

PIERCE Reunion June 30, 2011

Good evening. What a thrill to see so many alumnae and to feel so powerfully the sense of pride and significance that this special place holds for each of you. It is clear that through the experiences you shared together on this campus both important dimensions of your individual character and cherished lifelong relationships were formed.

I am confident that the founders of the school would be pleased, indeed, to see you here tonight. You are the embodiment of our school's mission and the fulfillment of our founders' dreams. This is precisely what the courageous women missionaries from Boston had in their minds and in their hearts when they sailed from Boston in 1875: to make a difference in the lives of girls who would then make a difference in society.

But, I believe that PIERCE's founders would be pleased not only to see you. I believe they would also be pleased to see the young people who are studying at the school now located on the slopes of Mt. Hymettus. I have often remarked that one of PIERCE's most impressive aspects is the continuity of the school's character – a character symbolized by its motto, *“non ministrarisedministrare”*.

Locations have shifted – from Smyrna to Athens, from Elleniko to Aghia Paraskevi – and the composition of the student body has changed from girls only to now 50% boys. But, the character forged by the founders and sustained by successive generations of faculty, staff, parents, alumnae and friends has endured. I take the preservation of this character for future generations to be one of my highest obligations – an obligation and an opportunity with which I am hopeful our alumnae will increasingly identify.

The history of philanthropy at PIERCE is a long and strong one, although not well known. (SHOW SLIDE ONE (PICS OF CAMPUS)). Donations from individuals abroad and the United States government provided funds to build the original school in Smyrna, the Elleniko campus and later the Aghia Paraskevi campus.

But, philanthropy has accounted for more than our buildings; it has also made possible the precious gift of a quality education for students whose families could

not otherwise afford PIERCE. Throughout its history the College has sought to keep tuition within the reach of as many families as possible and has offered scholarships to many who were academically qualified but could not afford, without assistance, to attend. (SHOW SLIDE TWO (STATS)) This was certainly the case during the years before and after the Second World War, when 30 – 40% of the high school and 75 % of the junior college students received scholarship aid. As you can see from the slide, this information was carefully tracked at the time, although few people knew then that these girls were being assisted in this way. These scholarships were provided in honor of *“a deep rooted tradition of the College to offer educational opportunities to students from all classes of society”*. (Quote from archives circa 1950)

Anna Benaki, who is with us today, was one of these students. We were moved and pleased that she shared her story with alumni at the benefit dinner at the Megaron in April. (SHOW SLIDE THREE (BENAKI SLIDE)) The personal accomplishments and social contributions of Anna Benaki are certainly an inspiring example of the case for investing in our young people! No doubt others of you received such assistance or know girls who were aided similarly.

Not only have PIERCE students been the beneficiaries of philanthropy, they have also reached out to help others. (SHOW SLIDE FOUR (VILLAGE)) As you may know, PIERCE students acted as nurses during the war and helped Greeks living in remote villages in the difficult days that followed – and PIERCE graduates have been and still are involved in philanthropic causes here in Greece and abroad. Just after World War II the following was written:

“Graduates of Pierce College are well trained; they have proved outstanding in many fields of work. But more important still, they go out from the College into lives of Christian service and make definite contributions to the welfare of their communities and their country.”

Today, in the midst of one of the worst economic crises in the history of modern Greece, this spirit of giving to the common good and giving back is again urgently needed. The College is doing all that it can to meet the challenge that this crisis

imposes on our students and their families. But, we cannot meet all the challenges alone.

In the past, PIERCE College has not called consistently or systematically on its alumnae to support the school that was established here so long ago and has benefitted so many. (SLIDE THREE AGAIN (BENAKI)) Having been the beneficiaries of this wonderful and continuing tradition we hope you will consider how you can support The American College of Greece as it moves forward through these difficult days to provide education at a global standard of excellence. And, we know that some of you have already done so; we sincerely thank you!

There is information in your program about how you can help, and Vice President of Development, George Triantaris, and Director, Mary Triantafillou, are with us tonight and would be happy to speak with anyone who would like to learn more.

Thank you very much and enjoy this extraordinary evening of remembrance and renewal of friendships. PIERCE College is a true treasure that needs to be passed on to future generations who will, like you, embody our mission and fulfill the dreams of our founders.