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Welcome Remarks: Aftershock Conference, September 5-8, 2006

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Good afternoon and welcome to “Aftershock: Rethinking the Future Since September 11, 2001.” My name is David Caputo, and I am proud to say I am the president of Pace University.

Pace University is honored to host this three-day conference where we will examine the economic, cultural, environmental, educational and political consequences of the day five years ago that forever changed the world as we knew it then.

And we are pleased to extend a warm welcome to each of you who’ve chosen to spend part or all of the next few days with us. Whether you have come from across the globe or from right here in lower Manhattan, you are here because you are interested in taking this occasion of the five year anniversary of the terror attacks to consider the consequences of those attacks and what, if any, lessons we have learned and what lies ahead for us.

It is our expectation, and our hope, that we have indeed learned lessons during the course of the past five years.

I suspect many of us have experienced an examination of a very personal nature: how resilient we are; how tolerant, or intolerant, we are of the diversity of cultures and religions and ethnicities in our daily lives; how we feel about living in a world of color-coded alert systems, semi-automatic rifle-carrying security at our airports and in our subway systems, an ever-present danger of yet another terror attack; and what we think about the kind of future we are building for our children and generations to come.

I suspect, also, that we have examined our own political views: how we feel about our government’s actions here at home and about personal rights and freedoms and civil liberties; what we think about our nation’s role in the world: are we liberator, oppressor, occupier, protector?; what we think about what others around the world think about us; and how we feel about the local, regional and national leadership of the rebuilding and recovery efforts.

These are just some of the issues that we will explore over the course of the next three days. We hope that by Friday afternoon, we will have shed new light on some of the important questions in our post-9/11 world, and that we will have had a civil, intelligent and engaging conversation that will help each of us better understand the consequences of the day that changed everything.

To accomplish that, we have assembled an extraordinary group of individuals to lead our conversation. More than 50 people on eight panels and four keynote presentations have agreed to share with us their experiences, their expertise and their wisdom about the various aspects of the terror attacks and their aftermath.

I want to thank each of them, and especially our four keynote speakers: writer, teacher, commentator and presidential adviser David Gergen; former Congressman and national 9-11 commission vice chair Lee Hamilton; presidential historian Doris Kearns Goodwin; and editor, author and commentator William Kristol. I have no doubt their thought-provoking commentaries this week will give us a unique perspective on the state of the world five years after the terror attacks and a solid context for our panel discussions. We at Pace are particularly grateful to them for engaging our students and faculty directly in the classroom during their visits to campus.

Following our opening keynote in just a few minutes, we will begin our dialogue this afternoon with panels on three of the pressing post 9-11 issues we face: our readiness for another attack; the impact of the attacks and the aftermath on the global business environment; and the consequences of those attacks on our health and our environment

Tomorrow, in the morning, our focus turns to the individuals most directly affected by the terror attacks of September 11 – civic leaders and residents of lower Manhattan and the neighborhoods closest to Ground Zero, and then the family members of the victims of the attacks.

In the afternoon, we'll hear from those directly involved in and responsible for the rebuilding effort. Following that, we'll hear views on the impact on and response from the higher education community.

On Friday, our attention will be on politics – how America's role in world events has changed in the five years since terror was unleashed in its full fury on American soil.

Our program, as you can see, is robust and comprehensive, as it should be. At times, however, we touch on subjects where emotions understandably run high, and where some will disagree with the views or statements of one or another of our presenters. We ask only that presenters and audience members alike show each other respect throughout, and that speakers be given the courtesy of presenting their views.

Before we get on with our program, I do have some acknowledgements to make.

First, our gratitude and thanks is extended to the Pace University Center for Downtown New York, under whose auspices this conference is hosted. Director Meghan French and her team have worked tirelessly for the better part of the past year to bring this to reality.

And to the generosity of those who have made gifts to the Center for Downtown New York, and provided the bulk of funding to allow us to present this conference free and open to the public, we thank you.

Our thanks also go out to the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey and to Lehman Brothers, whose made grants that help to underwrite portions of the conference.

We were delighted that Crain's New York Business and the New York City Partnership chose to have their Business Breakfast Forum at Pace this morning, and Deputy Mayor Dan Doctoroff's talk provided a wonderful platform from which to launch our conference.

We are so pleased that the New York State Museum has partnered with us this week, and we invite you to take time to view their exhibit, "The First 24 Hours," which will be on display in our Theater Lobby throughout the conference. This exhibit features a historic, 40-foot timeline and a number of artifacts from the World Trade Center recovery effort.

And for those of you who will be in lower Manhattan during the evenings this week, please join our friends and partners from television station New York 1 as they broadcast live from this stage each evening from 9-10 pm a town hall forum on a variety of topics related to the five year anniversary of September 11, 2001.

It is now my pleasure to introduce a good friend, a respected business leader here in New York, and my boss, the chairman of the Pace University board of Trustees, Aniello A. Bianco.

Neil Bianco is a 1961 graduate of Pace University, and is a managing partner with Chadbourne & Park in Manhattan. Neil helped lead Pace University through the events of September 11 with courage, sensitivity, a resolute determination and compassion. We are a better institution for his leadership, and it is my honor to bring him to the podium now.