



# State of the University Address

by President Mildred García to the Academic Senate

Thursday, October 18, 2012

Good morning. I am very pleased to be here this morning delivering my first State of the University Address at the Academic Senate. I have now completed my fourth month and I am into my fifth. Can you believe it? This semester is flying by and I see many good things happening all over our University and so many things are being planned for our campus. Many of you were at convocation, and as you know, I addressed three areas of focus. The three Pillars for this year are: (1) Setting our Future Horizons: Completing the Strategic Plan; (2) Ensuring Student Success; and (3) Promoting Titan Pride: Friend raising and Fundraising.

## Setting our Future Horizons: Completing the Strategic Plan

Let me begin this first State of the University address by discussing with you the first Pillar of Setting our Future Horizons: Completing the Strategic Plan. I want to again thank everyone who has worked on the Strategic Plan and for getting us to this point and for meeting with Jolene Koester, our facilitator, to provide your insight and experience. The very morning of our Town Hall, Dr. Jack Bedell sent an email to all faculty reminding them to attend; this provides just one small example that shows how we are all working together to achieve this very important goal.

We had a wonderful town hall meeting on Friday with more than 400 faculty and staff attending and participating. It was so exciting to see the level of discussion and energy in the room that morning as participants began with the 25 goals, and through a series of exercises and group discussions, determined their group's top five goals. The conversations were lively, engaging and challenging — and there were areas of agreement and consensus, as well as differences. These were not easy discussions and I know when we have that kind of engagement from faculty and staff, we will have great results! If you weren't able to attend that meeting, I hope that you will provide your input online at the Strategic Plan website by tomorrow.

We will continue to get input from the campus for the Strategic Planning Steering Committee. I especially want to thank Drs. Jenny Faust, Bob Mead, Irene Matz and the entire committee for their commitment to this important work to complete our Strategic Plan by April 2013. Reports and data from the Town Hall and subsequent input from the campus community will be posted to the website and notifications will be sent as new information is posted.

Finally, my sincere thanks to everyone who attended the Town Hall and to those who have submitted their individual input on the website. I ask you to also be our advocates to go back to your respective constituencies and have them provide input through our website. It is so critical that all of us see that there is a process for inclusion even if you are not on one of the governing structures. Every voice is critical to our future direction and the successful completion and implementation of our Strategic Plan!

## Ensuring Student Success

I am thankful that Drs. Ed Trotter and Berenecea Johnson Eanes have agreed to chair the Graduation Initiative Committee. The committee will take the lead on assisting us to become an even better data-informed University that takes action for student success, across the divisions, where we will be measuring and acting on what matters to student academic achievement.

Their charge will include providing information to help all of us understand who our students are, to know who we are admitting, examining our retention and graduation patterns, disaggregating student data to understand where we need to improve, working with our academic deans on retention and graduation rates in their colleges so that benchmarks and goals can be established, and ensuring that all divisions are working together in aligning student success initiatives.

While I understand that some may be informed, this is an effort to ensure that the entire University has access to, and can engage in, understanding who our student body is. For example, I received comments after convocation where many individuals shared with me that they had no idea that our graduation rate for first-time, full-time freshmen is 50 percent. Before we can strengthen and improve our retention and graduation rates, we need to know where we are and know who we serve. I thank the committee for their commitment for embracing this very important charge.

In September, I was honored to give the closing address at Chapman University's *En Colaboración: A Call for United Action*, a conference on closing the Latino Achievement Gap in our colleges and universities. The changing demographics of our nation and the educational attainment not only affects Latinos and their families, but also the vitality and viability of this nation. Latinos represent 58 percent of the Orange County population under 18 years of age. In 2011, Latinos totaled 34 percent of Orange County's population and it is predicted to be at 50 percent by 2020. Additionally, of the students in Orange County, 47 percent are Latino. However, Latino students make up 93 percent of the student body in Santa Ana and 86 percent in Anaheim. Also in California, every other child born today is Hispanic (Pew Hispanic Center).

As we have noted, our fall enrollment is the largest ever with 37,677 students. We can take pride that our campus is able to react to enrollment targets, but we also have challenges when we consider how many students do not graduate and realize their academic potential and dreams, and how we can prevent perhaps not all, but some of the dropout.

### **Promoting Titan Pride**

Let me turn my attention to the second Pillar, Promoting Titan Pride: Friend raising and Fundraising.

One of the highlights of my first few months as president has been the opportunity to meet with six of our county's elected officials (and more are on my calendar), business and community leaders, and to profit from their experience serving the citizens of our region. As I meet members of our community, it is clear that Titan Pride extends well beyond the campus! I look forward to expanding our reach by building new relationships throughout our area.

I also had the pleasure of meeting with Don Shields, Cal State Fullerton President Emeritus. He continues to be dedicated to the growth and success of this campus. It was an honor for me that my first UPS signature was to accept the recommendation of the Academic Senate to establish the Donald L. Shields Excellence in Scholarship and Creativity Award that recognizes Cal State Fullerton faculty for their outstanding scholarship and/or creative activity. Congratulations to the Academic Senate, and of course to Dr. Shields, for acknowledging his contributions to our University.

In addition, in order for me to boast about the excellent work happening here, I need to learn directly from faculty and staff regarding those areas we should be bragging about across the University and externally. Thus, I have been meeting regularly with tenure/tenure track faculty in small groups of 10-12. These meetings are informal and a way for us to get to know each other. I have been so inspired with the academic work, creative activities and scholarship that is shared, and with the dedication and commitment to students that is expressed. It is so clear that these faculty love teaching and learning and have a commitment to our students. I have learned so very much — what they are excited about, concerned about and the things they are doing inside and outside of the classroom! Further, even in these small groups, I find individuals that don't know each other and learn about each other's work. If you haven't already, I hope that you will join me at upcoming meetings.

Many have invited me to attend events in our communities and I must admit it has been very busy with just a few rare evenings at home. In September, I was invited to speak to local business and industry leaders at recent meetings of the Orange County Business Council and Orange County Forum. Again, these events provided a chance for me to meet so many important partners and potential partners for Cal State Fullerton. It was a joy meeting so many alumni in the audience and their pledges to help us strengthen our friend raising and fundraising. Everywhere I have gone, community members speak so highly of our students, who are their interns and employees!

Further, I have hosted numerous on- and off-campus individuals and groups at the University House at El Dorado Ranch for receptions and dinners since my move in July. From the business meeting and reception for the Philanthropic Board, a dinner welcoming new faculty to our University, celebrating Hispanic Month with the Chicano/Latino Faculty and Staff, a kick off of the new academic year for the ASI Executive Board and Academic Senate Executive Committee, to a dinner with senior officers of Honda, and many more. We will continue to use El Dorado Ranch for fundraising and friend raising, and to highlight the significant achievements of our students, faculty and staff.

In September, I was also honored to be hosted by alums Ernie and Donna Schroeder at the opening dinner and performance of the Pacific Symphony. For those who may not know these two alums, you should know that they own their own business here in Orange County. Ernie is also a new member to our Philanthropic Board. They love Fullerton because they received an excellent academic education and they met each other here, married and have had a successful life together. At this event, Pacific Symphony Director John Forsythe formally introduced me as the new President of Cal State Fullerton. Many of you probably know that the Pacific Symphony Orchestra assembled for the first time in 1978 and began right here at Cal State Fullerton.

When I asked about the tradition here, where the president provided “A State of the University to the Academic Senate,” several individuals shared that this was an opportunity to discuss where the president hopes the Senate would work with the administration in the new academic year and possibly adopt new policies. They then highlighted BL 83-9. Obviously you are already doing some of the important work with the Strategic Plan by being active participants. Further, I will need the Academic Senate to work with the provost on student learning outcomes. It will be the provost and his team that will be ensuring that there is a foundation, structure and resources to strengthen and move forward our work in this area.

We also know that it will be the Academic Senate’s support and working with the provost that we will be successful. This is such an important area of work. We need to find the right assessment measures to first inform us as a community if students are indeed learning what we say we want them to learn and then we can provide that evidence to stakeholders, legislators and communities across the state and nation. Student learning must be coupled with retention and graduation; they are linked and inseparable. In addition to the student learning outcomes, let me once again thank Provost Murray and the Academic Senate under Dr. Bedell’s leadership for beginning the discussion on student advising. I know that the Provost’s Office is working with the Academic Senate and Student Affairs Division to ensure that a plan is presented to my office, which provides a comprehensive, intentional and consistent student advising program for all students.

In continuing our discussion on policies needed to continue our work, I understand that in the past, several UPS documents stayed in the President’s Office without a decision or feedback — sometimes for a couple of years. I am strongly of the belief that the Academic Senate deserves a prompt response to UPS documents — either approval or returned with specific comments indicating the reasons for returning them unsigned. This is very important to ensure continued strong, shared governance. You have my commitment that I will do my best to do this. In the same light there are tasks that I, as president, will be requesting of the Senate, such as re-examination of UPS docs, assistance in forming committees, etc. I hope that these will also receive similar prompt attention so we can move forward more rapidly than in the past in enacting policies and advancing the interests of the University.

Finally, please allow me a few more moments to provide some updates regarding searches. A reminder that Dr. José Cruz will be joining our campus as provost and vice president of academic affairs on December 3. I

know you will join me in welcoming him. He brings valuable experience and expertise that will contribute to moving our campus forward.

We also are eternally grateful to Dr. Steve Murray for delaying his retirement until we appointed a provost. Stay tuned! We are planning an event to provide the University's thanks for Dr. Murray's 41 years of service to Cal State Fullerton.

In addition, the vice president for university advancement search, chaired by Bill Barrett, has closed and the committee meets on October 23 to review resumes, followed by telephone and campus interviews in November. Many thanks go to the committee for moving quickly on this critical search. I also want to take this opportunity to publicly thank Tere Mendoza, who will be returning to her job at the Chancellor's Office in early November. She has been an enormous help during this transition period and we are very grateful for the time and dedication she has given to Cal State Fullerton!

Also, we currently have 35 faculty searches under way. These positions will also be integral to the academic success of our students. I know that Dr. Murray, the academic deans, and I are urging the search committees to ensure a strong, academically qualified and diverse pool of candidates that reflect the student body we serve. This too was highlighted to us at our interview with the WASC panel back in June. So, I thank the Academic Affairs team for their commitment to ensuring the diversity of our faculty.

We are also conducting a search for an athletics director, and Sed Dempsey former president of the NCAA, is assisting us in that search, and by the way, at no cost to us. Also, please join me in welcoming Kelly Ford, head softball coach, to Cal State Fullerton. I hope to see many of you at a future softball game and let Coach Ford see our Titan spirit! I am also pleased to share that NCAA Vice President Bernard Franklin will be visiting us, along with his team, on November 30. Their goal is to welcome a new president into Division 1 Athletics, and provide a workshop and information on Division 1 and the collaboration that can ensue between us and NCAA.

## **Budget Update**

Last but certainly not least, I will mention our budget. There are no significant updates on the budget, but we will know more following the November election. We know that if Prop. 30 passes, we will be going through returning tuition to 2011-12 figures, which will require an enormous amount of staff time in repackaging financial aid packages, and will leave us with a \$7 million shortfall for one year. The revenues for the CSU on tuition is \$132 million. The state will give us \$125 million in our base in 2013-14, but we will not get those dollars in 2012-13, thus creating the \$7 million shortfall. We are preparing for scenarios, as we know them, and we will move forward when we are given the final figures from the Chancellor's Office. My priority continues to be if Prop. 30 fails, given what we know now, I will protect tenure and tenured track faculty and essential student support services.

Before closing I want to thank the entire campus for your engagement and for working together to move our institution forward. It will take all of us working together to advance Cal State Fullerton to become the premier comprehensive public university of the nation.

Finally, I know you will join me in welcoming Dr. Timothy White as the new chancellor of the CSU system. I was honored to have been selected as one of two presidents, along Dr. Diana Guerin, to be a part of the advisory selection committee. I look forward to working with Dr. White on behalf of all of our students.

Thank you again Dr. Bedell, the Executive Committee and the entire Academic Senate for the opportunity to address you this morning.