Convocation 2014

Culture Matters

Thursday, August 21, 2014

10:00 a.m.

USU Ballroom

President Karen Haynes
INTRODUCTION

Higher education today demands people who focus on collective goals and accomplishments rather than on individual ones. It requires staff, faculty and administrators who expect and embrace new ways to work; who pioneer ideas quickly and efficiently; who measure risk and build on outcomes; and who learn from one another. From the video we just saw, Cal State San Marcos clearly has the right people in place throughout our campus.

Everyone here understands that our work is about more than ourselves; it’s about our entire university — a place that’s tremendously important to our region, that’s forward thinking and innovative and that transforms lives, builds better communities, and solves critical issues. We work with a university first spirit, and in collaboration, cooperation, and “mostly” in harmony to get things done.

We are forward focused. We think bigger, not smaller. We think about “how do we get this done, not it’s never been done.” We don’t sit idly by. Each day, we put CSUSM ingenuity to work to serve our students better, to spur regional economic growth, to forge partnerships for the common good. We are an exceptional university with ambitious goals, and we are moving forward together with a common purpose.

Many universities aspire to our mission to serve at-risk students, to be knowledge centers of their communities, to drive economic prosperity. But very few have all of the elements required: talent, perseverance, determination, resiliency. We have these in abundance at CSUSM, and because of that, we are operating from a position of strength while other universities continue to struggle. We are operating with the knowledge that the distinctive culture of CSUSM produces extraordinary results.
CULTURE MATTERS

Together we have built our university into a successful model for 21st century education, and we have stayed focused on our priorities. We have benchmarked our progress. We have innovatively pushed through barriers, and together, in these last 10 years, we have:

- More than doubled our student population from 6,000 to 13,000 students
- Doubled the number of buildings from 10 to 20
- Doubled our endowment from 10 million dollars to 20 million dollars
- More than doubled our academic degree programs from 27 to 58
- More than doubled the number of our athletic teams
- Nearly tripled our alumni from 13,000 to 33,000
- And nearly tripled our employee base from 700 to 1,900.

We have created, according to the Great Colleges survey, a university where 90 percent of you understand how your job contributes to those successes I just mentioned and to our mission to raise the educational rate of our region.

Our work is purposeful and grounded in our commitment to our students and to our region. Together we have created a university with expanded access and broader reach, one that reflects our shared work, and one that exhibits a belief that CULTURE MATTERS.

CULTURE OF LEADERSHIP

Unlike other institutions, our culture has been collectively built with intentionality, centered on our values, and with people at the core. It’s a
culture of bold ideas, innovative approaches and ambitious aspirations, one that embraces rather than shuns challenges, and one that encourages rather than hinders risk taking. CSUSM is a talent rich university built on a belief that leadership is systemic and foundational to our culture. You are each a leader in your respective roles, and you each play a critical part in defining and promoting our culture of leadership.

Central to this culture of leadership is our overarching and driving “university first” mentality, one that puts the broader interests of our institution — our student focus and community engagement — above those of divisions, colleges, departments or units. It’s a mentality that has enabled us to succeed when other universities are struggling and one that makes clear that the work we do each day is not just a job – that THE WORK WE DO MATTERS. Together we are transforming lives, families, and communities, and it’s essential that we continue to operate with this as the impetus of our work.

Great universities do not remain great and distinctive if they do not continually evolve, and innovate, if they do not provide employees with the tools and the courage they need to drive the mission and vision forward. CSUSM emphasizes leadership at every level and the development of leadership at every opportunity.

Acknowledging the need to provide professional development, recognition and social activities for employees, SAND, the staff appreciation and development committee, was reconfigured from just Academic Affairs to university wide in 2005. And now, from lunch and learns and Common Read activities to Cuban dance workouts and donuts and coffee, SAND members engage more than 500 staff each semester, strengthening our positive, university first spirit, and helping us to retain our special “culture.”
To further promote collegiality, SAND created the Staff Appreciation Program in 2007 as a way for you to thank each other for jobs well done, for collaboring, for being team players. The Gallery of Thank You’s, as they’re called, are on Instagram. They are truly inspirional and speak to how much you value each other and how much our university values its employees. **PEOPLE MATTER** at Cal State San Marcos.

**CULTURE OF SUPPORT AND SUCCESS**

In my 2006 Convocation speech — do any of you remember that one?— I said to you that by 2010, CSUSM, as an engaged campus, would become a best place to work and study. Because of your innovation, your participation, your leadership, we realized and exceeded that vision in 2010, and we are now **the** university to work for **in** all of California. According to the Chronicle of Higher Education’s survey, we were the only public four-year university **in** **the state** to earn the Great Colleges honor. It’s clear by your responses to that survey that we are creating a culture of support and success at CSUSM.

In the survey, more than 80 percent of you agree that you are given the freedom and responsibility to do your jobs and that CSUSM is a great place to work. I have said before that we chose campus climate as a strategic priority in 2005 not by accident, but as an intentional decision to help improve morale, create initiatives to build and maintain a positive, supportive atmosphere, and keep us focused on working toward common goals.

Campus Connect was launched in 2005 to strategically increase collegiality and promote discussion among employees who may not work together on a daily basis. Each class is intentionally selected to ensure participation from across divisions, departments and types of jobs throughout our university.
The program is a best practice that provides a 30,000-foot view of this grand university and cross-divisional perspectives. It also leads to creativity, collegiality and, consequently, a stronger “university first” spirit.

Today, 15 percent of all full-time employees have participated in this program. And as you saw this morning, Campus Connect remains popular and in demand — our 10th class is selected and ready to participate.

Furthering our culture of support and success, 15 managers, both new hires and promoted managers, have gone through our new onboarding procedures. At CSUSM, onboarding is more than just the traditional first-day orientation experience. It is an ongoing process that helps managers understand the culture and expectations of their new job and gives them the tools they need to be as effective in their new roles as possible.

Our goal is to provide each new or promoted manager with the information they need to become engaged in their work. This includes the people they need to know for successful collaborations and an understanding of how they contribute to the overall mission and vision of CSUSM.

As part of our program, we pair new managers with a “buddy” who answers questions, provides feedback, explains what we expect of leaders, and offers support and encouragement. One of the first people to go through our program has an extensive background in human resources and has seen numerous variations of onboarding programs throughout his career. He says ours is emblematic of a great institution that truly values its people — a testament to the effectiveness of the program and a sentiment echoed by other participants. It’s another best practice, and the only program of its kind in the CSU.

We are investing in our employees wherever we can, supporting practices that lead to individual and institutional success. For example, the Faculty Center...
offered its first ever summer institute for teaching and learning this year, focusing on active learning strategies. And because research and inquiry drive our university forward and improve lives in our region and around the world, we launched incentive grants for engagement scholarship this year.

These scholarships not only supplement faculty research but also assist faculty in engaging with our community toward the public good. Faculty from across the university are working with regional partners, investigating everything from how children make sense of the world to how to develop college ready writers and how to help teachers work more effectively with at-risk students.

As a university, we are effectively working with at risk students through guaranteed admission agreements with 10 public school districts and The Alliance to Accelerate Excellence in Education. The Alliance was launched in summer 2013 and will help CSUSM and district partners more effectively and efficiently execute the University's guaranteed admission programs by building the implementation infrastructure, strengthening the relationships between the campus and districts and launching Alliance programs and activities. As an example of our success in working with our school districts, I’d like to share a quick story about Alex, who came to us through our guaranteed admission program with San Marcos Unified School District.

Alex is a Hispanic male, and throughout most of elementary school, he envisioned life as a gang-banger. He was repeatedly told that “people like him” didn’t go to college, didn’t belong there. But in 7th grade, he visited our campus as part of our partnership with San Marcos Unified. As Alex told an entire group of our Alliance partners, that visit did not just change his life and transform his destiny; it quite literally “saved his life.”
Currently a criminal justice major, Alex has been on the Dean’s List every semester and will soon graduate and pursue his dream of becoming a police chief – ideally, someday, the San Diego police chief! He is succeeding because of our culture of support and success. Students like Alex are why we come to work every day and WHY WHAT WE DO MATTERS.

CULTURE OF INSTITUTIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

At the heart of our work and commitment to success lies accountability — the willingness to take responsibility for achieving goals, and the individual and institutional drive to make that achievement a reality. It requires an eagerness and pragmatic ability to set goals that are measurable and to measure progress toward them. It requires a culture of accountability; one that certainly exists here at CSUSM and one that is reflected in our strategic plan.

With that plan as our guide, we establish and consistently use metrics to assess and strengthen university programs, activities and services. And we annually measure our progress in achieving our strategic goals and objectives, recalibrating them when we achieve them, and refining and redefining them when we don’t.

It’s this intentionality, this culture of accountability and our penchant for breaking innovatively through barriers that has enabled us this year to:

• Graduate 2,600 students in May, 52 percent of whom were the first in their families to earn a four-year degree;
• Enroll our largest student body this fall at about 13,000 students;
• Launch three new degree programs: an MS in kinesiology, and both a BS and MS in speech language pathology — all in demand fields;
• Hire 23 full time staff;
• And hire 24 tenure track faculty.

Our Academic Excellence and Student Success fee, instituted last fall, has meant nearly 1,500 more seats in classes for students, helping to decrease their time to graduation. Also facilitating time to graduation, we were among the first CSUs to implement eAdvising for students. In April, we launched the college scheduler, a web-based planner that enables students to see, in real time, every possible schedule option with open courses. This means increased credit hours per student and reduced time to graduation since students can create more complete schedules that work around their other obligations.

But perhaps our most notable accomplishment over the last few years has been our closing of the achievement gap in one-year continuation rates between underrepresented minority students and majority students, a leading indicator that we will do so in our graduation rates shortly. In fact, we are one of few CSUs to close the gap, and it was not by accident. It was done through intentional measures, through using data and continually assessing our impact.

Our culture of accountability is clearly leading to institutional success at the highest levels, and WASC praised our data driven results during our last reaccreditation process in 2009.

As we prepare for our 2016 reaccreditation, we will continue to assess the quality, relevance and effectiveness of our programs and activities. We will remain focused on our strategic priorities of academic excellence, student life, educational equity, campus climate and community partnerships, and our overarching commitment to:

• Raise the educational attainment rate of our region;
• Create a student body that mirrors our region;
• Connect with and serve our community by producing well-prepared, ready-to-lead graduates;
• And to no longer be “the best kept secret” in North County or anywhere.

Together, we have been crafting a new framework for public higher education in the 21st century, one that is uniquely ours, that understands the importance of accountability, of support and success, of leadership. Through our targeted efforts and informed by data, we do more than just educate students, we advance the human experience. We open doors, expand possibilities and create opportunities.

CULTURE OF INCLUSIVENESS

And these days, those opportunities are happening in an increasingly diverse environment. California now has the nation’s largest Hispanic population and leads the nation in overall diversity. Yet, we know that many universities don’t reflect these changing demographics. Diversity doesn’t happen because we say we want to be more diverse. It happens because we develop strategies, craft initiatives and develop partnerships to better recruit, retain and nurture underrepresented students, faculty and staff.

For the last decade, CSUSM has worked tirelessly to create a diverse and inclusive environment. Half of our student body self-identifies as being from an underrepresented student population. Last academic year, Hispanic students, at 37 percent, accounted for our largest population — the first time ever in our history.

In fact, we are the only CSU that has increased the number of American Indian students over the last few years, and we remain the only CSU with a full-time tribal liaison and a California Indian Culture and Sovereignty
Center. I am also the only president in the system who delivers an annual Report to Tribal Nations.

We educate more former foster youth per capita than any university in the United States, and we are consistently ranked as being among the best universities for veterans. We are fulfilling our big, bold, audacious goal of raising the educational rate of our region. Through creating a culture of inclusiveness, we are ensuring that the most educationally at risk have the knowledge, skills and support that they need to get to and to get through college and lead meaningful lives and meet our region’s workforce needs.

From our numerous student support programs to our retention and graduation rates, we are creating a more knowledgeable and diverse region. Students in our College Assistance Migrant Program are retained at 95 percent annually; for students involved with our Office for Training, Research and Education in the Sciences program aimed at increasing minorities in the sciences, the six-year graduation rate is about 93 percent annually; and our six-year graduation rate for African American students has increased year after year for the past decade.

Diversity makes CSUSM a better university — for learning, for teaching, for being innovative. Our Great Colleges results show that 83 percent of you value the benefits of a diverse workplace, of a place that reflects multiple ethnicities and cultures. We are cultivating that kind of inclusion at CSUSM in our student body, staff, faculty and administration.

We have reviewed, refined and updated our hiring policies and practices to elicit more robust pools of applicants. This year, we’ll also launch diversity dialogues where the campus community will be invited to discuss a diversity-related theme, and this October will signal our first ever Diversity Awareness Month. And as many of you know, we have embarked on an
extensive diversity-mapping project. The outcomes, which we expect in spring 2015, will provide information and recommendations so that we can set goals and pathways to strengthen our culture of inclusivity.

Diversity, as we know, is about more than race and ethnicity. Our work extends to the LGBTQ community through our Safe Zones program that provides LGBTQ students and staff with a support network. And our Consent is Sexy program is an example of best practices in fostering a safe, healthy campus environment for our students.

Through our culture of inclusiveness, we are continuing to build a diverse university of people who will thrive together and learn from one another; a university that invites open discussion, embraces and respects differences and promotes a campus climate that is physically and psychologically safe.

CULTURE OF PRIDE

Great universities are a reflection of the people who work there, the faculty, staff and administrators who go above and beyond each day to support students and work together toward a common goal. Cal State San Marcos is a remarkable institution with an extraordinary culture of pride that infuses our campus. I know because 87 percent of you indicated in our Great Colleges report that you’re proud to be part of our institution.

Institutional pride has helped us through some the university’s most challenging times, and it is what drives our exceptional student service, our continued innovation, our commitment to University First.

Our pride was certainly on display during the Cocos Fires, and I remain proud of how quickly our university came together to not only protect our campus and our students, but by how quickly we rallied in the fire’s
aftermath. No other university, I am certain, could have completely
rescheduled and reassembled four commencement ceremonies in three days’
time. We worked together and got it done and, because of your herculean
efforts, because of your willingness to put aside personal plans to ensure that
our deserving graduates were able to walk across the stage and receive their
degrees, 91 percent of those students scheduled to walk did. And for those of
you who haven’t seen the commencement volunteer or “Happy” videos, let me
tell you that our entire campus was just as excited as our graduating students
and their families.

Our institutional pride is about more than serving students. We have
pride in place. We have, as I mentioned earlier, planned and built 10 buildings
in 10 years, including one of the newest, most technologically advanced,
environmentally friendly student unions in the system – where we are right
now! We will cut the ribbon on our new “gifted” Veterans Center next month,
and we will soon appoint a Veterans Services Director. Our School of Nursing
is moving to campus, and our Student Health and Counseling Services
Building will open in January, moving them back to campus after 15 years.

We are also, thanks to the approval of our Board of Trustees in May,
expanding our Clarke Field House to bring our basketball and volleyball
teams home – readying for our full NCAA status. And while there is a three-
year transition period, this new division enables a whole new level of
competition for our athletic teams – the CCAA conference.

From our athletics teams and facilities to the success of our students and
our being named a Great College to Work For, there are so many reasons to
be proud of our university. Our region and alumni certainly are. Alumni
giving was up nearly 8 percent this past year, and the number of donors to
CSUSM increased nearly 20 percent in the last year. Total gift commitments
are also up 11 percent. This rising philanthropic involvement signals a
growing culture of philanthropy, a growing culture of pride in what our
university means to our students and to our region. Our community believes
in our mission, in our work, as much as we do.

CONCLUSION

We educate and support first generation in college students, veterans,
former foster youth. We have “closed the achievement gap” in first year
retention. We reach out to our communities through student experiential
learning and faculty-applied research to make them stronger. We think
beyond the possible. We push ourselves. We stretch limits. We surpass
boundaries — all to improve our service to our students and our importance
to our region. We are committed, each of us, to being great individually and as
an institution.

CSUSM is a place of bold innovation, vast imagination, great
commitment, and unlimited promise. And we are confident, strong, and
healthy enough to appraise ourselves with an honest, even critical, eye, and to
change what we deem necessary. This university that we care about so deeply
is strengthened by your voices and your ideas.

Together we are setting the standard for excellence in public higher
education, and modeling a culture of best practices. We are energized and
focused by our strategic plan and fortified by the CULTURE THAT IS
CSUSM.

The story of CSUSM — “our story” — is one of opportunity and
courage, adaptability and resiliency, determination and tenacity, talent and
teamwork. Ours is a university premised on hard work and accountability, on
forward focus and calculated risk tasking.
Together, we have committed to the values that

- **PEOPLE MATTER,**
- **WHAT WE DO MATTERS**
- and **CULTURE MATTERS.**

Combined, those values are what made CSUSM the only public four-year university in our state, “a great college to work for.” We are leaders. We are accountable. We are supportive, inclusive and proud. That is who we are. That is the culture of CSUSM.

So imagine how much more we will achieve in the coming years:

**FORWARD TOGETHER.**