President’s Greetings

General Faculty Meeting

08/07/13

Welcome to our new colleagues, and to our continuing colleagues. We say thanks for great work over last year—and thanks again for all of your support during that time.

Circumstances of challenges in higher education are faced state wide and nationally—Jeffrey Selingo’s work College (un)Bound accurately reports the disinvestment over the last 10 years of publicly supported higher education—meaning that change will inevitably be with us for the future. However strong the arguments may be for or against these changes, we must recognize that these changes are here to stay, and will be part of our shared responsibility.

Collective work of faculty, staff and others to address some of those challenges is underway—and in fact it is the continued celebration of, as well as embracing of, those shared and collaborative actions on this campus that gives me so much hope in these changing times.

Last year saw the largest graduation group in CSU history—500 first time fill time freshmen and yet we graduated more than a thousand students last year. We provide success for many more students than those who started with us. Of course, this provides us with one clue of how important we are and can be in the state’s completion agenda.

New Science Building was funded—thanks to the work of an extraordinary number of people, the legislative leadership, the board leadership and the governor’s office. Over the summer, the details were being completed for construction through the collaborative work and leadership of Business and Operations, Academic Affairs, Arts and Sciences, and the faculty of Natural Sciences

Professor Richard Pearce Moses’ leadership made possible for this community to preserve the presence of the state archives adjacent to our campus, and create the conditions for future collaborations for our students and other USG student interns.

Reza Kheirandish staffed (together with a colleague from Johns Hopkins) a joint meeting of Society for Advancement of Behavioral Economics, International Association for Research in Economics & Psychology, and the International Confederation for the Advancement of Behavioral Economics and Economic Psychology—all done with the partnership with the city of Morrow, and serving scores of national and international scholars. At the very same time the faculty of the College of Information and Mathematics sciences hosted some 30 middle school students in futures in computer and information sciences. And some of the most consistent Facebook and twitter posts over the summer have come from proud parents and students announcing their selection to the Spivey Hall Children’s choir.

National Council for Teacher Quality—rankings, not widely endorsed—gave prominence to our graduate program in teacher education as the highest rated program by that group in the state of Georgia—here I acknowledge the methodological limitations of the ratings, while reporting the positive findings about the work of our colleagues.

The University was an essential feature in economic development plan for county, not only our Small Business Development Center but the entire institution. Dr. Crafton’s participation on the project’s executive committee was an important part of that group’s fine work.

Over the last year, we were able to draw closer ties with school systems. The dramatic increases in Dual Enrollment can be seen as one example of this progress. It also serves as a lesson in the value of attention to the execution of a plan—great ideas, combined with detailed plans for follow-up leads to success. And to Kevin Demmitt and his colleagues, we say thanks.

Last year saw a greater than a 40% increase in annual fund support, anchored by the enormous demonstration of belief by the faculty and staff of this institution. Partnerships with the colleges developing in a systematic and strategic way—those will be items I believe Dr. Crafton will begin to elaborate later—but I say that the group developing these proposals involved not only development, led by VP Troelstra and her colleagues, but Drs. Hall and Tate, and Dr. Elaine Manglitz in student affairs (who graciously accepted our invitation to serve this year as Vice President for Academic Affairs), among others.

In these times characterized by change, partnerships and collaborations (together with detailed plans for execution of plans and identification of results) will likely be one of the key characteristics of the success this institution will experience. Our possibilities, I believe, are epic!! But as I have observed on other occasions, commenters on the 200 mile hood to coast road race noted that its completion was epic—but that you could not do epic by yourself.

Dan Brown’s most recent effort to profit from the mass market created by well read fallen away Catholics, Inferno finds character Robert Langdon paraphrasing Dante to observe “in dangerous times, there is no greater sin than inaction.” And in the coming year, it is clear that, whatever else, this institution will not be subject to accusations of inaction. I want to speak today in appreciation of actions that have been taken, and that will be taken in coming months that have and will allow the university to navigate its way through dangerous times. Robert Zemsky observes that “…faculty members need to take a leading role in shaping what higher education looks like in the future. It won’t be the kind of higher education we want if faculty sit on the sidelines.”

Multiple projects are already under way;. For these and others, we have already drawn expertise from our faculty and staff of the institution. The success of these and other efforts is dependent on the collective action of our colleagues, crossing the whole range of campus programs and divisions. And our success will continue to require and in fact prosper as a result of collective actions.

Obviously, this will not be easy work—Nobel Laureate Daniel Kahnemen reports on the human bias in favor of preventing loss relative to actions for the benefit of achieving gains. But it is here that I believe our faculty and our strategic plan, focused on learning, engagement, and community, allow new actions for the sake of preserving our historic values. Let me note a few examples, again understanding that successful actions will require participation from across divisions programs and colleges.

**On-line learning**—There has been considerable discussion of moocs, massive on line open courses—and one area of discussion that I wish to continue will be the assumption of our faculty ability to assess the worthiness of on line offerings for academic credit, even if we provide few if any such offerings ourselves. Through the mechanisms of prior learning assessments, or credit by examination, we have an opportunity to expand our range of offerings, while continuing our responsibility to assess academic work for credit and degree program contribution.

**Large data analysis**— Micheal Crow at Arizona State University correctly identifies effective use of data to guide an array of institutional decisions as a powerful strategic asset. We agree. The strategic benefit for an institution in helping us invest faculty and staff time and resources in ways the most benefit our students, is at the heart of many activities in Academic Affairs and University Institutional Research.

**SACs compliance and the Quality Enhancement Plan**. This effort is being led by Dr. Jill Lane and Dr. Antoinette Miller. And through the demonstration with evidence of compliance with SACS principles of accreditation, as well as the development of a Quality Enhancement Plan the broadly supports learning objectives of the institution, we will have improved our ability to advance our core business of learning.

**Enrollment management**— we have seen remarkable success, especially relative to other institutions over the last three years. These efforts have been led by Dr. Mark Daddona, and will serve as the foundation of greater success in the future. Our efforts must be increasingly more disaggregated. Letting dual enrollment students know how they can value from our instructional opportunities likely requires approaches that differ from recruiting students with college credits, but without degrees (estimated for the near future as including some 21% of our population. We will need to be more discrete in our analysis, and more specific in the implementation of the projects in the multiple and diverse student population we serve so well—and connected well to the completion agenda.

**Completion agenda**—very detailed and complex—and again, is the result of cross divisional work here—and highlighted already during earlier board of regents meeting.

**Diversity**—the composition of the future Georgia population and university student population will reflect the kind of diversity so much a characteristic of this institution—an exceptional range of similarities and differences from which we must draw strength as a state and as an institution.

**Career development, liberal arts, and greater intentionality** our students seek us because they seek jobs and a better life—and in this environment, the often cited distinction between “trade school” and university education is but an outdated concept. On the contrary, we are obliged to help our students be able to articulate what they know, what they are able to do, and how those abilities can translate into activities someone will pay for—like knowledge of computers, like being able to express oneself in speaking and writing, like being able to draw careful inferences from evidenced researched by them. And with the fastest growing jobs being those that did not exist even ten years ago, our historic values as a lifelong learner will be more and not less important over time. Preparing students for both a career and a life is a university responsibility. Drs. Crafton and Manglitz will be leading a university effort to accomplish this during the coming academic year.

On these we will need your support—as we divide up efforts that hopefully allow each of us to not work more, but the work in shared and focused ways for likely positive results.

According to Micheal Barber, Katelyn Donnelly and Said Rizvi, six models of university are likely to survive this upcoming period of dramatic change. The Globe and Mail, Last updated Wednesday, Apr. 10 2013, 10:11 AM EDT

“Model 4: The Local University Around the world there are many universities which play a key role in the constant renewal of the local or regional economy”—Dr. Robert Vaughn will be leading our institutional effort for reaching Carnegie status as an engaged institution, which will be an important external measure of our success as a university that thrives in its commitment to being a steward of place.

Again, I thank you for all you do to make this an exceptional place for our students and our community. By way of introduction, I close with another quotation from Dan Brown in Inferno “He had been called many things—a soulless mercenary, a facilitator of sin, the devil’s enabler—but he was none of these. The provost simply provided his clients with the opportunity to pursue their ambitions and desires without consequence; that mankind was sinful in nature was not his problem. Despite his detractors and their ethical objections, the provost’s moral compass was a fixed star. He had built his reputation…on two golden rules. Never make a promise you cannot keep. And never lie to a client—ever.” And could that be our provost, Dr. Micheal Crafton?