President Karen S. Haynes
&
VP Neal Hoss

Convocation

Clarke Field House

Thursday, August 22, 2013

10:00 a.m.
Introduction

It is amazing to me to start this morning by stating the “surprising” fact that this is my tenth convocation address here. It seems like only a few days ago we were agreeing on our five strategic priorities and working together to create a shared vision for Cal State San Marcos. As some of you may have heard me paraphrase, “the years are flying by, but some days are long indeed!”

Those long days are worth it when I watch that video and look at the collective talent in this room. As I walked around, meeting and greeting many of you this morning, I was delighted to see a mix of the very new and the long tenured faculty and staff. You truly represent the breadth of the university — each of you with unique skills yet focused on our common goals and values.

Over the past nine years, I have talked with you about those values — everything from teamwork and our “university first” perspective to celebrating 20 years of innovation to recognizing our adaptability and resiliency in the face of six continued years of tough budget cuts. Today, with a little better economic news, some additional funding, new system leadership, and our 25th anniversary on the horizon, I want to celebrate this “learning organization” that we all care so deeply about.

Let me be clear that I am not describing our “learning organization” as such just because we are a public university but rather because we possess the characteristics, spirit, tenacity and wisdom to know that what we do matters even when the opinion makers may seem steeped in rhetoric to the contrary. We know that our work is important even when some may suggest
that it costs too much and takes too long. The cost of not persisting would be devastating to this state and to our entire region

People Matter

In learning organizations, people matter, and our important work could not be done without the people in this room. As faculty, staff and administrators, you help us to realize our primary mission—to educate the people of our region. Your work — and you — matters, and as a learning organization, it’s important that we support and appreciate each other and that this organization equip you with the knowledge you need to help us innovate and thrive amid the changing landscape of public higher education.

One of our five strategic priorities is campus climate, and over the years, we have established several initiatives aimed at creating and then maintaining an environment that encourages continuous employee learning, critical thinking and risk taking. That we chose campus climate as a priority was not an accident. It was an intentional decision to help improve morale, direct funds and energies toward maintaining a positive, supportive atmosphere, and keep us focused on working toward common goals.

For those of you who may remember, shortly after I arrived, I asked for input on what could enrich campus climate. From the many thoughtful suggestions, Campus Connect was launched to strategically increase collegiality and promote continuous learning and discussion among employees who may not work together on a daily basis. It provides a 30,000-foot view of this grand university and cross-divisional perspectives. I would
also posit that this program has led to more creativity and strong networks of supportive colleagues, which has helped increase productivity.

Since its launch in 2005, roughly 15 percent of all full-time employees have participated in the program — that’s nearly 200 Campus Connect alumni. As you saw on the slides when you walked in, 25 people were accepted this year out of 75 applicants. Seven of those selected are faculty, the highest number of faculty in one class in the program’s history.

As a complement to Campus Connect, the Leadership Academy was established three years ago to identify potential leaders at CSUSM and to support current leaders by widening skills sets and offering exposure to new experiences. Over the course of a year, academy members work together across divisions to effect change by demonstrating a university first perspective. They explore topics such as making courageous decisions and fostering open communication among teams.

To assist newly hired managers, we established new on-boarding procedures that pair these managers with a “buddy” or two. Buddies answers questions, provide feedback and offer support and encouragement. They also share our Culture of Leadership — the university history and philosophy, our strategic priorities, and how we work with the Chancellor’s Office, the system and its structure.

Another ongoing demonstration of our commitment to you and to our own continuous learning process is evident in the implementation of our diversity strategic plan this past spring. Building a community of diverse people who will thrive together and learn from one another is key, so we formed a campus-wide diversity council to help us remain aware and ahead of
diversity issues and have connected the faculty/staff associations under the office of diversity to create more cohesion between the associations and the work of the university.

A goal of our diversity strategic plan was to review and revise our search policies and practices for faculty and MPP hiring to look for candidates with experience working in diverse environments and with a commitment to higher education as access for underrepresented students.

As a community of scholars, we must be willing not only to tolerate colleagues' opinions about things that matter deeply; we must also be bold enough to engage with them in thoughtful, civil dialog. Our diversity strategic plan is indispensable in helping us do that and in helping us keep and attract a diverse cadre of students, faculty and staff. At the same time, the positive outcomes of the plan will foster a greater spirit of community on campus as well as between the university and our region.

All of these programs and initiatives, from Campus Connect to our diversity efforts, have not been small, ad hoc, or simply idiosyncratic incremental changes. They have been intentional and strategic. They have happened because we are a learning organization, a place that recognizes employees' worth and that encourages collaborating across divisions, taking risks, communicating openly, and working toward a common goal.

Innovating and Adapting

The past six years have not made our progress toward our strategic goals easy. But learning organizations, at their core, are innovative and adaptive. And we certainly are! That bears repeating: The last six years have
not made it easy to make progress toward our strategic goals, but we have because, as a learning organization, we are innovative and adaptive. There is no question that public higher education remains under attack, that it has come under increased scrutiny with state performance measures and federal oversight and that it has experienced draconian budget cuts. And even with the promise of some state funds the next four years, the “new normal” will continue to move us from a state-supported university to a state-assisted one.

This is especially true when you remember that even with the passage of Prop 30, our net gain, after refunding 4.1 million dollars to students, was only 1.3 million dollars. And the big caveat was that we would only receive the increase to our state appropriated budget if we did not raise tuition during those four years.

I will say again what I have said repeatedly, that together this learning organization started early to identify strategies that would take us through the economic downturn BEFORE we knew how relentless the recession would be. We held true to three principles throughout: continuing to serve students with quality, protecting as many jobs as possible, and investing in our future, and we were successful at all three.

Together, we continue to put the needs of our students before all else. When other universities are decreasing undergraduate student research opportunities, we are expanding ours. When other universities are cutting programs, we are launching new ones.

The CSU Institute for Palliative Care is an extraordinary example of our learning organization's innovation and adaptability, of our being able to get things done when other institutions might struggle, of our tenaciousness at
“getting to yes” rather than yielding to the easier “it can’t be done.” The first institute of its kind in the nation, the Institute will fulfill a serious void in healthcare professional training and education and in community awareness.

CSUSM was chosen to house and incubate the Institute because our system recognized our innovation and adaptability. They recognized that as a learning organization, together we can and do respond to the needs of our region and communities far faster and more creatively than other institutions. We build partnerships and create new revenue streams. The fact that it took only 18 months from the idea to the launch and we raised 2.4 million dollars is testament to that creativity and future focus.

We have already embedded palliative care into several nursing and health-related courses, and we are working with interested faculty to integrate palliative care across the curriculum where it makes sense. We are educating the next generation of leaders, the young and developing minds that will seek to move our communities forward.

For public universities to once again be seen as relevant institutions of academic excellence, they must, as we have, shift their thinking. We heard repeatedly from employers that they want well-rounded students, students who are not “discipline bound,” and who can communicate clearly, and who have real world experience.

Our faculty consistently work together to create cross-discipline experiences for our students. Literature and kinesiology professors are collaborating on medical humanities courses, and faculty in the women’s studies and anthropology departments are exploring the body and identity. In addition, through increased undergraduate research and a multitude of
experiential learning opportunities, our students and faculty are involved in innovative studies from sequencing strains of alga to exploring cutting-edge methods for detecting depression.

Students at our Temecula location are also involved in essential research from conducting various kinesiology studies to dissecting the impact local economic decisions can have on the environment. And with the launch this fall of new programs there such as the accelerated bachelor’s of nursing, the BS in business administration and a BS in kinesiology— all without state support — students in Temecula will contribute greatly to Southwest Riverside County.

Our programs in Temecula are so in demand, that in only three short years, we are already outgrowing our lease-free space. Enrollment this fall of matriculated students is expected to top 250, nearly quadruple the number of students we served when the center opened.

**Continuous Improvement**

Throughout our region and well beyond, our reputation and our value are evident. Together, we are finding new and different ways of providing access to a CSUSM education. Together, we are continuously improving. We are engaging with each other and with our region to drive innovation and create new knowledge.

With all of the changes in higher education, colleges and universities that are not examining their policies, practices, pedagogies, and pipelines are becoming less relevant. They are not seen as knowledge centers nor are they targets for philanthropic investments and research funding.
CSUSM is the exception. As a committed learning organization, together we are always reviewing and refining, and outside parties see us as a wise investment. The Price Family Charitable Foundation certainly does.

As part of our mission to serve the students of our region, we started the guaranteed admission program with local school districts in 2006, with a tribal nation and with three organizations for former foster youth. To date, almost 300 students have come here as part of these agreements. These students come to us better prepared. They have higher GPAs and better retention rates.

Clearly, the program is working. We signed our first agreement with San Marcos Unified in 2009, and students admitted to CSUSM that year graduated this May, taking only four years to earn their degree. But we want to create a stronger, more integrated program that better supports the districts, teachers and our university goals. Through conversation and consultation with the six public school superintendents, we agreed we needed to improve and expand the model and that we needed external support to do so.

The Price Family Charitable Foundation responded to our proposal and made a half million-dollar donation that has enabled us to establish what we are calling “The Alliance.” With The Alliance, we will create a more comprehensive plan, a sustained pipeline, and a strong database. And, as you heard earlier in the video, the goal is to offer workshops for teachers and parents on how best to prepare students for successful college careers.

A main component of The Alliance will focus on establishing a joint faculty development program between CSUSM faculty responsible for first-
year programs and area high school teachers, creating a seamless transition for students from high school to college.

As the only CSU with a formal outreach program that extends across multiple districts, we have a strong track record of faculty involvement in the schools, but our commitment to raising the educational attainment rate of our region extends to every student whether or not they attend one of our partner institutions.

Across the nation, there is a strong sense of urgency about expanding college access to the most educationally at risk students. That has been a priority of mine — of ours — for nearly a decade.

A Hispanic serving institution since 2010, our Hispanic student population has grown from less than 2,000 in 2008 to more than 3,000 last year. We now serve almost 7 percent more Hispanic students than SDSU, and applications from Hispanic students for this fall topped 7,800 — our largest pool ever. What’s more, the U.S. Department of Education awarded our College Assistant Migrant program, or CAMP, a five-year, 2.1 million dollar grant last year, proving that our targeted recruitment and retention efforts are working.

CAMP has helped our university transform the lives of several students, including senior Cipriano Vargas. One of nine children whose parents emigrated from Mexico, Cipriano would watch his parents go off to work the fields every day. He knew that he wanted a better life for himself and his family, and so he began applying himself to his studies, eventually coming to us through CAMP in 2009.
The first person in his family to attend college, Cipriano has been involved in campus life since his first days here, mentoring other CAMP students, serving on the ASI Board and spearheading numerous campaigns. Most recently, the governor appointed him to the CSU Board of Trustees, our first student Trustee, and a true demonstration of the good work we are doing together as a learning organization.

Our work with American Indian students is also impressive. In the spring, I delivered my second annual Report to Tribal Nations, highlighting our successes and goals. I also hosted the second annual Tribal Education Summit last fall, where tribal leaders and educators discussed viable ways to increase American Indian student enrollment in college. Among the suggestions were establishing workshops for Native parents, developing a mentoring program, and providing cultural competencies for the campus community.

We are making headway. Last fall, we hosted a college fair for American Indian students. Nearly 200 students attended, and we are looking to build on that success. We have also applied for a number of professional development grants to help increase the number of American Indian teachers and faculty, and we are actively exploring how more students might fulfill their Language Other than English requirement through Native languages.

Among our most notable and recent achievements are creating the first “How to Get into College” poster in a Native language, and graduating our first American Indian doctoral student. We are reaching out and reaching back to keep the door to higher education open to American Indian students, and to other educationally at risk students in our region.
Once students get to campus, we work hard to retain them and facilitate their progress to graduation. Starting this semester, as you know, we are instituting the Academic Excellence and Student Success Fee. This fee will address both of these goals by creating more sections of bottleneck courses, by expanding library hours and resources, and by increasing student academic support. We were clearly in a bind — reduced course sections and reduced student support due to reduced state funding led, invariably, to longer time to graduation and increased costs to students — both directly and indirectly — as it slowed time to entrance into the workforce.

By decreasing time to graduation, by serving the most educationally at-risk students, by developing new educational pathways, and by collaborating with our communities, we are building a stronger college-going culture.

To ensure that our students achieve their dreams, we must provide more than rigorous academics, we must also provide an environment that inspires them to learn and that equips them with the necessary tools. Our facilities are a prime example. They’re modern. They’re well equipped, and they represent our commitment to our students.

When I started here in 2004, there were 10 buildings. Since then, we have carefully planned, designed and built eight buildings. With the addition of the student union and the student health, that will bring the total to 10 new buildings, with a few on the horizon, including a new Veteran’s Center, which I will talk about soon.

With each building, we have adhered to strict green building standards, ensuring that our built environment is as environmentally friendly as it is functional. From solar power to using well water and landscaping with
drought tolerant native plants, our buildings have earned among the highest LEED certifications from the U.S. Green Building Council — silver for SBSB and gold for the Public Safety Building, the same level we hope to achieve with the Student Union, which, when open, is sure to create new excitement and energy.

Also changing the tenor of campus is the growing number of students living on campus. When I arrived, UVA had just opened in fall and there were fewer than 400 students living there. Today, phase two of The Quad is open, and all beds are filled, bringing our total number of students living on campus to 1,200! With more students living and spending time on campus, we need to bring services closer to them.

In June, we broke ground on the new Student Health and Counseling Services Center adjacent to the parking structure. The new building will have exam rooms, medical offices and counseling spaces and will be far easier for students to access.

Along with moving health services on campus, the School of Nursing will soon be moving back to campus. We are shoring up our future, expanding our blueprint and bringing services closer to students — and we are doing so in a wise and thoughtful manner.

Creating our Future

Every decision, every program and initiative we make is with a focus on the future. As a learning organization with a shared vision, together we are creating a bold future for our region and a different blueprint for public higher education – both increasingly important.
California now has the largest number of adults without a high school diploma or equivalency in the country. We are changing those statistics. More than 19,000 students applied for 3,400 spots this fall. Combine the incoming and current students with our more than 30,000 alumni, and it’s clear that we are creating a future of educated citizenry and quickly cementing our status as a top quality, comprehensive university.

We have survived and thrived during the toughest times by working together, by focusing on our students and by projecting the future needs of our region. This includes the needs of non-traditional students.

As home to some of the largest military bases in the country, veterans, active duty military and their families are increasingly turning to us as an institution of first choice. They are older, their life experiences are vastly different, and their needs as students are unique. We work to make them feel welcome and to provide access to support services that meet their special circumstances. Our reputation for educating veterans is nationally known and is just one of many reasons why the Stevens Institute of Technology in New Jersey is donating their “Learning House” to us to create a new, modern on-campus Veterans Center.

Stevens is building the smart, sustainable house as part of their participation in the Department of Energy’s solar decathlon and is donating it to us after the competition in October.

Why us? Because our national reputation as “veteran friendly” and the regard of several past generals from Camp Pendleton put us in the Institute’s spotlight. And, after their visit here in early July, they were certain we were their “recipient of choice.”
The 1,000-square-foot house will be situated between Markstein and Science Hall I and will go a long way toward strengthening our relationships with our military partners and ensuring their continued success at CSUSM.

We are equally committed to ensuring the success of the former foster youth who attend our university through the ACE Scholars Services program. The program began in 2007 with only nine students and has grown steadily; 14 freshmen are expected this fall, bringing total enrollment to 56 students. Because of the specialized support we offer them, ACE Scholars have an 88 percent retention rate and more than half of the graduates have gone on to post-graduate studies.

I have full confidence that Matt Walsh, who you saw in one of the opening videos, will be one of those students. Placed in foster care at age 2, Matt was removed from his adoptive mom’s home when he was 14. He eventually moved in with a friend’s parents who helped him make his way to college. He found a home at CSUSM in the ACE Scholars program. He also found his voice, a voice he will surely use as the newly elected president of Associated Students Inc.

This remarkable institution — this learning organization — is transforming lives on every level. Our effect is so profound, that many of our alumni remain at the university using their CSUSM knowledge and experience to help future generations. And, our commitment to the professional development of our employees has also meant that many employees become alumni.

Nearly 200 alumni are working in departments throughout the university – that’s nearly 15 percent of our employee base. That says a lot
about who we are, about how we all share a common vision and how committed we are to this learning organization.

And it’s not just those of us on campus who believe that we are creating a more vibrant future for our students and our region. Our community is increasingly investing in us. They are recognizing our vision and contributing to our mission.

In the last year, we have seen a 25 percent increase in the number of donors to our university, and a 30 percent increase in total donations. In fact, the Pardee family recently made a 1.5 million dollar donation to endow student scholarships. And Darlene Shiley donated 1.2 million dollars last fall to help launch the Institute of Palliative Care.

**Conclusion**

Through the investment of our communities, through our collective commitment to being a learning organization, and through our growing list of accomplishments, we are propelling our university forward, faster, farther. We are preparing our students to be leaders by ensuring that our “university first” spirit is based on sharing a passion for learning and ideas, understanding and respecting differences, and recognizing and building on Civility Campaign commonalities.

Ours is a university that thinks as one, that knows that success comes not by thinking we are different colleges connected by a heating plant or a series of divisions connected by telephone lines — and I have worked at those kind of universities — haven't you? Ours is a university that works with a common purpose because we utilize learning organization principles...and we
need to, because we are the front door to our region’s future and the portal to the American Dream for so many first-generation students.

What is required of all of us then is to approach each day with an urgency of purpose and the will to continue to work together to improve lives and enrich communities. I know that isn’t easy — and it requires all of us together — but everyone has a role in identifying and implementing new ways to work smarter, reduce costs, enhance services, and generate revenues. We must solve shared problems, and we must advance our university together.

With all this in mind, I think you’ll agree that our university — this source of academic and cultural energy — is demonstrating persuasively that we have an appetite for and ability to implement significant change. We are transforming and elevating public higher education, not tinkering at the margins of existing models. Together, we are working with purpose, discipline and imagination to provide our students with extraordinary educational experiences. We are preparing, building, solving.

Our life-changing, life-enriching work is gaining broad recognition, and I am grateful to all of you for making that happen. Our momentum is strong. Our vision is clear. We must not — we cannot — let divisiveness or the critics derail our work and the outcomes that we produce or our deep impact on our region. Together, we are a remarkable institution. Together, we are the exception to the higher education norm. Together, we are a learning organization. Together, we are CSUSM.