



News Release

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Famous Futurist Tells Century: Vision Is Vital

Joel Barker, the world famous futurist who is best known for coining the phrase “paradigm shift,” told a Century College audience this week that having a positive vision of the future is essential for success.

“I define vision as dreams in action,” said Barker. “Visionary people have dreams and act on them. The visionary process is very powerful.”

Addressing faculty and staff members several days before the start of fall semester on Monday, Aug. 25, Barker said vision is important because it clarifies purpose, gives direction, adds efficiency and “empowers you beyond your assets.”

“Nations rise and fall on their vision of the future,” said Barker. “When you study the history of western civilization, you find that great leaders talk about the future of a country before it becomes great.” For example, Adolf Hitler (a “crazy housepainter”) gave his country a powerful image of the future in his book “Mein Kampf” and convinced a hopeless group of people to take on the world.

“Visionary nations outperform their assets,” he said. “Look at Japan.”

Barker's research shows that the most powerful influence over the American people is the mass media, while in other parts of the world, family, friends and leaders have more power. He said the profound negativity of the news media is dangerous because it focuses on problems (the economy, foreclosures, terrorism, failing infrastructure) and barely mentions solutions. "I find many reasons to be optimistic about America's future," he said. "For example, we are well on our way to finding sustainable, long-term solutions to many of our problems, preventative health care is really expanding and we are making great progress on alternative energy. I am most worried about K-12 education. It has got to get out of the dark ages."

Barker said emphasizing science over team sports, lengthening the school year, adopting multi-age grouping and organizing learning around projects and activities would go a long way to improving students' educational outcomes.

"Unsuccessful students tend to think that life is a lottery, and nothing they do can make a difference," said Barker. "The strong students – no matter what their IQ – have a profound belief in the future and their ability to shape it."

Barker said the only current, widely-held vision for the United States in 2025 is homeland security – defeating the terrorists, making freedom safe for the world. "Compare that to China's 100-year goal," he said. "Vision precedes performance."

In his latest book, *Five Regions of the Future*, Barker says it is no longer adequate to talk about "high tech" innovations. Instead, he describes the five "technological ecosystems" that are forming: Super Tech (i.e. fusion power), Limits Tech (be careful with what you've got), Local Tech (think small, think home), Nature Tech (be one with nature), and Human Tech (what lies within us).

"Century College is in the human technology business," he said. "Watch for the good news and tell your students about it. Positive vision is so powerful. It gives you a reason to be optimistic."



Photo: Joel Barker at Century College