Good morning.

I want to welcome all of you to the start of the fall semester and a new school year. It’s good to see the Sacramento State community back together after a very busy and challenging summer. I hope you enjoyed the break – whether you were away from campus, took the opportunity to go on vacation, or just rushed home after work to watch the Olympics. Spending plenty of time with family and friends, and taking time to rest, relax, recharge and get ready for the coming year is important for all of us. I also welcome all the alumni, community members and friends of the University who have joined us today. To our guests, I want to say that your friendship is critical to this campus, and we truly appreciate your continued interest, support and enthusiasm.

New Faces at Sacramento State

On that note, I would like to welcome a number of people who are new to the campus. First, there are six new faculty members who have joined us as critical replacements for our academic departments. Last year, the number was five. I can only hope that in the years ahead, support for the CSU will allow us to return to full strength. Other new posts in our colleges include Ted Lascher, who is the interim dean of the College of Social Sciences and Interdisciplinary Studies; and Guido Krickx, who just missed out by a few months on being announced at last year’s address as the dean of the College of Continuing Education. We also have three new associate deans:

- Kimo Ah Yun in the College of Arts and Letters,
- Seung Bach in the College of Business Administration,
- And Dianne Hyson will serve in an interim capacity in SSIS.

Next month, Steve Boilard will join us as the director of the Center for California Studies. Steve is a former professor, in addition to spending 14 years in the state Legislative Analyst’s Office. Over the years, Sacramento State has participated in the ACE Fellows program. This year we have one coming here, and two going away. Brian Oppy, a professor of psychology from Chico State, will be with us during the fall semester. And Dave Evans from Geology and Jana Noel from Teacher Education will be away on fellowships – Dave at the University of Nevada, Reno, and Jana at St. Mary’s.

The new faces continue with Student Affairs, where a number of recent retirements and departures created some key vacancies. Beth Lesen is the new associate vice president for student engagement and success. She replaces the retired Edward Jones. Anita Kermes is the new director of financial aid, replacing Craig Yamamoto, who left for San Diego State and the beautiful weather. And Ardith Tregenza is the director of student conduct, as Leonard Valdez has also retired.

Over in HR, Veronica Hodge is the associate vice president for employee services. In Public Affairs and Advocacy, Jeannie Wong is the associate vice president of university communications to reflect her expanded role as well as that of the division. And this will be Police Chief Mark Iwasa’s first fall semester at Sacramento State, after joining us in January. These positions interact with many of you, so please be sure to say hello.

Campus News

You may notice some other changes on campus. Facilities Services has spent much of the summer refreshing campus areas, both indoors and out. The indoor project included about 180 classrooms in 24 buildings, and several other areas, such as corridors and stairways. I toured the rooms last week, and the work they have done makes a huge difference. Here, you can see some examples. Crews have performed deep cleaning, painted rooms, removed graffiti, refinished floors, and replaced doors and

Changes and Challenges: We Must Keep Looking Forward

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lighting. The focus was on improving the learning environment for our students.

All told, the project involved more than 100 people, including custodians, IRT technicians, painters and maintenance professionals. These improvements were made in a very cost-effective manner and resulted from a reorganization that gave select managers distinct zones of responsibility on campus. Additionally, new landscaping projects are using sustainable materials and plants that need less water. The goal is to reduce maintenance costs while enhancing campus beauty. Ali Izadian, Daryn Ockey, and Mark Leisz in Facilities deserve a lot of credit for bringing these projects in on time and under budget.

Another renovation comes to us from the Chemistry Department. Thanks to Tom Savage and his faculty colleagues, we were able to renovate the Cimera lab, a cell and molecular biology suite in Sequoia Hall. The $800,000 project was funded by a National Science Foundation grant.

University Enterprises, Inc., has also been busy with campus dining renovations. The University Center Restaurant has been remodeled and rebranded as Epicure Restaurant at Sacramento State. This will bring more natural light into the restaurant and modernize its décor. Other projects include the first phase of the River Front Center renovation, an update for Round Table Pizza, and the launch of a sandwich and salad venue called Good Eats. All of these upgrades will provide a better dining experience and healthier choices, while improving energy efficiency, sustainability and ADA compliance.

In the virtual world of Sacramento State, the home pages for six of our seven colleges have been redesigned in partnership with IRT and Public Affairs and Advocacy. This is important for our University’s identity, as the website is often the first point of contact for prospective students. Another project that will improve the visibility of our University is a new strategic plan for Athletics. A committee of faculty and staff has been engaged in the planning effort since the spring, and a final draft is scheduled for later in the semester. I have asked Vice President Lori Varlotta of Student Affairs to help with the implementation of the plan.

I am also proud to report that Sacramento State once again exceeded its goal for private fundraising. Students will be helped by a 5 percent payout from our endowment for the second consecutive year. That translates into more than $730,000, most of which will be in the form of scholarships. We must always remember the difficulties students are facing with the budget cuts, and every dollar that we raise can make a big difference in their lives.

Budget Update

Now, on to the budget. I want to take a moment right now to thank the faculty, staff and students who serve on the University Budget Advisory Committee. Their prudent fiscal guidance has been invaluable as we continue to face budgetary difficulties. I think we all wish that they weren’t getting so much experience in dealing with drastic cuts in support. But we can be very thankful that the committee members take on this solemn responsibility with the utmost professionalism and dedication.

Once again their task was enormous, because we are dealing with more than our fair share of budget uncertainty. The specter of another midyear reduction has returned, and we have become all too accustomed to the term “trigger” cut. This year, the trigger cut is $250 million for the California State University system. The trigger will be pulled if Gov. Jerry Brown’s tax initiative fails to pass in November.

In that event, state funding for the CSU system will be down 39 percent since 2007-08. The initiative is now known as Proposition 30 – and the CSU Board of Trustees has endorsed the measure as our best possible outcome for the fiscal year.

For our campus, all of this means that we had to prepare for more than $11 million in baseline reductions, in case the initiative does not pass. Additionally, we are using reserves to cover another $9 million of the resulting campus deficit. Our cautious budget approach and careful planning are again helping us to survive. We are holding some funding in reserve and postponing some larger projects to allow us to weather the trigger cut if Proposition 30 fails. If Prop. 30 passes, we hope to be able to reallocate some of those funds midyear.
Commitment to Student Success

The continuing budget difficulties have really put us under the microscope, especially in terms of graduation rates and student success. Nothing in the last few years has been easy, but I am proud to say that Sacramento State is making tremendous progress in these areas. The College of Education is on track to complete its reorganization by August 2013. Dean Vanessa Sheared has worked extensively with faculty and staff on this comprehensive effort, with the goal of better meeting the needs of students, streamlining services, and enhancing teaching and learning. The most apparent change is in the organization itself. The college is moving from six departments to four specialty areas.

In support of new students, Sacramento State's implementation of the Early Start program has gone exceedingly well. Early Start is a CSU-mandated program that requires a preparatory class for all first-time freshmen who need remediation. The initiative's success on our campus took a lot of work, and there were four staff members who stood out in particular. They are Nancy Nelson, Cindy Martinez, Dena Lemus and Emelina Logan.

Services for Students with Disabilities also continues to promote retention and graduation through its SSS program. Eighty-six percent of the students in the program graduated within six years of entering the project, and the retention rate was more than 88 percent.

As further evidence of our overall success, Sacramento State's interim report to the WASC reaccreditation commission was well-received. The report dealt with educational effectiveness and the progress we have made with assessment and data on retention and graduation rates. As a result of this positive reception, our reaccreditation remains reaffirmed through 2018. I know the WASC process involves a lot of work by a lot of people on campus. This accomplishment is something we can all be proud of.

Our achievements in this area are part of our commitment to examining how we deliver education at every level. If that sounds familiar, that is because I raised this issue in January at my Spring Address. At that time, it was very apparent that we were evaluating programs and implementing changes at all levels, from individual faculty and staff members to departments and divisions, and to the Faculty Senate. This level of introspection and self-assessment has not been easy, but being ahead of the curve will only help us in the years ahead.

A Time of Change

The saying goes that you can either make change happen, watch change happen, or have change happen to you – but no matter which road you take, change is going to happen. I hope we all agree that Sacramento State needs – and deserves – to be leading the way. We have demonstrated time and again that we can be the very best when we break the mold – when we redefine the possible. Initiatives like our Veterans Success Center, our Graduation Initiative, our Facebook page, and The Well are all known throughout California, and in many cases, across the nation. The College of Business Administration's AACSB accreditation was reaffirmed, thus maintaining its spot in the top 5 percent of business schools worldwide.

Sacramento State is also blazing successful new trails in two areas that are very appropriate and important to the future of our campus.

The first is health care. This semester, the first students will begin under our new Doctor of Physical Therapy Program. Our ability to offer a DPT is crucial to the health and well-being of people in the region, as the doctorate will be required for accreditation in 2015. We are planning new teaching, lab and research space in Folsom Hall for the program, and construction should begin this semester. When you consider that our School of Nursing is already there, we are growing closer and closer to the day when Folsom Hall becomes synonymous with advanced health care education in California. Along with the exciting new DPT, I want to recognize one of our most cherished programs. The Department of Speech Pathology and Audiology is celebrating 60 years on campus, and at an event in November, we will be honoring the department’s life-changing contributions to patients and professionals since 1952.

Our health care story does not end there. We are becoming well-known for our mental health
services on campus. Vice President Varlotta is the principal investigator on federal and state grants aimed at enhancing our comprehensive suicide prevention efforts and to support mental health services. The Student Health Center will receive a county grant, as well. The center has also merged all health care services, including counseling, into one program. Those of us who have shuttled back and forth to multiple providers in different locations can appreciate how much of an improvement this can be.

Our Health Center can provide seamless care – and we are the only CSU campus to use a single electronic medical record for patients.

Congratulations to Joy Stewart-James and everyone else at the Student Health Center. Suicide prevention is one of the most important issues we can focus on, and I was very pleased to learn that cross-divisional training workshops lasting two days have taken place across our campus.

Another emerging strength is our work to extend Sacramento State’s reach internationally.

Right now, about 250 students are living on campus and taking courses in the College of Continuing Education’s English Language Institute. The goal is to help them matriculate to an American university, and hopefully Sacramento State. We have also implemented a policy that will admit a limited number of undergraduate students from other countries to the University, with the condition that they complete ELI training. This will make the process of coming to Sacramento State easier for those students who are otherwise qualified, but who lack English skills. The partnerships we have signed with numerous overseas universities will support this effort, as well as allow our students to study abroad.

Faculty and staff throughout Sacramento State deserve a lot of credit for these and our many other successes. That said, the changes are only beginning. WASC, which I mentioned earlier, is no exception. A redesign is under way for WASC, and the effects will likely be far-reaching. Everything is on the table, including:

- Learning expectations for all degree levels,
- How we define credit hours,
- And emerging federal regulations in the wake of increasing online education.

On that last point, the move toward online delivery of programs is gaining more and more momentum. The reality is that students process information much differently than they did even a few years ago. Three-quarters of our students say that the use of cutting-edge technologies is important to them. At Sacramento State, Academic Affairs is offering its second e-Academy this fall. The project helps professors convert courses from traditional teaching to online and hybrid formats. The interest in this type of assistance is increasing, as more and more faculty members seek to use technology to enhance teaching. In fact, IRT is working diligently to assess technological trends and needs on campus. The division has created a website to share these data. We will publish the URL for this site in the Monday Briefing.

We have also had discussions about how we can best implement the Cal State Online initiative coming from the Chancellor’s Office. It has been a major topic with the vice presidents, and I also met with the college deans on the issue. I expect these serious and thorough discussions to continue, as we work to identify the best ways to undertake this initiative and provide the most benefits to students and faculty – especially during this era of declining resources.

I think we are all aware that we are being forced to work harder during a time when access, quality and affordability are all under assault simultaneously. And there is even more change looming on the horizon.

Presidential elections inevitably lead to change, no matter who wins. The economy is dominating the campaign rhetoric, and public higher education is being swept up in that, with student loans and graduation rates taking center stage. At the state level, the fate of Prop. 30, and the CSU’s response to the outcome of the vote, has the potential to set the tone for future CSU and Sac State students. The Board of Trustees has been forced to consider all options if the measure does not pass. Enrollment reductions, last-minute tuition increases, and cuts to salary and benefit expenses are under discussion. All of these options could seriously jeopardize access, affordability and quality.
At the same time, California will be electing legislators in November under newly drawn districts – so in many ways, all bets are off in terms of what we can expect the State Capitol to look like come January. And to top it off, the Board of Trustees is searching for a new Chancellor. Now before you ask, I don’t have any insight on who it will be. That may be more difficult to predict than Olympic gymnastics. But the one thing we can be sure of is that the CSU is in for a change, no matter who is picked.

My message here is that it is up to us to be ready to handle whatever the future may hold.

Sacramento State’s Value to the Community

I see this as a watershed year for Sacramento State. I truly believe that the future of Sacramento State, and of public higher education, will be defined by the work that we do to preserve quality, access and affordability. Thanks to you, we are in a better position for this important fight. We have been doing a good job of providing value to the community we serve. At an event last spring, more than 50 community leaders came to campus for a presentation on Sacramento State's economic impact. The data really opened their eyes. Between our alumni and our campus operations, we generate about $8 billion in economic activity for the California economy.

And that is only part of the story, because even a small sampling of achievements from our campus illustrates just how essential and innovative we are. For instance, the College of Arts and Letters partnered with the Crocker Art Museum for U-Nite in the Spring. The spectacular event featured the work of more than 30 Sacramento State faculty members, and more than 1,700 people got a first-hand look at the talents we have here on campus. Kudos to Dean Edward Inch and everyone from Arts and Letters.

Another example of community impact is the recently launched Center for Entrepreneurship. The center already has four business tenants who are receiving advice and assistance from our faculty and students. Pia Wong and Deidre Sessoms from Teacher Education received a grant from the Bechtel Foundation to strengthen math and science teaching in the Sac City Unified School District.

Tim Fong of Ethnic Studies earned a U.S. Department of Education grant for the first year of a five-year project to enhance student success and service learning among Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. Vera Margininer in Physics has received funding from Google for two pilot projects. One is aimed at increasing the number of physics teachers, and the other promotes the use of technology to improve teaching and student learning in science and math.

Warren Smith in Electrical and Electronic Engineering is securing a licensing agreement that will allow his most recent breakthrough to be produced and marketed. His innovation is a biomedical device that tracks the movement of children who have cerebral palsy, and it was developed in conjunction with Shriners Hospitals for Children. The device documents data such as how often the youngsters fall, which can help reduce injuries.

I could go on all day with examples, but the point is that what we do here directly benefits those who need it most. And we have to continue to promote ourselves and our work. The Public Affairs and Advocacy reorganization is complete, and one of the unit’s charges is to be a full-service resource for campus communications. I have seen many student, faculty and staff accomplishments publicized, on TV and in print. We need to see more. Much more. So when you have good news, call Public Affairs. The office has also launched its “Made at Sac State” campaign, which highlights prominent graduates with video, social media, and advertising.

The next few months are crucial for public higher education in California. How we deal with the changes and challenges ahead will go a long way toward determining our success as a model regional institution. We need to work together to further demonstrate our value to the community, to the students who need us as they pursue their dreams, and to the people of California who will decide our fate in November. We have to demonstrate that we are willing to continue to put in the work necessary to honestly address student success. And we must keep looking forward. Our students and the people we serve depend on us. Thank you for the work you do for our University and for our students. Have a great semester. Thank you very much.

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