Girl Scouts France—61st Anniversary
Keynote Address
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Today, we call the Girl Scouts "the premier leadership development organization for girls" with over 3.5 million members worldwide. In my day, some fifty years ago, half a lifetime ago for the Girl Scouts, when I was a proud Brownie and then a Scout in the early 60s, we didn't talk so much about leadership, much less women's leadership. I know that I was obsessed with sewing ever greater numbers of badges on the green band that crossed my uniform from shoulder to waist. It appealed to my overachieving personality! But I also remember palpably the feeling I had back then that in Girl Scouts I was free to test, to try, to achieve, to exceed my own expectations for myself. What I didn't know then was that. But in my lifetime—indeed in the lifetime of the Girl Scouts that you are celebrating today, women's leadership would come—internationally—of age. Over the life cycle of the Girl Scouts organization, women have stood up for their rights, won the vote, burned their bras, gone back to work, broken through the glass ceiling, stormed the boardroom—in short, the history of the Girl Scouts parallels the 20th century history of women as they came into their own.

I want to begin by thanking Jodi Dedeyan, my colleague at AUP, as well as all of you, for drawing me and AUP into this celebration of the Girl Scouts. As soon as she approached me about her idea, I knew I wanted to host this meeting on our campus. The American University of Paris and the Girl Scouts France have a lot in common—we uphold as part of our mission, of course, certain cherished American traditions, but we are also in the business of educating young people to make a difference in the world. At AUP we receive a thousand students a year who hold over a hundred different nationalities. We educate students from every educational background, and we revel in the learning that goes on in our classrooms when students of 15 different nationalities work alongside one another to find common ground. We believe that tolerance is way overrated, that it takes hard work and great negotiating skills to get past difference (anyone who has been in a bicultural marriage knows that). We at AUP, believe that people transcend their differences when they work together, solve problems together, volunteer together, learn together, and ultimately come to love each other.

This is, of course, what happened in the 70's when Francis Hesselbein took over as CEO of the Girl Scouts. Peter Drucker called her one of the greatest leaders in America, not only for leaving the Girl Scouts with the highest membership in its history, but for tripling the membership of minority girls. She remade the handbook, designed new badges focusing on math, science and technology, and put issues on the table that would have made the troop leaders of my day blush. She made the Girls Scouts into a mirror of America, indeed into a mirror of a diverse world—ethnically, linguistically, culturally, and socioeconomically.

Everyone asks Hesselbein, who has now published a memoir of her leadership, whether women bring to the table special attributes and whether these are especially important to organizations today. I love the answer she gave to that question in an interview: she used three powerful words—diversity, values, and service. She sees women as distinctly committed to and capable of appreciating diversity, seeing it not as a challenge, but as an opportunity. And she believes that women lead, sort of characteristically, from values, notably the value of service. Before I go any further, let's agree that from the outset service is likely to have been well socialized into us as woman AND that women do not have a monopoly on values. There are great examples, as well, of men leading from the deepest values of a community, of men speaking as well from amongst others. But that is not our subject today, even if I will come back to it in my closing thoughts.

In his brilliant book, Good to Great, and more particularly, in his sequel to that book focusing on nonprofits, Jim Collins also uses the example of Francis Hesselbein to illustrate why the greatest leaders are trained in the social sector. He notes the way that she led from the middle--as she put it herself, "I'm not on top of anything." As Collins analyzed it, Hesselbein changed everything about what it meant to be a Girl Scout, but she did it without concentrated executive power. She used words I want to evoke here to describe how she led in an organization with a governance structure and a flat hierarchy: she talked about the power of inclusion, and the power of language, and of shared interests and of coalition. The Girl Scouts have clearly had a brilliant exemplar of a woman leader at its helm, a woman who has understood the diffuse and complex power structures of a social organization coming into its own at a profound moment of social change. And Hesselbein has been followed by others, notably Cathy Kloninger your current CEO.

As a University president and a woman, I have given this topic a lot of thought, as you can well imagine. For leading a university is very much like leading the Girl Scouts. I

laugh when the faculty talks about presidential power. There's no power, really, to be wielded in a University. I would instead use the metaphor of an orchestra director, not so much imposing executive decisions, but keeping the totality of the score within everyone's hearing, inviting the various departments and divisions to come into the music. We rely on persuasion, shared interests, a profoundly held sense of mission, to create the right conditions for decisions to be made, for change to happen. And I believe that women are uniquely suited—whether innately or socially conditioned, and that point I won't argue here today—to this kind of leadership.

What I can say to you can be summed up in a single sentence: the world needs infinitely more of it.

I am going to talk for a few minutes about the field I know best, that of the university and the college president. That will allow me to present you with some statistics and to make some empirical observations about women's leadership more generally. Then I will say something about what I have learned about leadership in my three years as head of this institution. Finally, I will end with a few words on leadership for the 21st century.

In 2000, only 7% of university presidents were women. In the past decade, in the US in particular, the ground gained has been enormous, even symbolically. I don't have to tell you that half the Ivy League universities are today run by women (Harvard, Princeton, Penn, Brown), and so is MIT, numerous public institutions, and increasing numbers of liberal arts colleges. It is interesting to note in passing that the vast majority of these presidencies are in the Northeastern states and California. Yet, the American Council on Education reported recently that women make up only 23 percent of college and university presidents nationwide, 29% of community college presidents, with figures rising rapidly; twenty-five years ago, in 1986, that figure was only 9%. Even more hopefully, a full 45% of academic vice presidencies and deanships and department chairmanships in the US are held by women—and on some campuses the percentage is significantly higher, such as my own. To me it is inevitable that this trend will snowball, and that women provosts and deans will increasingly take on presidencies, first in the US and Canada, of course, but then worldwide, especially as women's presidencies are increasingly viewed and documented as successful. I will be meeting in Saudi Arabia next week the woman president of the first Saudi institution of higher learning for women, and I will be participating as one of a few women in the International Conference on Higher Education held there for the second time. The issue of credentials, however, appears to be crucial—I don't know of any women college presidents

who did not first establish scholarly and administrative recognition for themselves. Men from other fields tend still to be imported into the college presidency. And representation of minorities in university presidencies lags sharply behind that of women. There has been remarkably little improvement since 1986.

The presence of women on campuses as academic leaders is critical for several reasons:

1. The impact of role models cannot be underestimated. On my own campus, everyone from women students to staff members to faculty tell me how much my appointment to the presidency gave them a sense of possibility. The presence of a woman president on campus will impact the choices of women students across all disciplines and divisions. My own appointment has sparked, for example a very public, healthy, email conversation amongst faculty about gender discrimination in hiring and promotion practices, which I have taken seriously. The fact that our university currently has a woman president, a woman board chair, a board half made up of women, and a very evidently female-heavy senior staff has not gone unnoticed, and sometimes provokes uneasy jokes about the feminization of our campus. It probably says something about how busy I have been that I hadn't even noticed the powerful gender redistribution at my own university. That said, as in most liberal arts institutions, we have 67% women students—why shouldn't the administration of the university naturally reflect that that bias?

2. The reform of the academy from the perspective of gender equity is a holistic task, and women's accession to leadership cannot be separated from the support for women's education generally, for research on women and gender, and from social recognition of the daily business of simply getting one's scholarly work or teaching accomplished during the crucial early years of our children's lives. In my own case, it is nothing short of a miracle that I made it to this presidency, a miracle I attribute to the fact that I had my children relatively late in life, and therefore had the time to establish my scholarly credentials avant la lettre. As a single mother of a handicapped child, I am sensitive as no one else to the archetypal bad timing of the march to tenure and the biological clock. Women leaders who remember the arduousness of their graduate student lives and assistant professorships will guarantee a review of all such processes on the campuses they direct, as Shirley Tilghman has done so brilliantly during her tenure as Princeton's president. New

family friendly policies, stop the clock to tenure policies, clearly published tenure standards, and support for academic couples trying to find jobs near one another are transforming the academy, and not only at wealthy private institutions.

3. The old saw is that women are "people people" and that they humanize the academy, which may or may not be true. Women have been associated with conflict resolution since the dawn of time—think of Aristophanes' Lysistrata, or the Biblical heroine Esther, or even Shakespeare's Coriolanus in which the hero's mother and wife dissuade him from destroying Rome. Women in academia are often represented as the peacemakers, bringing warring department or board members to consensus. I think it is worth saying that, in point of fact, it turns out, and this has been substantiated by research, that women are in fact more entrepreneuring and innovative as college presidents, take greater measured risks, and tend to move their campuses forward in more daring ways than men. " The study results did not support the general view that women are more democratic in their leadership styles than men, or that they are more inclined to group or consensus decision-making. The researchers concluded that women were substantially more likely than male colleagues to listen to people with different opinions, as well as to encourage creative individuals with whom they disagreed. Such evidence, coupled with the spectacularly successful presidencies of many women university leaders, demonstrates how important it is that women succeed to such positions of power—especially during the present crisis in higher education. Success stories are perhaps more important right now than the old, disappointing statistics.

4. <u>Great women leaders and managers are made not born, and they are sustained by mentors and by supportive peer relationships</u>. Strong, inspiring, change-making leadership is a skill that can be learned, and I would not be where I am today without significant investment in leadership training, and without the presence in my life of both seasoned and peer women presidents with whom I can share stories from the front. Networks are training grounds, safety nets, brainstorming chambers, and occasionally trauma wards where we go to be patched up. I consider it one of the major responsibilities of women presidents to provide such mentoring, as well as to contribute to worldwide efforts to provide leadership development opportunities to women. That is why I wanted to host the Girl Scouts at AUP today.

5. Campuses and companies thrive when their presidents make explicit commitments to diversity and equity. Without that kind of leadership from the top, we are bound to fail in our efforts. Women leaders also bear a responsibility for setting the tone for equity standards, and for ensuring that progress is made, reported on, and celebrated. Drew Faust, Harvard's president, announced "addressing the gender gap" as one of her immediate goals. She has her work cut out for her. At Harvard women now make up 56% of the undergraduate population, are predicted to earn 60% of the university's MA degrees and half of its doctorates by 2010, but only 20% of full professors at Harvard are women. Women hold, on average, only 24 percent of full professorships in the US.

6. Although it is important to raise awareness, to set quotas for equity, to redress gender imbalance, and to revise our historical practices in higher education, there is nothing so compelling as witnessing someone walk the talk, that is, model new forms of consciousness and new ways of being in the world. For undergraduate and graduates alike, for staff and faculty, nothing is more salutary than to watch a woman leader work through difficult issues, survive political tempests, make wise decisions consistently over time, build broad commitment to mission, create environments where safe but fierce conversations can be had about what's really going on within the institution, set free the energies of her faculty, create dynamic teams and departments, and hoist the aspirations of her community into voice.
7. What have I learned about leadership in my years at AUP?

First, you don't have to be larger-than-life or winningly charismatic. A few years back the Harvard Business Review reported on a study of the 20 CEOs of the top-performing companies in US history. Inventorying their character traits exhaustively, the researchers were only able to come up with one common denominator amongst them, one character trait that they could correlate across the lot, and that was humility. Some of them were very shy people, still others were poor public speakers. Yet those leaders had something akin to what the poet John Keats called "negative capability." Those men and women were able to empty themselves sufficiently of ego to channel the spirit, the values, indeed the futures of the companies they directed. They knew the simplest truth of leadership—that it was not about them.

Second, you don't have to do everything perfectly or be right all the time. I was myself relieved to learn that communities and companies, organizations and families,

schoolrooms and boardrooms are resilient enough to survive our errors. Great leaders make plenty of mistakes, but they differ from ordinary mortals in the use they make of them. We need to tell our children not to beat themselves up for their mistakes. If they are going to fail, they should fail magnificently! Sometimes errors set in evident relief the right path one should take next; sometimes they provide opportunities to deepen trust, by talking through what went wrong. We should always admit to our errors and model what it means to survive them. It is not our successes, but our stumbling that saves us, our missteps that make us strong.

Third, you don't have to do it alone. What great leaders do is to galvanize all members of their community in the service of its mission. They do not so much stand out amongst others or stand up for them as substitutes, so much as stand up amongst them. When Obama called the American nation to public service during the campaign, he triggered a multiplier effect, inspiring retirees, high school students, and ordinary people from all walks of life to volunteer, so many, in fact, that nonprofits and philanthropic organizations were not equipped to meet the huge demand. There is nothing so exhilarating, nor so lightening of the load, as that moment when men and women of good will lean into shared purpose. Leadership at its best is a collective act.

Finally, leadership doesn't require the greatest stage in the nation. It is needed at every level of an organization, and I see it in play everywhere at AUP and in the Girl Scouts organization. Classrooms need leaders, and so do clubs and associations of all kinds; communities and most of all families are crying out for dedicated leadership. I say families, because this social institution has been under siege for years—by the economics of work, for example, and the rise of divorce rates—yet families of whatever composition need attention, common projects, inspiration, and calls to action if they are to become the right kind of holding places for smart, stable, loved, and loving children, if they are to be home places for future leaders. I always suggest to students that they start by practicing on what is closest at hand, maximizing their opportunities to develop their own leadership skills.

I like to tell a Girl Scout story to drive this last point home. I'm sure you have all heard about the 12 year old girl in New York City who sold 30,000 boxes of Girl Scout Cookies. Interviewed on CNN, she was asked how she did it. She looked straight into the camera, scratched her little face, and said: "At some point you just have to stop chatting and ask." That's the Girl Scout version of "just do it."

So, what kind of leadership will the 21st century require of us? A couple of points.

1. I think we're going to be surprised by examples of compelling leadership rising outside of and beyond the first world, where we do not, any longer, hold a monopoly on women's leadership. An example that always used to fascinate my students is that on an international scale measuring the presence of women in politics, education, and business, Trinidad and Tobago, a tiny island in the Caribbean, was third, where France and the US finished disappointingly around 12 and 13. A change in that island's educational policies had brought a generation of women magistrates and lawyers forward, who in turn changed family policies, laws, and opened access for women in that country. I think we have lots to learn, as well, from some of the traditional ways that Nigerian women seize leadership. I have particular affection for a tradition called "sitting on a man," an Ibu way of encircling a man's house and keeping him under house arrest.

2. I am personally looking forward to that moment, fast upon us, when the gender of a leader is not the first or the only thing we notice. What we need so badly in a world ripped apart by a global financial crisis that will drag 50 million people below the poverty line before it's over, by wars on all too many fronts, by natural disasters occurring in terrifying concentration, and by an environment over which we have lost control is the finest and most inspired leadership that women and men can muster, working together. The revolt spreading across the Middle East, fueled by the anger (and the social networking) of young people, is challenging old-style leaders, dictators, patriarchs who have monopolized power. I am excited to see the role that women and girls have played in these revolutions, especially as writers and bloggers, and also to see what roles they will play in these countries as change takes them over. I have hope when I see young men and women working together for a better world, standing up amongst others for change, calling their peers into a vision of a world held in common, by the people, for the people --as they do in both of our transplanted French-American institutions, AUP and the Girl Scouts.

And I'm going to stop right there, wishing you, your daughters, and the Girl Scouts of France a wonderful anniversary weekend.