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Cal State San Marcos**

**RENEWING THE PROMISE...
*RISING ABOVE***

Report to the Community

**Thursday, February 5, 2009
Clarke Field House
7:30 – 9:00am**

Both an improbable dream and a uniquely American success story – public higher education.

I believe that public higher education IS the story of America: growing with each new generation, transforming to meet each new age, and opening new doors of opportunity along the way. As Abraham Lincoln said, public higher education is “built on behalf of the people who have invested in these institutions their hopes, their support, and their confidence.”

This nation’s public universities have occupied a unique place in the American landscape: student-centered institutions of access and opportunity. “Stewards of place,” engaging their communities... serving their regions.

In this age of global fear and pessimism, the historic promise of public higher education is of vital importance. Our mission of educating future leaders and generating partnerships for the public good has never been more critical. As YOUR public university, we need to assure you that your hopes for, your support of, and your confidence in Cal State San Marcos have been well-placed.

Since my arrival five years ago, I promised you that we would:

- Raise the region’s educational attainment by raising the expectations that more people can and should graduate high school and pursue post-secondary education;
- Engage fully with this vibrant community we serve, partnering and leading to enrich the economic, intellectual, and cultural life of this region;
- Pioneer institutional practices of accountability and innovation.

I stand before you today to report how we have not only kept these promises, but risen above them. Today I take this occasion to “renew” those promises and to commit to continue to exceed your expectations.

I ask you today to visualize all the ways that our remarkable region has been shaped by YOUR university... and I challenge you to imagine how this region will keep flourishing, even in

these difficult economic times, because Cal State San Marcos will keep renewing its promises; fulfilling its public mandate; and, always, rising above.

Rising Above in Educational Attainment

Public higher education has promised to provide access and opportunity to those who arrive at its doors. Our pledge to you has been not only to provide that access and opportunity, but to rise above that promise by actively creating pathways so that more students can arrive, qualified, at our doors. We have also risen above that promise by reaching across in partnerships to assure that our new arrivals represent the diversity – in age, race, ethnicity, and income levels – of this region.

Targeting educationally at risk students who will become first-generation in college students and who will be representative of our region is important to us as a public university – and it is important to you as a community. Why? Because, given what our region and our nation are facing, the stakes have never been higher.

We all lose when only 38% of high school seniors in our region graduate with the required preparation for college. We all lose when 1 in 4 California high school students drop out. We lose not simply because they won't have the skills our workforce needs, but also because low educational attainment increases the likelihood of underemployment, falling into poverty, becoming homeless, committing crime, and, in the process, becoming a "burden" to a region. We all lose because we have lost our region's brain trust and our region's future leadership.

But when students from diverse backgrounds have the same educational access and opportunity, we all win. Cal State San Marcos has put this community on a winning path by preparing students for college admission through our multiple Memoranda of Understanding that focus on underserved neighborhoods, Native Americans, and foster youth.

Your university is rapidly increasing enrollments among the minority groups that have made Southern California a richly multicultural region. We are close to earning federal "Hispanic Serving Institution" status, a goal I set when I arrived because this status opens up federal monies that would enrich the educational experience of all students. HSI designation is awarded to universities having at least 25 percent Hispanic full-time student enrollment and we now stand at 24.7 percent!

Similarly, last spring, we became a federally designated Asian American and Pacific Islander institution – a designation granted when student enrollment in these categories exceeds 10%. Our Native American student population continues to increase slightly and the retention rate among our African American students has risen to 74%! – higher than our overall student retention rate.

Once we recruit underrepresented students, we must retain them by creating a campus climate that nurtures people of all cultures and backgrounds. This year, I convened a campus Town Hall Meeting on Diversity to explore how we can continue to strengthen educational equity and diversity. The turnout was remarkable and so were the ideas that surfaced in our discussion

about building inclusivity. We came away with new insights and a new sense of excitement for “walking our diversity talk.”

When students matriculate at Cal State San Marcos, they are promised a 21st-century education that will prepare them to succeed in the global workforce and contribute to the economic vitality of our “Biotech Beach” Region. We are rising above that promise with a range of pioneering initiatives in math and science education. We offer a Bachelors of Science in Biotechnology degree, and we have initiated a Certificate in Biotechnology for workers who want to update their skills.

Rising Above in Community Engagement

As “stewards of place,” public universities are inextricably linked to their communities, and they all promise to advance the public good by focusing on challenges and opportunities unique to their region. But Cal State San Marcos is rising above that promise with strategic partnerships that are vigorous, transferable, and sustainable.

Our partnerships with allies like you endure regional and institutional leadership changes and ideological shifts. They are recognized as models of best practices. These partnerships prepare future leaders who embrace civic responsibility and collaboration as bedrock values. And these partnerships are mutually beneficial: the university advances the region’s priorities and long-term interests while the region advances the university’s educational mission.

Our nationally-acclaimed Community Service Learning Program continues to rise above its promise that we will simultaneously enrich our communities and enrich our students’ educational experience. This past year, our students’ service total rose to 104 thousand hours, valued at 830 thousand dollars!

YOUR university is not just “of” this community; it is IN this community! Across our region, our Chamber Champions program now has risen to 72 volunteers; we have filled more than 230 seats at chamber events and attended over 80 chamber mixers!

Our Osher Lifelong Learning Institute – which debuted in 2004, the same year as my presidency! – started out in one location, with 249 members. Today, the Institute has spread to 15 locations with 885 members! The Osher Foundation was so impressed with this phenomenal trajectory that it awarded us a 1-million-dollar endowment last January for reaching the 500-member benchmark, and we are today within 115 members of qualifying for a second million-dollar endowment at the 1,000 member mark.

Over the years, this community has told us, “You gotta have art!” This past year, we installed our first public art in over a decade, two sculptures by Luiseño artist Robert Freeman. An abstract piece titled “Focus” welcomes visitors to campus from the corner of Campus Way and Craven. And a life-size and rather formidable Tukwut, Luseño for Cougar, our campus mascot, holds court in the Tukwut Courtyard in Craven Hall.

Public art, like public higher education, belongs in the public domain, accessible to everyone, inspirational to all. When we share art with the community, we convey our university values of inclusivity and openness. With that in mind, I have convened a new Public Art Task Force, and I have charged its members with formulating a plan for the acquisition and placement of public art throughout our campus. I agree with Mayor Desmond when he comments that he wants San Marcos to not only be a place where people come for education but a place where educated people come to live and to enjoy the culture of this city.

Rising Above in Institutional Accountability and Innovation

When I joined this community in 2004, I did not say, “Trust me.” I said, “Listen to what I say; watch what I do; and I feel certain that your trust will follow.” I focused on accountability as an institutional priority because it would enable us to earn public trust – your trust - as well as to make informed decisions and measure progress in reaching our goals. Public universities, as “stewards of place,” are guardians of the public trust. We ask our states and our communities to invest in us. For that investment, we promise fiscal responsibility and verifiable outcomes.

Cal State San Marcos has risen above that promise by emerging as a national pioneer in institutional accountability and innovation. We gather an array of data to measure our progress in key mission areas. We constantly learn from those data, and we use them to make tactical decisions and long term strategic plans that will best serve the public good. And, all along the way, we share those data with you - our public.

That accountability data assures you that our operations are sound, our fiscal stewardship strong, our directions clear and constant. That data should give you a sense of pride that **YOUR** university establishes benchmarks, sets goals, and shares our progress.

In 2007, as we became a leader in the higher education accountability movement, WASC, our accrediting body, praised us in their accreditation report of our institutional capacity for being a “data driven institution” by noting, “There is a clear commitment to using evidence-based reviews and analysis at multiple levels and across multiple arenas, and to link analyses with improvements.”

In April a WASC team will visit our campus for the second of their two part reviews – this one on Educational Effectiveness. Public universities often view such visits with anxiety and dread. YOUR university rises above that mindset – we view such visits as opportunities to shine and to grow! When the WASC team arrives, we will be ready. We will show how effective we are at engaging learners and transforming them into global citizens, critical thinkers, and leaders. And again we will provide evidence of how key decisions in the management of our university are driven by data and shaped by careful planning.

In 2007, when we became one of only 17 pilot campuses nationally for the “College Portrait” initiative, we operationalized our commitment that a public institution of higher education must be accountable to all of its publics:

- Prospective students and their families can determine how our educational programs compare with other schools.

- Our peer institutions can see how we perform in key areas like outreach and recruitment, retention, graduation, student engagement, student-faculty ratios, average class size
- Voters can be reassured that Cal State San Marcos is safeguarding the public trust and contributing to the public good.

Along with institutional accountability, Cal State San Marcos has emerged as a leader in institutional innovation. We make better use of our existing resources, and we seek new ways to improve our operations. We are especially proud of our stellar track record in the area of environmental sustainability, where Cal State San Marcos routinely outperforms older and larger universities.

This year, we were one of the 16 CSU campuses chosen to participate in the “solar power” partnership with the California Department of General Services and SunEdison. With support from this public-private partnership, we are installing a photovoltaic system in the form of solar panels on campus rooftops. The system produces zero greenhouse gases, and it will ensure that over 20 percent of all our power comes from green sources.

Cal State San Marcos was selected as one of this year’s “Flex Your Power” statewide award winners in the “Peak Demand Response” category for our innovative methods to help stabilize the local San Diego Gas & Electric grid in the summer of 2007. The result was a peak demand savings of 9% of our normal usage. In notifying us of our award, the “Flex Your Power” committee said, quote, “While we received many strong applications this year, California State University San Marcos stood out above the rest!” unquote

And, in what has become a campus tradition, Cal State San Marcos triumphed in the Environmental Protection Agency’s “Recyclemania” contest by winning a national “Grand Champion” title for the fourth year in a row! This year, we faced our toughest test yet, with 400 universities competing, twice the number from last year. And we emerged victorious with an astounding 76% recycling rate.

Call To Action

Fifteen days ago, this nation entered a new era of change and promise for the 21st century under the leadership of our 44th President – Barack Obama. In his inaugural address our new president made it clear that education is a cornerstone of America’s future. Further, he charged, “We will transform our schools and colleges and universities to meet the demands of a new age.” Last week, I carried that charge to our campus – to not just get through this economic crisis, but to rise above it, with a sense of urgency, and to be even more engaged, creative and innovative in serving students and this region.

I began this morning renewing our promises of educational attainment, community engagement, and institutional accountability and committing to you that we would continue to rise above these promises. And, as President Obama has asked us all to “rise above” past issues and future challenges, so, I ask you to join Cal State San Marcos, a 21st century university, YOUR university, as we lead the change for our region.

Your presence in this audience speaks volumes about your dedication to this extraordinary public university. However, YOUR university needs more than your attendance at this report, it needs your voice to carry the message that public higher education can lead us through the surmounting challenges we face. It needs your action to advocate for OUR support not just to maintain, but to flourish. It needs your commitment, not only in words and deeds, but in resources. And it needs your *presence* at campus events where our community can gather with students, faculty, and staff to plan; to problem solve; and to celebrate achievements.

Conclusion: “Roaring Into Our 20’s!”

In 2010, Cal State San Marcos will cross a milestone – our 20th anniversary. In university years, we are still young. But while we are “still young”, we have had a phenomenal trajectory, and while experience has matured us, we still have the youthful exuberance and the optimism that makes everything seem possible.

So, with your renewed commitment to us, indeed, with your commitment to rise above that with extraordinary actions; with your acknowledgment of the important role we must play in collaboration with you for this region’s future, and with the excitement of our approaching 20th anniversary, we have set our anniversary theme and we will put it into action beginning today.

Cal State San Marcos will not just promise to *advance* into our 20s. We will rise above that. We will, with you, in just eleven short months, celebrate our 20th anniversary by “**ROAR-ing Into Our 20s!**”