

ACADEMIC ASSEMBLY REMARKS

Thursday, January 14, 2010

ARTS 240

9:00 – 10:30 a.m.

President Karen S. Haynes

OPENING REMARKS

Good morning! Thank you to Dr. McDaniels for extending the invitation to address all of you again this year. It is good to begin another spring semester and I welcome all of you back and hope that you enjoyed peace over the holiday break.

As we look ahead to this new spring semester, the overriding challenge will continue to be the state's economy and our budget. We should not underestimate or mask the challenges that we are facing but I continue to believe that we are facing them extremely well. At Convocation in August, I talked about how we are moving beyond conversations about fiscal restraints and focusing on what is important: our obligation to continue to engage in our community, identifying and meeting educational needs that add positive value to our region.

I know that some of you may think that I have been too positive in my outlook and in my remarks on the budget. I know that budget cuts and furloughs have caused unusual tension and complexity this past fall. I understand that multiple and unexpected fee increases have hurt some of our students. But if you think I have been too upbeat or overly optimistic let me say to you that, first, I believe it is my role as President to be the voice that provides encouragement and confidence during difficult times such as these and that, second, and very importantly, positive things are continuing to take place here at CSUSM! I have countless reasons to be positive! In fact, in just a minute I'll be sharing just a few of those reasons with you.

But first, I want to remind you to attend my open Budget Forum now rescheduled to January 28 and delayed by a week from my announced one so I can bring any news and updates from the system. At that time, I will share our sense of whatever new information or prognosis the CSU senses from the Governor's proposed budget for 2010/11.

Standing here today at the midpoint of the 2009/10 academic year and at the beginning of what is certainly a momentous and significant milestone in the life of Cal State San Marcos - our 20th anniversary year - I am pleased to see that we are continuing to move forward with a shared vision, innovative thinking, timely investments, and a great deal of hard work.

We have not allowed this budget crisis to get the best of us. Nor have we hunkered down. With our eye continually trained on advancing the University's strategic priorities, not only have we met challenges head on but have we risen above them.

Academic Excellence

Delivering academic excellence is at the core of our work at Cal State San Marcos. Thanks to your work we made significant strides this year.

We began 2009 with our WASC Team hard at work as they prepared for the March visit from the WASC Accrediting Commission. The achievement of this WASC report and a seven year time line until our next is very extraordinary for such a young institution – I do not take our outcome for granted, and know that it represents the spirit, work, talent, energy of many. Please accept my thanks and congratulations again to all who played a role in preparing the report and hosting the team while they were on campus.

2009 has undoubtedly been a stellar year for faculty scholarship. Your research has garnered support from a spectrum of agencies and research institutes. This year, faculty received \$8.9 million in research grants and contracts – more than similarly sized sister CSU campuses – reaffirming CSUSM as a thought leader in this region and beyond. In fact, we are already on track to meet – if not beat - this amount for 2010/11.

Because we focused on it and directed resources towards it, we have improved the percentage of students who become successfully remediated in math and/or English – we're now at 85 percent, up from 80 percent last year.

Our commitment to addressing retention rates of first-year students has also seen positive results – up four percent to 78.4 from 74.4 percent last year.

Educational Equity & Diversity

I have, as you know, been focused on our strategic priority of diversity and educational equity for several years now. Building on our past activities and successes, last November, I established the Committee on Diversity on Hiring to focus on our goal to assure the most diverse and qualified pools of applicants. The decision to create the new committee came directly out of discussions and recommendations from the two Diversity Forums previously held. The Committee on Diversity on Hiring will produce an action plan to address both staff and faculty hires, retention and support for career advancement.

Additionally, I am pleased to tell you that Hispanic full-time enrollment has reached 27 percent, meeting the criteria for us to apply for H.S.I. designation. This is particularly important because this status opens up federal monies that have the potential to enrich the educational experience of all students.

Looking Forward – Community Partnerships

These accomplishments are just a small number of all of the individual and institutional accomplishments we have seen over the last year. It is clear to me that despite the dreary economic climate we will continue to build on this momentum to reach our future vision.

At Cal State San Marcos, we are in the business of reaching out. We reach out through education, research, and community service. And now, more than ever, it is important that we continue our work to reach out to strengthen and further expand our local and regional partnerships. That's why I have been focused on working with Neal Hoss, VPUA, to create a strong, new Philanthropic Board. This board, comprised of community leaders dedicated to raising funds to further our strategic initiatives, is now working alongside with staff in University Advancement to engage with the community and identify new opportunities for giving. That board, working with me, will help us set a goal for a major campaign, to culminate in our 25th anniversary – which really isn't that far away!

We have seen how powerful these partnerships can be. CSUSM at Temecula is thriving only because of the support we have received from our community partners in Southwest Riverside. In fact, the Temecula Valley Unified School District is leasing us a new facility on the grounds of the Sparkman Alternative Education Center for only a dollar a year for the next ten years!

What's more, the City of Murrieta recently approved a \$200,000 grant of redevelopment funds while the City of Temecula recently approved a \$3 million dollar redevelopment grant to pay for renovations to the building. This success at CSUSM at Temecula represents the power of a shared vision and the motivation of many people who are eager to transform a region with opportunities for public higher education.

Our large and broadly representative President's Advisory Council continues to become both more knowledgeable about us and engaged with us as our advocates and ambassadors throughout our region and with Sacramento.

Looking Forward - Student Life

Actively engaging our students must remain a priority. We know that student life activities play an important role in empowering students to make their own decisions and helping them gain vital experience and skills to lead them on the path to a positive and enriching future.

Student housing is one facet of campus life that will be improved upon in the immediate future. There are immense benefits to students living on campus – student who live on campus typically do better academically than students who commute and they are more participatory in educational, cultural, and recreational activities that enhance the college experience.

We only have room to house 625 students at the University Village Apartments – less than 7 percent of our total student population. That's why we were so pleased when the San Marcos City Council recently approved plans for The University District, a 190-acre planned development located on both sides of Twin Oaks Valley Road. The University District will feature mixed-use of residential, retail, and dining establishment. A key component of the plan is student housing area with 800 to 1,000 condominium-like units. The first phase of the project is the student housing component which will break ground in 2011.

Athletics is another important facet of student life that we will be growing over the next few years. This past fall season has been one of the most successful in CSUSM Athletics history. Our teams are not only competing in national tournaments but they are winning them. But we don't have all of the facilities and fields for them to play and practice on here at home.

During the fall, we broke ground on practice softball fields thanks to the generosity of several individuals and companies. These fields have been a long time coming and it's wonderful to see them finally becoming a reality.

The softball fields are just the first step toward moving CSUSM Athletics into the NCAA as a Division II school. This is a goal that will not only serve the entire campus but will draw the community to campus, creating a stronger sense of school spirit and pride.

CONCLUSION

So as you can tell, I am and I will remain very positive about Cal State San Marcos because we are doing amazing work here – you are doing amazing work here. Considering the many challenges of the last year, we have remained actively engaged and committed to our

strategic priorities. And together we are striving to transform challenges into real and meaningful opportunities, building upon strengths both as a University and a community.

Our success over the last twenty years is the product of many decisions and actions taken at critical junctures. And it is your innovative thinking, your entrepreneurial spirit, and your commitment to Cal State San Marcos that will continue to define this University into the future because, obviously, this is another critical juncture in the life of this institution.

The heart of this University lies in its people and I look forward to bestowing the President's Awards for Faculty and Staff for meritorious achievements following this assembly. Thank you for all that you do, every day, for the students of CSUSM. Your commitment makes the University's mission possible.