

“The State of Fresno State”
August 18, 2014
President Joseph I. Castro

Good morning everybody!

Kevin, thank you so much for the kind introduction, and thank you Catherine for being here; I wanted to congratulate you on your new appointment. I appreciate Grace Liu’s leadership and I’m looking forward to working with you Catherine. I also wanted to thank Lynn Williams for his leadership for the Senate; Kevin, I’m looking forward to working with you and Tom Holyoke during this upcoming year.

I also want to thank Moses Menchaca, our student body president who’s provided exceptional leadership, and we have this joke that I call him landslide, because he won his second term by about 35 votes. Pretty close election, so we get to work with him again this year.

I also want to thank my wife Mary for all her support. Thank you, Mary, for everything that you do for the campus.

I also want to thank all the Office of the President staff who work so hard every single day to support me and to support our campus. Thank you so much to each and every one of you.

So to get things started I’d like to ask if any new faculty or staff since my spring assembly, if you would please stand up. Wonderful, welcome. We are so happy to have you join the Fresno State team.

I have just completed my first year as your president. I’m so excited to be here with you to give my first “State of Fresno State” report to all of you.

I’m happy to report that today, that as we begin our 104th year, that Fresno State is **STRONG**.

Today, Fresno State is **INNOVATIVE**.

Today, Fresno State is **SUCCESSFUL**; Successful in educating students, conducting quality applied research, and performing public service that benefits our region and beyond.

And, yes, today, Fresno State is **BOLD!** Yes.

Thanks to your great work, we can look back on a stellar year of achievement by our students, faculty and staff. And now, as we begin our new academic year, I am confident we have in store new and impressive achievements as a campus.

Our last academic year was one of change and transition as I began to meet you, to learn more about Fresno State, and to discover how we serve our diverse student body and community.

We have another transitional year ahead, with three outstanding vice presidents, new vice presidents.

I want to introduce first, our new Provost, who's an alumna and formally served as our associate provost, Dr. Lynnette Zelezny. Welcome Lynnette!

I also want to acknowledge our new Vice President for Student Affairs; he comes to us most recently from the University of Texas, in Arlington, where anything is big, go big or go home. We have with us now, Vice President, Dr. Frank Lamas! Welcome Frank!

Last but not least I want to introduce our new Vice President for University Advancement. She also is an alum of Fresno State, was born in Atwater. We are so happy to have her here, she is on her fourth week on the job, and she comes to us as a long-time CEO of Valley PBS. So happy to welcome Paula Castadio! Welcome Paula!

In addition to the new Vice Presidents, as Dr. Ayotte said, we also have a familiar face moving into a new role as Vice Provost, which we formerly called Associate Provost position. I think you all know Dennis Nef. We are very fortunate to have Dennis in this Cabinet position. Thank you, Dennis, for accepting this new role!

I'd also like to introduce our co-interim Athletic Directors. First Dr. Cynthia Matson, who's taken on more responsibility, and I want to thank you Dr. Matson for stepping-up along with Stephen Robertello, to be our co-interim Athletic Directors, if you wouldn't standing so people can see you.

I've also appointed Dr. Juan Carlos Gonzalez from the Kremen School of Education to serve as our co-faculty athletics representative, along with Dr. Dawn Lewis, and I want to see if Juan Carlos or Dawn are here today. There's Juan Carlos and there's Dawn. Thank you both!

Also in an interim role is Dr. Jose Diaz, who is going to serve as our dean of the College of Arts and Humanities. He replaces Dr. Vida Samiian, who has stepped down to return to teaching. I want to recognize Dr. Samiian for serving 10 years as dean, and extend my congratulations to her on the Horizon Award that she received just received last week from the Fresno Arts Council. Joe and Vida, thank you so much. Thank you both.

Last fall when I addressed this Assembly, I spoke about a critical infrastructure need at Fresno State as my top non-academic priority. On the academic side, I told you about my desire to develop a tablet program to embrace the latest technology for 21st century teaching and to enhance student success.

Today, I am happy to report success on both of these very important areas. We got both of those things done this year! Thank you so much for your hard work.

With \$30 million in funding from the Chancellor's Office, we've begun electrical infrastructure work to replace our aged underground wiring infrastructure, substations and other needs. This is

a major move forward for our campus! Thank you to Vice President Matson, AVP Boyd, and their staff for their effective work on this very important project. Thank you very much.

In response to my call for boldness in bringing tablets to the classroom, a campuswide team led by our Provost Lynette Zelezny has been working for a year on this project.

Today, we are four days away from the launch of our DISCOVERe program! Starting Thursday, 33 faculty members will offer more than 50 sections of classes for 1,200 students – using tablets as the primary teaching and learning tool.

Thanks to a \$600,000 grant from the Fresno State Foundation, each DISCOVERe student received a \$500 stipend to offset the cost of his or her tablet. This has made such a tremendous impact in making our program affordable. I want to thank everybody for their hard work in doing that, thank you so much.

To our knowledge, this is the most ambitious tablet program in the CSU and positions Fresno State as a bold, national leader in technology! Our vision was recognized with the award of a transformational planning grant from the Association of Public Land-grant Universities, which is managing the grant on behalf of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, which funded the initiative.

Fresno State is one of just seven public urban research universities selected to participate in a one-year project that seeks to transform the way higher education is delivered. We will work with Hispanic-serving school districts and communities colleges in the Valley on tablet technology, which will result in better prepared students ready to fully engage in their college coursework.

Thank you so much Provost Zelezny and your team for doing this work.

As I shared with you last year, an area of sincere commitment for me and the Cabinet is investing more in our faculty and staff. This year, as we await word from CSU talks with the bargaining units on increased compensation, I can report that we are looking at making salary equity adjustments here on campus. We have set aside \$1.2 million in campus funds for equity adjustments in the 2014-15 budget, contingent upon collective bargaining agreements making them permissible.

Another of my priorities in 2013-14 was increasing professional development opportunities for faculty and staff.

Today, I am happy to report we made progress with LEAD, STAR Day and Healthy U Wellness programs. This year you can expect an expansion in our LEAD and our leadership development programs. Watch for an open call for staff interested in participating in the third pilot year of our mentor program.

We will be acting on a number of the recommendations from the Work Life Review Task Force that was convened last year. This year we will introduce three new initiatives:

- The President's Leadership Series, Lecture Series will bring some of today's leading voices in higher education to Fresno State. Thought-provoking perspectives will be shared with the entire university community regarding the challenges and opportunities facing universities in the 21st century. See how excited I am? On September 15, Daniel Goleman of Harvard University – one of the leading thinkers about leadership – will be on campus. I hope you will join me in attending that conference.
- We also will work on faculty professional development and focused internal leadership training in academic affairs. This is one of Provost Zelezny's highest priorities.
- And third is a new Innovation and Creativity for Excellence initiative. This effort will begin with a campuswide IDEAS challenge. This is our opportunity to voice ideas on how we can improve services to students or fix an ineffective process on campus. I am seeking bold ideas on how we can be more innovative and creative.

The Cabinet will select a few projects to tackle this year and we will provide training, support and rewards for the ideas selected and for the teams that work on the implementation. And in the spring, I will host the President's Showcase of Excellence to celebrate efforts from throughout the year.

I invite all of you to participate in these opportunities for professional growth and development.

Our President's Commission on Human Relations and Equity had a very productive year. They facilitated very important dialogues across the campus. I believe that such dialogues – and the actions that have begun to follow, help make our campus more inclusive – and they're vital to our continued success. I want to thank the entire PCHRE for its valuable work and want to ask them to stand up to be recognized here today. Thank you. Thank you very much.

One of my first-year priorities was advancing our agricultural programs. I appointed a "Commission on the Future of Agriculture" and charged the group with imagining a new, bolder future for Fresno State's agricultural programs.

I'm pleased to report that the Commission fulfilled its charge and presented me a number of significant and do-able recommendations, including deeper relationships with industry; forming a food and agriculture institute; and working to secure new facilities and equipment.

We're investing \$1 million in Phase 1 of new campus funds in the Jordan College of Agricultural Sciences and Technology during this upcoming year to support the recommendations of the commission. I'll also be seeking additional support from the Fresno State Foundation Board of Governors and from our alumni and friends throughout the agriculture industry.

Among the immediate actions underway are two searches – one for an internship program coordinator and another for a communications specialist to raise awareness of our agriculture programs. I will keep you abreast of our progress in this vital area. And I want to thank Dean Boyer and his team for moving so quickly to implement these recommendations. Thank you Dean Boyer, are you here today. Thank you Dean Boyer.

The past year produced progress in the state of Fresno State's physical campus. As you saw in the video earlier, we have new signage on the exterior streets, in parking lots and on the interior of campus. We also have new eye-catching monument signs at the campus entries at Maple and Shaw and Cedar and Barstow, plus a beautiful new sign, my favorite one, at the corner of Cedar and Shaw. I want to thank the team for working on those beautiful signs. Great job you guys!

Last May we broke ground for the new Physical Therapy and Intercollegiate Athletics building between the Aquatics Center and the North Gym Annex. This two-story facility will be home to the Physical Therapy Department and offices for several athletics coaches.

And in June, the Jordan College of Agricultural Sciences and Technology at Fresno State broke ground on the new 30,000-square-foot Jordan Research Center at Barstow and Woodrow avenues. It is designed to foster collaboration among students and faculty in agricultural sciences and technology, engineering and science and mathematics and is scheduled to open next fall. Thank you all for your hard work in getting us to this point with all of these facilities. Will you join me in thanking them?

Today I can report the state of enrollment at Fresno State is the strongest in our history. We expect to enroll over 23,000 students for the fall semester, including our largest-ever first-time-freshmen class of about 3,500. Isn't that great?

Fresno State continues to be the campus of first choice for students from our region and beyond. In fact, this fall we had to turn away, unfortunately, 3,800 fully eligible first-time-freshmen from OUTSIDE our service area, because of CSU enrollment limitations. This is 1,000 more applicants than were denied admission last year and the percentage of students who accepted our admissions offer, and this is great news, also increased this year.

We are emerging as a destination campus for international students, whose presence helps us better understand other nations and cultures. Last year we enrolled more than 600 international students from 59 countries around the world. This fall we expect more than 700 students from across the globe, representing 65 different countries. Fresno State is indeed becoming a global university!

This year with Vice President Lamas' leadership, we are starting FresWOW Weeks of Welcome, pretty cool, to help transition our new students to campus and give them an opportunity to bond with their new classmates. We want our new students – and our entire diverse student body – to feel welcomed, comfortable, prepared and with a sense of belonging on our campus.

Research on food insecurity issues have been brought to my attention from various sources, including faculty, ASI and others this past year. I been informed that as many as 30 percent of our students are going hungry each week. Food insecurity impacts student success and the quality of life issues. This is an issue we must address – it's just the right thing to do.

I have asked Dr. Lamas, along with my wife Mary, and AVP Debbie Astone, to bring together a group of students, faculty and staff this fall to develop short and long-term recommendations to

address this issue. The time is now to act and I'm really happy that Dr. Lamas is moving along this quickly. Thank you Dr. Lamas.

Working to enhance student success has been and will continue to be an important thread that runs through all that we do at Fresno State. This year, Dr. Lamas and Provost Zelezny will revamp and restructure the various groups working on student success to maximize our innovation and move us forward. We can and WE WILL accelerate our progress thanks to our leadership and all our community.

Academic Affairs has also exemplified strong, innovative, successful and bold action. Forty-four faculty were hired last year and I am especially pleased that our new faculty are an accomplished and diverse group, including a number of females in the sciences. We have approved 45 faculty searches for next year, and we will continue efforts to bring the talented and diverse professors to Fresno State.

Again, welcome to all the new faculty here.

The past year was stellar for Academic Affairs.

- The Kremen School of Education and Human Development got high praise in its reaccreditation by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education. The school was 100% successful in national and state accreditation, with no weaknesses cited or improvements needed in any program or at any level. I want to thank and recognize dean Beare with his entire faculty, staff, and students. Dean Beare, thank you Dean Beare.
- With the Central Valley rapidly transforming from an agricultural base to an urban domination, responsible leaders, city planners and citizens met with the leadership and faculty from the College of Social Sciences to express concerns regarding the lack of planners to fill much needed planning positions and the need to develop or revive a City and Regional Planning degree and a Community and Regional Planning Center to meet the planning needs of the Valley. Four programs in City and Regional Planning are in the pipeline, and the college has received \$295,000 in student scholarships for the programs. I want to congratulate Dean Gonzalez and all her team of staff. Thank you.
- Spearheaded by the Division of Continuing and Global Education, Fresno State will enter into a strategic partnership with Bitwise Industries and Geekwise Academy to develop a regional hub in downtown Fresno that integrates education and technology. This self-support initiative will expand access to Fresno State, and it acknowledges our shared responsibility in the revitalization of downtown Fresno. Joining us today is Mr. Jake Soberal, the CEO of Bitwise. I'd like to recognize Jake, please stand. Welcome!
- And service learning, sponsored by the Richter Center, continues to be strong and meaningful at Fresno State. Students who take a service-learning course are 2.8 times

more likely to graduate. Last year, Fresno State students provided 1.16 million hours of service to the community, with an economic impact of \$31.4 million. This was the fifth-straight year that the university community contributed over 1 million hours of service to our region. I want to acknowledge Chris Fiorentino and the entire team there for their work. Thank you Chris.

Fresno State Athletics celebrated another record-breaking season in 2013-14 as teams claimed three conference championships in football, women's basketball and women's tennis.

Individual student athletes also claimed four conference titles, five conference players of the year honors and seven All-America honors.

In the classroom, the department shined even brighter as 136 student-athletes were named academic all-conference - the fifth straight year the program has topped the century mark.

The athletic department's combined student-athlete GPA was 3.11 last fall and 3.02 in the spring. Ninety-one student-athletes recorded a 4.0 GPA during the year. Awesome!

Fresno State also took home the Mountain West Student-Athlete Advisory Committee Community Service Award for the second-straight year for its outstanding volunteer work in the Valley.

Bulldog Diamond - home to one of the nation's winningest softball programs - was renamed Margie Wright Diamond after the hall-of-fame, former head coach who directed the Bulldogs to one national title and 10 Women's College World Series bids in her 27-year tenure. That was a special day with her coming and all of her friends and family there, this is a wonderful thing for her, our campus and our community.

As I mentioned earlier, we've begun construction on the new Physical Therapy and Intercollegiate Athletics Building that further enables the University and Athletics to rise together.

We want to recognize and thank Thomas Boeh for his nine years of excellent service as our Director of Athletics, and I understand when he said farewell to his staff last week that he got a great standing ovation, which is well deserved for him. And I want to ask you to join me in thanking him for his service to Fresno State.

In the coming weeks we will launch a nationwide search for a new director and my hope is to have someone on board by the early part of next year.

I want to share two recent acts of philanthropy that will change the face of our campus.

Thanks to a lead gift pledged by Farshid and Darius Assemi of Fresno, we have begun planning for renovation and expansion of the Music Department's Concert Hall. The envisioned 500-seat hall with perhaps the best acoustical environment in the region will serve our educational needs

more effectively and will be a beautiful venue for our community to enjoy performances by world-renowned artists.

In 2008, William Lyles and his family invested significant funding to support engineering. Now, a new, long-term partnership between Fresno State and Mr. Lyles and his family will help take the Lyles College of Engineering to new heights of success. This is a 25-year commitment to us folks. Wonderful! I just love the long-term view that our Avenal native, Dr. Lyles, has about life and about this campus, and it's just going to be wonderful for all the students and faculty who benefit for generations to come. I also want to thank the Fresno State Foundation Board of Governors, who as part of the arraignment with Dr. Lyles, invested half a million dollars in funds into the Lyles College of Engineering. I want to thank them as well.

I hope that these acts of boldness demonstrate both our current positive position and our potential to be an even more impactful University as we partner with those who believe in Fresno State.

In fact, due to the generosity of our alumni and friends, in 2013-14 we experienced one of our most successful private fundraising years in our history.

Donors gave or pledged more than \$43 million in philanthropic support to Fresno State and that total is notable for two reasons — it's the highest amount raised since the beginning of the great recession and it represents a nearly 64 percent increase from the prior year. And I want to thank everybody here who helped to do that. Thank you so much.

In closing, I am very pleased to reiterate that the state of Fresno State is strong, innovative, successful and bold.

In the past year, you have heard me say many times that Academics and Athletics will boldly rise together at Fresno State. From this report, I hope you can see that that is happening! We must and will remain focused on continuing this progress.

Each of you has played an important role in our year just completed, and I'm grateful to you. Now, I seek your help to make our new year even more successful.

As I asked you last fall, will you join me in our important work to shape the future of Fresno State and all of Central California? I know with your help, we can make Fresno State an even greater university for the generations to come.

Thank you so much for everything you do. Thank you