

To all of my CSU Stanislaus colleagues:

As we begin planning for the new academic year, I wanted to share my thoughts, delivered in my Annual Report on September 3, for any of you who might not have been able to attend, as well as for anyone who might like to revisit specific goals that I have outlined.

It's hard to believe that it has already been an entire year since my last Annual Report to faculty and staff. Although the days often seem incredibly long, the years have a way of passing quickly. Time is funny like that and I think it is easy to lose sight of our accomplishments as we take on the problems and challenges of each day. Thus, I am a firm believer in the value of stopping to measure our progress and reassess our goals so that important milestones do not fly by unnoticed.

I'm sure many of you enjoyed watching the Olympics over the last few weeks. Watching those superb athletes, or any athletic competition, always reminds us that if we stay focused on today's race, the records will take care of themselves. Look at American gymnast Raj Bhavsar: twice he was named an alternate and wondered if he would ever get to compete in an Olympics after years and years of training. But he kept on his eye on his goal, stayed in shape, and when his moment came, he became part of the bronze-medal-winning men's gymnast team. That kind of commitment and perseverance is typical of people who set records and make their mark in the world.

I see those same qualities in the great team of people we have here at CSU Stanislaus, who I believe are the most dedicated and outstanding faculty and staff in the entire CSU system. I see the results of those qualities when I see accomplishments, rather than trials, after reflecting on last year. While we faced some challenges, including state budget cuts, we also recorded significant achievements and earned much well deserved recognition.

I would like to highlight a few of our campus' accomplishments from the past year before moving on to look at our goals for this year and beyond.

### **ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

One of the actions for which we can be most proud is our notable display of unity in advocating for the restoration of the CSU's state funding. Time and time again, legislators and others expressed how impressed they were by the collaborative efforts of faculty, staff, unions, students, alumni, and administration. They don't see a unified front among CSU groups very often, so it made a big impact that will continue to pay dividends. Thank you all for your ongoing efforts.

I am also delighted by the national recognition that we continue to receive. Once again, CSU Stanislaus has been ranked by the Princeton Review as one of the "Best 368 Colleges" in the nation. Princeton Review added a new "Green Rating" this year as well, where we scored 94 out of a total 99 points. Two national publications also ranked us as one of the "Top 100" institutions of higher education for awarding degrees to Hispanic students.

A third accomplishment is the improvements we completed in campus facilities & infrastructure. The first year of classes in the Nora & Hashem Naraghi Hall of Science was a great success, and the community tours were popular. The Student Recreation Complex is advancing toward completion. The University Bookstore will open next month and will be an architectural showpiece for our campus.

Our technology infrastructure is improving as well with the campus going wireless and classrooms becoming “smart” with newly installed audio-visual equipment.

Our new academic programs are being widely praised throughout the community. Our first Doctorate program, an Ed.D. in Educational Leadership, begins this fall with 30 students. Just last month, we received final approval for a Masters of Science in Nursing, which will begin in the spring. In addition, we have received approval for a B.A. in Gender Studies. We also were able to add new online courses this past year to meet the growing demand for e-learning.

We continue to generate revenue through extramural funding. Our Executive MBA programs have been a tremendous success.

I am very proud that we have negotiated a leasing contract with Clearwire Corporation that will generate one million dollars per year to fully equip our campus with state-of-the-art information technology and services. As a result, faculty and staff computers and Computer Lab and Library computers will be replaced every three years. I commend the efforts of our CIO, Carl Whitman, who has been a great partner and advisor.

For the first time in the history of California State University Stanislaus, we have a reserve of more than \$3 million through our Clearwire deal, with our endowment now at nearly \$15 million. I expect our fund-raising achievements to continue with the solid leadership of Vice President Gajic-Bruyea. Her foresight has allowed for streamlined departments and work processes to increase quality, productivity, and effectiveness in promoting CSU Stanislaus to donors, alumni, and other constituencies.

Most importantly, our faculty and staff did a commendable job of educating almost 9,000 students and placing more than 2,000 graduates into the workforce, making the most important contributions to the State of California and the nation. Thank you, faculty. Thank you, staff.

Clearly, we have much to be proud of. These and many other accomplishments have set the stage for another fantastic year in 08-09.

### **GOALS FOR 2008-2009 AND BEYOND**

Looking ahead, I see three key goals. They depend on our ability, as a leading institution, to take the initiative in some vital areas and to be responsive to the needs of our students and our communities. I look forward to working with all of you as we continue moving forward on our goals to Improve Student Success, Actively Recruit International Students, and Provide Needed Programs & Educational Opportunities.

President Lyndon B. Johnson once said, “We must open the doors of opportunity. But we must also equip our people to walk through those doors.”

In that same vein, one of my three major goals this year is to Improve Student Success.

We need to remediate more incoming students prior to their first official semester. This year, we tested a summer remediation program. The program was truly successful, and I commend Professor Mark Thompson and his colleagues for such a wonderful job. We, therefore, have to continue next year with this much-needed program. If we can provide remedial courses for free through external grants, we will be able to improve student success. Both students and faculty will benefit if the high percentage of

incoming students who need remedial education is drastically reduced before they start their college-level coursework.

At California State University Stanislaus we have been recognized nationally for our better-than-average retention and graduation rates. And although we are one of the top schools in the CSU for retention and graduation, due to a faculty and staff who have done a fantastic job, we have to substantially increase these rates in the next five years because we can do even better. To move our freshmen-to-sophomore retention rate up from 81% where it is today, we need to set a target with an eye toward improvement. Likewise, I would like to see our six-year graduation rate rise above 52% even though that, too, is one of the highest in the CSU. To accomplish these objectives, I am asking the Provost to work closely with the Faculty Senate to discuss these targets.

Improving student access to quality advising and mentoring opportunities is at the heart of student success and is a key component of the unique, personalized education we offer at CSU Stanislaus. I have asked our advising staff, under the leadership of Lee Renner, to make a presentation to the Cabinet in order to initiate discussion about how we can further improve our advising. We must develop a pragmatic plan by building on a variety of studies that have already been accomplished by our hard-working faculty and staff.

To further improve student success, I am charging Provost Covino and the Deans to work with faculty and staff to recruit the “second tier” of high school students who we tend to lose to other colleges and universities. I am talking about those with SAT scores in the range of 1100 – 1250 and/or 3.0 – 3.5 GPAs. By recognizing these students as a distinct and hard-working group called “Stanislaus Scholars,” and by providing mentoring and advising, early acceptance letters, and more, I hope we will be able to attract more of them to our university. I would also like to form focus groups this fall to study how to attract these students and to visit area high schools where we can talk to them about why they aren’t choosing CSU Stanislaus as their first choice.

Through the market research conducted for us by Noel-Levitz, we have learned of a false perception among these students that it is better to go to a community college if a student hasn’t yet chosen a major. We want to change that perception and bring more of those students to CSU Stanislaus their freshman year. I have asked the Provost to explore some great ideas suggested by Ruth Fassinger, our new Dean of the College of Education, that include providing these “undeclared majors” with monthly opportunities to meet one-on-one with Deans, the Provost, or myself for career guidance and mentoring. We welcome any suggestions to develop this idea further. Again, college centered focus groups would be a good method of exploration.

A second goal for this year is to make some concerted efforts on recruitment of international students. As society becomes more global, the importance of growing our international student body is ever more apparent. Our students’ educational experience will be richer if they graduate from CSU Stanislaus with a global focus and knowledge of worldwide cultures. One of the ways we can continue increasing access to higher education in the Central Valley is to simplify our admissions processes. I have asked our Enrollment Management staff to analyze our current practices and procedures to find areas in need of simplification or streamlining.

Finally, a third goal for this year is to Provide New Programs & Educational Opportunities that respond to community and workforce needs.

We already have accomplished much in this area with the launch of the Executive MBA and Education Doctorate, the expansion of the nursing program, the birth of a Masters in Genetic Counseling, and more. Nevertheless, providing new programs is an ongoing challenge and opportunity.

As such, I am charging the Deans and the faculty to propose new, relevant degree programs that can be self-supporting. Similarly, I am asking University Extended Education (UEE) to study and develop new certificate and degree-completion programs for workforce development. Another way we can meet educational needs in the Central Valley is through e-learning. The demand for more accessible educational opportunities is growing as transportation costs increase and as more people seek a college education while working full-time. Thus, I am asking each College to explore development of at least one full-degree program online to better serve our communities. As we plan these fully online programs, we have to develop the student-support side of them as well, including registration, advising, and library resources.

As we all know, there is a severe shortage of math and science teachers in our K-12 schools. Our Colleges of Education and Natural Sciences are addressing this shortage through the Science, Technology Engineering, & Mathematics (S.T.E.M.) program. I have asked Dean Fassinger and Dean McNeil to seek additional funding from federal agencies and foundations for this very important program.

### **STOCKTON CENTER**

To advance our mission of access, one of our top priorities this year must be the CSU Stanislaus – Stockton Center. San Joaquin County is hungry for greater access to public higher education. We have already developed a strong team of Stockton Advisory Board members, and we are forming another working group dedicated to fund-raising and development of the campus. There is a great deal of community support for expanding the Stockton Center campus. We need to take advantage of that momentum.

As we look ahead to reaching for these goals, we also have to acknowledge challenges and evaluate our performance, just like an Olympic athlete.

As the hoopla surrounding the Olympics dies down, we will forget the specific trials and triumphs of various athletes from around the world. Their records may stand or fall in years to come, but their achievements will stand and the lives they touched will be changed forever.

So it is with our work in education, to an even greater degree. Though the waves of Michael Phelps' eight gold medals will forever ripple through the record books, the effects of a CSU Stanislaus education will prove more far-reaching as they ripple through the lives of our students, their families, our communities, and our nation. Every student we serve has his or her own goals and challenges; the more clearly we focus on the goals we have set to help them succeed, the stronger our commitment to accomplishing our objectives and the greater our impact of a CSU Stanislaus education.

We have records to set. I invite you to join me as we strengthen the mark of CSU Stanislaus on the world.