

Good morning!

Thank you, Ray!

And, thank you, for attending the first-ever ***State of the University Address***. This event signifies the importance of discovering how when we become ever more inextricably woven together...Community and University as one...our region can thrive.

Collaborating with each other is nothing new to us. California State University, Fresno has been supported by this community and our region for 105 years. What may be new is a greater focus and understanding that by strategically working together, we can propel the lasting success of the San Joaquin Valley.

To provide some context, let's take a step back in time. When the university was first established in 1911, it was called the Normal School and was located where Fresno City College is today. This was the first graduating class - 30 students, all women and one man learning to become elementary school teachers. Early childhood education was the only subject taught at that time. Today, Fresno State has eight colleges, 1,300 exceptional faculty teaching over 24,000 students annually in 61 baccalaureate degree, 45 master degree programs, three doctoral degree programs and 10 certificates of advanced study.

Fresno State is 24,000 students strong, for many reasons: Our boldly focused strategies, which you'll hear more about in a moment, state funding, the supplementary support from our community and the passionate interests of students – from families locally, nationally and internationally – who are choosing Fresno State as their higher education destination.

As you can see, historical enrollment shows how demand for Fresno State has grown, and this fall we welcomed a diverse class of 5,400 new freshmen and transfer students. Unfortunately with high demand comes challenge, and this year we had to turn away 5,000 qualified applicants.

The purpose of this Address is to annually connect you to the University's mission, strategic direction and the positive outcomes achieved through community ties. It also presents an opportunity to demonstrate ways for you to get involved and offer support. And, of course, every State of "Anything" (city, county, University) Address should have at least one surprise special announcement!

As you've heard from our Provost and student-body President, at the heart of our mission is Student Success. It is incumbent upon the University to be a catalyst in the region it serves, where there is a tremendous need for a next generation of leaders and no shortage of opportunities and challenges, to develop Student Success.

Of course, Student Success is what you expect of any learning institution. So, what is a promise of Student Success that Fresno State uniquely delivers? One promise of a successful student is that a student learns to lead in a way that can transform a business, an industry, a community, a family, a science, a country a world! Leadership is a universal asset and it is developed over time. At Fresno State, as students discover themselves, find their calling and develop their potential to break through whatever challenges they take on, they learn to lead.

Leadership becomes even more of an asset when you live in one of the most diverse regions in the nation. At a time when our country's demographics are changing, students from Fresno State are developing an understanding of diversity. This skill set refines their character which will help them wherever they land and *choose* to lead.

This is also a region that has historically produced trailblazers, going back to its agrarian roots, where the freedom and opportunity to succeed along with the courage to be distinctive in those achievements were essential. Fresno State has capitalized on this heritage to create an environment where distinction can shine.

Did you know that 72 percent of Fresno State students are the first in their families to attend college? Think about that and imagine the infusion of these students, inspired by high-impact practices, inventive programs, leading faculty, hands-on experiences and a bold attitude, into our unique San Joaquin Valley and beyond. That's distinctive student success, with a university and community working as one.

Paving the way for the next generation of leaders requires hard work by a strong and passionate leadership team. In addition to faculty, staff, alumni and friends of the University, I am extremely proud to stand alongside this senior team and delighted that we recruited our top choices for each Cabinet position, a majority of whom are Fresno State alumni and Valley natives. I'd like to ask the Cabinet to stand at this time so that I can personally recognize them as the strongest leadership team I have ever seen in my career and thank them for their support.

Speaking of support, in addition to the hundreds of community members who graciously "give of their time" as board and advisory council members and volunteers, I'd also like to thank the most precious volunteer on campus, my wife Mary.

Bottom line, I'm certain we can all agree 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, results-oriented way that is focused on the greater good for our community. In a higher education environment that could easily default to 'safe', Fresno State has committed to being Bold in delivering on the promise of Student Success!

These bold approaches are starting to pay dividends for our Valley. It's important to realize that the majority of graduates stay in our region to contribute further. In fact, of the 200 thousand alumni that have graduated from Fresno State, 80 percent or 160 thousand live and lead here, the place where they found their calling, which has also shaped who they are. With a show of hands, how many of you are proud Fresno State alums, married to an alumni or have a child or grandchild attending the University?

As you can see, Fresno State alums are here in full force and the good news is that all students are graduating at higher rates. Two years ago, Fresno State's 6-year graduation rate was below the CSU average at 48 percent, while today, it has increased to 58 percent and is now tracking well above the CSU average. Our campus goal is to achieve a 70% graduation rate by 2023. We are well on our way!

So to recap...bold focused strategies designed to maximize student success for a diverse student body, in collaboration with community partners, is the winning and lasting formula.

In this last year, newly crafted and equally as bold strategies have become a part of the equation. And, success is at hand. We have focused on two core strategies. We have deepened our commitment to removing barriers for students so that they *can* succeed and increased our commitment to academics and athletics rising together.

We have focused attention on the essential life necessities that we sometimes take for granted. This year, we grew the Student Cupboard, Clothing Closet and the Good Samaritan Fund. Thanks to the significant support from many alumni, staff and friends, including Granville Homes, the Student Cupboard has already served over 3,300 students! Since this need for nutrition and hygiene products has been so significant, it is reasonable to predict a similar need for professional attire; that is, most students do not have the economic means to purchase quality clothing to wear for interviews, jobs or internships. And finally, gifts to the Good Samaritan Fund provide critical financial support for students when they experience a crisis inhibiting them from learning or attending school. This year, nine students facing catastrophic events received financial help.

Another aid and incentive driven by donors are scholarships. Scholarships make a huge difference to families by reducing the overall cost of tuition and in some cases fully funding a student's education. Thanks to so many of you in our audience today, Fresno State awards millions of dollars in annual student support. Many donors love this way to give because they can have an immediate and lasting impact on a student's life. I think you would be surprised to know that a first-time gift of \$5,000, along with an annual commitment of the same over four years, can establish a \$25,000 endowed scholarship that grows in perpetuity supporting the dream of an education for a student every year.

We live in a Valley that has a long-standing tradition of supporting Fresno State athletic teams. It's practically in our DNA. Athletic events bring us together as a community and help build pride among alumni and friends. Some say to walk away from our commitment to sports, others say let's invest more and grow our programs. We decided to invest more because we believe strongly that Fresno State athletics enrich the student experience and vitality of our area. Our vision includes re-instating wrestling and women's water polo as Division I sports and I'm happy to say, this is now a reality! I am grateful to those in the community, including the Zinkin Family, who stepped up to assist us in realizing this goal.

Balancing athletics and academics is something we don't take lightly. Our students are expected to do well in school and act as role-models on and off the field. Few Universities can join Fresno State in boasting a student athlete GPA average of 3.12 percent!

The achievements of our women's tennis team are especially noteworthy, four of the eight members earned perfect 4.0 GPAs, six of the eight players were named Intercollegiate Tennis Association scholar-athletes and the team earned the NCAA's highest possible Academic Percentage Rate... all while winning two straight Mountain West championships!

Of course, student success requires excellent faculty. This academic year, we have hired over 40 new tenure-track faculty and another 60 will be hired by next fall. This means that over 100 new tenure track faculty in the span of one year will join the Fresno State team. Each new faculty member will bring new energy and ideas that strengthen our support for students.

To assist students in choosing a career path and ensuring they are on track for graduation, we've significantly restructured our advising efforts. A decentralized model now offers advising centers and

expertise within each college to improve advisor-to-student ratios and allow more time for counseling. We have also dramatically enhanced our internship and job placement efforts in collaboration with you and many others.

Retaining students is a top priority and offering meaningful high-impact practices aligned with real-world needs have proven to do just that. “Learning by serving” is becoming core to who we are as a University. There is not enough time to share every impactful research project, internship or collaboration. But, it is important to highlight a few to underscore that you have a university eager to partner because of the synergistic opportunities that we can make available for our students to learn problem-solving skills in the context of regional challenges.

Agriculture in the Central Valley feeds the world so, naturally it deserves a strong University partner. The commitments of our Ag community are demonstrated routinely and once again through sponsorships of today’s event. To advance our efforts as a premier academic hub for agriculture, the Jordan College of Agricultural Sciences and Technology is searching for an innovative and forward-thinking Dean and will open the new Jordan Agricultural Research Center this spring. Thanks to a special gift from our friend, the late Dee Jordan and her family, this will be the first interdisciplinary center of its kind in the CSU system bringing science, agriculture and engineering together.

Another major research project to celebrate was commissioned by Wells Fargo through their Clean Technology and Innovation Grant. This study on the human effects of the drought is now fostering dialogue and building consensus around the region regarding solutions to the water shortage. I’d also like to recognize our Water Task Force for guidance in positioning Fresno State as a foremost authority on water.

One of the faculty/student research projects spearheaded through the Craig School of Business’ this past year evaluated the Economic and Fiscal impact of successful fire interventions by the Fresno Fire Department and provided valuable insight that the City of Fresno’s Fire Department is now utilizing to improve their organization.

Beyond the classroom, in honor of the 100th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, Fresno State and community leaders commemorated the event by constructing and unveiling an Armenian Monument. As the first college campus nationwide with such a monument, we are proud to serve as an example of how a university can lead in raising awareness and cultivating pride on campus and within a community.

Students from The School of Nursing in the College of Health and Human Services have taken wellness “on the road” with their Community Mobile Health Project, providing much-needed hands-on clinical outreach services to the rural areas in Fresno County. In just a few months, they have served almost 500 individuals!

The Autism Center at Fresno State within the College of Science and Math trains students in real-time how to work with children 18 months to 6 years of age with a diagnosis of autism or a related disorder. The cutting-edge research and principle based behavior therapy applied gives hope to families as their children gain skills and abilities. The demand for this specialized care has resulted in a new strategic partnership and satellite Center with Valley Children’s Hospital that opened last year.

And, it doesn’t stop there. Training future teachers where they live enables students to teach and learn in their hometowns. The South Valley Education Initiative provides a Teacher Residency Program linking

South Valley schools, and scholarships for students who strive to become teachers. We are proud that the Teacher Residency Program at the Kremen School of Education has received the highest honor, the Christa McAuliffe Award from the American Association of State Colleges and Universities.

To support revitalization efforts in Downtown Fresno, the College of Arts and Humanities opened its first satellite campus with the Graduate Art Studios at M Street Arts Complex. Here, students take art classes and can show and market their work through the gallery. Also, the Division of Continuing and Global Ed has teamed up with Bitwise, a thriving downtown technology hub, to offer a variety of professional development courses relevant in today's business climate.

The College of Social Sciences offers another exciting example of how a University can be responsive to local workforce needs. Thanks to Supervisor Henry R. Perea and nearly \$300,000 in contributions garnered through his Office, Fresno State is bringing back a City and Regional Planning certificate and undergraduate degree program. Now, local students interested in this field of study will be able to pursue their education here at home!

The Lyles College of Engineering is preparing talented students to lead in water, transportation systems and manufacturing and our graduates are in high demand! The skills cultivated at Fresno State have allowed them to compete for top jobs against candidates from other Universities.

And in the area of education, 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.

These programs and initiatives begin to give you a glimpse into the many collaborations happening across campus with our region. I am proud to lead a University that has so many deep ties and supporters who care about keeping Fresno State strong for the long term.

This year marks the end of a 5-year Strategic Plan that preceded me and the opportunity to work with my colleagues in shaping a new strategic direction. Please take a look at the four priorities that emerged from a series of campus and community forums. These priorities will keep us focused and support our decision-making around Student Success. Take for example, priority one...

Strategic Plan

- 1. 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.**

Inspiring innovation will drive new ideas as we deliver on our promise of providing a high quality learning experience for our students. To focus on one such program, I'd like to tell you about DISCOVERe. Becoming ever more student-centered, educational courses are being reimaged to integrate tablet technology. This is how many of our students wish to learn so, it is only fitting that the proceeds from today's inaugural **State of the University Address** benefit our DISCOVERe program. 7,000 students and over 130 faculty are participating this year, with a 700% growth

since it was first offered in the Spring of 2014. Data shows that students who participate in tablet classes learn more and achieve higher grades than those in traditional courses, and the cost savings has increased to an estimated 73% over a traditional course!

2. Invest in our dynamic work environment to better attract, develop, and retain talented, diverse faculty and staff.

Like many of you during a very long recession, our faculty and staff went without raises. To stay true to our second strategic objective, the campus has invested nearly \$2.7million in addition to the CSU system contribution of \$6.4 million over the past two years to increase salaries and benefits for our valued employees. We have more progress to make in the coming years, but I know this support has been appreciated by our team.

3. Modernize and expand our campus physical and technological infrastructure.

This priority is extensive and enormously critical.

Student learning is vastly enhanced by investments in infrastructure, deferred maintenance and facilities. A \$31 million upgrade to the campus aging electrical infrastructure is on track to be completed in September and an additional \$20 million is reserved for deferred maintenance over the next two years. And, earlier this semester we opened the new Physical Therapy and Intercollegiate Athletics Building where PT students learn how to heal injuries.

Student athletes and our hundreds of thousands of Bulldogs fans are the inspiration for modernizing the 35-year-old Bulldog Stadium. Discovering their needs and addressing their most critical concerns – restrooms, concessions, accessibility and parking - are at the heart of this renovation. With the support of our community, this vision can also become a reality.

We have accomplished a lot already under this priority. Expect to hear more in the upcoming months about renovated learning and athletics spaces, \$2 million in upgrades to the University Farm Laboratory, and plans to construct a new student union and faculty development center.

4. Grow and develop collaborative and engaged community partnerships to increase support for students and the University.

There are so many ways for you to get involved and stand behind the vision and direction we have shared with you today. Since time is short, I'd like to focus on just two. As an elite group of business professionals, the Fresno State Alumni Association would like to invite you to participate in our online advising program through Fresno State Career Connections. This online platform allows alumni, business professionals and industry leaders, wherever they live across the globe, to provide personal career advice to Fresno State students. Your expertise is invaluable and your involvement will help prepare our students for success upon graduation.

Also, to stay connected, check out our new community online hub for news, stories and information about Fresno State at fresnostatenews.com. This redesigned site offers a more user-friendly experience, allowing you to quickly and easily read inspiring stories about our students and community.

And speaking about “inspiring,” there is no better inspiration than our distinguished alumni. Please join me in honoring three President’s Medalists of Honor who are here with us today. This award recognizes extraordinary achievement and outstanding service both to the University and Community, and these alumni inspire our diverse student body.

Justice Marvin Baxter is the only lifelong San Joaquin Valley resident to become a member of the California Supreme Court. He is deeply rooted in the University starting with his involvement in student government while at Fresno State. Most recently, Judge Baxter and Mrs. Baxter established the “Marvin and Jane Baxter Scholarship,” which supports students in the teaching credential program.

Judge Armando Rodriquez served four years as an Air Force code specialist in the Korean War and attended Fresno State on the GI Bill. Highlights of his career include becoming the first Latino judge of the Fresno County Superior Court, and the first Latino elected to the Fresno County Board of Supervisors in 1972. On Saturday, Judge Rodriguez joined many in the community at a ceremony that named a local library after his beautiful late wife, Betty.

Now, as I mentioned before, as with any “State of the ‘anything’” there is always a special announcement. This one is particularly meaningful as I am honored to share with you this year’s newest President’s Medalist of Honor – Ray Steele, Jr.

Ray began his career as a news reporter right here at Fresno State and rose to become the publisher of The Fresno Bee. Ray is an extraordinary leader, serving as Chair of our Foundation Board of Governors. He has been instrumental in raising financial support for student projects and takes the time with his wife, Mary Lou, to personally make a difference in a student’s life. Thank you, Ray!

This is a time of extraordinary progress and possibilities for Fresno State. I feel the energy everywhere I go across campus and in the communities of the Valley and beyond, and I hope you do too.

I have served at many fine universities in this state. However, not one of them has the tremendous potential we have right now to build upon a 105 year old solid foundation.

Many of you have been supporting Fresno State for decades and some of you have made life gifts. We are very grateful for your generosity.

Others of you may be considering support for the first time. If this is the case, I hope you will continue to be inspired by the direction and impact Fresno State makes on our students’ lives and our home.

Fresno State is undoubtedly on the rise. While we will continue to aggressively advocate for additional future state funds to advance our ability to serve more students, it is clear to me that our path to new levels of achievement will require more significant levels of private support from friends like you and friends throughout the Valley.

Today, we have discovered how Fresno State in collaboration with our community has shaped student success. And now, we are positioned better than ever before to work even more closely and strategically with you, our partners, to boost regional vitality.

Philanthropic gifts are essential to achieving annual and long-term goals. When the timing is right, we look forward to aligning your giving with your passions for this community that are ignited when Community and University work as one.

Thank you for taking the time to discover how we are stronger together. Mary and I invite you to join us 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, faculty, staff, alumni, and friends – including all of you – our future is incredibly bright!

Thank you!