

Spring Assembly for Faculty and Staff

January 14, 2016

Good morning!

Thank you Kevin and Katie for all you do for Fresno State. I'd also like to recognize President Abigail Hudson of Associated Students Inc., and thank her for so ably representing Fresno State students!

And thank you all for joining us today for our first assembly of 2016! I hope each of you had an enjoyable and restful holiday break. Mary and I had a wonderful time with family and friends and we are rested and re-charged for what I believe will be an exciting year for Fresno State!

As we begin the spring semester, I'd like to ask all new faculty and staff who joined us in the fall to stand so we can welcome you. Welcome!

I'm also very pleased that our leadership team has some new additions!

One is a familiar face on campus, Dr. Saúl Jimenez-Sandoval, who is the new dean of the College of Arts and Humanities. Saúl, please stand.

We have a stellar Cabinet team at Fresno State and on Feb. 1 we'll be welcoming a new member, Lawrence Salinas, a Fresno State alum, who will serve as Executive Director for Governmental Relations. He joins us from the UC Office of the President.

And in the next few weeks we also will welcome a new University Controller, Benjamin Hylton, an alum of Stanislaus State, who is coming to us from CSU East Bay; and a new Associate Vice President for Human Relations, Marylou Mendoza-Miller, a Fresno State graduate coming from a position at Fresno Pacific University. Marylou is here today; let's have her stand and greet her!

Let's give another round of applause for our new faculty, staff and administrators.

This spring, we will expect to hear very good news on our WASC Re-accreditation. In the preliminary report, the WASC review team offered four commendations and applauded our efforts in developing a reflective institutional report that included wide involvement by the campus community. We can look forward to the final report very soon!

I want to commend Provost Lynnette Zelezny and Dr. Dennis Nef, plus faculty leads Dr. Melissa Jordine and Dr. Andrew Lawson for their leadership of this effort, and Laura Alcantar, who provided staff support. Will they and the members of the WASC Accreditation team please stand so we can thank you for your hard work in this effort?

Another major event in the life of our University is the development of a new five-year strategic direction. In the coming weeks, the Strategic Plan Committee will finalize the plan using the input received at the fall sessions for campus and community members. I want to thank each of you who attended an input session and provided comments.

Will the members of the Strategic Plan Committee please stand and be recognized? Thank you.

In my remarks on Tuesday at our first State of the University event for community members, I emphasized that Fresno State students deserve a University and a community willing to “Be Bold” in delivering on the promise of student success.

In my opinion, bold is an attitude that moves ideas, opportunities and people beyond convention, obstacles and naysayers, to success. Being bold inspires leaders and transformation because it tests limits and possibilities in a positive, open and results-oriented way that is focused on the greater good for our community.

As leaders in higher education, we could easily default to “safe,” but at Fresno State we must be committed to being bold in delivering on the promise of student success to advance this University to new heights!

Enhancing student success is focused on in the first priority of our new strategic plan, and underpins everything else we do.

Today, I’d like to use the four draft strategic priorities to discuss what we’ve accomplished and what is ahead for Fresno State.

PRIORITY 1 is to enhance teaching and learning through innovative practices, programs and high-impact experiences that contribute to extraordinary learning, the development of the whole student and life-long success.

One of the successful new teaching and learning practices that we’ve developed – and which will continue to grow at Fresno State – is DISCOVERe. It was in the spring of 2014, just two years ago, that we launched the program with the bold faculty who stepped up to be leaders in the program. Since then, this program has transformed the classroom experience and resulted in higher levels of faculty and student engagement.

Nearly 7,000 students have participated in DISCOVERe. The satisfaction rates with the program are 82 percent from students and 91 percent from faculty.

An important benefit of DISCOVERe is that it also has resulted in a significant cost savings in books and materials to students.

Overall there has been a 73 percent cost savings over a traditional course in regard to course materials and books. In fact, 60 percent of DISCOVERe courses have absolutely no textbook or materials costs because faculty use open resources and materials that we provide, which are free to students. Every dollar counts when it comes to student costs, and we have made a bold effort to significantly reduce textbook costs for participating students.

In addition, our DISCOVERe faculty have been recognized regionally and nationally for their bold work in leveraging mobile technology within their classrooms.

Looking ahead, we plan to expand DISCOVERe to 10,000 students and to more than 230 faculty next fall.

Thank you to the entire team of students, faculty, staff, and administrators for their exemplary teamwork in making this initiative such a great success! And, thank you to our Foundation Board of Governors for being bold in investing \$1.1 million – their largest single investment of funds – so we could provide scholarships to offset the cost of the tablets for our students.

Student success also hinges on the health and well-being of students. Last November, the Student Cupboard celebrated its one-year anniversary of enhancing food security at Fresno State.

A campus survey in 2013 brought the issue of food insecurity among students to our attention. Our experience with the Student Cupboard validates the survey findings. Listen to these statistics:

- We have served 3,337 individual students since the cupboard opened in November of 2014.
- In the six-month period of July to December 2015, the cupboard distributed over 85,000 pounds of food.

I'm proud that Fresno State is a leader in the CSU and the nation in meeting the food security needs of students.

Our work has gained tremendous support and donations from you, our alumni and many friends in the community. Thank you for your philanthropic giving on campus.

Did you know that we also have a Fresno State Clothing Closet, which offers students professional clothing free of charge as they head to job interviews and internships? The Career Development Center is collecting donations of professional clothing, footwear and accessories that are in ready-to-wear condition. Please consider assisting this wonderful program to help our students as they transition to professionals.

I am pleased that our commitment to student success is manifested in many other ways around campus. Here are some brief bullet points:

- We have six student success task forces jointly uncovering opportunities and addressing challenges jointly coordinated by Academics and the Division of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management.
- We have reorganized our Behavioral Intervention Team to be more streamlined and better prepared to address the needs of our students. The three sub-groups are:
 - Campus Assessment Response and Evaluation team, which focuses on students in distress;
 - The Sexual Assault Response team, which focuses on responding to sexual assault, domestic violence and stalking;
 - and the Threat Assessment and Risk Prediction team, which focuses on the safety of our campus for all students, staff and faculty.
- We also have established Survivor Advocacy and Support Services, led by a certified Sexual Assault Advocate who works in collaboration with various campus and community programs in order to meet the needs of students who have experienced sexual assault, domestic violence or stalking.

- We have successfully established a shared campus advising model where all colleges and schools have an academic advising center staffed by professional advisers. This investment is vastly improving the adviser-to-student ratio.
- The Learning Center recorded nearly 20,000 student visits last fall – an 18 percent increase.
- Supplemental Instruction experienced extraordinary growth in the number of course sections offered, total visits and number of students served. In the fall semester, more than 2,300 students met with SI leaders over 15,000 times.
- The six-year graduation rate for the fall 2009 Summer Bridge cohort was 60 percent and the Educational Opportunity Program graduation rate was 59.7. Both surpassed the campus rate of 58.4 percent.

Priority 2 is to invest in our dynamic work environment to attract, develop and retain talented, diverse faculty and staff.

We remain dedicated to recruiting and retaining the most talented and diverse faculty and staff to educate and serve our students. I applaud the work of our Human Resources and Faculty Affairs teams who support this commitment along with the leadership from the President’s Commission on Human Relations and Equity.

I believe Fresno State has outstanding faculty and staff members, and I’d like to give a “shout out” to four of them today.

First, a man with a pretty hard name to pronounce, but who is an outstanding faculty member, Armenian Studies Professor Barlow Der Mugrdechian. Barlow, please stand.

For 31 years, Barlow has taught Armenian language, Armenian art, literature, history, the history of Fresno Armenians, the Genocide, the Armenian church and other topics at Fresno State.

He is engaged in campus as a senator in the Academic Senate, in the local community, in scholarly publications, in development and is a leader in national Armenian studies circles.

Last year, Barlow was actively involved with Armenian Genocide Centennial Committee of Fresno and was a leader in establishing and raising financial support for our magnificent Armenian Genocide Monument on campus.

Barlow, thank you for your commitment to Fresno State!

Next, will Dr. Mara Brady please stand? Mara is an assistant Professor of Earth and Environmental Sciences and has been deeply committed to student success and sustainability issues on our campus.

She has helped lead the Fresno State Sustainability project, a group of faculty and students dedicated to educating students about sustainability issues and promoting environmentally sustainable practices on our campus.

Over the past year, Mara has been the lead faculty member in the new College of Science and Mathematics' first year experience. That is a year-long program that emphasizes active learning, teamwork and the integration of technology in an effort to improve retention and graduation rates as well as close the achievement gap to meet the nation's growing need for STEM graduates.

Mara, we applaud your bold efforts and outstanding work!

Next, will Dr. Francine Oputa please rise? Francine is known throughout campus and the community for her longstanding commitment to diversity and inclusion.

As director of the new Cross Cultural and Gender Center, Francine works every day to continue the development of a safe and welcoming environment for the Fresno State community, just as she did as director of the Central Valley Cultural Heritage Institute and the Women's Resource Center.

As co-vice-chair of the President's Commission on Human Relations and Equity, Francine has consistently advocated for acceptance and fairness at all levels of the University. She is committed to our goal of making Fresno State an institution where exploring the diversity of thought and discouraging marginalization are valued as a means of enriching knowledge and critical thinking.

Thank you Francine, for your devotion to Fresno State's students, faculty and staff.

And last but not least, Mai Kou Vang, please stand.

Mai Kou is the coordinator of Supplemental Instruction. Since assuming this position in 2011, she has grown the program from serving 372 students with 1,846 student visits in the fall of 2011 to 2,384 students with 15,290 visits in the fall of 2015.

Mai Kou is passionate about experiential learning and seeks to provide ways for students to take the reins of control with the success of their college education. Following the Chinese Proverb, "Tell me and I will forget; show me and I may remember; involve me and I will understand," Supplemental Instruction provides the tools and opportunities for students in traditionally difficult courses to succeed.

Thank you Mai Kou for your dedication to student success!

These four individuals are shining examples of the over 2,300 other extraordinary faculty and staff we have at Fresno State.

Last fall, the Cabinet and I demonstrated our commitment to salary support for both faculty and staff. The campus invested \$952,000 in faculty and staff salary/benefit increases impacting 373 employees.

This was in addition to our 2014 campus investment of \$1.7 million in faculty and staff salary/benefit increases which supported 353 employees.

The campus contributions over the past two years were in addition to the CSU-funded \$6.4 million in salary and benefit increases. In total, over the past two years the campus and the CSU have increased salary and benefits for Fresno State employees by more than \$9 million!

In addition to salary support, we remain deeply committed to professional development. Watch for new programming planned for spring focused on staff and faculty development at all levels of the University.

I understand the STAR Day committee has begun its work and we are looking forward to another fabulous day. Mark your calendars for June 1. The theme this year is “Developing from Within” and will focus on how we all can embrace and support the new Strategic Plan.

In 2014 we launched our inaugural Bold Ideas Challenge with the goal of identifying bold new ways to enhance teaching and learning and increase our operational efficiencies.

157 BOLD ideas were submitted. The cabinet identified 12 of those ideas and formed project teams to assess and implement the ideas. Eleven of these are moving forward.

For example, Anthony Bailey, a custodian who has worked in Plant Ops for over 28 years, submitted an idea for a Valley-wide leadership conference for area high school students. Anthony's idea will become a reality this June as we launch the inaugural Central Valley Emerging Leaders Summit for 300 area students!

Charah Coleman, a technician from Financial Aid, proposed an idea for a mobile app for students to readily access financial aid information using their smartphones. This idea grew as the implementation team realized there were several new features we could add to the Fresno State mobile app including admission status, registration information, grades, student cupboard and catered cupboard information and more! Many of these have already been added and there are more to come!

Today, I am pleased to announce we are launching our 2nd Bold Ideas Challenge. I invite all faculty and staff to send us your bold, innovative ideas on how we can improve services to students or fix an ineffective process on campus. We are particularly interested in creative ideas to advance our new strategic plan. The challenge will run for three weeks so don't delay! Watch for an email from me soon with instructions.

Priority 3 is to modernize and expand our campus physical and technological infrastructure, in alignment with the academic and physical master plans, to support and facilitate a sustainable, productive and inviting campus environment.

Modernizing campus facilities, improving our physical infrastructure and addressing our deferred maintenance have been among my top priorities. We are making significant progress in this area.

Over the fall we completed several exciting projects including the opening of the Physical Therapy and Intercollegiate Athletics Building, upgrades to the Student Health and Counseling Center and resurfacing the Wathen Tennis Center courts

This spring we look forward to the long-awaited grand opening of the Jordan Agricultural Research Center and a major facelift for Warmerdam Field.

The \$31 million upgrade to the campus's aging electrical infrastructure is on track to be completed in September of this year and will result in a modernized infrastructure that will improve safety, and increase potential capacity for future growth. In the upcoming months, installation of the remaining underground lines will take place followed by work in the electrical rooms of each building on campus.

I am delighted to report that we are also making a significant investment in deferred maintenance over the next two years. We have allocated nearly \$20 million dollars to address many long-overdue items. The list includes:

- Modernizing classrooms, laboratories and lecture spaces
- Roof replacements for Conley Art, North Gym, Social Science and University Center
- Heating/air conditioning replacements for Conley Art, Joyal, Social Science
- ADA improvements
- Elevator ADA upgrades in Ag Science, Grosse IT, University Center, Engineering East, Joyal, the Henry Madden Library, Kremen Education and the Peters Building
- Fire alarm replacement and
- Street and road replacement

Looking further into the future, we have bold new plans for a new Student Union/Faculty Center and the modernization of Bulldog Stadium. We are also issuing a request for proposals for a public/private partnership for the Central Plant.

Updates to Bulldog Stadium will be privately funded and the other two projects will be mix of public and private funds.

I'm pleased to announce that we have an exciting plan to alleviate some of our parking stress AND reduce the number of cars coming to campus! Next week we will launch a shuttle service that will operate Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. The shuttle will run every 15 minutes and include six convenient stops from Campus Point to Greek Row. Students will be able to park in the Save Mart Center lot and shuttle across campus to get to class!

The shuttle will be free for students as well as all employees with a Fresno State ID. We are finalizing the details on the agreement for spring and then plan to pursue grant funding to support electric vehicles going forward.

Having a robust and reliable wireless infrastructure is critical. We have refreshed a majority of our network and wireless infrastructure over the past year and have expanded wireless access into the residence halls.

This coming month, we will be rolling out wireless Internet access in some high-traffic outdoor spaces around the campus and will also release "eduroam." This system will allow students,

faculty and staff to have free, seamless wireless Internet access in many higher education institutions around the world, including a majority of our CSU campuses. It also will allow students and faculty to teach and learn in many outdoor spaces, as they wish, during our many sunny days.

Priority 4 is to grow and develop collaborative and engaged community partnerships to increase support for students and the University.

Fresno State has many community partnerships, and our connections will grow stronger as we move forward with this Strategic plan.

While we've been enjoying a wonderful rainy season so far, we know that the drought will not go away in one year and that water will always be an important topic for our region.

The report by the President's Commission on the Future of Agriculture, composed of campus and community members, included a recommendation to create a campus/industry task force to coordinate existing water-related programs and to redefine Fresno State as a recognized leader in the area of water technology, water resource management and policy.

In October of 2014, that water task force was created and met numerous times over several months. Their recommendations were submitted to me last spring and then last fall, we began working to implement key parts of those recommendations. One request was to identify the "front door" for all water programs at Fresno. It was determined that a new California Water Institute at Fresno State would be the official umbrella for water programs. Dr. David Zoldoske has been named Executive Director of Water Initiatives at Fresno State. Thank you, David!

As a critical first step, we will be developing a five-year strategic plan to build Fresno State into the recognized leader in water as envisioned by the task force. During the spring of 2016, faculty, staff and students will have the opportunity to contribute to strategic plan development. This effort is designed to reach across all schools and colleges, so if you have a passion for water, please plan to be actively engaged in the process. We'll continue to involve our community partners in this effort so that Fresno State will be the leader in this crucial field.

There are many other examples of community connections and partnerships underway or planned. Let me give you just three high-impact examples that align with real-world needs where students learn to problem-solve in the context of regional challenges:

First, a Craig School MBA study for Fresno Fire Department. Our students collected data, conducted interviews and analyzed information on the economic and fiscal impact of successful fire interventions. Fire Chief Kerry Donis, a Fresno State alumna, was very complimentary on the quality of the project and swift timeline that it followed.

A second example is students from the School of Nursing in the College of Health and Human Services who have taken wellness "on the road" with their Community Mobile Health Project. It provides much-needed onsite clinical outreach services to the rural areas of the county. In just a few months, they have served over 460 individuals!

And third, thanks to generous support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Fresno State has built solid partnerships across educational sectors to plan an improved K-16 college pipeline, now called the Central Valley Promise. The Promise is an intentional response to the low college-going rate in the Central Valley. This educational partnership will ensure that if children and their parents pledge to do what it takes in middle and high school to prepare, college will be there for them in the future, guaranteed.

Learning by serving is becoming core to who we are as a University. Thank you for the many research, internship and collaborative partnerships that you have developed to help boost student retention.

Fresno State is undoubtedly on the rise!

As I spend time with you and our students, I can feel the energy and excitement. I experience the same excitement as I travel across the Valley, state and nation to meet with our many alumni and friends.

I feel it when I visit K-12 schools and community colleges in our region and meet our future students. I feel it when I visit farms, factories, community centers, and houses of worship. On Tuesday night, for example, I met with hundreds of Valley Sikh leaders at a temple in Selma. Their highest priority for us is preparing their students for success. I hear the same thing from every community we serve.

Our new strategic plan will catalyze the passion, energy and support we have for Fresno State into concrete actions that boldly propel our university to even higher levels of success. The talented and diverse students we serve deserve our very best efforts to achieve this overall goal.

I look forward to another year of working together as we boldly take Fresno State to new heights of success that pave the way for an even stronger and more vibrant Central Valley, nation and world. Because of our students, you and our alumni and friends, our future is very bright!

Thank you!

I will now be pleased to answer your questions.