President Joseph F. Sheley’s Annual Address  
(Remarks As Prepared)  
August 27, 2014

Good morning everyone. Welcome. Thank you for joining me for my annual address to the campus community at California State University, Stanislaus.

Let us start appropriately — would all faculty and staff members here today stand so that we may recognize you? Thank you. I welcome especially new members of the faculty, staff and administration.

Next let me introduce my wife and best friend, Dr. Bernadette Halbrook.

I also want to recognize a few campus leaders:

- Speaker of the Faculty, Dr. Bret Carroll (and other Academic Senate members in attendance);
- Associated Students Inc. (ASI) President Mariam Salameh;
- Marvin Hooker, Vice President, ASI; and
- Natalie Dykzeul, Chair of the University Student Union Board of Directors.
- On the stage with me are a number of students from Warrior Watch, a student bystander intervention program that promotes individual responsibility in helping students in trouble. And members of the Student Health Advisory Committee. The reason they are here will become apparent in a short while; for now, I thank them for being here.

You know my administrative colleagues, of course:

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• James Strong, Provost
• Russell Giambelluca, Vice President for Business and Finance
• Suzanne Espinoza, Vice President for Enrollment and Student Affairs
• Dennis Shimek, Vice President for Faculty Affairs and Human Resources
• Shirley Pok, Vice President for University Advancement

And our Deans:

• Reza Kamali, College of Science
• Oddmund Myhre, College of Education, Kinesiology and Social Work
• David Lindsay, College of Business Administration
• James Tuedio, College of the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
• Our new Dean of the University Library, Ron Rodriguez
• Ashour Badal, the Stockton Center
• Chuck Gonzalez, Executive in Charge of University Extended Education
• Ron Noble, Dean of Students

As is our custom, we have some special guests from our larger campus community. They are here today to show their support for CSU Stanislaus.

• the honorable John Lazar, Mayor of the City of Turlock (an alumnus of our University);
• he is joined by Roy Wasden, Turlock City Manager;
• Sharon Silva, CEO of the Turlock Chamber of Commerce (a Stanislaus grad);
• Cecil Russell, CEO of the Modesto Chamber;
• Pamela Able, Superintendent of Modesto City Schools;
• she is joined by Ginger Johnson, Associate Superintendent of Educational Services, Modesto City Schools;
• alumnus Dr. Ben Duran, former president of Merced College and now CEO of the Great Valley Center;

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• I always ask someone to represent the many fine faculty and staff members who are alumni of this University; this year, please welcome Araceli Garcia from the Program for Academic and Career Excellence and Dr. Kilolo Brodie of the Department of Social Work;
• we are also joined by George Petrukakis, of Petrukakis Law and Advocacy, APC, and President of the CSU Stanislaus Foundation Board;
• John Jacinto, president and CEO of VisTech Manufacturing Solutions, and chair of the CSU Stanislaus Alumni Council; and
• Norik Naraghi, a member of our Foundation Board, and co-owner of California Marcona Company.

Thank you all for taking the time to be here today.

This is the third time that I’ve spoken to you at the start of a new academic year. You will recognize some of the themes that I will raise today, longer-term issues about which I have spoken, often with considerable passion, in the past. But I want to introduce two other matters — one of which I believe will be fun in many ways, the other of which is exceptionally serious. All of the issues in question, old and new, remain tied to what I still view, just as I noted in my very first address to you, as foundational: Who are we? How do we relate to our region? Are we or are we not a community?

Before proceeding, let me talk briefly about our financial situation.

It would be wonderful were I not to feel the need to begin today with budget news, but such is life in higher education. Still resting upon Proposition 30 funding, we will essentially be fine this year, but ours nonetheless remains a relatively flat budget. Economic recovery, though steady, is slow. As members of the University Budget Advisory Committee (UBAC) learned this past year, there is not nearly enough funding available to permit us to address many of our challenges, let alone pursue our aspirations. Nor can we bet on the future with any real confidence — Proposition 30 expires just two years from now. We must, of necessity if not by inclination, approach budgeting very conservatively.
The truly positive news is that we are being permitted to grow for a second consecutive year — 200 new “full-time-equivalent students” on top of 162 last year. That means at least some new revenue for us. More important, it means access to higher education for more residents of our region. I want to thank the members of UBAC for the effort they put into recommendations regarding priorities for our increased revenue. And let me take a moment too to thank everyone who provided feedback to our vice presidents and to UBAC as they crafted budget recommendations — the Faculty Budget Advisory Committee, ASI, individual faculty and staff members. I was proud of the level of engagement and of everyone’s focus on the larger good of the institution.

I will soon address UBAC’s recommendations formally. I am fairly in concert with the directions they’ve suggested. But the budget from the CSU has not been shaped sufficiently yet to permit us to know just how far we can get into our list of needs and wants. Again, we will be fine — even if fine falls short of what we were hoping for.

Our budget may be flat, but we are not. Let us start with the fact that we are being noticed for the good things we are doing. I think by now everyone has heard about the Time Magazine rankings that came out in the spring. Time ranked 2,500 colleges and universities based on access, affordability and educational outcomes — which I think we can all agree are pretty good criteria — and CSU Stanislaus was No. 28 on that list.

You likely also heard that the Princeton Review recognized CSU Stanislaus in its Best Colleges guide for the ninth consecutive year. And that both Forbes and Money magazines placed us among the best in the nation for our combination of quality and affordability.

We’ve been successful in other public arenas too. Our student government leaders have been a force at CSU system level, as have members of our faculty serving on the Statewide Academic Senate, chaired by our own Professor Steven Filling. Dr. Brodie, whom I introduced earlier, was recently appointed by our governor to serve on a regional board of the California State Council
on Developmental Disabilities. Our newly reopened Science I facility was recently cited in a national publication for its outstanding interior renovation features.

And let’s not overlook track and field, women’s soccer, golf, men’s basketball — our Warriors were champions this past year, and not just on the fields and courts. We moved significantly up the rankings in the academic performance of our athletes.

In short, our award-winning professors, coaches and staff members have in abundance the ability to inspire our students, and those students in turn inspire us every day.

Let me update you on progress along many fronts. Last year at this time, I called for a renewal of our strategic plan. That effort is moving along, and I am grateful to Provost Strong and the Strategic Plan Working Group for shaping the process we will now undertake. They have recommended that we focus on the three core themes of our 2007 strategic plan: Student engagement, development, and achievement; teaching and learning, scholarship and service; and the University and the community. In line with these themes, they recommend that we pursue four or five specific campus priorities within a two-year window. The priorities must be able to be measured and progress assessed at initiation and completion. Over the course of the next few months, a new Committee to Implement and Prioritize the Strategic Plan will be asking for your participation in this process. I am asking too. Please become involved.

I also asked last year that we focus upon student success — not just counting courses and issuing diplomas, but graduating our students with exceptional strength in foundational skills, the ability to: think critically and constructively, identify and solve problems, act ethically, change and adapt rather than simply drift, recognize the beauty and challenges inherent in a diverse and now global society, lead when appropriate, follow when appropriate, and communicate well orally and in writing. So strong should our students be in the basics that employers hire them practically sight unseen, confident that a Stan State student always will come through.

In this same vein, I asked that we focus especially upon improvement of writing skills among our students and ourselves. I am grateful to all of those faculty members who have stepped up their

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commitment to writing in their courses regardless of subject; to members of the Department of English who have given me good counsel; and to Paula Barrington-Schmidt and her colleagues and students who have worked on writing projects with local high schools and business organizations. And thank you to Todd Hall, who has been working with many departments to develop writing samples from across disciplines so that our students have a sense of what works and what does not. With appreciation to Advancement’s web communications team and OIT, look for a new campus web page on writing to appear very soon.

My thanks also go to faculty colleagues on the Ad Hoc Committee on General Education for their work on G.E. and the basics. We are hopeful not only for strength in foundational skills but also for stronger integration of the G.E. goals into major curricula. And I continue to urge greater flexibility for students to explore free electives.

I asked last year as well that we strengthen the structure and quality of our advising. If we wish better performance in coursework, increased progress to graduation, better choices in major and in course selection, greater enjoyment of the larger university experience, excellent counsel in the face of life’s difficulties, and informed decisions in pursuit of careers, we must advise well. So thank you to ASI for its resolution calling for a campus-wide task force on advising — it will be launched immediately. Thank you to Student Affairs for its increased commitment to advising and psychological counseling, and for its new career counseling services. Thank you to academic departments who are going the extra mile in advising. And a special thank you to everyone who joined the “Adopt a Student” movement last year. It was fun, and I hope even more people do it this year.

Finally, you should know that I have asked Provost Strong and Vice President Espinoza to take the effort to improve the basics outside our own walls. We need to partner with local school districts to start much earlier — at least in middle school — to clarify for students and their families what it takes to be ready to succeed in, not just enter, college. It’s not just GPA, A through G, and other technicalities. It’s strength in the same basics to which we are dedicated here. And it’s about a partnership with K-12, not us telling them what they need to do. A key feature of that partnership must be integrated advising that starts early, continues through high

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school and community college, and is carried on, not begun, here. The Central Valley needs more college graduates. That will entail an advising effort writ large — community-wide, coordinated, focused.

Our commitment to student success, our signature, should turn heads, stand us above the crowd, fill our alumni with pride, and attract much-needed advocacy from our region.

The link among signature, pride and advocacy is proactive communication. We must get the word out. It is getting out now through our website, social media and traditional media. Check out the recently re-launched STAN Magazine via hard copy or online. Word is also getting around thanks to so many of you doing the simple things that signal pride — wearing University colors and pins, especially to events like the Haven “Walk a Mile in Her Shoes” gathering last spring in Modesto. Or the sea of Warrior red at University Night at the Turlock Farmers’ Market last fall — it’s Sept. 5 this year; be there. Thanks also to all that ASI has done to promote Warrior pride. And to University Advancement for its work to engage alumni. And to the new One Purpose annual campaign seeking not only to raise $1 million in scholarship funds in six weeks, but also to increase awareness that we are culturally, not just physically, part of our region.

We must continue building pride and telling our story. I therefore ask your participation in a project that I hope you will see as both important and fun. I love our seal; it is beautiful and has integrity. Yet, we should not be using the University’s official seal as our everyday logo. Beyond that, as much as I enjoy seeing it on lapel pins throughout the room today, it’s not an easily recognizable symbol to folks off campus, nor the easiest to read.

Our stylized, popular Warrior head and “S” mark work well for Athletics and school spirit, but beyond those, we need a true university logo, one that represents the broader campus community, communicates our values and catches the eye from afar. Imagine a simple window decal in every shop in the region, a statement, in one glance calling up and reinforcing pride in the region’s university.
And what do we call ourselves while bursting with pride? Of course, we are and will stay formally California State University, Stanislaus. But it’s a mouthful in everyday conversation. What then for everyday? We seem to have so many names! CSU Stanislaus, Cal State Stanislaus, Stanislaus State, Stan State. And there’s CSUS — just four letters, a space-saver for the newspapers. Just 90 miles apart, the Sacramento Bee and Modesto Bee write about CSUS, and each is speaking of a different university. That is not what I call a signature. Who are we?!

This year, let’s develop a logo that works, one or two consistent names, and perhaps a clear, concise tagline that captures the essence of CSU Stanislaus … or Cal State Stanislaus or CSUS or Stan State. This is not a trivial exercise. Indeed, we will engage in it this year with great care and respect. We will seek input from everyone, for this is the institution you love. You’ll be surprised both by the passion this quest produces and by how much fun it is. I hope you’ll be surprised, too, by the byproduct of the process itself: pride. There is real value in forcing ourselves to distill our purpose to fewer than 10 words, or to attempt to capture the University’s essence in a single image or design. Clarity and focus naturally translate into better storytelling, and that means more effective advocacy, support and respect.

I noted earlier that I planned to talk today about a serious matter, one that must become part of our story. Many of you have heard me say that the key to health, public safety, risk management and identity security at the University is not more bureaucracy and rule enforcement. Instead, it lies within our sense of community. This should be yet another element of our signature: This is our home, and we look out for each other in our home.

Our capacity to look out for each other is being put to the test. Perhaps you have heard of Title IX and the Violence Against Women Act. We are seeing a national legal and political movement aimed at sexual assault on college campuses. The concern is not misplaced. For many reasons, campuses have not done all that they should to keep people safe. Nor have they always done well responding to complaints and reporting offenses. The factors that play into this are well known: a culture of freedom and exploration, group dynamics, high levels of alcohol use, younger people exploring new social settings, different senses of what happened between acquaintances, limited investigative powers within the university, inadequate attention to those who report incidents.
The problem cannot continue, and the law now will not let it. The mandate and consequences are clear. Our very reputation as well as the safety of our community is at stake.

Let us cut to the heart of the matter: No one, female or male, of any sexual orientation, student, member of the staff or faculty, visitor to our campus, should be sexually victimized. Not debatable. It counters the very core of what we are about. Parents should not have to worry about the safety of the offspring they’ve sent to college. And no one who is victimized ever should feel ignored or alone.

Over the course of the next few months, we will be putting in place the federal- and state-mandated elements of new legislation regarding sexual assault. We will commit resources, positions and mechanisms to the effort. You will be asked to engage in discussions and training. In many ways, you will become experts in understanding the law and our legal responsibility. You will find yourselves discussing terms like “affirmative consent” and “impaired capacity.” Those of you in social clubs and organizations will be discussing the added legal responsibilities you now own. Mandated surveys of members of the campus community will occur.

But that’s the legal side. It takes us only so far. What will matter more is our sense of community and, within it, our responsibility to care for each other. The beautiful feature of our campus is its scale — we are not so large that we must hand off responsibility for safety to others. We can and will look out for each other. Put another way, there can be no such thing as the disinterested bystander within our campus community. Every one of us has choices to make. Letting someone drink and drive. Or not. Ignoring a dangerous situation at a party. Or not. Letting someone else worry about a health and safety hazard. Or not. Leaving sensitive personal data unprotected. Or not. Ignoring self-destructive behavior. Or not. Ignoring a possible sexual assault. Or not.

No more looking the other way. Not because the law says we must, but because it is in our DNA as a community. I am asking especially for leadership and action from our students. This is why I’ve asked these students to join me on stage today. The attention is, of course, mostly upon students as potential victims and offenders in the area of sexual assault. Yet, as I’ve noted, it is bystander intervention that is the key to making a difference — rarely do assaults or harassment
happen on campus without other students knowing before, during or at least after the fact. While each of us needs to step up our efforts to look out for each other, I especially need leadership and commitment from our students. Those here on stage already have committed to help us change ours to a culture of bystander intervention. They are making a difference, and I am grateful. I now ask others to join them.

I hope you leave here today feeling, as I do, that we have much for which to be thankful and much for which to be proud. We can wish for a better budget, but thankfully we are not dealing with cuts.

Our strengths are becoming clearer and our aspirations more focused. We are a university on the rise, and we will have some fun figuring out what to call ourselves.

We are about student success. We will become better at telling that and other great parts of our story.

And we are about regional success. We will reach out to families earlier so that their kids will be ready to succeed when they walk through our doors.

Finally, above all else, we are a community whose members focus on each other’s safety and welfare. That is the signature that we wish the world to see.

Thank you for coming this morning. Thank you for a great year to come. Have a great day.