

Cal State San Marcos Convocation August 23, 2006 California Center for the Arts, Escondido

President Karen S. Haynes Remarks

I know you are here because you understand that the point of convocation is to give the campus “family” the opportunity:

- to come together to celebrate the start of a new academic year;
- to celebrate our successes and to remind ourselves of what our university is all about;
- to understand what our roles are in relation to the university’s mission and strategic priorities, and
- to recall that each of our individual roles, when combined, strengthens, builds, and renews our mission.

I hope you are already energized by hearing about some of your good works. I certainly am pleased, energized, and encouraged as I look around and see you—the talented and dedicated people who make Cal State San Marcos such an engaged place to work, to teach, and to learn. As I listened to what we’ve done together in the past year, and how we’ve responded to our students, to our community, and to each other, I can only say that I’m glad it’s time to begin a new year together.

Our first year’s Campus Connect class offered feedback on their impressions of convocation. Half of the class said it was a “feel good” spirit event, and the other half said, no, it’s about finding out what’s ahead for all of us. Both are good reasons to be here, and I hope we accomplish both today.

This is my third convocation with you, and if you were present at the previous two, I talked in 2004 about teamwork and in 2005 about a university first approach. I believe that we are successfully embracing those concepts as we refine our strategic priorities into measurable goals and activities.

At Convocation last fall, I laid out five strategic priorities: academic excellence, student life, campus climate, community partnerships and educational equity. I also stressed last year that how we implement our strategies would be more important to our success than the planning itself, and that our success will only come as the result of people working together utilizing a university first attitude. I said that our strategic planning success would not be defined by the weight of planning documents that can be put on a shelf and ignored.

I told you that a strategic planning document would not direct activities and hold people accountable. I promised you that the difference would be a strategic plan that was actually a continuous process which only people—you—could bring alive.

And you would bring it alive by creating a working environment that connects priorities, plans, budgets, and rewards through the very people—you again!—who have been charged to perform those activities. I promised that if you began to do this, we would have a dynamic, continuous, and sustainable effort that would not only meet, but exceed our expectations. And we—you—are doing just that!

I have said before, and have emphasized again this morning, but I can't say it enough - that it is people—you—who make our strategic planning and priorities live. Our Council for University Strategic Planning has spent this past year establishing working principles and began development of a data warehouse, which we have named “CougarStat”.

You can now access online historical demographic data on our students, faculty, and staff. You can see how we're performing in areas like outreach and recruitment, retention, graduation, student engagement, student-faculty ratios, average class sizes, and many other indicators.

This provides us with the capacity to make informed strategic decisions in a timely manner and to use our data in measuring our progress to our priorities. So our structures, processes, and people are now in place.

In one of our areas of particular emphasis this past year—educational equity—several efforts were begun. A campuswide task force was established to serve as the champion of educational equity with a goal toward making the campus environment more welcoming in every way possible. The task force completed a web page detailing their recommendations, and a beginning database for diversity and equity-related research.

I also established a Native Advisory Council to advise me on university relations with their communities and to support professional access and success of our own Native American students and employees.

This group not only got to work on advising me, but they also put me to work. It was an honor to be the first Cal State San Marcos president asked to speak at their annual San Diego American Indian high school graduation banquet for 93 graduates from all 18 tribes. The Hispanic Serving Institutions task force continued its efforts toward helping us achieve recognition as an HSI by the year 2010. A significant part of their work this past year included gathering data on campus outreach and recruitment activities, as well as developing partnerships with our feeder campus colleagues at Palomar and Mira Costa Colleges.

We also took the time to celebrate and recognize excellence by establishing four new awards. A third faculty President's Award for Outstanding Service was added, thus acknowledging the full range of the faculty portfolio. And we selected two Employees of the Year as well as the first recipient of the Zomalt Outstanding Service Award. Perhaps the first award for Positive Campus Climate should go to all of you who filled the Dome to overflowing and who nominated, supported and applauded all these awardees in what will quickly become, I suspect, a strong campus tradition!

The first Campus Connect cohort met monthly throughout the academic year as part of our Campus Climate priority. They heard faculty explain their research, attended an Academic Senate meeting—voluntarily!—took a campus tour—underground—and checked their knowledge of extended studies by playing a version of the game Family Feud.

Also during this past year, we completed the first phase of our Chamber Champion Project with eight chambers of commerce. The first year's goal was to engage teams led by a chamber champion in the work of our local chambers. The teams participated in mixers, sponsored tables at installations and other chamber events, and served as board members or on education or legislative committees.

All eight chambers have appreciated the University's stepped-up involvement, and have reciprocated through increased participation in our campus events.

Along with our sister campuses in the CSU, we have been working diligently on an initiative called, "Facilitating Graduation", to strengthen pathways that speed a student's progress toward graduation. And, although it is a system initiative, it is a timely one for us and fits well within our strategic priorities.

We created a new degree audit tool for advising and created "roadmaps" that illustrate recommended course sequences. We expanded

our services that support student academic success through tutoring and learning assistance labs.

In addition to our compact with the San Marcos Unified School District, our educational outreach to the southwest Riverside County region created renewed visibility leading to conversations with the Riverside County Office of Education and local school districts.

Finally, I want to mention a success from this past year that transcends all departments and even all strategic priorities. For an amazing second year in a row, Cal State San Marcos beat out nearly 100 competing universities—including Harvard, MIT, UCSD, and my own alma mater, Goucher College—as the Grand Champion of RecycleMania for 2006!

Your university has had a very good year, and I thank all of you for your contributions to our successes.

Since convocation is about acknowledging our successes and about envisioning our future, what, then, are our goals for the year ahead?

We will pay more attention to our community partnership priority in the coming years. Our commitment to community goes well beyond producing an educated work force—although certainly that’s important. We already do much, but now we must step up and do more. You have already heard what happens when we engage with the community—once they learn about us and are engaged with us, they support our efforts, vote for our bond issues, extend financial assistance to students and programs and advocate on our behalf.

Next week, we will submit documentation of the multiple indicators of our community engagement. And, just like we became the grand champions of recycling we will, I am confident, be one of the first and few universities in the nation to receive the new Carnegie classification of “community engagement”. This classification will formally acknowledge our commitment to a learning environment that includes societal issues, contributions to the public good, and civic responsibility, and, like the recyclemania award, bring national visibility.

Our chamber champion program will expand its reach to add additional chambers. We will create partnerships with other public school districts modeled from the one we have with the San Marcos Unified School District. We will see the results of a vital partnership with Palomar Pomerado Health this fall as we begin to hold our nursing classes in their facility, newly renovated for our use.

Community engagement will also be promoted through our American Democracy Project in the coming year, as we all come together in reading,

discussing, and engaging in the themes developed in the novel, “The Kite Runner”.

And community engagement will be enhanced with a new mechanism to connect with our 16,000 alumni, multiple partners and our community in general by being one of several pilot campuses for a systemwide initiative in electronic political advocacy which will help us connect to our constituencies while supporting advocacy for higher education.

But there is still much for us to do—especially when I heard the story from our new provost that clerks at the Hawthorne Inn, just down the road from us, can’t provide directions to our campus!

Our work is to assure that no one in our region has reason to say: we’ve never been on your campus, we don’t know where you are, or, we don’t know what you do.

There is so much excitement, energy, optimism and opportunity here that we need to make sure our region knows that Cal State San Marcos **ROCKS!**

Certainly a centerpiece of academic excellence, one of our continuing emphases for next year, will be our WASC accreditation visit in the spring and all of our continued dialogue and planning for that this fall. Our tremendous and continuous enrollment growth requires that we tie our academic planning with our WASC themes and with our strategic processes.

Our enrollment growth will also require a focus on serving students and our One Stop Shop will give physical evidence to that commitment when it opens in the spring. Serving students also means that our student retention and graduation rates must improve. We are committed to closing the gap between our 70% retention to the systemwide rate of 82%.

Student Life will be enhanced with University Hour, additional students at University Village Apartments, opening our Center for Families and Children, as well as supporting our first soccer, softball and baseball teams. Go Cougars!

Educational equity was and still will be an emphasis among the five strategic priorities. I chose that because, as I told you last year, it demands our closest attention. I also noted that although we promote a campus culture of acceptance and of equity, we must go much further to achieve excellence in this area. It is not only about race, but about creating and protecting a fair and open campus environment which welcomes and supports the diversity of people and ideas; about fostering a learning perspective replete with multiple views and with respect for differences.

As we create our legacy—this region’s future teachers, business and civic leaders, nonprofit administrators, artists and scientists—we must try

harder to recruit, nurture and retain students who are representative of this large and diverse region we serve.

Later today, I will bring together the membership of four presidential advisory councils: the University, African American, Hispanic, and Native advisory councils, and present them with specific tasks that we need to accomplish in the coming year and ask them to take them on.

And we will invest in the continuous improvement of our campus climate, through the second year of Campus Connect which gets us out of our silos, provides connectivity and relationship building; through continued presidential forums so I can assure you that I'm listening and acting; through our faculty and staff recognition programs and events.

While the spirit on this campus is palpable and is acknowledged to me by visitors, I know both that it can be improved and that one can never take it for granted. I know that building campus culture and climate is one of the most difficult, time-intensive kinds of building there is, and it is never done,

In each of my convocation addresses, I have also taken a few minutes to note my beliefs and to renew my commitments to you. I believe:

- that open communication is key to assuring success and builds trust,
- that trust builds mutual respect
- that mutual respect fosters a university first approach
- that teamwork and collaboration move us forward and
- that partnering with our community will secure our place as a regional leader.

I recommit to you that you can and should expect from me: honesty, integrity, transparency in decision making, enthusiasm and appreciation. My commitment to you includes active listening, a responsibility to question and probe ideas and decisions; collegiality and mutual respect; getting out and staying out of silos and a university first perspective. From my vantage point, we have a leadership team who are “walking that talk” and who will continue to do so vigilantly.

Now, you may be asking, what's the “big picture”? Well, if you saw the editorial at the end of June in the Union Tribune it noted that

<quote> a giant—Cal State San Marcos—is quietly emerging in North County.....and as this emerging giant matures, it should be an exciting time for both the campus and the surrounding ...counties it serves. <unquote>

Well, it will be an exciting time! In fact, I guarantee it! We are now entering the beginning of what I was quoted as saying will be our milestone years.

OUR TIME IS NOW!

Last year I told you that we were about to face dramatic growth and increased expectations. This year I tell you: our time is now. As a campus, we have always been looking to the future, working hard to secure the programs, facilities and services to accommodate the future needs of the region. Well, our future is here, and our time is now.

Those of you in enrollment services have seen it first – not only the growth, but some dramatic changes - the freshmen are coming. The largest ever freshman class has accepted our offer to become their first choice of education. We are also experiencing a surge of transfer student applications, even when many other four year campuses across the state are experiencing declines.

Our growth is the result, in no small measure, of our more coordinated outreach and aggressive recruitment. It is the result of the enhanced visibility of Cal State San Marcos, not as an alternative place to get a degree, but as the first choice of education that is centered in personal attention and a supportive student climate.

We have moved from saying “we are building a place for you” to “we are the place for you”— from talking about being a new and small university to acknowledging that we are maturing and growing. We have spent time creating our mission, and refining and recommitting to it. Now we are living our mission. You have all worked hard preparing, organizing, working together, and suffering the growing pains to get where we are now. And, now is our time.

We will continue to fulfill and refine our strategic priorities by identifying measurable objectives that will focus our actions and drive positive change.

We will continue to develop goals and actions to nurture academic excellence, to achieve educational equity, to support a positive campus climate, to create more student life, and to expand our community partnerships.

We will continue to align our resources to our priorities as we began to do in a structured, sustainable way last year.

And we will continue to be a place of engagement, a vibrant community, a student-centered learning environment.

I told you the funny but poignant story of the hotel clerk not knowing that we were located behind them. But knowing where the campus is located is only a small part of our community understanding us. We see this every spring when commencement rolls around. In addition to our formal graduation ceremonies, we encourage groups who want to hold their own

recognition ceremonies to do so. And they do—all of them happy, proud celebrations of graduates, families and friends who share something in common, whether it is a program or an identity.

And yet every year, our local newspapers focus on the identity-based celebrations. Inevitably, we see a joyous occasion turned into a political cartoon or an editorial about divisiveness and separateness, when what we celebrate is diversity and inclusion around the successful accomplishment of a college degree. For me, at least, the selective coverage and resulting responses make me wonder, “Don’t they know who we are yet?” Clearly, we have some work to do and the time is now!

And so my roles will both stay the same—focused on the commitments I noted—and change—to be more about raising our region’s awareness of who we are and the force we will become; of creating more friends and thus, more supporters; of keeping my eye on our progress toward achieving these strategic goals.

Next year and beyond will be an exciting time. We are that “emerging” giant in every sense.

We have matured and grown—our time is now—but we have not yet “arrived”! Don’t confuse the two! We must continue to become the best that the CSU has to offer—not to some, but to all. There is work to be done.

So I leave you today with my vision of where we will be by our twentieth anniversary:

By 2010 Cal State San Marcos will be the region’s driving force by leading initiatives and partnering to meet community needs.

Our graduates, prepared by relevant curriculum and student centered services, will reflect the region and be empowered to lead it.

As an engaged campus, we will become a best place to work and study.

Commit, with me to this vision and to our future because our time is now!