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EDUCATION

Bernotsky inaugurated as 16th president of WCU

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WEST CHESTER—Amidst a rapidly changing climate in education and society, Laurie Bernotsky was inaugurated, Friday, as West Chester University's 16th President.

"From my view here today, our future looks awesome," Bernotsky told the full-house audience at Emile K. Asplundh Concert Hall at Philips Memo-

rial Building.

While the event was rich with pageantry, Bernotsky spoke of the simple use of courage to overcome her new gig that now "involves dealing with so much uncertainty."

The new president and many of the speakers who preceded her were blunt.

"Some of that uncertainty comes from our highly polarized politics, the extreme ends of the continuum of both sides of the aisle," she said. "In this

moment of intense polarization, it seems that the focus is more on winning battles than on the consequences of those battles.

"Sadly, our universities sit right in the center of this battlefield."

The new president told about how as a youngster she ran out of gas while swimming and needed to tread water to stay afloat and then she talked about using courage.

"In such an uncertain and

unnerving environment, it's often appealing to just tread water," she said.

"Courage works the same way," she told the audience that applauded often. "You start small.

"You do that small courageous thing, and you like yourself, a bit. Then, you do a slightly larger courageous thing, and you like yourself more. And then, you eventu-



New West Chester University President Laurie Bernotsky happily holds the MACE. **BILL RETTEW/MEDIANEWS GROUP**

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Dressing up for an inauguration. **BILL RETTEW/MEDIANEWS GROUP**

BERNOTSKY

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ally build up the courage to be consistently fair and kind, and just, and generous, and humane, and you like yourself a whole lot more.

"To me this so important because having the courage to consistently practice these other virtues is how we unleash the potential in those around us, and unleashing that potential is how we move our university forward."

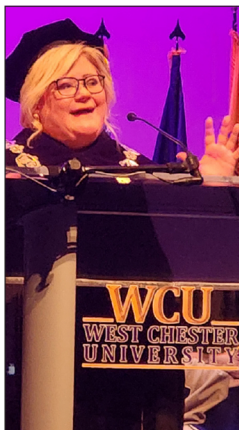
What does WCU have going for it?

"It is important to know what grounds us: our commitment to open inquiry; thoughtful dialogue; and the pursuit of knowledge for the public good," she said. "At West Chester University, we believe that the learning flourishes in an environment where ideas can be explored freely, where questions can be asked openly, and where teaching and scholarship are guided by curiosity, evidence, and care."

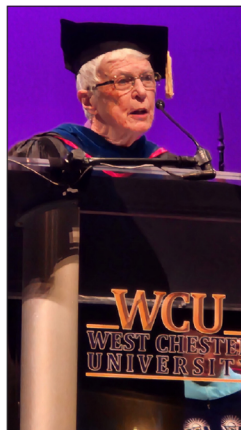
So, how does the university get to the next "awesome" level?



The WCU Wind Ensemble, conducted by Andrew Yozviak. **BILL RETTEW/MEDIANEWS GROUP**



WCU President Laurie Bernotsky at her inauguration. **BILL RETTEW/MEDIANEWS GROUP**



The first woman president of WCU, Madeleine Wing Adler. **BILL RETTEW/MEDIANEWS GROUP**

"Awesome means breaking down barriers in education so we can ensure that every student—no matter where they come from—leaves here ready to lead, ready to serve, ready to succeed.

"Education is not about the next four years. It is about the next forty. Because education is not about what happens inside the classroom. It is about everything that happens beyond it."

Bernotsky concluded on a positive note.

"Let us have the courage to stay true to who we are," she said. "Let us face the uncertainty of the present moment not with fear—but with hope.

"Not with hesitation—but with determination. Not with boundaries, but with a boundless belief in possibilities. If we do that, and we do that together, then I am certain that our best work is yet to come."

Zebulun Davenport, university advancement and external affairs, welcomed the new president and said that society is rapidly changing and these are dynamic times.

Barry Lee then presented a land acknowledgement and talked about the agreement with the Lenape that showed "We all Belong."

U.S. Rep. Chrissy Houlahan referred to Bernotsky as a woman of intelligence, passion and emotion.

"Lately my job in Washington, D.C. has been sort of a bummer," Houlahan said, with a smile.

Kate Shaw, of the Governor's Office, represented Gov. Shapiro. She praised the startup of the new State Board of Education and said that the Bernotsky is exactly what we need.

State Sen. Carolyn Comitta is a graduate of West Ches-



WCU ROTC prepares prior to the inauguration in the shadow of the Frederick Douglass statue and Philips Memorial Building. **BILL RETTEW/MEDIANEWS GROUP**

ter University. She that the vision is listening, learning and collaboration.

State Rep. Chris Pielli said that Bernotsky is a transformative leader and has a passion for student success.

County Commissioner Marian Moskowitz said that while Bernotsky followed a crooked path to reach the presidency, she has much empathy.

West Chester Mayor Lillian DeBaptiste is also a WCU grad.

"Laurie has a unique sense of diplomacy, collaboration and insightful decision making," said the mayor.

Cynthia Shapira, chair, board of Governors Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education, celebrates everyone who made WCU what it is.

Students McKenna Nugent and Matheeha Majeeth talked of how hope is the heartbeat of the soul.

Christopher Franklin,

WCU Council of Trustees, is also a WCU grad. He said that Bernotsky is humble.

The 13th President of WCU Madeleine Wing Adler is a mentor to Bernotsky.

She quoted a country singer who said you need a wishbone, backbone and unny bone to succeed.

The 15th WCU President Chris Fiorentino is the Interim Chancellor of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education.

He noted that most important is a life-long love of learning.

Professors and staff wore their graduation robes from their respective colleges.

Rodney Mader is an English professor and wore his Temple robes.

"It's a nice, good secular ritual," he said about the ceremony.

Victor Donnay is a Bryn Mawr College Math professor and was wearing New York University robes. He worked with Bernotsky 15 years ago and was there to show his support.

He said that while he wears regular street clothes to teach, it was a lot of fun to dress up in the old-fashioned school robes.

Student Mina Grabove is a Freshman studying Theater and Business.

"Celebrate the university on a day like today," she said. "It's nice to have a woman president"

The WCU Wind Ensemble was conducted by Andrew Yozviak. The Flag Bearers were the WCU ROTC. The MACE Bearer was John Baker. The Grand Marshals were Joby Hilliker and Sandra F. Mather. The National Anthem was sung by Joseph Galdi.