**President Joseph I. Castro**

**Spring Faculty-Staff Assembly**

January 12, 2015

Good morning and Happy New Year! It’s really nice to see everybody!

I hope you had the opportunity during our winter break to spend time with family and friends and to relax a bit during the holiday season. Mary and I had a wonderful break. We spent Christmas at University House with all of our children, which doesn’t happen often enough, and then got sometime by ourselves to recharge.

Speaking of Mary, she sends her regards to everyone. She’s participating in a leadership development program sponsored by the Fresno County Farm Bureau. She’s out there visiting some farms today.

I want to thank all of our faculty, staff and student representatives for their outstanding leadership. Let’s start with Faculty Senate Chair Dr. Kevin Ayotte. Thank you. Our Staff Assembly Executive Committee Chair Katherine Williamson. Thank you. ASI President Moses Menchaca. Thank you so much. Moses read “The Godfather” during the holiday break. Was it good, Moses?

Before we all left for the break, several Cabinet leadership changes were put in motion.

We learned that Dr. Cindy Matson was selected as the president of Texas A & M – San Antonio and today is her first day on the job! As we begin our semester here, let’s send good thoughts to Dr. Matson as she begins this new chapter in her life. We thank her for her decade of service at Fresno State and wish her the very best. Will you join me in a little applause for her?

I have asked Debbie Adishian-Astone and Clint Moffitt to assume interim leadership positions in the Division of Administrative Services and I appreciate their willingness to step up and take on these responsibilities.

Debbie will serve as interim Vice President for Administration and continue her duties as Associate Vice President for Auxiliary Operations and Enterprise Development.

Clint is interim Chief Financial Officer and will continue in his role as Associate Vice President for Financial Services.

The reason I separated the positions is because I wanted to gain budget and financial advice that is independent of the interests of any one division of the University.

I want to thank Debbie and Clint for stepping up. Would you stand so we can recognize you? And I want to thank those colleagues of yours who are stepping up along with you to assume those duties. I appreciate that very much, that gives an opportunity for a number of people to stretch, let's give them a hand as well.

We will undertake searches to permanently fill those positions later this year.

Another new member of our campus leadership team is Athletic Director, Jim Bartko, who is beginning his second week on the job! Jim comes to us from the University of Oregon, which is nationally respected for its superior athletic and academic programs. In fact, as you might know, the Oregon football team will be playing tonight in the national championship so I gave Jim permission to take today off to attend that history-making game!

Jim is a Valley native. He was born in Stockton and attended high school in Modesto. He has the right skills that we need to continue our efforts to strengthen our athletic programs. He brings demonstrated success in enhancing the educational experience for student-athletes, program development, community relations, fundraising, plus extensive experience in integration of the athletics department with the university as a whole.

During the transition to Jim’s arrival, Dr. Matson and Steve Robertello ably served as co-interim athletic directors and I want to thank them for taking on this additional role in addition to their usual duties.

Another new member of the Cabinet who joined us last week is Diana Ralls, my new Chief of Staff. Diana is a Fresno State alumna, earning a master’s degree in Education. She comes to us from UC Merced where over the last 16 years she played a significant role in the establishment of that campus. She most recently served as the Director of Financial Aid and Scholarships.

Reporting directly to me, Diana will have two key roles: Ensuring that the Office of the President is service-focused and runs effectively; and working closely with me and the Vice Presidents on special projects and initiatives that advance Fresno State.

Diana, would you please stand and be recognized?

I am ecstatic about the caliber of professionals that we’ve recruited to fill these key leadership positions. They are highly skilled technically and they have high levels of emotional intelligence. This is the standard by which we will continue to fill positions at Fresno State.

Let’s also recognize any new faculty and staff – and I met a few this morning – who have joined us in recent months. Please stand so we can welcome you to the Fresno State family! Anybody new since the Fall Assembly?

I’d like to update you on a few of the matters that we discussed last fall.

First, CSU salary increases and the campus equity program. I thought we might lead with that. I thought that might be of interest.

A CSU general salary increase of 3% has been received by staff represented by CSUEU, APC and SETC, retroactive to July 1, 2014. Retroactive payments were issued before the holiday break and employees’ paychecks issued on January 2, 2015, reflected these increases in their base salary. I hope that's true. I want to double-check that with you. Okay, good.

MPPs and other non-represented staff will receive salary increases from a 3% merit compensation pool on or before March 1, retroactive to July 2014.

Employees represented by UAPD and SUPA – we love acronyms, don’t we? – received their general salary increases earlier this year.

For faculty, the bargained salary increases in year one of the CFA/CSU Unit 3 contract include a 1.6% salary increase for all faculty members and salary recovery adjustments for faculty who are below the Service Salary Increase maximum. All increases are retroactive to July 1, 2014. So we have some good news there.

Secondly, I have authorized with the Cabinet the expenditure of $1 million in permanent base budget dollars to fund salary equity program for tenured and tenure-track faculty. We will also provide $200,000 in additional permanent funding for staff equity adjustments during 2014-15.

With respect to the equity program for faculty, we are consulting with the CFA, and I expect to have a program for approval in April. Equity increases, again, will be retroactive to July 2014.

No salary equity program can, on a one-time basis, fix all salary equity concerns that we have. But, as I promised you in the fall, allocating additional base funds will help take substantial step forward.

Salary issues for faculty and staff are an ongoing concern that requires continuous attention throughout the CSU and here at Fresno State. Together, these investments in our faculty and staff represent the largest single permanent increases – again, the largest single permanent increases – made in the first budget I prepared as your president. The Cabinet fully supports my commitment to you and your efforts to ensure student success.

Since the fall Assembly we have discovered so much.

I shared my concern about food insecurity among our students. Under the leadership of Vice President Lamas, Interim Vice President Debbie Astone, my wife Mary and many others, the Division of Student Affairs launched a seven-pronged Food Security initiative resulting in several new ways to connect with students who need food assistance.

The most visible connection is the Student Cupboard, which opened just before Thanksgiving. The cupboard, which has already received national attention, provides food and hygiene items at no cost for our students and their families. In the first 19 days that the Student Cupboard was open before the Holiday break, it had 191 visits by 111 students. The items provided by the Cupboard served a total of 677 people. It’s a great start.

During the holidays, many of the offices here collected cupboard items at their holiday gatherings and many of our colleagues also made personal contributions. The Student Cupboard is an example of how this campus community comes together to care for those who need a helping hand. Initiatives like this speak volumes about who we are as a campus. On Friday – just a few days ago – I received a very touching and inspiring letter from a local family, which provided a generous gift directed to address food insecurity among our students -- in honor of their late son. It's a great, great thing to see that.

We want our students to be successful, which means they need to be nourished. We don't want them to have to decide between buying food or buying books for class. I’m hopeful that with our Student Cupboard and our other food security initiatives, they won’t have to make that choice.

As I have discussed with you at previous Assemblies, the upgrade to the electrical infrastructure for the campus continues to be our highest non-academic priority and is important to all of us. The $30 million in CSU funding has been secured, we have a signed contract now with Ryan Company to serve as our general contractor and work is expected to begin this month.

Please be aware that this construction project will impact the entire campus and will be a visible part of our campus life for the next two years. Our goal is to minimize the disruption to the campus community, but I ask for your patience during the work. I’m sure that the short-term inconvenience is going to be well worth it!

I want to acknowledge our team from Facilities Management leading this effort: Bob Boyd, Gary Wilson, Devon Fullner and Jeff Prickett. Will you please stand so we can recognize you? Thank you very much.

Last fall at our Assembly, I spoke to you with enthusiasm as we prepared to launch our DISCOVERe tablet program. Today I can report that with Provost Zelezny’s leadership, DISCOVERe is an unqualified success!

In the fall semester, 1,079 students completed the first courses of this initiative. More than 40 classes using tablet technology were taught by 32 faculty members, many of whom are here today.

Let’s watch this brief video to see just how the tablets were used in Prof. John Benynon’s English class.

Video - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hu_EAZSMXkk&feature=youtu.be>

As promised when we announced the tablet program, we have been carefully monitoring and evaluating DISCOVERe. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness contracted with an independent evaluator to provide research support in assessing the initiative. The focus of the first year is on formative evaluation: determining what, if any, aspects of the student and faculty tablet class experiences can be improved in order for subsequent semester courses to be even more effective.

Extensive, detailed surveys were administered to participating DISCOVERe students and faculty at the beginning and the end of term. Preliminary findings indicate both students and faculty in the program had very positive experiences. The overall student satisfaction at the end of the semester was about 84 percent and faculty satisfaction was about 92 percent – really high. That’s great. Thank you so much.

The DISCOVERe implementation team is working to address reported issues related to technology connectivity and functionality including Apple TV, Blackboard and tablet apps.

The good news is data shows that tablet students are enjoying significant savings in textbook costs. The savings were approximately 55% for DISCOVERe courses in fall 2014, as compared with the same courses in fall 2013. For our students and their families, this is an enormous savings. Thank you so much.

Why are we doing this? Student success – that’s why we do everything! There is growing evidence that students who participate in tablet classes learn more and achieve higher grades than those in traditional courses. We will continue to refine and improve our tablet program – and add more courses, faculty and students – in order to provide students with this tool for success.

At this point, 566 students have enrolled in 33 tablet classes for spring and23 faculty will be teaching tablet courses.

Our plans call for continued development. By next fall, we expect 5,000 students, including student-athletes, who especially appreciate the chance to study while traveling to games, and 120 faculty dedicated to building complementary coursework.

Our DISCOVERe efforts already are gaining the attention of others. Last summer we were awarded an Association of Public and Land-grant Universities and Gates Foundation’s Transformational Planning Grant. We have also received generous financial support for this initiative from our Fresno State Foundation, from AT&T and from alumni and business leader, Darius Assemi.

Thank you to the faculty, students and staff who were the pioneers to make this program such a success. I also appreciate those who are now stepping up to make digital learning even stronger in the future! Thank you so much.

We take great pride in being inclusive of all backgrounds and perspectives, offering every student an equal chance for a quality education. That’s why our ongoing commitment to promoting acceptance and fairness throughout this university sets us apart and attracts others who want to belong.

Last fall’s Diversity Forum featured keynote Dr. Robert Teranishi, a renowned expert on the stratification of college opportunity and the rapidly growing Asian American and Pacific Islander population in the United States. This demonstrated focus has resulted in Fresno State being invited to participate as a partner at the national level with the White House Initiative on Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions.

And, two new grants that were recently awarded for research on Southeast Asians in higher education will further cement our reputation as a leader.

The awards totaling $211,000 from the California State University Chancellor’s Office are for two projects addressing the scarcity of research on the success of Southeast Asian-American students in higher education.

Also, we recently established an American Indian Recruitment and Resource Initiative to increase the number of American Indian students enrolling and graduating. This effort will strengthen partnerships with rancherias, school districts and tribal agencies serving American Indian students. The goal is to double – double – the number of American Indian students enrolling at Fresno State by fall 2016.That’s pretty bold, Frances! Thank you to Frances Pena and our new program coordinator Katie Garcia for their leadership in this important area!

This spring we will host another Diversity Forum. It will feature Dr. Luis Ponjuan from Texas A&M, who will speak on access and equity in higher education for underrepresented students and faculty members of color. The activities and academic discussion related to the forum will focus on the Latino student population.

Also this spring, we will be launching an online Civility module, a new diversity resource guide and updated ASPIRE plan~~s~~. All of the initiatives underway for enhanced professional development will eventually lead to a diversity certificate.

Providing these resources and support enriches our learning environment and demonstrates care for every student who belongs at Fresno State. I'm very proud that we also received the 2014 Higher Education Excellence in Diversity award from “INSIGHT Into Diversity” magazine, one of the nation’s largest diversity-focused publications.

Within the next few weeks, the Provost and I will be announcing new leadership for the President’s Commission on Human Relations and Diversity to advance this very important area of work.

Fresno State is a university of distinction and two recent awards from the American Association of State Colleges and Universities celebrate just that!

One is the Christa McAuliffe Excellence in Teacher Education Award for our Central Valley Partnership for Exemplary Education led by the Kremen School for Education and Human Development.

The second is the Leadership Development and Diversity Award to Fresno State for developing an initiative with CSU campuses in Bakersfield and Northridge to provide leadership training for employees moving into administrative positions. I need to stop for a second and tell you that I was at the event to receive those awards, and there were exactly five awards given on that evening by this national organization. There was no other university in the nation who received two awards, and Fresno State received two awards on that night and you better believe that everybody noticed that. So, I just wanted to share that good news with you.

We were also just informed that Carnegie Foundation has selected Fresno State to receive its 2015 Community Engagement Classification. This signifies a national validation of the importance of community engagement in higher education, and of our work to make community engagement a central feature of our university’s identity.

Fresno State was one of the first universities to earn the Carnegie Elective Community Engagement Classification back in 2006. The 2015 cycle was the first time the Carnegie Foundation required campuses to apply for reclassification. Thus, our university has been on the forefront of both of these efforts and is one of 361 campuses gaining this important designation.

These awards provide significant national recognition as Fresno State sets the standard for higher education and student success in the region and beyond.

In the tradition of great American universities, our athletic programs are rising alongside of our academic programs.

We have received recognition for the successes of our student-athletes. In 2013-14, the cumulative GPA of student-athletes was 3.07. At a recent CSU Board of Trustees meeting, we had the highest academic performance for student-athletes of any CSU. The women’s tennis team captured the 2014 Mountain West Conference championship and advanced to the NCAA Tournament, the tennis program’s 16th NCAA appearance and first since 2011.

In addition, three students from the tennis team were selected for All-Mountain West singles or doubles teams, and head coach Ryan Stotland was named the 2014 Mountain West Women's Tennis Coach of the Year.Ryan, please stand. Congratulations, Ryan.

On the Bulldog football team, safety Derron Smith was the 11th player in program history to earn All-Conference honors for three seasons. Derron completed all requirements for his degree in Communications in the fall.

Looking back over the first six months of this fiscal year, I’m happy to report that Fresno State continues to receive strong support from our alumni and our many friends. In fact, we have raised more private funds in the first half of this year than last year at this time.

Membership in The President’s Circle for Excellence has doubled, cash donations are on the rise and we established $2.5 million in bequests and scholarship funding.

The great news here is not just the money – that is wonderful – but that more alumni and friends than ever before are investing and standing firmly behind Fresno State and our vision to be bold! And that is great news!

Bold strategies are emerging all across campus. For instance, we have been selected by the American Council on Education for its Change and Innovation Lab project. Fresno State and teams from four other Minority Serving Institutions will meet, engage, envision and define new methods and practices for increasing postsecondary attainment.

These teams will identify concrete steps for broader mobilization of those methods and practices within our institutions.

And we’ve just submitted – and I know that Gail, Lynnette and others worked very hard – an application to the California Department of Finance for its Innovation in Higher Education award. The department has $50 million in award monies to disburse to California community colleges, CSU and UCs. Our application highlights both our campus DISCOVERe program and our efforts to strengthen it regionally in partnership with K-16 schools through the APLU Transformational Planning Grant. We’ll hear soon about that.

And now, I’d like to turn the spotlight toward individual contributions of our outstanding faculty, staff and students. As I get to know more of you, I am constantly reminded of the distinction of people who choose to work and study at Fresno State. While there are many who deserve recognition, I’d like to highlight just a few today that are boldly representing our university. So when I call your name, I’d like to ask you to stand.

**From our faculty:**

Dr. Tehrani Fariborz, associate professor of structural engineering in the Lyles College of Engineering. Dr. Fariborz was the 2014 recipient of the Outstanding American Society of Civil Engineers Faculty Advisor Award for the San Francisco section, which serves the Northern California coast from Monterey to Oregon, including the Bay Area and Fresno County. Congratulations.

Dr. Helda Pinzon-Perez, professor in the Department of Public Health. Last November, Dr. Pinzon-Perez received the Community Champion Award from the West Fresno Family Resource Center. She was selected because of her exemplary commitment and contributions to the underserved community of southwest Fresno. Award recipients are champions of healthcare and human services for Valley residents exhibiting compassion, dedication and public service. She is away with her family today, but, I want you to join me in congratulating her as well.

Dr. Jennifer Randles, assistant professor, Department of Sociology. Dr. Randles received two national awards from the American Sociological Association. The first was the Community Action Research Initiative Grant Award from the Sydney S. Spivack Program in Applied Social Research and Social Policy, and that will support her research on engaged and positive paternal involvement among low-income fathers in Fresno. The second was the Article of the Year Award for 2014 by the ASA Sociology of the Family Section. Congratulations Jennifer.

**From our staff:**

Tosha Giuffrida, Interim Director of the Learning Center. She won the 2014 Leadership Award for staff members from Fresno State Women's Association. She oversees tutoring, Supplemental Instruction and SupportNet activities to assist students who are at risk of failing their courses. Congratulations Tosha.

Chris Fiorentino, director of the Jan and Bud Richter Center for Community Engagement and Service-Learning. Chris was the recipient of the 2014 Serve Award presented by Fresno’s Leading Young Professionals in recognition of his commitment to community service to the Fresno area. During 2013-14,over 11,000 students, faculty and staff spent 1.16 million hours serving others. Awesome! These hours equal an estimated value of more than $31 million. Incredible.

Mike Pronovost, project manager for the University’s DISCOVERe tablet program, was recognized last fall at the United Nations as one of the world’s top entrepreneurs under age 35. Mike participated in meetings on the future and sustainability of technology and entrepreneurship. His accomplishments in the field of technology and his work in solving problems in rural areas were highlighted at the United Nations Economic Council Meeting. He also had the opportunity to communicate with foreign ambassadors who were seeking insight into how to use technology to solve real-world challenges. Congratulations Mike.

And last but not least, the grounds crew, irrigation team and plumbers. Last January, Governor Brown called for all Californians to reduce their per capita water consumption by 20 percent by 2020. Our grounds and irrigation staffers took that challenge seriously. Through their incredible efforts, we have reduced monthly water consumption across campus between 20 and 30 percent –20 and 30 percent! – well ahead of the governor’s goal. You decided not to wait till 2020 and do it in one year! Over the next year, we expect to reduce our annual water usage by more than 60 million gallons. Incredible!

Let’s thank and acknowledge our faculty and staff for their scholarship, hard work, innovative ideas and effective leadership.

I want to recognize one of our many outstanding students, Gavin Baird. Gavin, please stand. Gavin is a senior political science major and economics minor who I asked to join us today.

Gavin is the first – let’s repeat that, the first – Fresno State student to be awarded the prestigious Marshall Scholarship that will enable him to study in the United Kingdom later this year. The highly competitive Marshall Scholarship is a British government-financed program that selects scholars from across the United States to study in England and serve as ambassadors for relations between the two countries.

Gavin is among the 31 Marshall Scholarship winners nationwide. That’s fewer than 1 per state if you do the math. He will study International Relations at the London School of Economics and Political Science and will analyze political responses to mass migration.

We know that faculty and staff have a great impact on student success, and I’d like to acknowledge and thank the individuals and programs that have assisted Gavin. Representing the College of Social Sciences, Associate Dean Dr. Xuanning Fu. Dr. Fu, would you please stand? Thank you! Dr. Kurt Cline, chair of the Department of Political Science, would you please stand? MCJ Professor Dr. Bradley Hart, I know he would have loved to be here, I know he is returning from overseas trip and he is a personal mentor to Gavin. Gavin I know you would agree, you probably wouldn't be in this position without him, so, let's thank him as well.

Congratulations Gavin! I want to express my appreciation to you, for the way you handle this award, you've been out there. I think is going to be very important not just as you go and experience that, but when you come back and share with the others, because you are the first but there will be more.

I also want to thank Gavin's father who wrote me a very kind letter. Gavin didn't know about this, but his father, Neil, is a Fresno State alumnus, he wrote me a letter explaining why Gavin and his family decided to come to Fresno State and why it was so compelling, and I wanted to thank him, if you can thank him for me.

Gavin's incredible achievement, along with the other noteworthy achievements and initiatives by our entire community, are concrete examples of a university who's academic and athletic programs are on the rise. There is no doubt that our trajectory is going in a very positive direction.

Yes, like other organizations, we continue to face challenges that stimulate us to do our work better and smarter.

We must and we will continue to accelerate progress on student success. We will do it the right way by ensuring and enhancing the quality of our programs and through heightened academic standards. And yes, one important metric for us is our graduation rate. We will increase it to at least 70% within the decade – we’re committed to that. This will position us as a national leader and it is what our students and their families deserve and I know that we can do it together! I thank you in advance to all the faculty, staff, administrators for your work in helping us get there. Thank you.

We must and we will continue to invest in our people – our students, faculty and staff. We made significant progress on compensation for faculty and staff, but clearly, more work needs to be done and will be done in this area.

We must and we will continue to invest in our campus' infrastructure. The electrical upgrade is an enormously positive step. However, the reality is our capital and deferred maintenance backlog – estimated to be somewhere near $200 million – and it must be addressed.

I will continue to focus with all of you on investing in our campus to ensure that teaching, learning and research are supported by a quality and technologically adept infrastructure.

This is our single most critical non-academic challenge. The backlog was accumulated over decades and will take time to fully eliminate. I will need your full support in dealing with it so that those who follow us have a strong campus for generations to come.

As we move forward and the difficult years of the Great Recession get further in our rear view mirror, let's look ahead with great optimism about 2015 and the years and decades ahead.

As your President, I continue to insist that everyone matters and every voice matters. If my actions – or those of my Cabinet – do not demonstrate this every day, please let me know. I probably don’t have to say that – you’ll let me know!

Let's continue to sustain and improve upon the Fresno State that we want our children and grandchildren – and those throughout the Valley and beyond – to thrive in!

Let's be known as a great university because of the quality of our programs and the way wed our work! So, Be Bold. Yes. Be Nice. Yes. Be Proud. And Be Fresno State!

Because of all of you, our future is very bright! Because of the important role that we play in the Valley and beyond, the future of those we serve is also bright.

I want to end by thanking you for your loyalty and commitment to excellence that help make our University great!

I’ll end now and be happy to answer any questions you may have.