President shares encouraging news and a surprise

Dr. Alexander Gonzalez, beginning his 12th year as Sacramento State’s president, announced today that he will retire at the end of the spring 2015 semester.

“It was a difficult decision, because I feel there is much more work to be done,” he said at the conclusion of his annual Fall Address in the University Union. “I also know that it is the right time for me to make the transition and let someone else lead this great institution.”

The hundreds of students, faculty, staff, alumni and friends in attendance gave Gonzalez a standing ovation.

The President praised members of the campus community for their hard work and dedication. He called Sacramento State “a destination, a valued educational resource and a source of pride for the community we serve,” adding that the University provides “one of the very best public educations available in our nation.”

The address also was used to welcome the largest freshman class in Sacramento State’s history: 3,700 first-year students, an increase of about 10 percent over last year.

The University is on target to meet its enrollment goal with about 29,000 students this year. Further, 49 new tenure-track faculty members will begin teaching this fall, nearly double the number hired last year.

Gonzalez introduced three new academic leaders: Jim Prince, vice provost for Academic Affairs; Órn Bodvarsson, dean of the College of Social Sciences and Interdisciplinary Studies; and Lorenzo Smith, dean of the College of Engineering and Computer Science.

In other good news, Gonzalez announced an increase of $4.9 million in the University’s baseline budget, with more than 70 percent of that boost going to Academic Affairs.

One-time allocations approved by Gonzalez include funding to promote faculty and student research, and grants to develop fully online courses that address bottlenecks and high-demand courses. He also approved renovations to Sequoia and Solano halls to add laboratory space.

Other highlights of the President’s speech:

- Provost Frederika “Fraka” Harmsen has begun implementing new programs to strengthen research by faculty and students.

- A new sexual and domestic/dating violence awareness campaign has been launched to ensure that every member of the campus community knows where to report incidents and get help.

- A new, 400-bed residence hall overlooking the American River on campus is expected to open in three years.
The University, the Sac State Office of Water Programs and the City of Sacramento are working together on a $3.7 million grant from the state’s Safe and Clean Water Initiative to better manage stormwater runoff on campus.

The University recently completed a project to establish green bike pathways on campus roads, supporting safety, alternative transportation and Sacramento State’s connection to the city.

Sacramento State raised $13.9 million in private support during the most recent fiscal year – exceeding its goal by more than $2 million. And, the successful Campaign for Nursing brought in nearly $2.1 million to equip Folsom Hall with state-of-the-art facilities and teaching labs.

Sac State now has more than 300 endowments, and 95 percent are earmarked for scholarships. In 2013, the University awarded 795 privately funded student scholarships totaling close to $1 million.

Sac State is moving forward to develop a campus center on donated land near Roseville.

The University is rolling out a pilot of the technological degree-planning and e-advising project, which is a part of its efforts to meet the CSU Graduation Initiative.

The University has signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Sacramento City College and the Sacramento City Unified School District – and hired an executive director – for the Sacramento Pathways Project. It will provide a more seamless educational transition and support college readiness for local students.

Sacramento State’s new strategic plan (www.csus.edu/universitystrategicplan) shapes the mission, vision, values and strategic direction of the University. Among the University’s six major goals are: to enhance student learning and success; foster innovative teaching, scholarship and research; and promote a strong identity for Sacramento State. The plan, which was crafted by students, faculty and staff, incorporates extensive research and feedback from the community.

“Even though the overall picture is brighter, public higher education and Sacramento State have to compete for resources, which remain relatively scarce,” Gonzalez said. “And to make the case for a greater investment from the public, we must demonstrate a greater value to the public – and we must demonstrate it clearly. (The Strategic Plan) will help us do that.”

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