

# President's Convocation Address

August 17, 2023

Good morning and thank you for being here. I'm so glad to see all of you today as we begin the 2023-24 academic year. This will be my 23<sup>rd</sup> year in higher education now, and to this day, I still get the same butterflies, nervous energy, and excitement that accompany the start of a new academic year. I hope that everyone here is equally as excited, which to me, stems from the honor and privilege of serving our students and the opportunity to be an integral part of their academic, professional, and psychosocial development. I've continually strived to serve them at an exceptionally high level.

I want to offer a warm welcome to the faculty, staff, and administrators who have joined our campus since Fall 2021. I also like to welcome our special guests in the audience – please hold your applause until everyone is recognized: President Emeritus D. Mark Bush, College President Julius Sokol (Sokol) and Oxnard College President Oscar C. Cobian; members of our Foundation Board, our Alumni and Friends Board; our Site Authority Board, our University Auxiliary Services Board, and our President's Scholars; and members of our newly formed Retiree Association. It's amazing to see this level of campus and community engagement here today.

I welcome and thank the faculty, staff, and administrators who are returning today, for continuing to choose CI and investing your energies, intellects, time, and care for our students, for our region and beyond in the families, communities, and workplaces of our graduates, but ultimately for our society and its future. There are no small stakes here. Our work is vital – and our need to excel in it, individually and collectively, is great.

## 2022-23 Highlights

Before turning our attention to the coming year, I want to start recognizing one of the central responsibilities that I hold as President: this awarding tenure and promotion to our tenure-track faculty.

Thank you to our program personnel committees, program chairs, deans, the University Retention, Tenure, and Promotion Committee, and the Provost for your work on the rewarding but incredibly weighty and time-intensive process of evaluating RTP files and making your recomm

Matera Daniel Reinema, Jacqueline Reynolds, Cynthia Sherman, Rachel Soper, Vida (VEEDA) (VUH-KIL -EE-IN) Vakilian, Kimberly Vose (VOZE) and Taylan (TAYLIN) (YAL-CHIN) Yalcin

And now, my congratulations to those who earned promotion to Full Professor this year. You've achieved the pinnacle of tenure track progress. You've spent more than a decade since your first year as an assistant professor, working continuously toward this promotion. Please join me in congratulating Drs. LaSonya Davis, Jamie Hannans, Jacob Jenkins, Ekin Pehlivan, and Brian Thoms. Well done on this remarkable achievement.

I want to also recognize my elected partners and campus leaders in shared governance:

x Academic Senate Chair Dr. Jo

l-e[1,-Ja

forward. I've been very much in the weeds on these efforts, and I've seen our enrollment management team and the entire campus community step up and engage in the work that is necessary to move us forward.

We have solid enrollment management strategies in place and underway, but a set of strategies is not a strategic plan. However, as I said ~~yes~~ ~~ago~~, this doesn't mean that we haven't been planning strategically from the very beginning of our administration. We've been doing exactly that, in a number of areas vital to the long-term health and success of our University. An early synthesis of these efforts this past spring ultimately led to a three-year "bridge plan" which describes and develops four strategic directions for our campus.

### Strategic Directions Framework 2023-26: A Three-Year Bridge Plan

I am pleased to share with you today a complete draft of our [Strategic Direction Framework](#)

As [shared with the campus throughout last Spring](#), Cabinet members and I created the bones of this Framework by first conducting an comprehensive inventory of the various initiatives and programs underway across divisions. We found that there was a great deal of essential and extraordinary work being done, but often in ~~packages~~ ~~parcels~~ lacked a cohesive and centrally organized conceptual framework to unify our work and maximize resources.

We discussed this draft Framework with the campus community throughout the spring through presentations to the Academic Senate, Staff Council, Student Government, and campus administrators; through our Strategic Resource Planning Committee; through interactive WASC Accreditation Gallery Tours that engaged students, staff, faculty, and administrators; and through our Critical Learning Collectives whose recommendations for improving campus climate were presented to Cabinet members and me in a series of late-Spring meetings.

In all of these conversations, what ~~came~~ ~~through~~ consistently was ~~the~~ ~~need~~ to avoid initiative fatigue.



With this overarching context in mind, I see the incredible opportunities ahead to better serve our students, communities, and employers – and the need for a unified, long approach as we move in this region towards 2030 and beyond. All of this speaks particularly to our first new Strategic Direction, which is about our academic and campus identity. In what follows, I want to describe my vision for our next decade. I hope it will provide rich food for thought about how we can more substantially lay claim to the truly unique University that we are, and set us upon the work of developing that identity messaging, and marketing it as a unified and long vision. I look forward to talking with you throughout this year about the ideas that follow, critiquing and improving them as we go.

### One Health for 2030+

Our approach to achieving CI's historic vision and mission for this decade of our existence will logically be different from what saw us through our first 20 years when "build it, and they will come" was enough, and when a strategic enrollment management and marketing plan was not required for us to grow. Though not fixed on a name title for this approach, keep coming back to the fact that for me, everything we do is grounded in our unique sense of place and in our promotion and facilitation of environmental and community wellness. In discussing this idea with a number of colleagues, the notion of "One Health for 2030 and Beyond" emerged.

According to Dr. Jenn Perry, Executive Director of Regional Education or a (t)-4.er (l)-2.h (m)2.

content-specific and specialized expertise, working towards long-term security and meaningful livelihoods for themselves and their families through high-impact practices like experiential learning, internships, and undergraduate research opportunities. Again, students have these opportunities at other CSUs, too. High-impact practices are neither unique to our campus nor uniformly accessible to all of our students.

So, how is CSU distinct from other CSUs and every other university option that prospective students of every age have available to them?

I am certain that what distinguishes us is our incredibly unique sense of place – and fully embracing our location in one of the most resource and culturally rich environments in the nation. This reality provides distinctive place-based learning opportunities and experiences for our students that we have never leveraged anywhere near the fullest extent possible – either through curricular and co-curricular programs. (m)20-1.4 (m)aughro 8(nnpor)-1.4q

social services, health-related, and more given the unique combination of rural, suburban, and urban areas that are ours to serve.

Through this One Health lens, embracing the unique of our region we will no longer have the very dubious distinction of being “hidden gem” of the CSUs such an obvious leap forward, because environmental and community wellness is already firmly embedded in virtually everything we do with our academic programs – ESRMs focus on coastal sustainability preparing teachers and other leaders for early childhood through high school education, to providing communities with nurses and health care workers, to our role in providing essential employees and industry leaders in the biotech and biopharmaceutical industries, computer programming and mechatronics, and of course, to healing our community through the arts, performing arts, ethnic studies, more – as well as with our broad array of high

Healthy enrollment is intimately tied to student success, and each student's success requires that they know and feel that they are seen, valued, and capable of achieving their goals. This makes each one of us essential partners in supporting student retention efforts and growing enrollment capacity through our everyday work. Much of this can be done in the simplest and most human of ways -- by being approachable and welcoming, by ensuring that no student has the isolating experience of spending weeks on end without ever hearing the sound of their own name, by being both proactive and responsive as communicators, and by helping students when we become aware of problems they are navigating in campus systems that can be foreign, confusing, and frustrating to them.

In the context of talking about enrollment and retention, it is impossible for me to overemphasize the importance of our excellent work, each of our individual ways to be attentive to our students and to be accountable for our responsibilities. I'll share an experience from this summer to illustrate responsibilities which each one of us is accountable, myself first and foremost.

I spoke in June with one of our campus's most ardent and generous supporters, who is also the grandfather of one of our students. He was extremely complimentary of CI at what he called the macro level-- for the programs and services we offer, for our expansion plans through the new Academic Master Plan, our capital construction projects, new community partnerships, and for the unprecedented levels of philanthropic support. But I won't soon forget him exhorting me with a line that, frankly, landed pretty hard. He said, "forget the micro describing CI and his granddaughter's experience here as wonderful at the macro level, but as an ongoing struggle with what I called 'micro experiences'." These included things like inconsistent and highly varied levels of responsiveness in communication from faculty and staff, and being required to follow confusing, step-by-step approval processes, etc.



with new people, perspectives, strategies, technologies, and the benefit of 21 years of hindsight now available for that work. We stand on the shoulders of those who came before in doing it, with many of those same shoulders still here, thankfully, ~~lifted~~ still

Paying attention to the sands in our gears will be a major emphasis for me this year, and I will need your help – not only to improve our students' experiences in navigating our

n1ed ydi2,4er,,4e(7c5.5 (1ed y, (2)o)-1C (2)9.8h 1t)-45 (,)sr,32r,m1ed yg31ed yi (m)2.5s(4e8

With thanks to Provost Avila and AVP Kirk England, our Chief Academic Budget Officer, we are beginning our 21<sup>st</sup> year with a cost model for new academic programs in hand. In the implementation of our Academic Master Plan, this represents Phase II, which outlines the methodology by which new programs will be prioritized and existing programs will be identified for growth. While cost is relevant for the immediate future and always a significant factor in this kind of prioritizing and decision-making process, it is by no means the only lens incorporated in this methodology. Other factors include projections for enrollment growth, faculty and staff capacity, the degree of alignment with regional needs, and alignment with the organizing concepts of our One Health lens.

Going forward, Academic Affairs will utilize this cost model to evaluate all of our academic programs. As President, I will be asking all other divisions to go through a similar exercise in evaluating their program costs relative to realized contributions. All of this will allow us to create the long-term budget planning model needed for seeing us through the next few years and then beyond, when we are on the other side of this watershed moment in our institutional history and enrollment is again rising. Keep in mind, it is the cumulative picture in data that we need so that we can pursue new program development strategically and maximize growth as early as possible.

#### Accreditation

Another vitally important category that I ask you to learn about and be engaged with this academic year is our WSCUC accreditation reaffirmation process, which is well underway. 0.8

- o in Gallery Tours in October to familiarize yourself with the contents of the Institutional Report drafted by the WSCUC Reaffirmation Steering Committee and its working teams; and
- o also participate in campus accreditation kickoff events.
- Be able to explain, should a visiting WSCUC member or anyone else ask:
  - o that TPR stands for Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation, a WSCUC review option that we were offered that allowed us to identify three themes for our own self-study, instead of having this review focus on everything about our University;
  - o that our three TPR themes, identified and developed with the campus community in Fall 22, are:
    1. Academic Quality and Student-Centered Infrastructure,
    2. Student Services, Support, and Development, and
    - 3.

CSU Channel Islands, the creation of a Cultural Resources Management Team, securing of federal funding to be used toward developing a Native American and Indigenous Studies curriculum, and the formation of affinity groups for students, staff, and faculty.

My thoughts return often, in this context of trying to do better, to something that the Chair of the Barbareño Ventureño Band of Mission Indians, Matthew Vestuto, shared with members of the Chumash Advisory Council Steering Committee. This group met throughout last year, leading up to the first full-Council meeting this summer, in June, with thanks to that body's Co-Chairs, Drs. Raudel Bañuelos and Jenn Perry, and to its

The ARSL is a cutting-edge HoloLens 2 Augmented Reality Lab, equipped with 14 headsets dedicated to simulating corrosion damage in aerospace metals. By embracing this technology-driven innovation, Trent is actively showcasing the value of integrative approaches, a foundational aspect of our campus' mission statement, providing all students with opportunities to engage in interdisciplinary research. Well done, Trent.

It is my honor to welcome this year's President's Award for Student Innovation recipient, Trent Ruiz.

