

2021 Fall Address - Sacramento State
"Land of Hope and Dreams"

May we have a moment of silence for all whom we have lost from this horrific virus, COVID-19, and for all the terrible destruction and loss of property, life, and beauty from climate change and the fires, most notably the Dixie Fire and most recently the Caldor Fire.

Forgive me, but some of you will remember my referencing Bruce Springsteen in this year's Spring Address – it seems so long ago.

Please indulge me again—I think that we need to hear the Boss's lyrics, now more than ever.

[Play Video of Bruce Springsteen's "The Rising"]

"Can't see nothing in front of me
Can't see nothing coming up behind
Make my way through this darkness
I can't feel nothing but this chain that binds me
Lost track of how far I've gone
How far I've gone, how high I've climbed"

Bruce Springsteen's anthem to 9/11, to a firefighter, a first responder climbing the stairs in one of the World Trade Center's towers, has taken on new meaning in the 20 years since the planes crashed into those towers and since we have suffered through a global pandemic.

2,977 people were killed that day.
6,000 more were injured.

Over 205M cases of COVID-19 infections have been reported.

36.5M cases in the US; 4M here in California.
4.3M deaths worldwide; 618K deaths in the US; 64K deaths in California.

September 11th, we will play football against the University of Northern Iowa.

At half-time, we will honor and celebrate the first responders who climbed those stairs.
We will also honor all first responders who have done so much to save lives and to comfort those who have been left behind.

"Sky of blackness and sorrow (A dream of life)
Sky of love, sky of tears (A dream of life)
Sky of glory and sadness (A dream of life)
Sky of fullness, sky of blessed (A dream of life)
Come on up for the rising"

When we celebrate the first responders at half-time, we will be celebrating you, all of you in this room and all of you watching the livestream; for you are the first responders.

You are our heroes, our Hornet heroes.

To the groundskeepers, custodians, tradespersons, and police who have showed up every day throughout this pandemic to care for our beautiful University, we salute and thank you.

To the Student Health Center, to our Nursing faculty, and Nursing students who administered over 22,000 shots in our vaccination clinic, we salute and thank you.

To Information Resources and Technology who gave out over 1,800 laptops, 1,600 hot spots, and 475 web cams, we salute and thank you.

To the faculty and staff who never gave up, who refused to let a pandemic beat them, who helped us graduate 9,099 students last May, we salute and thank you.

To the football players who will be playing on September 11th and who are 100% fully vaccinated, and to all the athletes in fall sports all of whom are 100% fully vaccinated, including Volleyball and Men's and Women's Soccer, we salute and thank you.

We will be at your games to support you, to cheer you on.

Yes, football is back.

So are dance and theatre.

And let's not forget concerts and music.

"Come on up for the rising."

This fall, 46% of the sections for our classes will have a face-to-face component.

54% of the sections will be online.

61% of our students will be enrolled in at least one class with a face-to-face component.

Only 39% of the students will have fully online schedules.

All in all, as of last week, the fall 2021 headcount was 31,470 students—107 more than at the same time last year.

We expect the enrollment to be within 100 more students or 100 less students once everything settles around the fall census day.

In the North Village Residence Halls here on campus, we anticipate that there will be 2,000 students, or 96% capacity.

In the new Hornet Commons where the McAuliffe Ballfields were, we expect that there will be 556 students living there—50% occupancy, a bit of a disappointment.

There are 1,100 beds available.

I am quite certain that the occupancy will rise dramatically when students learn that the complex is pet friendly; there is a first-rate fitness center, a

basketball court, a swimming pool, a beach volleyball court, and you have your own washer and dryer in your apartment.

Finally, the Upper Eastside Lofts behind Dos Coyotes on Folsom will be 76% occupied with 307 students.

Yes, we are coming back.

When the students and faculty arrive on campus, thanks to Information Resources and Technology and Facilities Management, they will come back to 450 classrooms that have been renovated and have new technology.

The classrooms have new projectors, new screens—sometimes up to 2 screens—new docking stations, new microphones, new document readers, and more.

There are even new white boards thanks to federal CARES and HEERF monies.

I will speak later about how we have used CARES and HEERF funding, but we have invested much of the institutional portions into infrastructure, including new HVAC and air filtration to make the campus safe for your return.

Students are uploading documentation daily regarding their vaccination status, and we will be cross-checking their documentation against the state data base. So far, over 95% of the students who have attested are fully vaccinated.

The vaccination clinic on campus continues to operate two days a week and is administering close to 200 vaccinations a week to students.

For students who are symptomatic, the Student Health Center will provide free testing.

Any student who claims a medical or a religious exemption and who plans to access campus, even if only to go to the Student Union or the library, must test twice weekly.

For those students who are not accessing campus, the Student Health Center will continue to provide health and counseling services via telehealth.

If a student does test positive for COVID-19, the Student Health Center will provide instructions for isolation and quarantine and will follow their normal protocols for notifying faculty, staff, and students of any potential risk, as they always do for tuberculosis, meningitis, and other reportable diseases.

As everyone knows by now, the CSU system has issued a new mandatory vaccination policy.

That policy is immediately in effect, and requires that everyone—students, staff, faculty, and administrators attest that (1) they have been fully vaccinated, (2) that they are claiming a medical exemption from vaccination, (3) that they are claiming a religious exemption from vaccination, or (4) that they will not under any circumstance access campus this coming semester.

Those individuals who declare medical and religious exemptions will be required to test twice weekly.

The declarations must be entered into the system by September 13th.

We chose September 13th because that date allowed everyone to be fully vaccinated with either the Pfizer or J&J vaccine, whichever they preferred.

However—and this “however” is a **HOWEVER** in all caps—this mandatory vaccination policy is in the meet and confer process with the unions at the system level in Long Beach.

While the policy is in effect immediately, no represented employee can be disciplined for not attesting to their vaccination status by September 13th.

And no represented employee with an exemption can be required to test twice weekly until the meet and confer process has been completed.

Please let me repeat: not until the meet and confer process has ended can represented employees be required to be tested or be denied access to campus.

On the other hand, under the new policy, as of September 13th, both students and administrators can be disciplined for not being vaccinated if they do not certify that they qualify for a medical or religious exemption.

And starting September 13th, both students and administrators who have declared a medical or religious exemption will be required to be tested twice weekly or they will be denied access to campus and to any University programs including internships, field experiences, athletic or sport competitions, and University events.

I know that the inability to require represented employees to be vaccinated or be tested twice weekly is causing consternation among many individuals who will be on campus.

But we must respect the right of the unions to meet and confer regarding working conditions. And I will do so.

The efficacy of these vaccines is not in doubt—they are the best way to keep the Hornet family safe.

Please note that there is no exemption for opposing or not “believing” in vaccinations.

Once the meet and confer process is executed, there will not be exemptions for students, faculty, or staff who simply don’t want to be vaccinated.

Our real mandate is to keep the campus safe for everyone, including the squirrels, turkeys, and coyotes.

As a secondary measure to keep the campus safe, until the pandemic is declared over, all students, staff, faculty, and administrators as well as anyone entering any Sac State building will be required to wear a mask in all public spaces including hallways, restrooms, gyms, conference areas, etc.

Only when eating or drinking, may the masks come off indoors, unless you are alone in your private office.

I am sorry for strict measures, but the pandemic and the delay in executing an agreed upon policy dictates that we do so.

As I said, the goal is safety.

The goal is not to be a for-profit online university.

We believe in education.

We believe in meeting our students face-to-face.

We believe in keeping our custodians, our groundskeepers, our tradespersons safe.

Someone on our campus who has to be here to process paperwork deserves to be as safe as someone who is taking a class that requires hands-on work or someone who needs to see an advisor because of disability accommodations.

Given that there will be on-campus represented employees who have not been vaccinated and given that exposure may occur at the grocery store or at a restaurant, free testing kits will be available for faculty, staff, and students who are concerned about exposure or about transmitting the virus to their families.

These kits will be available even after the meet and confer process has been completed.

In the meantime, for non-represented employees and students who have declared an exemption, a testing station will be established on the first floor of the parking garage PS3.

The tests will be free and will only take 15 minutes (though I would expect that you will need to allot 30 minutes).

If anyone tests positive, they will be asked to consult with their medical provider and will be denied access to campus until the medical provider clears them to return to campus.

As to whether someone can work from home after testing positive, that determination will be made on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the manager and his or her supervisor, including the Vice President.

As of last week, 48% of students and 40% of our faculty and staff have certified their vaccination status.

Those numbers are steadily and rapidly growing as people begin to understand that one must certify their vaccination status in order to be on campus, to go to class, to do research, to go to the library, to get a Starbucks latte.

Remember we have until September 13th for students and administrators to be in compliance with the vaccination policy.

Remember too that the bulk of the people who will be on campus will be students.

Even though some of our represented employees may wait until the meet and confer process is finished to be vaccinated, over 1,700 have already attested to being vaccinated.

I truly believe that with the use of masks and common sense, the campus—you and I—will be safe.

As I said, we are investing in upgrading our HVAC systems, and we are adding outdoor seating. Every building has or will have MERV 13 filtration as recommended by the American Society of Heating and Refrigerating and Air Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) COVID-19 Guidance.

Accordingly, we are investing \$14M HEERF funds (Higher Education Emergency Relief Funds) on HVAC upgrades.

We have also invested \$1.5M alone on Personal Protective Equipment. And we are investing a little over \$4M in outdoor seating.

Just as importantly, we have invested another \$15M in the faculty.

\$4M for student assistants.

\$2.2M for training to teach online and hybrid.

\$3.2M for technology.

\$8.1M for the upgrades of the 450 classrooms that I mentioned earlier.

To give refunds to our students, many of whom lost their jobs during the pandemic, and to make up for the lost revenue because of those refunds, we have allocated \$39M.

These funds went to housing, the Upper East Side Lofts, and dining services—because of these funds, students were able to drop their contracts and were refunded balances.

We were also able to restore temporarily with one-time funds the state budget reductions.

But the greatest benefit has gone to our students.

Initially, with the first federal CARES funding, we gave fulltime students with the highest financial need block grants of \$850. Those students who had some need received \$400. And those students who didn't fill out the FASFA Received \$200.

Subsequently, in the Spring of 2021, we distributed \$875 to each Pell Eligible fulltime student, including undocumented students and international students who were not eligible for the federal HEERF funds.

We had to use lottery and other discretionary funds for the undocumented and international students because they were not eligible under the law.

Even parttime students received at least \$500.

All in all, our students have been awarded \$41.5M so far.

That sounds like a lot, but remember that we have 31K students, all of whom were enduring a pandemic.

Additionally, we were able to allocate \$3.2M for emergency grants for those individuals who were in danger of losing their dream to have a college education.

This coming year, we have been allocated \$52.5M for block grants for students.

These funds are meant for the neediest students, and we will calibrate the grants based on Pell eligibility and estimated family income.

We are still in the process of calibrating the awards, but we expect to be able to award up to \$900 each semester, fall and spring, for fulltime students and up to \$700 for parttime students.

I am thrilled about these grants, but I am also deeply concerned.

I don't expect that there will be another HEERF bill or any other block grants to our students after this year.

We have to double and triple our scholarships for our students.

And it is on you and me to do so.

There also won't be additional federal funds for infrastructure, training, and technology.

That is why we are investing so much in HVAC and classroom upgrades.

In the future, we will have to reduce expectations and increase other avenues of funding.

All of which brings us to this coming year's budget and then to fundraising.

Both stories are good stories—well, at least fundraising is.

Last year, we suffered a 10% reduction in our budget.

Overall, the CSU system was cut by \$299M.

This year, to the surprise of many, that \$299M was restored.

Even more surprising, overall, the state increased the CSU system general fund budget by \$550M with an additional one-time allocation of \$325M for deferred maintenance.

\$23.3M of that \$550M was allocated to Sac State to restore the cut, to fund mandatory costs like health benefits, to fund the Graduation Initiative, and to support basic needs and mental health for our students.

Not all of that \$23.3M allocation to Sac State actually came to Sac State.

The CSU system clawed back \$6.43M for "Systemwide Priorities."

Our actual allocation of new and restored funds is \$16.9M.

\$10.7M of the \$16.9 restores the cut from last year.

So, we are really talking about \$6.2M in new dollars.

In reality of the \$6.2M, \$1.4M must go for health premiums, \$60K for compensation adjustments, \$144K for the maintenance of the Welcome Center, and \$293K for State University Grants for our students.

In other words, we only have \$4.3M more than last year.

\$2.1M is supposed to be dedicated to student mental health and basic needs.

All of which means that we only have \$2.2M left for the Graduation Initiative and to implement AB 1460—Ethnic Studies.

These two initiatives, if fully funded, should be funded at \$10.8M.

Because of the claw back by the CSU system and because of increased health premium benefits and compensation costs, we are \$8.6M short of where we would be if we had been truly fully restored and fully funded.

\$8.6M short may sound bad, but stop and think about what it would have been like to have been cut again.

We were able to restore \$11M to the divisions to make up for their 10% cut for last year, and we were able to set aside \$6.87M to fund our five imperatives—the Graduation Initiative, the Anchor University Initiative, Diversity, Inclusion, and Antiracism, Philanthropy, and Safety.

We were also able to fund fully and permanently the \$5.5M for lecturers that we have been taking from our reserves with ongoing funds.

Additionally, we have one-time funds totaling \$5.7M for emergency grants for our low-income students, faculty professional development, and the Graduation Initiative.

And we have enough in our reserves to fund \$8M in one-time projects.

In the end, what looks like a bad story is a good story.

For the 6th year in a row, we will have a balanced budget.

Now on to the other good story, philanthropy and the On the Rise Comprehensive Campaign and to the great accomplishments that we have seen even during the pandemic with the 5 imperatives.

For the most recent five years, we have dedicated ourselves to these 5 imperatives.

Perhaps nowhere have we seen more success with the imperatives than with the On the Rise campaign...well, maybe other than the Graduation Initiative.

As of the end of this fiscal year, Sacramento State raised over \$30M in philanthropic support.

University Advancement secured \$1M for improvements to the Hornet Baseball stadium, a \$1 million estate gift for the Tschannen Science Complex, \$4.2M from the Planned Giving program, and over \$7 million in gifts and pledges for the future Sacramento State Placer Center.

Even when faced with the challenge of working from home this past year, Athletics, Student Affairs, and each academic college met or exceeded their fundraising goals.

We attained the highest annual giving donor and dollar totals in the past five years and increased the number of donors giving annually by 44%.

For the first time, our annual giving donor retention rate surpassed 50%.

And in the latest fiscal year, the Alumni Association transitioned to an inclusive format where all alumni can become members at no cost.

Our On the Rise comprehensive campaign was on an accelerated path before the pandemic hit, and we were preparing to launch the public phase a year early in April 2020.

This past year because of the pandemic, we had to pivot twice and ultimately publicly launched the campaign on March 16, 2021.

As of the end of July, we have reached nearly 96% of our comprehensive campaign goal by raising approximately \$216M of our \$225M goal.

With the gifts currently in the queue, we expect to surpass that goal by May of next year.

I could not be prouder of the University Advancement Team.

Last year, I frustrated them when I said that I was asking the entire University to do less with less, but I was asking University Advancement to do more with less.

They certainly did more.

They certainly outperformed themselves.

Where we Hornets as a whole are outperforming the nation is with the Graduation Initiative.

I know that we have looked at a lot of numbers today, but let's just look at the numbers, remembering that each one of these numbers represent a student, a student whose life has been transformed by all of you in your concerted work.

In 2016, our graduation rate for our first-time first year students was 8.8%.

This year 26% of our students graduated in four years.

That's a 188% improvement.

Our female students have gone from 10.7% to 30.1%--a 181% improvement.

Our male students have improved from 6.8% to 20.7%--205% better.

Let's not forget our underrepresented students and our underserved students.

Our Pell eligible students were graduating in four years at a 5.6% graduation rate.

Now they are graduating in four years at a 23.3% graduation rate—314% better.

Our first-generation students have improved from 4.7% to 23.5%--an outstanding 396% improvement.

Our African American students have been amazing.

Their graduation rates have improved from an abysmal 4.5% to 19.8%--a 344% improvement.

Our Asian American students have moved the proverbial needle from 5.5% to 24.8%--353% better.

Our LatinX students have improved from 8.8% graduating in four years to 25.3%--188% better.

I could recite the numbers for our six-year rate as well, and you would see the same sort of amazing performance.

Overall, our six-year rate has improved from 49% to 57.4%.

Our through-in-two transfer students are graduating at 45.3% as compared to 5 years ago at 27.1%--a 67% improvement.

And now over 79.9% of our transfer students are graduating in 4 years.

But the statistic that I find the most satisfying and the most hopeful, especially given our Anchor and Antiracism initiatives is that the Underrepresented Minorities equity gap—what we want to call Opportunity Gap—for our six-year graduation rate is only 4.6%, a huge improvement.

When our students graduate is not the most important thing; that they graduate, that is what matters.

We simply want them to graduate, graduate as proud Hornets with a first-rate, as good, and almost always better education than they can get here rather than anywhere else.

With the new Chancellor, everyone in the CSU system will be focusing on alleviating equity gaps, doing what we have been doing for the last six years.

All 23 California State Universities will be targeting DFW rates.

All 23 California State Universities will be implementing integrated, directed advising.

All 23 California State Universities will be prioritizing course availability.

All 23 California State Universities will be launching block scheduling.

Yes, everyone will be launching their own version of Hornet Launch.

To all those who helped launch Hornet Launch, I commend and, very deeply from my heart, thank you.

You sacrificed so much for our students.

You are true first responders.

I am not going to say anything more about the Safety Imperative.

I have talked about it more than enough when talking about the repopulation of campus.

We can and we will be safe on campus.

I want to finish by addressing the final two imperatives: Community Engagement/The Anchor University Initiative and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion/The Antiracist Initiative.

Next year at this Fall Address, we will have a new strategic plan.

The five imperatives will be in that plan, but they will be honed and sharpened.

Being an anchor institution is whom we are.

Being an antiracist university is whom we must become.

All the numbers that I just cited about graduation rates are about the community.

I highlighted the successes.

But at some point, we have to face the reality that many students do not finish in 6 or even 8 years.

We have to ask why, and we have to develop plans for constant improvement.

The Anchor Institution Initiative and the Antiracism and Inclusion Plan directly address our failures.

We have not fully engaged the communities from where our students come.

We have not fully addressed the racism and bias that our students encounter in our communities and on our campus.

Partnerships, we have to be in the community, be equal partners with the community.

There can be no Miracle on J Street unless we are Beyond J Street.

This year, the Sacramento State Foundation Board gave the Anchor University Council \$30K for individual grants to improve the pipeline and the lifestyle in the communities surrounding Sac State.

Eight recipients, eight teams of faculty, staff, and students, are now working in the community.

Sacramento's Dreamer's Resource Center is working with the Sacramento Family, Unity, Education, and Legal Network to create internships for Sac State students who will be dream builders.

Our graduate psychology students will be "Giving Voice to Youth Psychological Well-Being" in Natomas to combat poverty, racism, ableism, and homophobia.

Our nursing students will be partnering with Our Sister's House to help heal people who have suffered so much from domestic violence and sexual assault.

Our dieticians will be working with the Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Authority to do nutrition lessons, including cooking demonstrations in Alder Grove and Marina Vista.

Our civil engineers will be exchanging letters with student in Elder Creek Elementary School to improve their writing and to engage them in STEM education.

Finally, our art students will be introducing the students at Washington Elementary School and the

Washington Neighborhood Center to the beauty and healing power of the arts.

These children will be ready for Sac State, and we must be ready for them.

And that is why the diversity, equity, and inclusion imperative is so critical.

I want to keep the discussion of this imperative short because I don't want to take away from the power of the September 29th Convocation where we will fully unveil and discuss the Antiracism and Inclusive Campus Plan.

But I cannot end this speech without expressing my gratitude for the over 80 outstanding, dedicated individuals—faculty, students, staff, and administrators—who came together in 7 Action Planning Groups to craft a 95-page plan with over 180 pages in appendices.

They tackled Anti-Racism Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Assessment; Antiracism Learning and Literacy; Cross-racial and Inclusive Engagement; Encounters with Racial Stress and Bias; the Impact of and on the Sacramento Region; Institutional Commitment; and Mattering and Affirmation.

They developed 42 pages of recommendations, dealing with salary disparities, curriculum and syllabi, all-in grant funding, and student and faculty retention.

They even got to the granularity of ensuring that there were more choices of ethnic food on campus and that there were murals and art that represented the diversity on our campus.

This plan is not just a “we need more faculty who look like our students” plan or a “we need more training” plan, even though we do need our faculty to look like our students and we do need new and better training.

This plan is a plan to convert our University into an Antiracist University.

This plan is a work plan, a plan that will not let itself languish on some shelf, a plan that will require true work and true change.

Some of that work is already being done.

The Division of Inclusive Excellence just a few days ago welcomed a Bias Response Director to campus and implemented a website where faculty, staff, and students can report incidents of racial bias that don't rise to the legal definition of harassment and discrimination.

Indeed, the Division of Inclusive Excellence is poised to lead this work.

A new Director of Faculty, Diversity and Inclusion will begin work next month.

We completed the interview process to hire the new Director of Inclusive Excellence Learning.

We are hiring a new Communications Specialist.

And UBAC approved a Data Collection Analyst and a Truth, Racial Healing, and Trauma Center director.

Most importantly, we are searching for a new Vice President for Inclusive Excellence and University Diversity Officer.

The Division has gone from a director of diversity on-loan from the College of Health and Human Services to a Vice President with a couple of direct reports, and now, to a \$1.965M operation.

In other words, we have funded what we have declared a moral imperative—we are not just paying it lip service.

But the work cannot be done by Inclusive Excellence alone.

The work of this moral imperative must be done by everyone at Sac State, by every member of our Hornet Family.

You have heard me before, but I do believe in Sac State, in you.

And I believe in the path before us and the train we are on.

Bruce, one more time.

[Play Video of Bruce Springsteen's "Land of Hope and Dreams"]

Yes, all aboard this train.

On this train, dreams will not be thwarted.

Faith will be rewarded.

The Land of Hope and Dreams.

SAC STATE IS NUMBER 1.

STINGERS UP.