become more important to young men over the past four decades, women have come to value a college degree four times more highly than men do.

I believe that this is a trend that we as a society must reverse. At the current pace, it will not be long before American higher education is only 40 percent male -- a 20 percent split. In an election, that's a landslide. In a football or basketball game, 20 points is a runaway victory. We are currently processing the 2000 freshman class at the University of Georgia. We have issued the first round of acceptances. That first group for the freshman class of 2000 is 60 percent female. Young men, who as a group have higher average SAT scores, are simply not going to college at the rate their high school graduation numbers would justify. What can we do?

I'd like to offer several suggestions, some based on personal experience, some based on conversations with trusted colleagues and friends, some based on reading and research. First, parents should look seriously at the role of athletics in the lives of young men, even young boys. Second, boys must be encouraged to take the most challenging courses available to them in high school. Third, as families and as society, we must rediscover the value of a time for reflection. Fourth, limit organized activities. Fifth, engage children in conversation. Finally, know your children; observe them; spend time with them.

Boys love games. In his book "Boys will be Men," Richard Hawley, headmaster of an all-male private school in Cleveland, wrote that, "Every boy . . . longs to be a knight" and that the modern-day equivalent of the knight's wardrobe of shining armor might just be the athletic uniform. I played baseball and basketball and football, and I remain a sports fan to this day. My sons played various sports; one was even good enough to travel the country with a junior soccer team. In those days, I spent many a Saturday watching soccer games for little boys. Additionally, I coached basketball, football and baseball as my boys grew up.

For my boys and, I suspect, for many of the young men in this audience, the cultural pressure to participate in organized sports activities began very early. This spring, it will be easy to find 4- and 5-year-olds playing soccer in brightly colored uniforms while volunteer coaches offer instructions from the sidelines and parents shout encouragement from the spectator area. Six-year-olds will struggle mightily to hit a ball positioned before them on a tee; applause and cheers will erupt at any success.

I realize that many of these teams will include boys and girls. I also realize that the pressure to participate in and succeed at organized sports is greater on boys than on girls and far greater today than it was for me and greater even than it was on my two sons less than 20 years ago. I cannot help believing that the increased pressure to participate in sports has had a negative

impact on the academic life of boys. I am particularly concerned that although less than one-tenth of one percent of high school athletes will ever receive a paycheck as a professional athlete, far too many of them focus their energies on that elusive goal.

Let me be clear about this: Boys should take the toughest high school courses and carry the most rigorous schedule. Their teachers should challenge them and their parents should encourage and support them. The goal of a college education should begin early -- at the same time many young boys dream of an NFL or NBA career -- but it will not survive if it is not nurtured by parents and other adults with a positive influence. And while money is one of the lesser rewards of a college education, it is worth noting that the average high school graduate will earn a starting salary of $23,317; the average starting salary for the recipient of a bachelor's degree is $36,155. A 55 percent return on a four-year investment is not bad.

In the past week, I have posed the same question to the CEOs of three large companies: What are you looking for in the people you hire? Their answers read like an advertisement for education. They want people who write well, who speak well, who think critically and who present themselves well.

Our boys must come to appreciate the value of education as a process with life-long rewards beyond the financial. Critical thinking, discernment, clear speaking and writing -- these are skills that serve us well through life and, I think, are skills that are honed in the college or university setting, where minds are challenged and self-confidence is strengthened.

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Within the context of increased attention to academics and decreased focus on athletics can easily fit a time for simple reflection. Whether that takes the form of meditation, in the spirit of Judaism or Eastern religions, or simply sitting outside under a tree, there is great value in setting aside time for thought. Many of us in this room have commented on the pace of our lives today; I myself am making an effort to reserve Sundays as down time. Our children feel this urgency as well and would, I think, welcome a respite.

I do not think that television, however, serves the purpose. The value of down time is the opportunity to engage in undirected, uninterrupted thought. Television, while entertaining, is all about directing and interrupting thought. The same can be said for computer games and the Internet. While I do periodically use the computer, I am not into buddy lists, chat rooms or listservs, or any of the places online where one can find the kind of gossip that permeates not only the Internet but, to some degree, all of human communication. Communication is about so much more than words, and the picture of two young people, separated not only from each other but from the people in their own homes, staring at the glow of a computer screen and typing to each other is, I must admit, disconcerting to me. The global village can be an isolating place, a view supported just last week in a study by a Stanford University researcher, who reported that Internet users spend less time with family and friends.

I think back to my youth and how Saturdays and Sundays were spent. We might play ball, but it was not organized, uniformed, structured ball -- it was kids in a field having fun. There was also the simple joy of family time -- sitting on the porch talking, reading a book, taking a nap. It seems odd that we might have to plan for this sort of simple relaxation, but we have become a planned society.

I think that parents should be very careful about the amount of structured

activity time they allow their children to have. I have a young friend whose mother is an elementary school teacher. Whenever parents ask her for advice about their children and academics, she tells them, "No more than two organized activities per week." I think there's a lot of good sense in that statement.

One of the things that I know I learned while I was playing baseball in my neighborhood with my buddies was how to solve problems. You may think that sounds funny, but organizing a baseball game out of 13 fifth-graders takes a lot of skill and finesse. What will we use for bases? Whose ball is the best? Did anybody bring an extra bat? Who gets to pitch first? 13 divided by 2 is 6.5 -- which team gets seven players and which gets six? How do you array six people on a field normally defended by nine? Who bats first? What counts as a home run? The questions go on and on, and the game hasn't even started yet. Once the game starts, there are rule disputes and strike zone debates and stolen base controversies.

And amid all that conflict, we learned how to start a game and play a game, and we did it without coaches or fees or uniforms or scoreboards. We figured it out, and a lot of life is simply that -- figuring it out.

Today's kids have too few opportunities for figuring it out. Jay Coakley, a sports sociologist at the University of Colorado, has written a book about the effect of organized sports on young people. One potential downside, he writes, is that "adult-organized activities may prepare children for passively accepting the adult world as given. Children may grow up thinking they are powerless to change the worlds in which they live." And yet I am privileged to work and talk every day with young people who clearly have the capacity to change the world.

Fifth, children need the opportunity to engage in stimulating conversation. As a college and university administrator, I was fortunate to raise my children in an environment of remarkable conversation. My sons had the opportunity to sit at supper and talk with scholars and researchers and artists and writers. But you don't have to be a university president to provide children with the opportunity to talk in an intelligent manner. I would encourage the parents here today to make every effort to have family meals and to talk to your children during those meals. Listen to what they say. Lay the groundwork for more substantive conversations as they grow, year by year, older. I know how difficult this can be -- I find that we have more meals with our sons now, when both of them are full-time students, than we did when they were teenagers living under the same roof with us. But it's important.

Dr. Beverly Feldman, an education consultant and author of "Kids Who Succeed," has this advice for parents about communicating with their children: "Listen! Listen! Listen! Stop lecturing your adolescent. No matter what his or her age, or what the issue, parents are more likely to seek to justify their own thinking than to try to understand the adolescent's thinking. Try to listen to your teenager from his point of view."

Finally, parents, know your children. Observe them. Meet their friends. Spend as much time with them as you can and they will let you. I'm not talking about being your child's friend -- I'm talking about being your child's parent. When I was growing up, my mother was always nearby. She didn't follow me around the neighborhood, but she was there. The country music group Shenandoah said it best in a song entitled "Mama Knows": "Sometimes I think she's got a window to my soul. Mama knows."

I realize that much of what I've said today makes me sound like an old fogey, longing for the good old days. While I don't yet think of myself as an old fogey, I have put some thought into my childhood, my children's childhoods and the childhoods of today's high school and college students. In many, many ways, today's children have it better than I did. This Age of Information puts at their fingertips a breadth and depth of information that makes my family's set of World Book Encyclopedias seem limited by comparison. The ease of transportation opens pathways to this country and the world that I and my friends could only dream of. Modern medicine has rendered many of the ills we feared obsolete.

But in many ways, mine was a better childhood. I was allowed to play. My parents

talked to me around the supper table. I did my homework. There was down time.

Those are simple acts with powerful effects. I believe that reclaiming those acts and making them a part of all of our lives would have a striking effect on all of our young people, but especially our young men. In so doing, we will have an equally striking effect upon American society.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today. Your invitation spurred me to do some more reading and further research into a topic I have been concerned about for several years. As I said earlier, I came to you today with more questions than answers, more concern than cure. I hope that my speech will stimulate a discussion here and in the education community about what we are doing, and can do, to facilitate the overall development of young males.

Thank you very much for your attention.