Greetings! Welcome to what we sometimes cryptically refer to as AY 2015-16. The beginning of the school year has always been a magical time for me, and I trust it is for you as well. Our students are nearly here; and as we gear up to greet them, and welcome colleagues back from the four quarters of the globe, it is a prime occasion to reflect on why we are here and anticipate how we might make the best of this new academic year. As you glance through the pages of this booklet you will find much to celebrate: accolades to our worthy colleagues, new faculty joining us for a brief visit or a long-term stay, major scholarly works of note, and department highlights.

This is a particularly auspicious year, being the 50th anniversary of our college. On June 1, 1965, the College of Humanities was born and, like a new universe, divided, merged, and expanded itself into what is now eight departments, ten centers, and dozens of major and minor programs. Our alumni number over 28,000, and we play a vital role at the university, touching nearly every student in some way. With much to celebrate over the next twelve months, you will receive a steady flow of reminders about building art, exhibits, special publications, and events. The ongoing commemoration will give us a chance to reflect on the legacy of those faculty, staff, and students whose lives have enriched the college to which you now belong.

We come together at University Conference, as with our other conferences, to do more than just receive counsel and listen to messages. We conscientiously attend as a gesture of openness and need and, in turn, can be richly rewarded for that humility, often through quiet, sudden promptings and small bits of inspiration that may have little, if anything, to do with the program content. I hope you find, sometime during this week, subtle rewards for the devotion you so unselfishly demonstrate to your students, your colleagues, and the college.

Finally, regarding the food at today's luncheon, we hope you will be pleasantly surprised by the offerings and, as you eat, will contemplate the diversity and eclecticism that is part of our college culture.

Bonne année, and bon appetit!1

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1 The origin of the word “dean” is either a) a corruption of “deacon,” from diacon, via ecclesiastical Latin from Greek diákonos “servant,” or else b) from Old French deien, from late Latin decanus “chief of a group of ten.” I prefer a), the false etymology.

2 Although it ostensibly stands for “Academic Year,” AY may be an acronym for anno Youngi, from the medieval Latin “year of [Brigham] Young.” Variant sources include a) reference to the cryptic message “At Y!” penciled in the corner of letters sent from Provo by Karl G. Maeser between 1876 and 1879; and b) an allusion to the Scottish ballad, “Aye, 1513, A dimnae ken a year so dowie!”

3 This bilingual gambit to impress echoes the traditional use of French by the upper classes in England and Russia. For some peculiar reason humans often use the tongue of linguistic hegemons to curry favor.