

Faculty-Staff Fall Assembly 2016

President Joseph I. Castro

Good morning and welcome back!

Thank you, Kevin, for that kind introduction. I appreciate your strong and steady leadership of the Academic Senate. I also appreciate Katie Williamson for leading our Staff Assembly so effectively. I also want to recognize and thank my partner and favorite Fresno State volunteer – my wife Mary. Last, but certainly not least, I want to welcome our new faculty and staff, and new Associated Students President, Tim Ryan. Please stand and be recognized!

I hope that summer provided all of you some quality time with your family and friends. This keeps us in balance...creating greater capacity to contribute and handle challenges...to be prepared for what's ahead, including a greater self-awareness of others...at a time when our complex world calls for it.

As a University, and as a team, we have all the best reasons to be prepared. That's why we start by coming together on a day like today, ready to grow and to reflect, to change when change is necessary and to plan – together -- for a new year that will take us to new heights of success. It's the opportunity for us to commit to something bigger that we can only accomplish as a whole. I love the quote: "The whole is greater than the sum of its parts". The whole that I speak of listens to each other and develops our most valuable asset: student success. When our students succeed inside and outside of the classroom, we have succeeded.

Doris Kearns Goodwin, noted Presidential historian, weighs in. She believes, "Good leadership requires you to surround yourself with people of diverse perspectives who can disagree with you without the fear of retaliation."

That starts with listening...our biggest opportunity to succeed...a most valuable tool and particularly now. We must listen...to what's going on in our world...and what that means for us as a place where inclusiveness, free speech, civility and empathy can thrive. I believe these are essential ingredients for the development of our students – the next generation of leaders in the Valley and beyond.

Civility requires understanding where the other person is coming from, and not being pre-occupied by persuading the other to your side. This is authentic respect for one another. The most thoughtful solutions to challenges and tremendous growth can come from this simple step. All voices are heard and listened to, with the ear and mind to move beyond any one agenda to a result that integrates the best intentions and proposals of each voice. It is through this integration of perspectives that the greater good for our campus and community will be served.

And each of us has a voice that matters at Fresno State. Our monthly Conversations on Inclusion and Equity and our Forum on Inclusion, Respect and Equity scheduled for September 28th and 29th are two concrete examples of our commitment to listen.

David Brooks of the New York Times who was on campus in May describes in his book, *The Road to Character*, a “moral bucket list”—one that includes what he calls the inner light...a reflection of “eulogy virtues”, not “resume virtues.” Resume virtues help prepare you for a professional career; eulogy virtues build personal character. As educators Brooks believes that we should be spending as much time with character as with careers. I agree. He suggests that those with an inner light listen well...in the process they are often caught looking after other people, not thinking about what wonderful work they are doing, but hearing and valuing what’s up with others.

Here at Fresno State your voices are being heard. The call by our LGBTQ community for the freedom to designate an individual student’s name preference was heard and put into action. The call to better support African-American students in connecting with their peers and the University was heard and put into action. A first ever retreat – appropriately titled *Harambee*, which means “Let’s pull together,” was held this week where new and continuing African-American students, along with African-American faculty, staff and alumni, could exchange ideas of how to create a greater sense of belonging on campus.

The faculty and staff have been heard and are valued, with a multi-year compensation plan and a more robust professional development program. Since 2013, our funding commitment to salaries, wages and benefits has increased by twenty six million dollars and is projected to increase by another eleven million dollars in the coming year. We will continue to hear you.

And when voices are heard, there’s dialogue. That dialogue leads to the discussion of “what if’s”. Here’s one big “what if”: what if unity across campus came not only out of crisis whether here or across the country, but could also come from each of us seeing the opportunity to elevate student success, elevate every department, elevate every faculty member and staff, and elevate our community in which we live. That’s possible!

When we model how unity can thrive internally here at the University – even with our tremendous diversity and each department’s wish list – we open the door for our community to see how unity can work for them...to raise our community’s self-image...to help ignite industry clusters to tackle regional issues we face like air and water...and to create new jobs, many of which will be filled by those 80% of Fresno State graduates who stay here in our community to have an impact. We are not only a huge economic engine for the region generating impact that trickles down to each of us as residents, we are an engine for inspiration.

The examples of how we are unifying as a University are real. From the day three years ago when I began serving as your President, I’ve spoken of the power of what happens at a University like this one when Academics and Athletics rise together. Once a concept, now is a reality.

One example is unfolding as we speak. For the first time ever, what would have been another TV campaign to sell tickets for Bulldog Football has become a bigger message of how our athletes are STUDENT athletes first...who well after the cheers and the tailgates have an impact on our community because of what happens in the classroom. We’re asking the entire community, not just Bulldog Football fans, to buy tickets not only for game day, but for all the days and years in the future when these students will play a role in creating wins for our region. All beginning with how the price of a ticket is just the ticket to build our community. Take a look:

“JUST THE TICKET” TV SPOT PLAYS

Where did this unity come from? It didn't just happen. Very different departments used to hearing their own formula came to understand the power of unity to accomplish something greater than just what their departments could produce on their own. Credit to Paula Castadio, our VP of University Advancement and her team, and Jim Bartko, our Athletic Director with his team, for setting this example.

Our Bold new Strategic Plan didn't just happen either, it was crafted by US out of a unity of purpose to set inspirational and aspirational goals.

We are already living the Strategic Plan's mission to boldly educate and empower our students for success. Those high-impact practices we are driving together as faculty and staff set an extraordinary path for the development of new leaders and lifelong success.

As mentioned earlier, we are investing with purpose to attract, develop and retain diverse faculty and staff...69 new tenure-track faculty for fall – the largest cohort in twenty years – further evidence our Plan is guiding us the right direction. I want to acknowledge and thank our talented Deans across the campus for recruiting such a stellar group of new faculty!

And you'll hear in a moment the progress we are making on other Strategic Plan priorities...improving our physical and technological infrastructure...and growing, developing fully engaged community partnerships that support students, faculty and the University's aim to work as one with the community to create a more vibrant Central Valley. This is our charge as California State University, Fresno as we begin our 106th academic year.

A charge that has accomplished a great deal in the last year, and the plans for coming years are even bolder. Some recent highlights can travel under the radar, so let me shine some light.

Provost Lynnette Zelezny reports our Richter Center, during the 2015-16 academic year alone, provided one million, one-hundred and ninety-eight thousand hours of service to our community. This is the seventh year in a row we have exceeded one million hours, and growing every year. That's learning by serving at its finest...another way the University and community work as one for something bigger than ourselves. And consider the economic impact of those one million plus hours in our community: nearly 34 million dollars that touch others.

Vice President Frank Lamas reminds us how empathy and encouragement for others live in many ways on campus. The Student Cupboard, since opening in November 2014, has seen over 45,000 visits. In March of 2015, we teamed with Craig School of Business alumni, Christopher Morse and Ken Wittwer, to raise over \$100,000 to fulfill the food and hygiene needs of our students so they could focus on their success in the classroom.

We're also feeding the hunger of those who need a hand to start and finish strong. We provided over two-hundred and twenty million dollars in financial aid for 2015-16. Two-hundred and twenty MILLION dollars in support of our students! Our "Recruit up to 99" Career Internship Fair saw fifteen hundred students attend and employer participation increase by 44%. And dreams of a higher education continue to come true at our newly established Dream Outreach and Success Center.

And remember our pledge to see Academics and Athletics rise together? Our Athletic Director Jim Bartko reports a stat that you won't hear on SportsCenter: we have set a school record of one-hundred and five All-Academic Mountain West honorees and another school record of eighty-two Mountain West Scholar Athletes. That tells you of a powerful new game plan at work at Fresno State.

There are more familiar stats, including crowning our Men's Basketball, Softball and Baseball teams as Mountain West Conference Champions.

We've hired head coaches for our new wrestling and women's water polo teams—Troy Steiner for wrestling and Natalie Benson for women's water polo, both of whom are Olympians. Our new softball coach, Linda Garza, grew up right here in Fresno just blocks from campus, is impressive. As a young girl, she attended Fresno State softball games and dreamt of being the coach. Today, Linda has returned home to be our coach!

For the third straight year we top all Mountain West teams for TV network viewership. And to capitalize on that interest by our fans, we've renovated the Spalding G. Wathen Tennis Center—home, by the way, to our tennis team that touts one of the highest in the nation student athletic G.P.A. of 3.7. We're completing an update of Warmerdam Field, and have begun phase one of making Bulldog Stadium a world-class venue for a community full of events that unite us on one field.

The first step toward accomplishments like these gets back to listening...across the University, across our community...across the country among over two-hundred thirty thousand living alumni...uncovering the opportunities to represent our many constituents and advance the University and community in sync.

At the heart of advancement is, not coincidentally, what the University Advancement team is doing. An important snapshot of our success is our fund raising among donors who 'get' where we're headed and why. They wouldn't have given over 20 million dollars in 2015-16 if they didn't see it. That's an increase of 18% over last year. Our President's Circle of Excellence – those who are giving \$1,000 or more – has increased nearly 39% in the last year. Growing support at this level says we are doing something right.

One reason? We're listening. Our Alumni Association and Development team are reaching out from our region across the U.S. and world to sit down with alumni to consider how their examples of success can return in-kind to campus to inspire students who will follow their example. I've also taken to the road across the Central Valley this last year to have one-on-one and community conversations with alumni and friends who want to know more and want to contribute because they're hearing about, or getting a sample of what we call Bold.

And before you think that Bold for a university is expressed simply in programs, initiatives and accomplishments, consider the people behind Bold who believe in it and don't stop until they see the results.

People like Professor Antonio Avalos, chair of Department of Economics, for his work on the Central Valley Export Plan. His powerful work will help to strengthen our Valley economy. Thank you, Antonio!

Joy Goto, Fresno State Chemistry professor, whose ground-breaking research (along with 49 colleagues around the world) is helping us better understand the role of environmental toxins in ALS and Alzheimer's disease. Thank you, Joy!

Debbie Young, our interim director of the Career Development Center, who is transforming the delivery of career services to better equip our students for their next stop...including developing a new Career and Internship Fair model concentrating on eight industries that hire the most in the Valley, and initiating the Clothing Closet to ensure that our students dress for success. Thank you, Debbie!

And there's Jim Michael who started at Fresno State in 1989 and will finish strong as he retires next May having helped transition our technology organization to become a more outward-facing, service-oriented department that benefits everyone on campus. Thank you, Jim!

Let's make more contagious this calling to be Bold...in distinction and service by our entire team at Fresno State.

And there are times when being Bold is a virtue of restraint and quiet wisdom; one example is how our Campus Police have successfully handled the expected and the unexpected at all hours of the day and night.

I invite all Campus Police staff members to stand and be recognized. Thank you!

What's ahead of us for the next year?

This summer and continuing through the fall, we're responding to the needs for upgraded physical and technological infrastructure in line with our Strategic Plan. Deborah Adishian-Astone, our new Vice President for Administration, reports we're making a total investment of eighty-six point five million dollars in upgrades to campus facilities and utilities and for deferred maintenance...to improve and sustain the tools you need to do your job...that includes enhanced campus safety.

And we're so proud of two major projects—our 30 million dollar electrical infrastructure upgrade and the crown jewel...our new Jordan Agricultural Research Center, the first ever multi-discipline laboratory in the CSU, funded by 24 million dollars in non-State donor funds.

Our Provost, and Associate Provost Dennis Nef, will focus this year – with the Deans, department chairs and Academic Senate -- on redesigning General Education, reimagining research and graduate studies, and ways to holistically support faculty and staff.

The launch of a Fresno State Visalia campus, in partnership with College of the Sequoias and led by Dean Luz Gonzalez, is moving forward, alongside one of our most critical initiatives for the future—the Central Valley Promise, meant to fill our K through 16 pathway from rural and urban areas with the best prepared students ever. My thanks to Dean Jim Marshall for his leadership in initiating the Promise.

Orlando Leon, our Chief Information Officer, assures us that our University community will have the benefit of greater connectivity to help us better communicate with each other.

The DISCOVERe program – in just its third year -- will serve ten thousand students this year, making this Fresno State mobile initiative one of the largest of its kind in the nation. And Zimbra will be replaced with Google’s suite of email and calendaring this coming school year.

Our compassion for students and their families will continue to be top-of-mind, as Student Affairs rolls out its campus-wide Project H.O.P.E., in partnership with the United Way Central Valley, to help link students to resources that address basic human needs: physical and mental health, support of their children and families, and employment needs.

Not the least of these initiatives is our plan to build, by 2020, a new student union and faculty center to accomplish exactly what the word ‘union’ implies: a 24/7 place for students and faculty to engage, exchange, listen to each other, grow, and find a common ground upon which to unite.

Just to take a quick peek at what else we see by 2020: a six-year graduation rate at or near 70% (which will place us in the upper 10-15% of public universities nationally) and a four-year rate at or near 50%; more modern teaching, learning and housing facilities that break any previous mold of possibilities; and a comprehensive fund-raising campaign to help fund this transformation with seed gifts from alumni and friends already in place before launching the public phase.

And we just got a vote of confidence we’ll get where we need to go. The higher education strategy consulting firm, Firetail, has identified their “Class of 2030” which consists of a new generation of what they call “challenger” universities that have an opportunity to become globally renowned in the next 10 to 20 years. They studied 346 institutions...they looked at each university’s balance between short and long-term strategies...and they looked at how each views our changing world. California State University Fresno is one in that “Class of 2030”, and has been named a “rising star.”

We belong in this class because of your efforts. Take our well-deserved credit, faculty and staff!

How can we aim this high? You know the answer after the last twenty-five minutes or so. We’re choosing to seek unity. We’re choosing to be inclusive, respecting every voice and hearing what each has to say. We’re choosing to put student success first, knowing that if we are true to that, everything that matters will follow. We’re choosing to be one with our community, where students learn how service above self is a preferred future for all citizens...a place where students contribute to problem-solving that builds new industries and increases our quality of life here in the Valley and beyond.

And in the end, it’s all possible because we remain determined to do one thing first: we’re choosing to listen. As simple as that can be, in today’s world, that’s Bold.

And Fresno State is where Bold begins.

Thank you for all that you have done and will do in the year ahead! I wish each of you the best for a year beyond our own expectations.

Now I’d be happy to take any of your questions.

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