

Academic Assembly Remarks  
Thursday, January 15, 2009  
Arts Building 240  
9:00 – 10:30 a.m.

President Karen S. Haynes

Good morning! And thank you, Dr. McDaniel, for inviting me to address this year's Academic Assembly. I always look forward to this occasion because it gives me an opportunity to speak in greater depth than I can at Senate meetings about our recent accomplishments, our future plans, and the "big picture" issues that frame our plans and fuel our accomplishments!

When I spoke at Convocation in August, I talked about Cal State San Marcos as an engaged campus. I noted that we engage:

- our students and other learners at all stages of life,
- our faculty and staff,
- the regional community that has pinned its hopes on us, and
- the greater public that expects much from us as a public institution.

Today, I will tell you how we are engaging all our constituencies in the key areas of diversity, educational attainment, and accountability. We are intensifying our efforts on these fronts, even in the face of the ongoing state budget crisis – and I'll say a few words about how we are navigating that crisis by strengthening our campus climate. We are emerging as a model institution that generates "best practices," and we are collaborating effectively, and communicating openly, to move this institution to the forefront of public higher education.

Cal State San Marcos continues to increase our enrollments among the groups that have made Southern California a richly multicultural region. We are just inches from earning federal "Hispanic Serving Institution" status, a goal I set when I arrived as the new president. That designation is awarded to institutions

for having at least a 25 percent Hispanic full-time student enrollment. Our Hispanic undergraduate population now stands at 24.7 percent!

We currently enroll 79 Native American students, an increase of 3% over the past 3 years. We have become a federally designated Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander institution – a designation granted when student enrollment in these categories exceeds 10%. And the retention rate among our African American students has risen to 73.7% from 68.6% the previous year! That is higher than the overall student retention rate of 70.4%, and it is due in large part to the efforts of our African American Faculty and Staff Association to welcome and mentor our African American students.

Once we recruit underrepresented students, we must retain them by creating a campus climate that nurtures people of all cultures and backgrounds. This year, acting on a suggestion I received at a faculty open forum, I convened a campus Diversity Town Hall Meeting to explore how we can continue to strengthen diversity and educational equity. The turnout was remarkable, a standing-room-only crowd of nearly 200, 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.

I will follow up with a Diversity Town Hall next month, on February 16th, and I will continue to share the results of our diversity efforts with regular reports on my new “From The Desk of Karen Haynes” presidential Webpage.

Targeting students who are at risk, who will be first-generation college graduates, and who are truly representative of our region is important to us as a public university and important to the publics we serve. Everyone loses when only 38% of high school seniors in San Diego County graduate with the required preparation for college.

Everyone loses 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 because low educational attainment increases the likelihood of falling into poverty, becoming homeless, suffering from undiagnosed and untreated mental illnesses, committing crime, and, in the process, becoming a “burden” to a region in services needed and income and property tax dollars lost.

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 Memoranda of Understanding with school districts that have high percentages of underrepresented populations and low college going rates. And we have developed MOUs with San Diego and Riverside Counties as well as with San Pasqual Academy to ensure access and support for our foster youth.

Our participation in the Voluntary System of Accountability's "College Portrait" initiative has made us accountable to the public, and it has given us the capacity to make informed, strategic decisions and to measure our progress in reaching our goals.

The most recent data in our "College Portrait" show that we have increased our remediation rates: 80% of our students who needed remediation completed the coursework to become proficient, which is a significant improvement from 70% the prior year. This advance is due in large part to the efforts of our First-Year Academic Coordinator, Dr. Geoffrey Gilmore, our First-Year Programs, and faculty who have engaged these students.

But our retention rates for first-time freshmen remain flat. Only 70% of our first-time freshmen who began in Fall 2007 returned in Fall 2008, and a large number of those who do not return are students of color. We're taking steps to understand why so many leave after their first year. Improvement in this area will remain a top priority. We will continue to identify best practices, expand those we already have, and adopt those we find at other universities.

Student engagement is a key factor in boosting retention and graduation rates. As part of our commitment to accountability, we have been participating in the National Survey of Student Engagement since its inception in 2000. This annual survey asks first-year and senior students about specific educational practices that are highly correlated with learning outcomes and personal development.

The results of the 2008 survey are very gratifying. Here are just a few examples:

- 69% of our first-year students made a class presentation, compared with 43% of all CSU first-year students and 33% of the entire survey sample.
- 60% of our first-year students worked with other students on projects during class, compared with 49% of all CSU first-year students and 43% of the entire survey sample.

- 76% of our senior students used an electronic medium to discuss or complete an assignment, compared with 61% of all CSU senior students and 60% of the entire survey sample.
- 68% of our senior students wrote at least one paper or report of 20 pages or more, compared with 49% of all CSU senior students and 50% of the entire survey sample.

Next month, a WASC team will visit campus for an exhaustive Educational Effectiveness review. Public universities often view such visits with anxiety and dread. We view them as opportunities to shine and to grow! And we have you, our faculty, to thank for that.

When the WASC team arrives, we will be ready to show them the excellence that you have helped us attain. We will demonstrate how effective we are at engaging learners and transforming them into global citizens, critical thinkers, and leaders in their fields and communities. We will provide evidence of continuous assessment, and we will demonstrate how a learning organization uses data to improve its performance.

As California's budget crisis worsened, we knew that our campus community needed communication and information continuously. We launched a two-pronged initiative. First, we began a series of "Budget Forums," open to the whole campus, where students, faculty, and staff have an opportunity to hear the latest news directly from me and voice their concerns and their ideas. Second, we created a "Budget Central" Webpage that features up-to-date budget reports from the state, the CSU system, and our own campus.

In the Governor's 2009-2010 Budget that was released on January 9<sup>th</sup>, CSU was hit hard: \$66.3 million in budget cuts proposed mid-year for 2008-2009 would now be permanent. That same day, Chancellor Reed announced a range of cost-saving measures aimed at maintaining jobs and student access to quality programs. Those measures include the suspension of state-funded design and construction projects, including our own Social and Behavioral Sciences Building, which is temporarily on hold.

We have never before faced a budget crisis of this magnitude. But we have successfully navigated previous crises by being prudent in our fiscal practices and resilient in our outlook. And our "University First" philosophy has kept us energized and focused on moving this institution forward together. Our next Budget Forum takes place Thursday, January 29, from 12 noon to 1 p.m.

here in Room 240 of the Arts Building. I invite you to take that opportunity to ask questions and contribute ideas.

This Academic Assembly is a campus tradition in which we look ahead to a new semester with confidence. Later this morning, we will take part in another campus tradition to celebrate the excellence and the dedication of our community of scholars and teachers.

Cal State San Marcos is a great university because we have great faculty and staff. If you need proof, please join me at 11 o'clock in The Dome when I bestow the President's Awards for Faculty and Staff for meritorious achievement in teaching, in scholarship and creative output, and in service to our campus and our community.