



## Looking back and looking ahead

By John D. Welty  
January 14, 2013

I appreciate this opportunity to speak to the University community for our spring, 2013 Assembly; my final Assembly after 22 years as part of the Fresno State family.

As you might imagine, the past several months have been an especially nostalgic time for me as I have remembered, and savored, and yes, in a few instances, tried to forget – certain moments over the last two decades!

During transitional times such as this, it's common to take stock of where we have been, where we are and where we are going. As I look back over our 102-year history, it's clear that this university's base is as rock-solid as they come; a foundation built to last.

Looking ahead, I see a very bright future that is extremely bright. The reason for my optimism is that I believe we have the right people in place – all of you – with the skills and the desire to serve our students in Central California.

As for the “where we are” assessment, I can say for the first time in several years that I feel good about the semester ahead. Thanks to the efforts of many of you to educate and inform voters, the passage of Proposition 30 last November provides us some breathing room in responding to the state's previous disinvestment in public higher education.

There will be challenges ahead and we will continue to operate with significantly fewer state dollars than five years ago. But Fresno State continues to have a strong appeal throughout the state of California. A record number of first-time freshman applications were received for the fall of 2013 – 17,294 applications for the freshman class. This is a 10% increase over last year which was also a record. Our transfer student applicant pool experienced a whopping 26% increase over last year. And the 6,735 upper division transfer student applications also set a university record.

It is clear that students want a higher education and they want to come to Fresno State. Our region needs a more highly educated citizenry and the educational experiences that are necessary to help them be productive citizens and help address the state and this regions problems.

As you know, Governor Brown released his proposed state budget last week. The budget contains better news than we have had in several years. The Governor proposes a \$250 million increase for the California State University. Now, one hundred and twenty five million of that amount replaces the amount that we lost this year when legislation rolled back the 9% student fee increase.

The remaining \$125 million represents new dollars for the coming year. However, it's important to recognize the CSU estimates that the system will face about \$48.1 million in mandatory cost increases for health benefits and related areas for the coming year. In addition, \$10 million of the increase is set aside to fund so-called "bottleneck courses" through online education.

Thus, our real increase systemwide is in the neighborhood of \$65 million.

The Governor also has been very clear about his expectation that fees not be increased for students. In addition, there is language in the budget proposal about the system assuming responsibility for debt service in the future and an expectation that the system entirely fund benefits for any new positions beyond this year's level, which could have further negative financial consequences for us.

The governor also has proposed that CSU employees pay a share of health benefits. The budget proposal is certainly better news than we have had, but not a dramatic increase, given the needs that we face as a system. We will have more news on the budget in the coming days as our CSU Board meets and Chancellor White reviews additional details on the impact.

Also before us are major issues which the federal government must address. While the fiscal cliff was avoided, Congress delayed addressing funding reductions until March 1 and so, we must remain vigilant to assure that higher education is not disproportionately cut.

What we do know for certain is that the passage of Proposition 30 means that Fresno State will not face a \$13.2 million permanent reduction in state funding this year. Instead, we have an immediate one-time reduction from our 2012-13 budget of approximately \$7.1 million due to the tuition fee rollback that was mandated by the Legislature if Proposition 30 passed.

That means that we have the opportunity to reallocate the approximately \$6 million in carry-forward dollars previously set aside for the potential trigger reductions, if Proposition 30 had failed.

I have consulted with the University Budget Committee on a plan to redistribute the dollars to the campus. It will include returning dollars to campus units, addressing high-priority deferred maintenance needs and funding high-priority initiatives in our "Plan for Excellence."

Specifically we will return \$3 million to the units from which the funds were originally acquired, we will allocate \$1.5 million for deferred maintenance projects and about \$400,000 to fund key initiatives in our strategic Plan for Excellence; and we will set aside the remaining \$1.1 million for the Level A committee to recommend how the money should be spent.

This spring semester, there are several bright spots for our campus I want to share them with you briefly:

- We have a new Dean for the College of Science and Mathematics, Dr. Susan Elrod. I believe Dr. Elrod has joined us today. Dr. Elrod, please stand – welcome!
- We have selected a new director for the Office of Institutional Effectiveness – Dr. Angel Sanchez, who will join us on March 1.
- We will continue the searches for 55 new tenure track faculty, across 39 disciplines. Provost Covino and I are committed to recruiting a new class of faculty that reflects both diversity and distinction. I am grateful to the search committees that are keeping these values in view, and am pleased to note that the candidates are very promising.
  - So far, the Craig School of Business and the Biology department have extended offers that reflect diversity of backgrounds: four are faculty of color and three are female. It's important to note that diversity hires are occurring in two fields that traditionally have had difficulty attracting diverse candidates.

Special thanks go to the Faculty Affairs Diversity Team, which has developed a process for helping to ensure that both diversity and distinction are fully considered as we fill these positions. Members of the team are Associate Vice President Michael Caldwell, Associate Provost Lynnette Zelezny, Professors Alex Espinoza, Juan Carlos Gonzalez, Marnel Niles-Goins, Lorenzo Rios, and Ms. Diane Volpp.

- I also am very pleased to share with you that I have approved a new diversity plan which was recommended by the President's Commission on Human Relations and Equity, which was chaired by Vice-President Cindy Teniente-Matson. As part of her ACE Fellowship, Dr. Jody Hironaka-Juteau will work with Vice-President Matson to begin implementation this spring. The approved plan may be found at [www.fresnostate.edu/academics/diversity/pchre/](http://www.fresnostate.edu/academics/diversity/pchre/).
- The Diversity Plan identifies as one of its four major themes, the recruitment, development and support of employees. In order to address this priority, we are establishing a Center for the Recruitment and Retention of Underrepresented Faculty, Staff and Administrators.

The purpose of the center will be to:

- ✓ Develop programs and activities that are designed to encourage underrepresented students on our campus to pursue careers as faculty members and administrators.
- ✓ Provide assistance and advice to hiring units within the University to attract underrepresented populations to apply for positions.

- ✓ To develop a pool of prospective candidates for positions with emphasis on candidates who have come from Central California.
- ✓ To develop activities that assist underrepresented employees to advance their careers within the University.

I have appointed Dean Luz Gonzalez as part-time director of the center for 18 months to develop an implementation plan and to launch initial activities. She will report to me and work collaboratively with senior leaders of the campus.

- This semester, two building projects will be completed:
  - The new 4,800-square-foot Rue and Gwen Gibson Market will be open, and stocking our favorite Fresno State products, by the end of February.
  - The innovative Foster Farms Poultry Education and Research Facility will open later in the spring, housing an eco-friendly research and training center that replicates professional poultry production for students and faculty in the Jordan College.
- Two other major projects are moving forward.
  - Construction is expected to begin in late summer or early fall on a faculty office/laboratory building near the Aquatics Center. It will house Physical Therapy and some Athletics coaching faculty. In addition, renovations to the former North Gym Pool are expected to be completed by the end of February. It will become a multipurpose space that can seat up to 500 for meetings and other events.
  - Also, schematics have been approved for the Jordan Research Center, which will provide research facilities for the colleges of Agricultural Sciences and Technology, Science and Mathematics and Engineering. The building will be located at Barstow and Woodrow Avenues. Construction is expected to be complete by fall 2015. This project is made possible by the gift from the Jordan family. Replacement hay storage and truck scale facilities are under construction and will be completed this spring.
- You may have noticed grading site work and utilities under way at Campus Pointe. That is in preparation for the retail portion of the project. This phase of the development will include a theater and 170,000 square feet of retail and office space. This project is being accomplished through a public-private partnership between the California State University, Fresno Association and Kashian Enterprises. Construction of individual retail building pads will begin this spring and the developer is in the process of finalizing several retail leases. Construction on the hotel and senior housing projects are expected to begin next year.

- We will also vigorously pursue methods for financing our \$100-million-dollar infrastructure project, which has been delayed by the state’s inability to pursue capital bond funding as a result of its fiscal condition. Our infrastructure is very old and fragile. The recent 72-hour power outage made that fragility very, very real. We have to develop a solution as soon as reasonably possible. We want to thank Administrative Services staff and many others around campus who worked during this 72-hour outage.
- We will take steps to bring stability and predictability to our funding for the future. The Level A review committee will make recommendations to me in February with regard to changes in Level A allocations. I will review these recommendations with the University Budget Committee and senior campus leadership prior to making final decisions this spring.
- Meanwhile, the University Budget Committee is nearing its recommendations for the Level B allocation process for academic affairs.
- We will assess where we stand on our carry-forward situation as soon as next year’s budget is adopted and we will move forward to make one-time allocations to address critical fiscal issues. It is my goal to leave the university with the knowledge that our fiscal house is in better shape than it has been for the last five years.
- We are in the final stages of completing an information technology strategic plan covering six major areas: analytics, digital content, instructional technology and learning spaces, mobility and BYOD (a new acronym for “bring your own device”—every month is a new era here), communication, collaboration and engagement, and effective services. We will complete consultation with the campus community this month and then will make revisions before taking it to the Information and Educational Technology Coordinating Committee for adoption.
- Our efforts toward comprehensive internationalization continue. Last fall international enrollment grew for the first time in nearly a decade, a trend that we are confident will continue. The University is in the process of actively expanding study abroad opportunities and forging new partnerships with institutions abroad. This past fall we signed our first agreement with an institution in Taiwan. Fresno State also has remained competitive in producing faculty, staff, and students – chosen for their academic merit and leadership potential – who have received Fulbright awards.
- I’m pleased that our Supplemental Instruction effort has proven to be a high impact practice for improving student academic performance in specifically targeted courses. In the fall 2012, Supplemental Instruction was offered in 10 course subjects, covering a total of 21 course sections, and working with 12 faculty members from various

departments on campus. Supplemental Instruction served over 800 unique students with over 4,000 total visits. Students who attended SI had higher exam grades than those who did not.

Analysis of student performance data through the Office of Institutional Effectiveness shows that the mean final course grade for regularly participating students in Supplemental Instruction is higher in comparison to those students who did not participate. In the spring of 2012, the mean course grade for SI participants was 2.92 in comparison to 1.87 for others who did not participate. The same trend held true in fall 2011: 2.72 grade point average for those involved in SI compared to 2.03 for those who did not participate.

Supplemental Instruction is an effective strategy to improve student academic performance in historically high failure rate core courses; therefore, we are planning to expand to additional courses. Faculty interested in learning more about SI may contact Tosha Guiffrida or Mai Kou Vang in the Learning Center.

- Another example of our staff's fine work to help students is the record \$80 million dollars in financial aid that's been disbursed this spring to approximately 15,000 students, or about 70 percent of our student population.
- This spring, we will celebrate a major milestone in the life of our university – the completion of the Campaign for Fresno State! As you know, we have been diligently striving to reach our \$200 million goal and I can tell you with certainty that we'll have good news about that after we conclude the campaign on March 31. I'd like to thank all of you who have contributed and worked to further the Campaign. I know that conducting a campaign of this nature during the nation's worst economic downturn in decades has not been easy, but the Campaign has been key to transforming our campus in many ways. Every corner of this campus has been touched by the success of the campaign.

The Campaign for Fresno State has been a testimony to the support the university draws from alumni and the community, as well as donors throughout the state and across the country. To date, more than 32,000 individuals and corporations have made nearly 133,000 gifts. Our donors have provided funds for scholarships that allow students to stay in school, rather than drop out. Donations support faculty in their research and expand programs. And donors, such as Foster Farms that I previously mentioned, help us build much-needed facilities.

- I believe that we have strengthened and brought some stability to the Mountain West Conference for our Athletics program. I am pleased that Boise State will stay with the Mountain West, and I, for one, hope the perpetual churning of membership in athletics conferences will stop for a period of time. I believe we have strengthened our program for student-athletes through our Mountain West membership. I know we have made an immediate impact on the Mountain West, and with the leadership of

Coach Tim DeRuyter, this past fall our football program won the team's first conference championship in 13 years and energized tens of thousands of Bulldog fans.

- Also this spring, a CSU trustee committee will be conducting the search for the eighth president of Fresno State. I'm sure you are all interested in how this is going to work, so let me explain: CSU Trustee Pete Mehas will chair the Trustees' Committee for the Selection of the President. The other trustee members of the selection committee will include Rebecca Eisen, Hugo Morales, J. Lawrence Norton, as well as Trustee Chair Bob Linscheid and CSU Chancellor Timothy White.

Board policy requires the Board chair to appoint an advisory group to the trustees' committee. The Advisory Committee to the Trustees' Committee for the Selection of the President is composed of representatives of faculty, students and alumni, as well as a member of the campus advisory board, all of whom are selected by the constituent groups. Also on the advisory committee is a vice president or academic dean from the campus, a president of another CSU campus and community members selected by the chancellor. Both committees function as one group.

Members of the Advisory Committee for the Selection of the President include:

- ✓ Faculty members Dr. Nora Chapman, director of the Smittcamp Family Honors College and professor of Classics and Humanities, and Dr. David Schechter, professor and department chair of Political Science.
- ✓ Dr. Lynn Williams, chair of the Academic Senate.
- ✓ Dean Luz Gonzalez of the College of Social Sciences.
- ✓ Staff member Shirley Staton of Accounting Services.
- ✓ ASI President Arthur Montejano, representing students.
- ✓ Brad Fischer, representing alumni.
- ✓ Dr. Katherine Flores, representing the University Advisory Board.
- ✓ Community members Robert Oliver, Bill Smittcamp, Peter Weber and Mayor Ashley Swearengin, and
- ✓ Jeff Armstrong, president of Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo.

The first meeting of the search committee will be held in an open forum here in the Satellite Student Union from 10 a.m. to noon on Monday, Feb. 11. This is the only meeting of the committee that will be open.

The purpose of the meeting in an open forum is to review the role of the committee, receive comments and input from the public and campus community, explain the search process and confidentiality, confirm the schedule of meetings, discuss preferred attributes of the next president, review the descriptions and needs of the campus and presidential position, and discuss any other business related to the search process including probably what the former president didn't do right!

The committee will work over the next several months reviewing applications and will conduct interviews. It is expected that the new president will be selected by the CSU Board of Trustees at their May meeting. As I have said previously, I will remain on the job until approximately July 31 to provide for a transition with the new president.

Now, let's look ahead. In just a few months, we will know the name of the next president of Fresno State. Where will he or she come from? What background and experience will she or he possess? How will he or she impact this campus?

I know each of you is asking these questions. Sorry, but I don't have any inside information and I will not have any inside information. I'm asking the same questions!

And while I don't have answers, I know the next president will step onto a campus that is steeped in excellence and brimming with potential. I also know that the campus community will welcome the new president with open arms and be prepared to provide the support necessary to continue to grow our university.

I am so proud that everyone is working so hard to make sure that Fresno State continues to be an excellent university. We can take great pride in our institutional accomplishments and we can take even greater pride in the accomplishments of our students and graduates. Because of your efforts, they are excelling. We can't say enough that they are making a difference in our region, state, nation and the world.

As I move into my final months, I have a heightened appreciation for this university's impact on students, as well as faculty and staff and our region.

I can remember many occasions in which students and alums have told me or written me notes about their positive experiences with their faculty or staff members. I know we have helped many discover their talents, abilities and passions. I know we have unlocked the potential of thousands of students.

For example, Bob Wagner, a graduate from 50 years ago, who recently reconnected with Fresno State, said it was in the classrooms at Fresno State that he discovered he was good at presenting ideas and could communicate well. That led to a successful career in sales and sales management with national companies.

This past December we received a \$5 million anonymous bequest for scholarships from a graduate in the 1950s. This alum expressed his deep appreciation for two faculty members who touched his life and allowed him to discover the talents he needed to be successful. His desire is for students today and in the future to benefit from our excellent faculty in the same way.

And earlier this year, we were so proud that our students and faculty were part of the international team that announced a breakthrough in the quest to discover the origins of the universe. Physics Professor Dr. Yongsheng Gao heads Fresno State's participation in this cutting-edge, experimental high-energy physics research.



For other students, discovery is more personal. It happens when residence hall-mates learn to share a room for the first time. Or in the thrill of mastering a complex mathematical formula that unlocks the next level of understanding. Or perhaps in finding a passion for serving the less-fortunate through Richter Center volunteer program.

Our community also allows our fine faculty and our exceptional staff to experience the thrill of discovery – in teaching, research and solving office and organizational dilemmas.

I am so pleased that Fresno State offers the opportunity for exciting and productive discoveries. This benefits us all!

In reflecting on my experiences at Fresno State, I believe one of the defining qualities of this special place is the diverse fabric of our community, and the opportunities we have each day to learn from each other.

Like our Central California region, we are a university filled with people from regions throughout the country and the world. We have a variety of backgrounds, ethnic heritages, cultures, preferences and ages. We are a university of opportunity for students who are the first in their families to set foot on a college campus. We have multiple interests and strengths.

Fresno State must continue to be a leader in welcoming all people and all points of view. We must continue to treasure our diversity, learn from one another and lead our region by example.

I have found in my travels that Fresno State students, faculty, staff and alumni are recognized nationally and internationally for their accomplishments. I've enumerated our pride points at many of our Faculty-Staff Assemblies, and I love to brag about them to our donors and friends.

These achievements are not a result of good luck. Planning, purpose and persistence are so ingrained in our campus culture that their fruit is a list of distinctions that almost never ends.

In closing, it has been my privilege for almost 22 years to be part of this amazing university. The ongoing **discovery**, the fascinating **diversity** and the incredible **distinctions** are far more than this Illinois farm boy who was the first in his family to attend college, ever could have imagined when he joined this community in 1991.

I thank each of you for the important role that you play in making Fresno State great. Please don't stop. Keep making a difference each day. Our students need you.

I know they thank you.

And I thank you, too, for all that you do.

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