

2017 Fall Address
“FROM TRANSITION TO TRANSFORMATION: THE YEAR IN MOTION”
Sacramento State

I have titled this Fall Address as “From Transition to Transformation: The Year in Motion.” Change is all around us, and I will focus on that change shortly.

But first, I want to remind everyone of our mission:

Our mission statement reads that “As California’s capital university, we transform lives by preparing students for leadership, service, and success.”

We are here to serve our students, to serve them in the most turbulent times that I remember since the War in Viet Nam.

Our students may be vulnerable, but our students are strong. And they are courageous.

They are also smart.

Twitter limits each post to 140 characters—our Sac State first-year students have already figured out how to post entire letters to the University of Virginia students on Twitter.

Yes, on Twitter, a group of @SacState 21’s reached out to UVA’s class of 2021

I can’t avoid a sidebar here before I get to their message, a message that deeply touched my heart.

Our first-year students, our freshmen, are already planning to graduate in four years—they have named themselves the Sac State 21’s—they have the Finish in Four mindset.

They will graduate in four years.

2017 plus 4 equals 2021—even I, as an Arts and Letters faculty member, can count.

But back to our first-year students—please allow me to ask a spokesperson for a group of Sac State 21’s to come forth and read the letter that they wrote, the letter that I reposted on Twitter with the message:

“Shannon and @sacstate 21’s, you have great hearts and make our #HornetFamily proud. United, we will overcome bigotry and racism. #StingersUp”

Here is Shannon, here is one of our first-year students, to read her fellow students’ letter:

“To the University of Virginia Class of 2021,

In the wake of recent events occurring in Charlottesville, a group of Sacramento State’s Class of 2021 reaches out to you in hopes of inspiring unity, acceptance, and encouragement in the face of such turmoil. At this critical moment in all of our lives, it is more important than ever to stand up for what is right, stand up against racism, stand up against ignorance, and stand up against outright hatred. Although the events in Charlottesville are terribly reminiscent of our nation’s darkest moments, they have illuminated remaining racists’ sentiments throughout our country and have provided an opportunity for us to speak up in opposition.

Above all, we condemn the racism displayed by self-proclaimed “white-nationalists” during the past few days in Charlottesville, Virginia. In addition, these horrifically violent acts in the name of white supremacy and Nazism displayed in Charlottesville are abhorrent and disturbing. We are angered by the leaders in this country who have failed to denounce this bigotry and ignorance to the necessary extent. While we retain many grievances about the current situation in Charlottesville, our hopes are not to create further division, rather our goals are—

1. To establish solidarity among Sac State 21s, UVA 21s, and all other students wishing to unite under mutual love and respect for one another.
2. To take a strong stand against any form of discrimination, whether it be on our respective campuses or anywhere else in our lives.
3. To communicate with one another, by any means possible, in hopes of learning more about our fellow student to gain a better understanding of our diverse nation and its diverse students.

We have a moral obligation to continue the work of those who fought so hard for justice before us in years past. In 1967, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. traveled to Sacramento State aiming to inspire a generation of students much like ourselves. This October, our school will celebrate the 50th anniversary of that event. In light of the spirit of Martin Luther King and the millions of others who took a stand against ignorance during the Civil Rights Movement, we maintain the idea that not only are all men and women created equal, but violence is never an option.

In the words of Dr. King himself, we agree “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” Thus, despite the 3,000 miles of separation between our campuses, we nevertheless stand with you for the sake of justice and hope throughout our entire country.

Furthermore, we reach out to you—UVAs Class of 2021—in order to inspire non-violent resistance against bigotry, alongside other universities that have done the same: Vassar, Pomona, Yale, Williams College, Columbia, and Dartmouth. Together we create something stronger than the hatred spread by those in Charlottesville---hope, bravery, and justice.

In Solidarity,
Members of Sacramento State’s Class of 2021”

Thank you, Shannon. Thank you for your heart.

Thank you for your courage.

Thank you for joining the Hornet Family and for moving us forward.

This letter stands for itself—it stands for the integrity, brilliance, and hearts of our students.

Shannon, I truly am proud of you and of all of our Sac State 21s.

I believe in our future, in the future of Sacramento State and our nation,
because I believe in you.

The day before the tragedy in Charlottesville, we witnessed the transformative power of Sacramento State right here in this ballroom.

Just as we just saw what is right with our students and America with the letter penned by Shannon and members of the Sacramento State Class of 2021, we witnessed the power of a Sacramento State education and of love.

The afternoon before the Nazis and White Supremacists marched on the University of Virginia, we had a celebration of one of our alumni,

- the new police chief of Sacramento,
- the first African-American police chief in Sacramento,
- the first police chief who was arrested at age 16 for assaulting a police officer,
- an adopted son, son of a father who died when hit by a drunk driver,
- a College of Business graduate,
- the former police chief of Roseville,
- my friend and colleague on Align Capital Region,
- another phenomenal student who is a leader, who is serving Sacramento and our nation, and who is a success
- a student who was transformed by our faculty and our staff at Sac State
Daniel Hahn!

PLEASE ROLL THE VIDEO

Daniel Hahn was born in Humboldt, the child of an African American and a Caucasian, who weren't ready for the responsibilities of being parents.

He was adopted by a white couple from Sacramento.

He lost his adopted father before he could remember his father.

His mother moved to Oak Park so that he could be with people who looked like him, who would help her raise her son.

At age 16 he was arrested.

At age 19 while a student, he became a police officer.

As a young officer, he heard a call over his police radio that someone, who was associated with dealing drugs, had been killed in an area Officer Hahn knew all too well.

He went to the scene and identified his brother, and then he called his mother on her birthday to tell her that her son had been killed.

He rose up the ranks, and he chose to come back to Sacramento State to be sworn in as Sacramento's police chief.

And he wore his Made At Sac State lapel pin when he was sworn in.

There are so many stories about our students, about their heroism—let me tell you one more, the story of yet another Sac State hero—Wil Stewart.

Wil is a student in our Paramedic Program.

The program requires the students to do an internship.

Wil was at a coffee shop, getting ready to interview for an internship with an ambulance service in San Luis Obispo when he heard someone coughing what he says was “the wrong type of cough.”

He looked up and saw a man walking in circles and holding his chest.

Wil leapt up, grabbed the man, and performed the Heimlich maneuver.

The man survived because of Wil and owes Wil his life.

But Wil doesn’t even know his name—he forgot to ask.

Wil, in his head, was still preparing for his interview—the perfect student.

Wil did get the internship. And during the interview, he didn’t even think to mention that he had just saved someone’s life.

Yes, our students save lives, shake the person’s hand whom they have just saved, and then go and get the job done.

Wil, will you please stand with your parents so that we can salute you?

As I noted, our faculty and our staff “transform lives by preparing students for leadership, service, and success.”

And then those students go on to transform other lives.

That is the beauty of Sac State.

But I have to admit that transformation is often painful and can sometimes be ugly.

Ask our students—many of them feel the pain as our faculty transform them into scientists, politicians, healthcare workers, business leaders, philosophers, artists, engineers, citizens of the world, leaders.

But they also feel joy and love, especially at graduation.

For the last two years and even before I came here, Sac State has been in transition,

- transitioning from a commuter college to a destination university,
- transitioning from a campus that had not built a new academic building since the Academic Information Resource Center in 2005 to a campus building a new 5 story science building,
- transitioning from a campus with few student amenities to a campus with a new dining hall for students, with a new residence hall overlooking the river, with the WELL and now with a 71,000-square-foot enhanced Student Union,
- from a campus without an Executive Director of Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity to a campus guided by an imperative on inclusion and diversity where belonging is crucial,

- from a campus that was hiring 20 plus faculty per year to a campus that is hiring over 80 faculty per year—40%-plus who are faculty of color and 60%-plus are women,
- from a campus where 56% of the students took remedial/developmental courses to a campus where only 15% of the students will take a remedial/developmental math course this fall,
- from a campus where for 30 years our 4-year graduation rate hovered around 8% to a campus where we have a projected 12% 4-year graduation rate this year (a 36% increase),
- from a campus where in 2013 only 27% of our freshmen took 15 credits to a campus where 84% of the new freshmen have pledged to take 15 credits—this most recent year, nearly 50% percent of the freshmen took 30 credits in their first year.
- from a campus with outdated science labs to a campus that is breaking ground on September 18th for a new science building with 30 new state of the art labs.

To quote my fourth favorite philosopher, “the times, they are a-changin’.”

But there is pain, angst, and ugliness in that change—we have to be honest.

We are building a new parking garage, which translates into 650 fewer parking spaces (all of lot 1) this fall.

We are also losing an additional 243 parking spaces and 12 motorcycle spaces beside the bookstore where the new science building will be erected—for a net loss of 915 spaces.

Fortunately, the parking structure will be finished by January 28th, which will add 1,750 new spaces for a net gain of 835 parking spaces.

As an aside, did you know that the parking structure is being built so that it can potentially become a residence hall once we advance as a society and get people out of their individual vehicles?

Cool, right?

Yes, Sacramento State is transforming not only our students, but also itself.

All in all, as far as parking goes, we are transforming from a sleepy campus where everyone could park next to his or her building to a campus where we need to walk some distance to our buildings and our classrooms.

I am hoping that we are all counting our steps and logging them into our calorie counters.

What worries me the most is our students.

The Collective Bargaining Agreement requires the University to provide the faculty with the same number of parking spaces as we have provided them in the past.

But our students have no such protection.

We have opened 1000 slots at our Ramona Avenue parking lot, and we will be running shuttles every 15 minutes.

But I ask the faculty to be patient if students are late to class.

To me, parking is the least important element in us moving from transitioning to transforming.

As I just mentioned, 84% of our new students are intending to sign up for 15 credits.

Last year, 64% of the freshmen took 15 credits.

In one year, our 4-year graduation rate has increased to 12%—well beyond 8%.

Our 6-year graduation rate has increased to 48.9%—almost 50%.

And our 2-year graduation rate for transfer students has risen from 27% to 32%.

I want to remind you that these numbers are real students, students in our classes, in the Student Union, at football and basketball games, in the workforce.

The Finish in Four campaign is working.

I am proud of the work of our advisors and our faculty.

I am proud of the work that the Math Education and Preparation Task Force.

They are providing students with clear and straightforward pathways to obtain developmental math education and quantitative reasoning.

They are reducing math remediation rate at Sac State.

They are eliminating non-credit bearing remediation courses in math.

I am equally proud that with the help of Student Affairs, Information Resources and Technology, the Advisors, the Associate Deans, and the faculty, Smart Planner is fully activated for over 289 programs and concentrations.

62% of our students have begun to create their degree plans in Smart Planner.

As we progress to a fully implemented advising system, Smart Planner will be a critical tool for our students and for our faculty—I call on all faculty and staff to embrace Smart Planner to get 100% of our students using Smart Planner.

These transformations are not easy, as I said.

For some of us, they are frightening.

And there is a small minority, I know, who believe that we are moving too fast and taking too many risks.

But we are going to move forward, and we are moving forward. As I said, this year is a year in motion.

We will continue with the four imperatives that I announced last year:

1. The Graduation Initiative—the Finish in Four and Through in Two campaigns are moving forward as the numbers that I have mentioned show,

2. Diversity—the Office of Equity, Inclusion and Diversity is fully functional and has a budget.

It will be rolling out a Climate Survey this year, and administrators, many faculty and staff, and many student leaders have received unconscious bias training.

3. Philanthropy—we are in the midst of raising \$20 Million for the new science building and doubling the number of scholarships—by the way, we raised \$26.1 Million last year, \$8 Million more than the year before, almost doubling the amount from two years ago.

The communications and marketing units have been reunited under University Advancement, and we will announce a new Vice President for University Advancement next week.

And UEI is leading the California State Employees Giving at Work “Our Promise” campaign where we raised the most money of any college in California--\$66,723—last year, and we will do the same this year.

4. Community and Civic Involvement—the Task Force for Community Engagement is continuing its work.

The Transgender Inclusion Task Force has produced its initial report.

And the Sacramento State Downtown, the official name for what some have called the downtown campus at 304 S Street, is moving forward under the management of Vice President Phil Garcia.

During the course of the last year, we added a 5th Imperative: Safety.

As I am sure everyone knows, we had three major events involving the safety of our campus.

- First, we found lead dust in Santa Clara Hall, which required major cleaning by an outside firm.
- Second, thanks to a project led by Professor Jeffery Foran, we discovered elevated levels of lead in 43 drinking water sources in the spring.

We tested over 800 sources to be certain that our campus would be safe and replaced parts, added filters, and shut down 5 sources to alleviate the problem.

As announced in yesterday’s Sac Send, we will be testing three additional fountains that Dr. Foran tested this summer and found to be over 15 pbb.

- Third, we had a serious chemical spill that has resulted in us changing many of our laboratory practices, advertising for a new Laboratory Safety Officer, and amplifying our training.

Safety and health are critical for our campus, and each division was asked to make safety a high budget priority.

That is why we will be investing \$965,000 in fire alarms and putting sprinklers into this very ballroom and the other ballrooms in the Student Union.

And that is why we will be a tobacco free campus beginning September 1st.

We want to get things right as we transform the University.

But I don't want to lose our focus on and our emphasis on the students in "this year in motion."

I began this Address with Shannon and her fellow students because what happened at the University of Virginia and in Charlottesville frightened me and continues to frighten.

I suspect that most of you are not on Twitter.

I can't believe that I am on Twitter.

As a natural skeptic, I assume that most of you may not have read what I wrote after what happened after Charlottesville.

I tweeted out the following tweet:

"Heartbroken by events at #Charlottesville and #UVA. We denounce racism & white supremacy. Not @sacstate-not anywhere #HornetFamily"

I had only 140 characters that afternoon—I wasn't as smart as Shannon and her class of 2021 and didn't know that there was a way around the 140-character limit.

Parents are frightened. Why should they send students, their children, to our campus, to any campus? Will they be safe?

Our students are afraid too.

I sent out the following Sac Send the next day:

"As I reflect on the events of the past few days – a celebration of diversity and inclusion on our campus with the swearing-in of the new Sacramento Chief of Police, alumnus Daniel Hahn, and the display of terrorist hate in Charlottesville – it is clear that we must decide who we are as a society.

I was shocked and dismayed by the violence and hate demonstrated by white supremacists at the University of Virginia and in Charlottesville over the weekend, and I am heartbroken about those who were injured or killed as a result.

The actions of the white supremacists and nationalists were a demonstration of cowardice – not patriotism. Each of us shares the responsibility of speaking out against what happened there. We have to denounce racism, anti-Semitism, and white supremacy.

As I've shared in previous messages, we must continue to have difficult conversations on our campus, but we also must continue to support one another.

As part of our Hornet Honor Code, we will continue our commitment to promoting an inclusive campus community that values our diversity.

We are a Hornet Family, and I ask that we stand together against hate that has no place in our country.

We are stronger together.

At Sacramento State, we will continue to make inclusion a priority and to celebrate our diverse community.

Last Friday on our campus, Daniel Hahn was sworn in as Sacramento's first Black police chief.

He represents a new and exciting beginning for the city and for the leadership in our community.

At 3 p.m. Friday, Sept. 22, in the Hinde Auditorium, we will welcome Dr. Miguel Gallardo to speak on multicultural and social justice.

And on Monday, Oct. 16, a full day of events is scheduled to honor the 50th anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. speaking at Sacramento State.

We will celebrate his legacy and contributions to the world."

I am proud that we have a plan moving forward.

I look forward to the Martin Luther King, Jr. celebration.

But I must remind everyone what I said in another Sac Send:

Words matter. Hate matters.

Calling students "illegals" is wrong, simply wrong.

Making unfounded accusations against colleagues is equally wrong.

Hatred is wrong.

Instead, I am calling on each of you, calling on all the Hornet Family, to declare it to ourselves and to actually be a Hate-Free Campus.

To become so will be much more painful than missing parking places.

And it will be harder than attending celebrations or taking unconscious bias training.

But we Hornets have the capacity in our collective Hornet Heart to be a Hate-Free Campus and to be the first campus in the United States to define jointly what a Hate-Free Campus is.

We have watched campuses fall apart and potentially explode. Do we want this degradation to take place on our beloved campus?

Will we let ourselves lose our integrity to honor?

I hope and believe not.

Let's dedicate this Year in Motion to becoming a Hate-Free Campus.

Let's dedicate ourselves to being Hate-Free.

We cannot let our campus be anything like what happened in Charlottesville.

We cannot be consumed by Hatred.

We are Hornets.

We are different.

We can and will transform our campus, our students, and ourselves.

We will denounce hatred, bigotry, name-calling, and violence.

But we will do more than just denounce.

We will transform.

STINGERS UP!