

## **The University of the Future**

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7<sup>th</sup> President  
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Good afternoon. First, I would like to acknowledge the many people whose support and friendship have made it possible for me to be here today.

I would like to say thank you to Jerre and Mary Joy Stead, who have been both dear friends and mentors to me. I very much appreciate Mr. Stead's inspiring opening remarks and his confidence in me. And I wish to thank Chancellor Reed, for those kind and generous remarks. It is a distinct honor for me to work as a member of Chancellor Reed's team, as he is one of the most prominent leaders in higher education and he has played a pivotal role in the transformation of CSU into one of the true great public institutions of higher education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

I am indebted not only to Chancellor Reed, but also to the CSU Trustees who put their trust in me as their selection for this post as President of this wonderful university. In particular, I would like to publicly thank Trustee Roberta Achtenberg for those gracious remarks, Trustee Debra Farar, who served as the search committee chair, and Trustee Carol Chandler, Trustee Herb Carter, and Trustee Murray Galinson, as well as President William Eisenhardt, Mr. John Phillips, Dr. Ben Duran, Mr. Ken McCall ('72), Dr. Cynthia Morgan, Ms. Jane Rodgers, Ms. Chessie Robbins, Professor Steve Filling, Professor Fred Hilpert, and Professor Mark Thompson.

I would like to acknowledge the Trustees who have honored me with their presence today: Ms. Roberta Achtenberg, Chair of the CSU Board of Trustees, Ms. Carol Chandler, Dr. George Gowgani, and Mr. Andrew LaFlamme, as well as Trustee-Emeritus Mr. Anthony Vitti upon whom I have the privilege of conferring an honorary doctorate degree at commencement. I would also like to acknowledge and extend my utmost appreciation to Trustee and Mrs. Paul Musco of Chapman University and to Honorable Kathleen Pesile and Honorable Kenneth Cook, Trustees of the City University of New York, Senator Jeff Denham and Turlock City Council Member John Lazar for honoring me with their presence. In addition, I wish to acknowledge my fellow university presidents: Dr. Ruben Armiñana, Dr. William Eisenhardt, Dr. Alexander Gonzalez, Dr. James Lyons, Dr. John Welty, Dr. Paul Zing and Dr. Mohammad Qayoumi. I am also pleased to welcome many of my former colleagues, special friends and family members, particularly my mother, who have traveled many miles and hours to join me on this warm afternoon in the central valley for this special occasion.

I am grateful to the faculty, staff and students of CSU Stanislaus who have entrusted me with the honor and responsibility of serving as your president. I am touched by the remarks made by the representatives of the faculty, staff, students and alumni. I look forward to working with you and getting to know each of you better in the months and years to come.

Finally, I am grateful to my lovely wife, Fathy, who has been by my side for her unequivocal support and unconditional love. Let me begin by expressing my appreciation to all my predecessors for the wonderful accomplishments they have made and which I will be building upon.

We are gathered here today to mark a beginning, the formal inauguration of my work as your new president. I am both honored and humbled by your trust in me as I work to serve you in this important office.

In the months that I have been here, I have come to love this campus, its environment and its people. This is a love I am certain we share. But what is more important is our shared understanding of the tasks before us, of the critical role that higher education must play in the future our children and our nation will enjoy.

My purpose today is to ask you to reflect on the complex and difficult challenges we face in education and the price we will pay if we do not meet them. Because nothing less than the economic vitality of our state and our nation rests on our success in meeting these challenges.

We are blessed to live in the golden state. California is one of the wealthiest states in the nation. If we were a nation, our gross product of \$1.5 trillion in 2003 would have ranked us sixth in the world. Yet our per pupil spending on K-12 education is below average and student achievement on national assessment tests ranked us in the bottom six states nationwide in 2005.

What's going on here? How can we produce so much, enjoy such a high standard of living and yet fail our children and thus endanger our future?

We face both internal and external challenges that will sorely test our resolve as we seek to strengthen our educational systems to prepare for the future.

The first and most immediate problem we face is coming to grips with the realities of the changing demographics of our population.

Today, the most highly educated generation in U.S. history, the baby boomers, are retiring. They are being replaced by a growing population of young workers from the nation's least educated groups. Thus, as the boomers retire, the size of our college educated workforce is shrinking. Because of this education gap, the U.S. is losing much of its competitive advantage in the global marketplace.

This national problem is even more severe in California. In just 15 years, the number of Latinos in our working-age population will equal that of whites. In fact, by 2020, Latinos will account for more than 40% of the state's population, according to the California Budget Project.

Although these statistics fall along racial and ethnic lines, what is significant are the educational implications of these changes. In our current workforce, the disparities are startling. Among whites, 46% have a college degree; among Latinos, the figure is 12%. Among those who do not have a high school diploma, more than half are Latinos; only 8% are white. Yet by 2014, more than half of our school-age children will be Latino. Of those, a significant minority will be English-learners.

Let's put these numbers into a global context. With the increased outsourcing of jobs and the growing competition of the rising economies of countries like China and India, we are doomed to falling ever farther behind—unless we are willing to radically rethink our educational system from top to bottom.

The general failure of public education to meet the changing needs of our population is systemwide. It is also a problem that has historic roots. There has been a dramatic shift in our thinking about who a college education should be for.

Before the second World War, a college education was not seen as the path for everyone. A liberal arts education was seen as the province of the elite, of the privileged classes who, by training and temperament, would become leaders, socially, politically and economically.

From the 50s on, a new way of thinking took hold. A college education became a public function—it was an expectation rather than a privilege. With the rise of the middle class and a growing demand for a highly trained workforce, the value of a high school diploma fell sharply. Today, students without a high school diploma have truly limited career prospects.

As an architect, I see a clear parallel between what has happened to the public view of higher education and how the general public sees the function of architecture.

Until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, architecture was a luxury function; only the rich, or governments, hired architects. Only recently have ordinary people had either the means or the inclination to hire architects to work on private buildings and homes.

Within the profession, architects struggled to figure out how to serve a mass audience. Whereas earlier architectural movements, such as art deco or the modernism of the 20s and 30s, were pleasing only to the elite, serving a broader audience demanded a rethinking of the language of architecture.

Today, the vocabulary of architecture has changed. The dominant iconography—that of malls and office buildings in every city in America—now reflects a more homey style, one that is attractive to the general public. In other words, architecture has studied the social and cultural context and responded to a changing world. Architecture has learned its lesson, bringing a broader approach to design rather than trying to impose a prescriptive style on design.

But what architecture has accomplished, education has failed to do. Where we have failed is to rethink what the content of today's public education should be. We have made some tragic mistakes.

In many instances we have watered down our educational offerings to serve a broader public, without rethinking how to retain the values of a liberal arts education for this more diverse audience. Add to this the poor preparation of many students, and the public expectation that a college education should be available to all has resulted in even bigger problems.

Today, only 25% of high school graduates in California are truly prepared to attend a university. This shocking statistic comes into even greater relief when we note that this figure is even below the dismal 31% of students ready for college on a national level.

The new California high school exit exam only requires students to perform at an eighth grade level in math and ninth and tenth grade levels in reading and writing skills. This dumbing down of expectations is bound to lead our young people to failure. Although California has made modest progress over the last decade in the number of 18- to 24-year-olds who have high school diplomas as well as the percentage enrolled in college, the figures are misleading. Although they enroll, many of these students simply do not complete college. Here again, California lags behind other states. We lose more African American and Latino students before they graduate than any other state.

What then are the answers?

Most people cite money as the answer. Throw more resources at the problem and we can solve it. I cannot discount the importance of a major investment in education. But the solutions go beyond this kind of simplistic response.

A recent study by Teach for America reveals what educators in general see as important factors in beginning to solve these problems. Better teachers. High quality academic administrators. Setting high expectations for student performance in the classroom and providing the mentoring support and resources that will enable students to succeed. Research proves that higher expectations do indeed improve performance.

We need to demand better discipline in schools and higher standards in K-12. We need to return to a common curriculum, a curriculum that challenges our students to go beyond routine learning to genuine and critical engagement with ideas, an education that is rigorous and challenging, but also engaging and intellectually exciting. We need to give teachers more authority and independence and to take the burden of unneeded bureaucracy off of their backs. And we need to make sure that our schools of education are doing a better job of preparing K-12 teachers for this task.

Which brings us back to the central question we are facing here at Cal State Stanislaus today: what should we expect from higher education? What do we expect today's colleges and universities to offer our students? How will they be prepared to live and work in a more diverse, increasingly global economy?

Consider the results of a survey conducted by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni. This survey reports that higher education today suffers from a "hollow core." We live in an era when the iron hand of political correctness can push sanity out the window. When a course on Persian miniatures is proposed for general education credit or a course in the History of Comic Book Art can replace a solid grounding in art history, neither the student nor society is well served. I say that not because I don't think such courses are interesting, but because we have to make tough choices between essentials and electives.

We have lost our sense of direction by trying to be all things to all people. We have lost the courage of our convictions that a college education should produce a literate young man or woman capable of conversing in the languages of the arts and the sciences. We have relaxed our grip on the standards that will enable our state and our nation to remain competitive in a global economy.

I am not suggesting that we return to the days of an education delivered only for the elite or an education that is static and shirks its responsibility to engage students and professors in vigorous debate about the content of education. Rather, I am suggesting that we must reinvent undergraduate education so that it provides a solid educational foundation. We must continue to demand that today's students work harder and we must deliver a higher level of content in college courses that we expect them to master.

At the same time, we must recognize that students of all backgrounds are capable of doing college-level work as it was traditionally conceived. Many of our colleagues believe that first generation college students and English-learners can't be taught a traditional liberal arts or "great books" curriculum. I am living proof that this is not true. People like me—who grew up elsewhere—can and should be expected to study the same curriculum that has traditionally defined an educated person. People like me—particularly those from a non-Western culture—need to know the "texts" that are the basis of the majority of international laws today.

To serve all of our students, we must identify areas where we have watered down requirements. We must recognize that we cannot follow the hot jobs of the moment or function as a trade school. We must go back to our educational roots—to provide an education that helps young people learn how to learn. Once they understand the language of mathematics or the scientific method, today's graduates can continue to learn on their own, even as the demands of the workplace change over time.

Our challenge is to show students that the education we offer is informed by strong curricula taught by true teacher/scholars. Our challenge is to show students the advantages of committing four or more years of their lives to a real education delivered by real people.

Here at Cal State Stanislaus, we have many programs in place to tackle some of these critical problems.

Already, CSU Stanislaus has a record of success in important endeavors that will help us address the needs of our changing population. We are one of 12 campuses cited in a national study by the American Association of State College and Universities for creating a campus culture that has helped improve student success and resulted in higher than predicted graduation rates. We have consistently placed in the top half of all CSU campuses in freshmen graduation and overall retention rates. Our six-year graduation rate is one of the best in the California State University system. We are ranked among the nation's top 100 colleges for bachelor's degrees awarded to Hispanic students.

One key reason for this success is the outstanding faculty mentoring we believe in. Our faculty are deeply committed to the success of our students and make themselves available to provide the help and support that enables our students to thrive and succeed.

Just one example of this kind of faculty leadership and commitment is the pioneering work our faculty have done to help both pre-college students and teachers improve their math skills, with a particular emphasis on encouraging young women to consider math and science careers. We have been recognized with numerous awards for this important and innovative approach to helping students succeed.

We are also helping to recruit and train teachers for “high needs schools,” through a \$3.3 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education. Working in partnership with Modesto City Schools, our education students are learning effective ways to help students overcome language, cultural, or economic barriers to academic success.

In Stockton, we are partnering with Aspire Public Schools to open a charter school this fall to help prepare students from low-income families for college.

We are contributing to our community in other ways through faculty/student collaboration and research. For example, the CSU Stanislaus Endangered Species Recovery Program has teamed university faculty and staff with state and federal agency experts since 1992 to restore rare and endangered plant and animal life in the region. This program has brought in not only millions of dollars in grants, but more importantly, has had a significant impact on the ecological health and diversity of our region.

This depth of commitment to our community is expressed in other important ways as well. For example, many of our professors emeriti are so committed to teaching that, even though they are officially retired, they continue to teach as volunteers. Not only is this kind of dedication to working with our young people praiseworthy, it speaks to the very heart and soul of this institution. When you have faculty that dedicated, you can be sure that they are the kinds of individuals who truly engage our students and shape their lives as students and teachers share a lifelong intellectual journey together.

Our success in evoking the passion and excitement of a lifetime of learning is seen in the lives of our many alumni who are leaders in their work and in their communities. CSU Stanislaus can count among its graduates young men and women who are shaping the future in a wide range of disciplines and endeavors—from major developers who are building our homes and businesses to those who continue to build on the great agricultural legacy of this valley. Our alumni include doctors and lawyers, politicians and teachers—the next generation who look to their alma mater to play a significant role as together we build our community and our state.

To meet their expectations—and those of our current students and of students yet to come—we have created six unique and outstanding colleges: The College of the Arts, the College of Business, the College of Humanities and the Social Sciences, the College of Natural Sciences, the College of Human and Health Sciences, and the College of Education. Together, these distinctive units and the incredible faculty driving them are the foundation for the comprehensive educational offerings we are privileged to offer through CSU Stanislaus.

But this can only be a beginning. Our goals are simple. We are here to serve our community. We expect to serve more students, building on our current strong programs and adding new programs as needed to serve the central valley. We will continue to recruit top faculty. We hope to transform Turlock into a college town, completing the marriage of town and gown. We will continue to expand our student services, our athletics program and every component of the Stanislaus experience to attract and retain the best students. In other words, we will be a university of choice.

I truly hope that today is a real inauguration. We need to inaugurate a new era in education—one that is committed to fostering a new and greater vision of public education that isn't afraid to tackle tough pragmatic problems in order to make this vision a reality. We need to begin to set higher, not lower, expectations. And we need to begin today, not only for our own sakes, but for the sake of generations yet to come. California is still the golden state. How long it remains so is up to us. I invite you to join me as we undertake this critical task. Our young people should expect no less of us. And we should expect no less of ourselves.

Thank you for your attention and your trust.