September 16, 2005

Dear Members of the Boston University Community:

I am writing to you in appreciation of the genuine outpouring of support and generosity and the open hearts of the Boston University community in response to the University’s decision to assist displaced students from our sister school, Tulane University, and to help those Boston University students who come from the Gulf Coast areas affected by Hurricane Katrina.

More than 320 Tulane students are enrolled here as visiting students this semester. Although we don’t have totals from other institutions, we believe this is among the highest numbers for a New England school. When word spread of the University’s offer to accommodate displaced Tulane students, in short order they began streaming to Boston by car and plane, many with parents in tow. They come from 40 of the 50 states, Puerto Rico, and several foreign countries. They will be taking classes in nearly every school and college of the University, both graduate and undergraduate. The vast majority of the undergraduates are taking classes in the College of Arts and Sciences, the School of Management, Metropolitan College, and the College of Engineering. Of 43 graduate students enrolled, 16 are in the Boston University School of Law, 14 in the School of Public Health, 5 in the School of Medicine, 4 in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, 2 in the College of Engineering, and one each in Metropolitan College and the School of Social Work. Each Tulane student at the School of Law is paired with a BU student buddy.
Dean of Students Kenneth Elmore hosted a dinner for the Tulane students last Friday to give them an opportunity to meet one another and to meet with administrators who have volunteered to oversee small groups of undergraduates to ensure their smooth transition to a new school and environment. Each visiting student received a Tulane hat and T-shirt to help them retain their identity while here at BU. The Dean of Students Office also established the Boston University Emergency Student Aid Fund to accept contributions for students in need, both at Tulane and BU.

As you know, a number of students and their families lost everything, and yet the students took advantage of the opportunity to continue their education and academic progress. I know each member of the BU community will join with me to ensure that we provide the same level of support, guidance, and concern for our visiting students that we do for Boston University students.

I am truly impressed and pleased with the coordinated, efficient, prompt, professional, and individual attention provided to these students and their families by the many administrators, staff, and faculty who worked so hard and long to advise, process, register, and assure a smooth transition for the affected students and their families. My special thanks go the staffs of the Office of Enrollment and Student Affairs and to Metropolitan College who shouldered the largest burden and represented the university at our highest standards. Boston University has made a significant contribution to the national higher education effort to assist displaced college students.
Many of you continue to share with me your concerns for the people affected by Katrina. We also are contacting Boston University students who may have been directly affected by this disaster. Approximately 200 of our students come from this region of the country. We are pleased that many of these students are back at the University, and we are eager to provide whatever assistance they may need to begin and to resume their studies. I am both grateful for, and pleased by, the compassion demonstrated within this community. More than two dozen faculty, staff, and alumni offered to open their homes to displaced students, a number of faculty, staff, and students have made generous donations ranging from offers to take a student shopping to a $2,500 contribution to the Boston University Emergency Student Aid Fund, and a local retailer has made a donation to assist students in need. As a community, we have and will continue to be involved in Gulf Coast relief efforts.

While this is a difficult time for many, I marvel at the resilience I see in the young people, the resolve in their parents, and the recognition of the value and investment both see in higher education. We often speak of teachable moments or learning opportunities. This is such a time. It is also a time of coming together, of bonding within families and communities. I encourage students and parents to be in touch with one another and to reach out to one another for support. The University has a comprehensive support system for students, staff, and faculty as well.

Many of you have contacted me to discuss ideas for campus efforts to contribute to ongoing national relief efforts. In order to facilitate collaborative planning and discussion, the University has developed a forum for members of the BU community to use for messages related to the hurricane and future responses. You may access this forum by clicking on the following
link: Katrina Message Board for BU Community. In addition to the facilitation of collaborative fundraising and volunteer efforts, messages of condolences, assistance, or other related topics are welcome.

Throughout this academic year, I anticipate that several University student organizations will plan activities with the goal of contributing money to charitable relief organizations — I encourage you to support these efforts. The University, through the Office of the Dean of Students, will assist these organizations in the planning, implementation, and accountability required for any program that involves charitable fundraising. The Boston University Student Union has offered to be a clearinghouse for student efforts (if you are organizing an event on the Charles River Campus, please contact the Student Union at 617-353-3642). I want to thank our student organizations and the Student Union in advance for providing opportunities for us to make contributions to the country and to come together as a community in order to discuss important issues — issues that continue to be relevant in our lives. I hope you will join me and others in these important efforts.

Boston University alumnus, Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., is credited with reminding us that “not everyone can be famous but everyone can be great because everyone can serve.” It may be difficult for you to offer your direct services to national relief efforts; nevertheless, I encourage you to consider serving as a volunteer, in general. Making a commitment to performing service in a neighboring community is another important way to contribute to addressing issues that have been highlighted by this devastating natural disaster.
Finally, please remember that you may take advantage of the medical, counseling, and spiritual support network available for students, faculty, and staff. This network includes the Office of the Provost, Student Health Services, Marsh Chapel, and the Office of Residence Life.

I have highlighted a few of many opportunities to address the devastation to the Gulf Coast region. Please do what your individual conscience dictates. I hope you will, as an individual, continue to be compassionate in your personal response in Katrina’s aftermath and continue to consider ways in which you can be of assistance.

Thank you for your good wishes, prayers, donations, and active responses to this challenging situation.

Sincerely,

Robert A. Brown
President