

2013 Convocation President's Address

Monday, August 19, 2013

10:30 a.m.

Bresnan Arena in the Taylor Center
Minnesota State University, Mankato

Well, good morning and welcome to all of you. What great TV spots, by the way. Our marketing team once again has created a great representation of the institution's big ideas, real-world thinking.

A convocation, as you all know, is a special occasion when we get together, once a year actually. And it's a time when we talk about the future direction. We talk about some of the challenges. And we talk about, of course, the work ahead of us. But we also talk about some of our accomplishments. So I'm happy to embark on another year, another official year here at Minnesota State. And like everybody here, myself, I hope you took a break from campus this summer and are now really rested and ready to start fresh. And most of you look that way.

And for those of us who remained on campus year-round, I hope that we're also all rejuvenated-- I know that I am-- and that you'll join me in taking full advantage of today's events to reconnect to returning colleagues, and welcome our new ones, and prepare

ourselves for the teaching, learning, collaborations, and achievements that lie ahead. Sounds kind of exciting.

So we strive to be a welcoming campus always. And so I'll begin this morning by pointing out the new leaders in our midst. Now some of these people are going to have to get up again. But I want to just say-- I'll start with Dr. Marilyn Wells, our Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs. Dr. Wells comes to us from East Stroudsburg University, where she was a key leader who had a significant impact on the institution's strategic planning and served as the System Liaison for Strategic Initiatives. And Dr. Wells also led East Stroudsburg's efforts to incorporate enrollment metrics-- I know you love analytics and metrics, so we got another one here-- and certainly worked hard on increasing enrollment of under-represented minority graduate students by more than 47% over a five-year period. So clearly we're fortunate to have her expertise and her leadership at the helm of our academic affairs division. Stand up, Marilyn and just take a little bow. And welcome. Thank you.

We also welcome Mr. Kent Clark-- he was introduced just a minute ago-- as our Vice President for University Advancement, who joins us from California State

University, Fresno, where he oversaw a \$214 million campaign and will take the helm here in helping us to wrap up our \$75 million campaign. So we're happy to have him. He brings a notable history of achievements and expertise in all areas of development, gift planning, and fundraising. So his background in university advancement, and in particular managing successful comprehensive campaigns, is an excellent fit for us at this moment in history, as come close to closing the campaign for our Big Ideas fundraising efforts. So, please stand once again. Thank you, Kent. I know this seems a little redundant. But I'll also point out that we have a number of longtime faculty and staff members who have taken great leadership positions in the expanded cabinet this year, including-- now these are individuals, some that were introduced. But they're worth noting again. So this time I want you to remain standing and follow directions. Please.

OK, we'll start with Dr. Barry Ries, Associate Vice President for Research and Dean of Graduate Studies. We have Dr. Kim Greer, our Interim Associate Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dr. Dan Cronn-Mills, an Interim Assistant Vice President for Undergraduate Studies.

As you're beginning to see, some of these people are coming over to the dark side. We have Dr. Stephen Stoyhoff, our Interim Dean for International Affairs and Dr. Maria Bevacqua, Acting Dean, College of Social and Behavioral Sciences, and Dr. Scott Fee, our Interim Associate Dean for the College of Science, Engineering and Technology.

Also with us on the expanded cabinet is Dr. Brian Martensen, our Interim Dean for the College of Science, Engineering, and Technology and Dr. Joe Reising, Interim Dean of the College of Business. And then I want to make a special mention of DeeAnn Snaza, who has been working with me this past year as the Interim Assistant to the President. Please stand and be recognized. We're grateful for these colleagues stepping up and serving the university.

OK. So enough of those introductions except for maybe one or two more. So I'd like to give a very special welcome to some of our emeriti faculty and staff who have joined us today. And I'm sitting down front, or I was, next to President Emerita Dr. Margaret Preska and Dean Emerita Dr. Jane Earley. And when I was sitting next to Dr. Preska and Marilyn made the comment about big shoes to fill, she did point out that she has big

feet. I don't know, Margaret, that you wanted everybody to know that. But you made a point of telling me. So I thought I'd share it with the world. So each year it's an honor to connect with such wonderful colleagues on this day. And let's thank them. Please stand one more time and thank them all. Thank you, Margaret. Thank you.

And so, as excited as I am to welcome so many wonderful individuals to our campus today, I also want to express a sincere thank you to the leaders who have moved on to new opportunities. And those people that have left are Dr. Linda Baer, Mr. Doug Mayo, Dr. Warren Sandmann, Dr. Maria-Claudia Tomany, Dr. Vijay [INAUDIBLE], Becky Barkmeier, and my special assistant Carol Stallkamp. And I want to just say a word about Carol. Carol came into my office the other day. At this time of the year she almost lives with me, working on the convocation address. And she came into my office the other day with some suggestions on how I could improve my speech, which of course, needs a lot of help. So we want to thank all of those people and especially Carol Stallkamp.

So I'd read be remiss this morning if I didn't acknowledge a major change on our physical campus

that took place over the summer. Our longstanding Gage Towers are now gone. So also, the view out my office window is dramatically different. A couple of years ago, before the students moved out of the Gage Towers, I'd watch thousands and thousands of students going back and forth to the Gage Towers. And then we lost that and it was kind of an [INAUDIBLE] scene. And all I had was the Gage Towers. So now I don't have the Gage Towers to watch anymore.

But watching the towers come down on June 29-- I know a lot of you were there-- was both exciting and emotional. A lot of people put that together-- staff from alumni relations, our facilities and security group, and many departments, as well as community members, and local business partners helped to make that a successful and a memorable event for all. So I want to take just a second to thank all those people involved in making the Gage demolition a positive charge. I did-- I changed it from charged-- change. Anyway, so in case you're wondering what replaces Gage Towers now, please talk to David Cowan. David, would you please stand? There you go. DeeAnn Snaza told me, don't put that thing in there about charge. They're not going to laugh. I should've listened to her.

Also, as you make your way around campus today, you'll see that our campus mall area is undergoing quite a transformation. The fountain is being replaced. And a new underground pedestrian link and small amphitheater between the library and Centennial Student Union is in progress. So yes, Paul Hustoles, another opportunity to display your talent and your department's talent in that amphitheater. So I understand that we've had that dream of connecting the college-- the student union-- to the library for over 20 years. So now it's going to be a reality. It's going to actually transform the way our students move around campus and the way they're able to use both of those facilities. It's just another exciting and positive change on campus.

Also note that we recently celebrated our first year with students living in the new Margaret R. Preska residence community. And I know Margaret is happy. She didn't live up to her part of the bargain. She promised me if we'd name that building after her, she would live in the residence hall for a month. So I'm going to hold you to that, Margaret. I'm sorry. You're not getting out of it. And so I want to thank you, sincerely, each and every one of you who worked to improve and sustain the beauty, and comfort, and the functionality of our

physical campus. It truly makes a difference for our students and for all of your colleagues every single day.

So as I reflected on what was the most important thing to share with you this morning, I thought first and foremost of our promise to students-- that if they enroll at Minnesota State University, Mankato, they'll go further than they imagined possible, that they will learn to combine big ideas with real-world thinking, and that they will be able to turn their dreams into reality. This is our brand promise. And it needs to be our promise for each one of us individually.

So this morning I ask that we all keep this in the front of our minds as we prepare our work together this year. Also in preparing to talk with you this morning, I reflected on the national higher education scene. The beginning of the academic year is always a perfect time to step back and take a look at that landscape. And it is clear that lots of things are happening to impact higher education today.

President Obama has been promoting significant higher education reform by taking steps to move it-- to make it more affordable, to streamline the path to graduation, and to open our doors to middle class and under-

represented students. Now since Obama has been in office, his primary focus has been on K-12 education and enhancing workforce development through our community college systems. And this continues to be a top priority while our nation struggles to rebound from the economic downturn of 2008. We're making good progress on that front, of course.

But the focus on workforce development has resulted in major adjustments for our community colleges, which have been able to cope well with soaring enrollments, followed more recently with enrollment declines.

During the same period of time, university enrollments did not really fluctuate as much or as dramatically, and for the most part remained relatively flat with slight increases in general. A recent report from the Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce stated that by 2020, seven years away, our nation will have 5 million more jobs than we actually have graduates. Now the same report predicted that more than 2/3 of jobs will require post-secondary education.

Now closer to home, what does that mean? The forecast by 2022 is that 70% of all jobs-- and equally 3.1 million jobs-- and 85% of new jobs, specifically in Minnesota, will require some post-secondary education. It's been

predicted that less than half of those new jobs will require four or more years of college.

So obviously we have our challenges ahead of us. But there's lots of challenges for higher education. So through every media channel almost, from every angle, we know that the value of college education is a hot topic of national conversation. People are writing, they're thinking, they're talking about the value of a college education and the return on investment, the affordability of education, the access to education, the skills gap and the relevance of higher education to the workplace.

Now those of us that are in higher education have a hard time understanding that. Because we all know the value of higher education. We know how important it is to the future of our world and to our global focus. But that tells us we probably haven't done as good a job selling our focus.

The tradition in higher education is that we do, in fact, do a poor job of both marketing programs, telling our story, and recruiting students. There is also a recent revival of conversation about the importance of continuing education and extended learning to accommodate the working class and our business

communities. And we all know that not all students are actually going to have the luxury of coming to a college or university campus, because they may be not just non-traditional students but may not be able to afford to attend a campus and will have to get their education online or at a distant site.

Well as a result of all of this, the for-profit colleges are under fire on several counts. But no one can argue that they're nimbleness allows them to seize opportunities to meet the needs of students at a really stiff price to those students, needs that are not clearly being met by our public institutions. And we have to step up to the plate. This sector, the for-profit sector, services-- believe this-- 124,000 students in Minnesota. Now you add to this figure an additional 20,300 degree-seeking students who drop out of our Minnesota public institutions after their first year, and another 20,000 Minnesota high school graduates who do not enroll in college each year, and approximately 13,000 students who travel to another state to attend college. And all of these statistics amount to unrealized opportunities for the State of Minnesota and MNSCU.

So we've got to do a lot better job of taking those students that are graduating from high school, getting

them either into a two-year or a four-year college, helping them to find the right path for them. We need to make certain that we graduate way more than what we're currently graduating right now. Right now the national average is about 51% of the students graduate. Now, you know what that means? That means that we lose one out of every two students that come to our university, and to most universities.

The more traditional institutions like Minnesota State, Mankato, as I said, are faced with mounting pressures. We have got to improve retention and graduation rates. To incorporate the newest of technologies into our teaching and learning delivery systems is also another major focus, without diminishing our academic standards. Why? Because we have to reach those populations. And we can't reach them all by having them come to our institution. The populations we serve are, of course, changing rapidly. And we have to work to accommodate those increased numbers of foreign-born, domestic minority and under-represented groups. So we're seeing dramatic increases of international students right here at our institution and around the country. And we need a comprehensive plan to manage the diverse population. We do not have a plan at this point.

Also, it is projected that the number of Minnesota minority high school graduates will grow by 7% between 2013 and 2022. That's significant. When we look at the population of undergraduate students coming into MSU, it's going to change dramatically. So we need to gear up for that population and make sure we understand what their special needs are.

And it's becoming increasingly important to step up our work with secondary education and community colleges through a variety of partnerships and transfer programs leading to completion of college and university degrees. Statewide support for higher education has, at the same time, diminished during the past decade. Whereby students previously paid 1/3 of the cost of education-- a college degree-- 10 years ago, they now pay more than 2/3 of that cost. It's becoming unaffordable for many, many students. And we have to figure out, how do we manage that problem?

I point out these pressures and demands to help us see the challenges that lie before us. They are regional, for sure. They are national. But they're also global in scale. And yet, one thing is really very clear. We must strive to provide a relevant and a strong education that

prepares our students for a more demanding future and a world that will change faster than we can predict, I guarantee you. Also, a global society is a reality for our graduates. And we must prepare them to succeed on that scale.

Chancellor Steven Rosenstone is aware of these issues and challenges. He has talked a lot about them. Last year he set the stage for a comprehensive plan which is now referred to as, Charting the Future. The report is still in its preliminary stages of development. And Chancellor Rosenstone has asked for widespread input so that the work groups he has assembled can finalize their report by October 23, 2013, just weeks away. The final report will result in comprehensive plans built around the system strategic framework but in three general areas-- the plan will include a plan for education in the future, a plan for the workforce of the future, and a plan for the system of the future.

Admittedly, there are some really controversial topics and recommendations included in the report. However, I like the general tenor of the document and the focus Chancellor Rosenstone provided to the working groups from the very beginning. And by the way, in the audience today we had two members of our faculty

serve on the working groups-- Dr. James Grabowska and Dr. Donna Brauer. And also Ms. Maria Miles, the state chair of MSU SA and a current student on our campus served on the work group. So they're still working as they work hard to meet that October 23 deadline.

So Chancellor Rosenstone asked the workgroups to consider how we function less like autonomous institutions. Let me just stop there for a second. We are pretty autonomous, as a university. And I'd been in Colorado and Michigan and Iowa at universities. And I can tell you, when I compare those experiences here, I say we have a lot of autonomy. Even though we're part of a system, we have a lot of autonomy to set our direction. But that has both good and bad connotations. And I think what Stephen Rosenstone is saying is, we need to function less autonomously and work together toward common objectives. It makes sense. And we also need to focus on transformational change, emphasizing competencies and advancing technologies.

We should leverage our shared resources, he says. And we need to promote collaborative leadership at all levels. His guiding principles for transforming our systems include these-- forge deeper collaborations,

very simple, and fully leverage our collective strengths and resources.

In fact, I'm sure as I think about it, that many of you have already poured over the draft of charting the future and maybe have questions and concerns, and maybe expectations. And by the way, some of you might even have jubilation after looking at it, regarding a number of the bold recommendations that have been reported.

So without belaboring all of the suggested strategic directions, I'll share a few that deserve mention today. By the way, you really need to go look at that if you haven't. But the reason I'm selecting these-- these are particularly groundbreaking, transforming challenges. Now everybody has an opinion. So I'm not going to try to decide what your view is on. I'm going to tell you, these are important questions.

One-- leverage faculty expertise by providing greater opportunities for faculty across our colleges and universities to collaborate, design, and deliver courses and programs for use across our system. Not something that we've done in the past, for the most part. Also, seek opportunities for new institutional mergers that are regionalized-- both colleges and universities, where there may be co-location, or other joint administrative

or educational arrangements. This is monumental. If that goes forward, there could be a lot of changes taking place within our system.

Also, another challenging objective is to create a statewide certification mechanism for competency-based awards of credit and degrees too, including credit for prior learning, something that we really need and that we're working on. In addition, create a faculty-driven process to define shared standards of student competencies within disciplines and departments. And then transform the financial model to provide a means to fund a statewide service model that incorporates the system office, the college services, and also university services.

He also talks about accelerating the building of shared services through the campus service cooperative, a group that I serve on, where we hope that we can saved \$44 million for the system and funnel that money right back into the system. Lots of questions being asked, but I think it's certainly worth pursuing. What a great opportunity for all of us to participate and contribute to this plan that promises to transform the future direction of MNSCU. So honestly, I hope you take time to go

online and submit your feedback soon before the final report is completed on October 23. It's important.

So closer to home. Our university has seen its own challenges that are obtainable. We know what our performance goals are and we work really hard on that. One of the things that a lot of the faculty might not be aware of is that we have 22 performance measures that are presented by the Office of the Chancellor, the system office, that we work to achieve every year. And we're making great progress on those performance measures. We're actually able to compare ourselves against our peers. And with the help of our institutional research office and Dr. Lynn Akey we're really able to stay on top of that.

But work we're achieving, if not surpassing, our performance goals. And we have a five years, really, to achieve all of our goals. I'm positive we're going to achieve those goals before then.

But time really doesn't allow me to elaborate on all of these 22 ongoing goals-- and you're probably happy about that-- at Minnesota State, Mankato. But suffice it to say that our new provost and other vice presidents will be addressing these goals as they move forward

with their agenda in working with our faculty and staff to develop plans to address these goals.

So we really look forward to our team's leadership and ideas. And in addition, the institution is going to continue to work on planning for the following areas, things that you probably already know are important to our university-- shared services, anything that we can save, any money that we can save on shared services comes back to the institution. And we reemploy those resources back into the academic and student affairs areas.

We also need to spend more time working on graduate education and research. And I realize one of my loves, having been a graduate dean, I realize that we've made pretty good progress at a time when graduate education really has had to take a little bit of a back seat because of the economic downturn. And by that I mean we haven't poured a lot of money into graduate education and research.

We are aspiring to be a doctoral institution. And many of you probably said, I thought we were already a doctoral institution. Well actually, in mission, yes. But until we graduate more than 50 doctoral students, the

Carnegie Commission will not classify us as a doctoral institution. That's going to happen. We're graduating more and more doctoral students every year. So we're just a short time away from achieving that goal.

But we're looking forward to a comprehensive plan where all of you provide input into that, where at the same time-- and I want to underscore this because having just my experience in these two areas is that-- we cannot let undergraduate education go by the wayside if we focus on graduate education. We have to do both. And just so all of you in the arts and humanities that are really focused on undergraduate education know, that will continue to be our mainstay, our bread and butter. At the same time, we have really been striving to make a difference in the Twin Cities metro area in trying to provide opportunities for students to complete baccalaureate needs. Now the truth is, we haven't really done a very good job. And I'm really worried that we're going to get a negative reputation if we don't really step up to the plate and deliver programs.

Now I want to, first of all, say we've done a good job on the programs that we've offered. So Jean Haar is down they're thinking, oh my god, I've been there for 20 years

and he's saying we're not doing a good job. That's not true. You're doing a great job, Jean, you and your college. But I'm saying, in general, we have not made a dent in the baccalaureate needs in the Twin Cities.

And guess what. This is something you don't know. I met every single two-year college president in the Twin Cities. I went and I visited them. And they said, you're the only institution we think that has the capability of delivering undergraduate education up here in the Twin Cities. We just have not had a good experience with the other-- their other partners. So please step up to the plate. And here's what we said. We said look, we cannot address all your needs. We have to be, by choice, very specific in how we're going to go about it. And so we have limited offerings up in the Twin Cities. But that requires us to be selective and that we are doing.

And we also have to figure out, how do we do it without faculty driving back and forth, back and forth, where we can use our regular faculty as much as possible, where we don't use as many adjunct faculty, but at the same time where there is a payoff. And the payoff better come back to the campus. And needs to come back to the department, come back to the college. There needs to be that reinforcement in order for us to be successful.

I can guarantee you, having run several programs in Detroit at one time, that faculty get burned out pretty darn fast driving to Detroit delivering programs. So we have to figure out a way to make that happen. Because the chancellors looking to us. And he said Dick, if any institution can do it, your institution can do it.

And so, what was my biggest worry? Biggest worry is we're going to fall flat. We're going to fail. And I don't want that to happen. So we're really going to work hard on that this year. And we have a big challenge. We don't want to disappoint our friends in the Twin Cities. We have four institutions that we've decided that we'll focus on. We're not going to work with all nine two-year colleges.

We're going to work with Normandale. Normandale Community College is a college that we have had relationships with for three decades or more. We're also going to work with Century College, a college that is one of the fastest growing community colleges on the east side of town, and with St. Paul College, the fastest growing two-year college and the newest community college in the Twin Cities, also named the number one college nationally among community colleges-- a new

president that's very aggressive and focused. And we hope soon to work with Minneapolis Tech and Community Colleges.

So why am I telling you that? Because I want you to understand that we're going to try to be focused in order to accomplish our goals. And I have to say to all of you, you really need to jump in and help us on this. It will mean a lot for the institution. I expect a payoff for you at the same time.

So obviously, continuing education and extended learning are going to play a big role. Bob Hoffman talked at our retreat last week about continuing education. He hired a new director of continuing education. And that is an area that we haven't really spent much time on. We haven't really talked about it. But the need is really significant in that area. So Bob will be leading the way on that.

If I stood up here today and I didn't mention this, you'd think something was wrong with me or that I took a different direction. But you know it's in my heart. And that is to talk about institutional diversity. It was the first goal that I had, our first strategic priority when I came over 10 years ago. It continues to be a priority and

also continues to be a future demand for us to address. So you know that we're going to hit that really, really hard.

We'll also continue to make steady progress on our existing five-year strategic priorities plan. You all know what those are. You can go online and look at that. And in fact, during our annual university retreat last week, where we had about 110 participants-- thank you all for giving up that day-- we received an update from each divisional vice president outlining their really ambitious goals in regards to our priorities. I'm not going to reiterate all of that. But we will be putting out a paper in the very near future to talk about how each division will address those strategic priorities.

And so finally, I'd like to tell you how I know that we're up to each of these challenges and ready to have a successful year. And by doing that, I'd like to share some highlights of the accomplishments that took place last year, because that tells you who we really are.

And so it's our tradition, at this time, to share a more complete list-- to share these accomplishments. But I have my newspaper page here that I hope you all will pull out and rip out of the newspaper and put on your

wall to remind you of all of our faculty and staff accomplishments that are listed here. And every year I have that dilemma where, who should I talk about? I'm worried about leaving people out. I want everyone to know how much we appreciate the work that you do and the accomplishments. It is never enough time. I could spend the whole day talking about that.

But anyway, I, with some trepidation, decide that I'm going to highlight certain accomplishments. So I'm doing that again this year.

- So one thing, we increased the number of faculty participating in a variety of public forums and certificate programs aimed at improving teaching, learning, and assessment.
- We also achieved our goal of increasing departmental submission of annual program assessment reports. And I understand that we have 61% of the departments participating. And I hope that by next year we'll increase that significantly too.
- Also, we continue to work on promoting partnerships with K-12 schools to help shrink the

achievement gap and to encourage students of color to major in STEM-related majors.

- The Small Business Development Center-- a lot of you might not know a lot about that, but it's very important to our reputation. It was named the Minnesota and Upper Midwest region of the SBDC Center of Excellence by the Small Business Administration, a major accomplishment. And we thank Mike Nolan for his efforts in that. I understand that Mike is not here today. He's vacationing in Belize. But what the heck, he deserves a break.
- Our partnership also with South Central College has continued. And last year we explored two new areas-- automotive engineering and agriculture. And I understand that we have a couple new areas that we'll be working, with the new president, Annette Parker, who joined South Central College and replaced Keith Stover.
- We earned approval from the Higher Learning Commission to increase online program options from 5% to 20%. And obviously that ties in to my

comments earlier. So we can offer up to 20% of online programs at this point.

- Speaking of Higher Learning Commission, we gained approval from the HLC for the Intensive Language Institute Program-- very, very important to our focus as we think about increasing our international student populations. I know we'll have pretty close to 900 international students here this year from 90 countries. And we don't really have a plan to address all of that. And so you can see, having an English language institute is really important to us.
- We were, and we remain, on track to increase the number of new undergraduate students enrolling this fall, compared to fall of 2012. There was a time a couple of weeks ago where our vice president for student affairs had me a little bit worried and pointed out that we may have anywhere from 5 to 700 new students that we weren't expecting. But what happens is that sort of whittles down by the time that students get here. So fortunately, we'll be able to manage all the students that we've enrolled here.

- So we're proud to report, also, that 87.9% of our graduates were employed, with 78.2% finding employment related to their degree. We also received full accreditation for multiple areas of the university including, for example, the counseling center, recognition by the International Association of Counseling Services, the IACS. The College of Business-- the AACSB accreditation was renewed through 2018. The College of Education reaccreditation was reaccredited. And iron range engineering was accredited for a full six-year initial accreditation by the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology.
- We expanded our programs in the Twin Cities through articulation agreements and partnerships with Normandale Community College, St. Paul College, and Century College. I just mentioned them earlier.
- And we ranked fourth nationally for the coveted Deerfield Sports Directors Cup, which is based on winning championships in both men's and women's sports. We hosted five NCAA regional events, winning three of those championships in a year that saw 11 of our teams go on to finish in the top 20

nationally, including seven of those in the top 10. Let's congratulate everybody at this point.

- And sitting out in the audience facing me directly is Paul Hustoles saying, don't forget. It's more than athletics here. So once, again Minnesota State, Mankato advanced more students to the semi-final and final rounds of the Irene Ryan Acting Scholarship competition than any other school in the region. And guess what? We're the largest region in the country. And we swept the musical theater acting awards. Congratulations, Paul, and all of your staff. Good job.
- We established a new Center for Excellence and Innovation, which we've been talking about for years and finally got it done. We launched a Twin Cities baccalaureate program. We successfully connected our Mankato campus and our Minnesota State, Mankato and Edina location with other college partners through TelePresence facilities. And I'll tell you, if you haven't used TelePresence, please give it a try. It's really exciting. I know we have a couple of our departments using it all the time. And the way that works in our TelePresence classroom that we have here on campus is typically,

we'll go to another site where they have a classroom, and we'll combine the same class-- students that might be up in Edina with students that might be here taking the very same class. It's pretty neat. And it allows students the opportunity to take a program that they might not otherwise be able to take. We've also done a lot of exciting things with Cisco's TelePresence where we've brought in major national universities to work with us in a variety of areas. So that promises to be a vehicle to help us achieve some of our goals.

- And we also-- this is a topic that those of you who have been here for a while, I hope you appreciate that-- we implemented a popular and successful campus-wide civility campaign. Everybody, thank you for that. Let's give yourselves a round of applause. That is really important. Believe me. Now I don't want to give you the impression that we're done. We're just starting. But I think we're really seeing everybody get on board. It is really important. It is basic to our values at this institution. And we're going to continue to push that agenda.
- In the area of fundraising, we exceeded our target fundraising goal of \$11 million this last year. I think

it's the third best in our history. And you may be hearing more about that in the fall.

- In the fall of 2012, the university began the transition to the new HLC accreditation process called Open Pathway, in preparation for HLC reaffirmation in 2015 and 2016. We'll be working really hard on that. I was with the team last year that went to Chicago. We made a lot of headway. The work is still before us, a lot of work that we need everybody's help on.

So I didn't name everything in terms of accomplishments. But I tried to isolate a few that I think stand out. The university and individual accomplishments are, as I said, outstanding. And I want to thank you for constantly raising the bar in each of your programs, services, each year as we strive to be the best university in Minnesota.

I just want to tell you this little story. So this past year, I had the privilege of hearing a presentation-- it might have been two presentations actually-- by Dr. Cindra Kamphoff. She's the director of our Center for Sport and Performance Psychology. And I was listening to her remarks. And she often referred to a book that

influenced her way of thinking. And the book is called, Positivity. And it's been around a while. It's authored by Barbara Fredrickson, who has been referred to as the genius of the positive psychology movement.

Anyway, after reading the book myself, I had a much better idea about the work being done at our Center for Sport and Performance Psychology. And I have to tell you, the concepts in that book actually impact everybody here. It's not just sport psychology. It is really for everybody in the room. But what I could not help conclude, after reading the book, what they're-- in this book, provides the basic principles of positivity that are clearly in operation every day throughout our university in serving our students. And I had to step back and reflect on that and say, that's why we're so darn successful.

Research has shown that when people and organizations practice positivity, they see incredible results such as increased resiliency, greater civility, enhanced creativity and inspiration, as well as pride. So now as I reflect on the successes of our faculty, and staff, and students, and the university as a whole, I'm convinced that one of the reasons we are such an outstanding university is that we practice positivity. You probably didn't know that, did

you? But I'm positive that we do, that we practice positivity.

I believe that positivity has played, and continues to play, a major role in our minds and our hearts. And it shows in our service to students and the excellence that we achieve together. It shows in the vibrancy of our university. And it also shows in the performance of our faculty and staff. Actually, it shows in all of our achievements. It really shows in a multiple of ways.

And so in summary, during the next two years, we will be involved in some major and exciting transformational changes resulting from charting the future goals. And so our positivity, our approach to change, and our desire to be leaders will be paramount in helping our system accomplish these challenges.

So I leave you today with this thought. I trust you will all participate in the exciting venture as we move closer to-- believe it or not-- our 150th anniversary, about three years away. So I hope you leave here with a renewed sense of accomplishment, pride, and enthusiasm for the work you do every day to make Minnesota State University, Mankato a model campus of the university.

So with that everybody, thank you, thank you, thank you so much.

So one last thing. Before you leave here, make certain that you set aside 4 o'clock this afternoon to hear our new Provost, Dr. Marilyn Wells, give her presentation. I've already gotten a little sneak preview of it. If you miss that, boy, you are missing something. So make sure you show up for that. It's going to be right here.

And we have a little bit of a cookout. And so I think that's taking place in a few minutes. Join us for the cookout. Enjoy the day. It's beautiful on campus. It's an exciting time to be back at Minnesota State. Thanks everybody.