Remember the past, acknowledge the present, and work toward the future.

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The cactus can be a metaphor for our institutions; institutions whose pasts may seem dead, yet there may still be new growth emerging. The cactus grows around its historical center. The flowers are new life, distinct from and arising out of the present - in all its steadfastness, stability, and prickliness. The dean is to be the light of perspective whose shadow highlights the institution’s place in time.
https://www.wabashcenter.wabash.edu/2018/05/remember-the-past-acknowledge-the-present-and-work-toward-the-future/