Sac State’s president lays out plans for the University

Dr. Alexander Gonzalez, who is celebrating his 10th year as Sacramento State’s president, spoke optimistically about the University’s future during today’s Spring Address to 350 faculty, staff, students and others at the University Union.

He unveiled the key concepts of a new campus master plan, as agreed upon by a task force made up of University and community leaders. It will be a blueprint for all physical aspects of the campus.

“First and foremost,” Gonzalez said, “the campus needs to function well for academic programs and students. This includes the ability to provide a modern educational experience, with learning spaces indoors and out, in both formal and informal settings.”

Part of the master plan would likely address the south end of campus, near Hornet Stadium, and the potential for developing new student housing, restaurants, shops and an events center. That section of campus is highly visible from Highway 50, and the city of Sacramento has plans to extend Ramona Avenue, which will create another entrance to the campus.

“The (task force) members also want a beautiful campus that can serve as the University’s face to the world. And it needs to be environmentally friendly and to use renewables and sustainable materials wherever possible,” Gonzalez said.

Renovations are under way at Folsom Hall to unite the School of Nursing and the Department of Physical Therapy under one roof.

The University is also working to secure approval for a science complex, which would serve as a new home for classrooms and labs for key courses that are vital to science, technology, engineering and mathematics fields. Science programs are currently housed in Sequoia Hall, which was built in 1967.

Gonzalez also praised the work of University faculty and staff who helped Sacramento State weather the “economic turmoil” of the past few years. “It took a lot of patience and sacrifice, but our cautious budget planning has ensured that we are well-positioned to succeed as a campus,” he said.
The passage of Proposition 30 in November meant that the California State University system avoided a $250 million trigger cut. Gonzalez recalled saying at the time that he was hopeful state leaders would begin to restore funding lost during those years of budget cuts.

“That hope is finally starting to be realized,” he said, noting Gov. Jerry Brown’s recently announced plan to add $125.1 million in new state funding for the CSU, which would reinstate another $125 million that was cut last year.

“It is important to note that $10 million of the new funding is being directed to online strategies that will address bottleneck courses,” Gonzalez said. “As I have said before, online education is going to play a larger role in what we do. We must give this issue our most careful attention so we can better serve our students.”

Gonzalez pledged to work with the faculty, staff and students on the University Budget Advisory Committee as more budget details emerge in the coming months.

“As we all know, the budget can go through many incarnations between now and the summer,” Gonzalez said. “But at least initially, we have a degree of hope that we haven’t seen in quite some time. So while we will continue to be thoughtful and prudent in how we budget as a campus, I believe we can allow for a ‘cautiously optimistic’ approach as we plan for the coming year.”

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