

2014 Convocation President's Address

Monday, August 18, 2014

9:30 a.m.

CSU Ballroom

Minnesota State University, Mankato

Big ideas – Real World Thinking

DISCOVERY – INNOVATION - APPLICATION

Good morning and welcome to our annual fall convocation. Once again, our Integrated Marketing team has created two new wonderful TV spots that represent Minnesota State University, Mankato. Each year, I continue to be so proud of the wonderful *Big Ideas, Real-World Thinking* from our students, faculty and staff. You should all be very proud of the role that each of you plays in the success of our university and students. Thank you.

What do you think of our new venue this year? I thought it would be fun and exciting to experience this annual event in a different location of our campus, and our beautiful CSU Ballroom. It is a special time each fall when we gather to kick-off a new academic year.

It's a time for us to celebrate our prior year's accomplishments, and look at some of our current and future challenges.

As always, the summer has come and gone too quickly. However, I hope that you had an enjoyable summer that included some time to relax and rejuvenate for this new academic year. We have much to be thankful for as a university. I hope that you take advantage of today's and this week's events by reconnecting with current and new colleagues as we all welcome our students to campus.

One thing that I consistently hear from prospective students and parents, along with other visitors and new employees to Minnesota State Mankato, is that we have a culture where everyone feels welcomed. And so, I'll begin this morning by welcoming new leaders in our midst. I recognize that some of these individuals have already been acknowledged through Provost Well's introduction today, however, I would personally like to congratulate them on their new roles with the university.

I'll start with Mike Gustafson, our Interim Vice President for Strategic Business, Education and

Regional Partnerships. Mike comes to us with 30 years of business experience, including 20 years in senior management and 10 years as a corporate executive. He led two different services companies and has experience with nonprofit board work. Mike served as a vice president for Ecolab, Inc., along with more recently, serving as the vice president of marketing for Multi-Tech Systems, and vice president of operations for Factory Motor Parts. Among his various professional and community activities, Mike has also served on the board of directors for the YMCA of the Greater Twin Cities, and is currently on the board's executive committee and chair of its marketing committee.

In his position as Interim Vice President, Mike will be responsible for leading the university in initiating, developing and coordinating strategic institutional partnerships with various sector areas including, business and corporate groups, public and private entities and educational groups throughout the state, region, and nation. Through these strategic partnerships the university will assist by providing human capital (knowledge) to move the region forward in the new global economy. We are fortunate to have his experience in order to maintain and grow with our

current partners. Mike, if you could stand, let's all welcome him to our campus community.

APPLAUSE

I also want to formally congratulate Dr. Scott Fee, who we recently announced as our Dean of University Extended Education. Dr. Fee has been a faculty member with us since 1997 in our Construction Management program. His passion and commitment to making public education accessible to all those who pursue it, regardless of income socioeconomic, or life circumstances, combined with his knowledge and leadership experience, will help lead the university in achieving our strategic directions, along with the goals set by Chancellor Rosenstone in *Charting the Future for a Prosperous Minnesota*.

APPLAUSE

In addition, Dr. Lynn Akey, was announced in November 2013 as our Assistant Vice President for Institutional Research, Planning & Assessment. Dr. Akey has been with the university since 2000. Her assessment, planning and research experience has already helped us with the formulation of issues,

analysis, trends and the understanding of outcomes. However, more importantly, she has taken the lead in preparing and planning for our upcoming HLC visit, which is scheduled for March 2016.

APPLAUSE

In addition, I would like to welcome and congratulate three new interim administrators, who have also been faculty members with our university. If you could each stand as I announce your name, I'll start by introducing Dr. Kimberly Contag, a university faculty member since 2007, who is serving as Interim Dean for the College of Arts and Humanities.

APPLAUSE

Next, Dr. Marilyn Hart, a university faculty member since 2001, who is serving as interim Associate Dean for the College of Science, Engineering & Technology.

APPLAUSE

And, Dr. Ginger Zierdt, a university faculty member since 2001, who is serving as Interim Assistant Vice President for Undergraduate Education.

APPLAUSE

Also with us on the expanded cabinet since last fall is Dr. Sandra King, who has been serving as my Interim Assistant to the President. Sandra, please stand and be recognized.

APPLAUSE

We're grateful for all of these colleagues who have stepped up and are serving the university in permanent or interim/acting roles. Thank you.

PAUSE

At this time, I would also like to share a very special welcome to some of our emeriti faculty and staff. I am pleased to announce that President Emerita, Dr. Margaret Preska, and Dean Emerita, Dr. Jane Earley, were able to join us again this year. If you could stand and be recognized.

APPLAUSE

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. Dr. Robert Hoffman, who retired after seven (7) years as our Vice President for Strategic Business, Education & Regional Partnerships; Dr. Walter Zakahi, who had been our Dean for the College of Arts & Humanities is now the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs at Keene State College in New Hampshire; and, Dr. Dan Cronn-Mills, who was our Interim Assistant Vice President for Undergraduate Education. Dan has returned to his faculty role here at Minnesota State Mankato and is leading our Curriculum Design System.

Unfortunately, throughout the year I have shared condolence announcements of employees, retirees and students, who have passed away. Each time I do so, it is a difficult one to share with our campus community. However, more recently, we lost two long-term employees that I would like to recognize and share my deepest sympathies with those of you who have worked with them during their time with our university.

Bonnie Lee, who was the Business Manager in Student Activities, was with Minnesota State Mankato for just a

little over 47 years. And, most recently, Denny Javens, our Plumber & Steamfitter Supervisor, who had been with us for almost 21 years. Let's take a moment of silence to remember Bonnie and Denny, along with others from our university and emeriti community.

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Our strategic priorities and vision for Minnesota State Mankato have not changed. We will stay the course by promoting global solutions and international education, growing extended education, creating the campus of the future, focusing on institutional diversity, promoting scholarship and research tied to our doctoral mission, and continuously strive to promote quality and excellence in our Academic and Student Affairs areas. The big difference this year is that MSU will be expanding our efforts in each of these areas and developing more comprehensive strategies that lead us closer to accomplishing our institutional goals.

True to our campus culture, all of this hard work will be transparent and completed with input and support of the entire campus. We work as a family, and know that if we are to go beyond theory and planning everyone has to be part of the process leading to the best practices.

This has been the tone of our campus and sets us apart from most other universities. I hear comments over and over from colleagues at other universities that we have such a positive campus environment where we all seem to work together in harmony and value differences of opinion. These people want to know our secret!

In fact, later today you will have the opportunity to hear remarks from Provost Wells that will resonate with our ongoing goals. You will hear that we are taking our planning to a deeper level than ever before. For instance, the big themes/big ideas she will emphasize should come as no surprise: we will continue our efforts toward academic mapping and academic planning tied to our Integrated Strategic Planning...both areas are critical to our future HLC reaffirmation of accreditation. And, we plan to launch our International Strategic Plan, implement our University Extended Education plan, address institutional research and build solutions and strategies for enhanced enrollment management. Provost Wells will reveal other supportive goals and details during her address this afternoon. I don't want to spoil her interesting and salient remarks.

All divisions will work together with our collective bargaining groups and one another as we strategize on

our next major campaign, figure out our financial plan, strive to take diversity goals to the next level, develop the best technology plan, the best extended education plan, the best university advancement plan, and the best institutional research office that will supply the data needed in making informed decisions. Finally, we all must continue to work together in a professional, civil and respectful manner, as we try to figure out the best strategies leading to enrollment management success.

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In addition, as we load on system-wide goals to our already ambitious institutional goals we look forward to being well-represented in *Charting the Future* planning. Dr. Lynn Akey has given several campus presentations on my behalf regarding System Performance Metrics; a total of 26 measures, with 22 at the institutional level. We will continue to be attentive to these goals as well.

While I would love to talk about all of these objectives and aspirations in more depth this morning, I have decided to zero in on a few of the most important challenges in American higher education; recruitment, retention, completion, affordability and the student debt crisis.

During the past 2-3 convocation addresses I have discussed the impact of enrollment management on the success of our university. Last Monday, the Cabinet devoted an entire day-long retreat to this topic and we also covered the topic the following day during the President's Annual Retreat. This illustrates how important this goal is to our university's future.

I extend a special thanks to our Admissions team led by Brian Jones for the outstanding work they do in recruiting qualified students to Minnesota State. Our fall enrollment picture looks very positive in comparison to our MnSCU peer institutions. MSU continues to rank near the top in MnSCU in terms of retention of first-year students, even though we lose approximately 25% of our entering class of 2,400 students. By the end of the sophomore year we lose an additional 18% accounting for a loss of more than 900 students. And, at the end of 6 years we graduate slightly over 1,200 of the original class touting a 51% graduation rate. This rate is not as high as we have challenged ourselves to accomplish over the years, however, it is close to the national average for public comprehensive universities.

We have been perplexed for years as we struggle to understand why it has been so difficult to increase our persistence rates. Everybody has a theory regarding this question, but most agree that the answer lies in multiple factors. We understand that the financial well-being of higher education has come to rest on having a successful retention plan. I have noted in prior speeches that for every 150 students we retain our base funding is enhanced by more than \$1.0 million. So just imagine if we could graduate two-thirds of our entering classes. Our base budget would increase by more than \$2.5 million multiplied by the number of years in college. The fact is, we have set 5-year enrollment and graduation targets to reach the goal of graduating two-thirds of our undergraduate students. Unfortunately, we are not close to reaching these targets, but plan for significant progress in the next few years. Continuing to implement best practices should lead to higher retention and graduation rates. Your help is needed as we continue to strategize and partner on this critical goal.

I might add that our graduation rates are not the same for all populations. International students have approximately a 90% graduation rate and graduate students also have a very high graduation rate. A well-known fact is that graduation rates at research

universities and private colleges are significantly higher than comprehensive colleges and universities like ourselves.

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Cost is also a big driver for today's college students and families. It is not unusual to read a newspaper, or article about higher education and see the major headlines and stories focused on affordability and college debt.

Vice President David Jones shared at our annual retreat that students who enroll 2 years at a community college and 2 years at a university spend on the average \$40,000 compared to 4 years at a public university costing \$69,000; or the more typical pattern of 6 years at a public university costing \$103,000. If we all do the math, I believe we will each realize why more parents and students are doing the same today as they struggle to figure out how to pay for a college education.

The literature on this subject is replete with statistics and data. Here are a few statements taken from the literature on retention, graduation, debt accumulation, affordability and the value of a college education:

- The National Clearinghouse Research Center reported national retention rates.
- Based on 31 million college and university students who left college during the past two years without a degree; 10 million left after only one term; 17 million did not go beyond 2 years; while the remaining students went beyond 2 years.
- We also know that community colleges have the lowest retention rates.
- Students with 2 or more years of college are identified as the highest potential completers with the most common group being in the 24-29 age group and out of postsecondary education for 2 to 6 years.
- Student graduation is frequently tied to debt load. The University Herald recently reported that “student loan debt is getting in the way of major life decisions.” For example, buying a home, or car, getting married and starting a family.
- These graduates tend to be those with \$50,000 or more in college loan debt.

- The Chronicle of Higher Education reported that only 1.5 percent of all undergraduate and graduate students graduated with six-figure student-loan debt. In looking at those with \$100,000 or more debt, 90% were graduate or professional students; 10% doctoral students; 36% law students, and 49% medical-school students.
- These same undergraduate students attended the nation's most-selective colleges with only 25% attending public institutions.
- “Seven in 10 college seniors (71%) who graduated last year had student loan debt with an average of \$29,400 per borrower.”
- “Debt increased during 2008 to 2012 by 6% percent per year.
- “Student loan debt is more than \$1 trillion with the average debt for a 4-year degree exceeding \$25,000 with 10 percent of graduates owing more than \$54,000.”

- Student debt has a negative effect on colleges since it often discourages student and alumni giving.

Despite all of these startling statistics the literature is still very clear about the value of a college education in terms of ultimate Return on Investment. Although more families and students today question this long-held assumption.

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The National Career Development Association points out the many frequently cited advantages of a college education;

- It gives a person more status and prestige;
- It opens up more job opportunities;
- Makes you more attractive to employers;
- Commands a higher salary resulting in higher lifetime earnings....a high school graduate earns \$1.3 million; a person with some college education, but no degree earns \$1.5 million; while those with a bachelor degree earns \$2.3 million.

A recent Bureau of Labor report notes that “20 of the top 25 occupations with the most job openings do not require a postsecondary degree. A majority of new jobs in the future (70%) will be found in occupations not requiring a 4-year college degree or more.” It is likely these factors will negatively impact higher education enrollments.

In the State of Minnesota, more than 10 years ago, colleges and universities received almost 70% of the cost of education through legislative appropriations compared to 30% today. Our challenges are immense in higher education as we struggle to address the affordability issue. It is time for our state government to step back and realize that by reducing state appropriations to our colleges and universities, they have knowingly forced institutions to raise tuition in order to keep the doors open.

PAUSE

In transitioning to a more positive message, I would like to share at this time some of the accomplishments that took place this past year. It’s our tradition to share a more complete list of these accomplishments in the

Mankato Free Press, which I hope you will read today. Here are some highlights:

- We launched Academic Master Planning, A Core Component of Our Integrated Strategic Planning, and a campus-wide effort to define and shape our future.
- We recognized four academic programs for demonstrating excellence in student learning assessment and utilization of assessment results to improve student learning. The Pathways to Student Learning Award was received by American Indian Studies. Also recognized for outstanding work: Economics, Dental Hygiene, and English Composition.
- Our Center for Excellence and Innovation served over 400 faculty and staff.
- We hosted a first of its kind TelePresence conference, connecting 12 endpoints across 3 states with peers from elementary, secondary, and post-secondary institutions.

- Our College of Education, Department of Educational Leadership, hosted the inaugural conference, *Leading Courageously for Racial Equity* engaging 125 school, community, and university leaders.
- We were awarded \$556 thousand in Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development workforce grants focused on non-credit training in advanced manufacturing, automation and leadership impacting 1,131 regional employees within four industries.
- Our Department of Automotive and Manufacturing Engineering Technology received an in-kind software gift from Siemens Product Lifecycle Management Software, with a whopping commercial value of \$325.0 million.
- Our Small Business Development Center served over 400 small business clients, student entrepreneurs, and helped start over 30 new enterprises in our region.
- We completed the 2013-14 season ranked 15th in the final Learfield Sports Directors' Cup standings.

The 15th place finish puts the Mavericks in the top five percent of the 290 schools that compete in the NCAA Division II. This year's results mark the 13th straight year that MSU has finished in the top 25 in the country in the national standings.

- We had three former Minnesota State student-athletes appear in the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia.
- We celebrated the completion of a new underground pedestrian link and small amphitheater between the Library and Centennial Student Union.
- Our student financial services processed more than \$127.3 million in scholarships, grants, work-study, and other support received in 2013-14 by more than 14,300 students.
- We led the first-ever MnSCU poster presentations at the State Capitol in St. Paul where 48 Minnesota Undergraduate Scholars displayed the work of 31 exceptional undergraduate projects from 7 MnSCU Universities and 5 Community Colleges.

- Our Extended Education enrollments grew 5-fold as we advanced partnerships and offerings at 7700 France - Edina, the Normandale Partnership Center, and the Iron Range.
- We raised \$77.8 million during our Big Ideas Campaign. That not only exceeded our \$75 million goal, but it was also the largest and most successful campaign in the history of both Minnesota State Mankato and the Minnesota State Colleges & Universities system. Since our announcement of this last fall, we have raised another \$11.3 million.
- When Minnesota Governor Mark Dayton signed a Minnesota Jobs Bill into law we received \$25.8 million in funding for a new clinical sciences building on campus, along with \$2 million for planning, providing a total of \$28 million in support of the project.
- We experienced new levels of greatness in International Affairs. We hosted 11 international delegations, had 922 international students enrolled on-campus, offered 24 faculty-led study abroad or away programs, and we will welcome 70 Brazilian students to campus as a result of a new international

agreement between the national governments of Brazil and the United States.

- We converted over 50,000 electronic accounts to StarID, allowing for unified authentication of multiple systems including E-services, campus accounts, and applications.
- We received 3,386 applications for admission during the National College Application Week in November 2013; the highest amount of applications received by any institution in the MnSCU system. In addition, the Admissions Office processed nearly 14,000 applications for the fall of 2014 semester. This total eclipsed the number of applications received for the fall of 2013 as the most in our office's recorded history.
- We initiated the MnSCU University World Languages Consortium, with all 7 MnSCU universities participating, to sustain and expand access for students to world languages, especially in Dakota, Mandarin, Somali, German, French, Hmong, and Ojibwe.

- Our School of Nursing partnered with the University of Minnesota Family Practice Rural Residency Program to initiate a collaborative simulation experience between their medical residents and our senior nursing students.
- We were selected to be one of 9 universities for “Think 2025”, which brings together student engineering teams from around the world to solve societal problems. Among 45 engineering students selected to travel to Switzerland to work on an international multi-university project sponsored by Audi, the German automobile manufacturer, 9 (20%) were from Minnesota State Mankato. This was the first time Minnesota State Mankato was selected to participate, and was the only United States institution participating this year.
- Our MBA program has been recognized by the Princeton Review as one of the best programs for 8 consecutive years (2007-2014).
- Our Law Enforcement program has a five year 100% pass rate for the Minnesota Board of Peace Officer Standards and Training test.

- Our Theatre and Dance programs presented is first African American Play on the Main Stage and brought back their most distinguished African American alumnus to direct *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*. The department also featured the *Kiss of the Spider Woman* that draws on Hispanic and Latino issues in the global sphere and treats LGBT themes in the Latin American context. Dr. Paul Hustoles will like this announcement....we sold over 35,000 tickets for theatre and dance audiences this past year. I've seen the schedule of performances for next year....tickets are on sale now, right Paul?
- And finally, we received the 2014 Diversity Exemplary Practices Award by the American Public Works Association for our Latino Engineering and Academic Day. This is the first time this award has been awarded to a Minnesota initiative or organization.

The university and individual accomplishments are outstanding, and I thank you for constantly raising the bar each year as we strive to be the best university in Minnesota.

PAUSE

And, so in summary we are connecting the dots with our strategic priorities and many campus initiatives striving to be the best in all ways. When we look at the challenges and statistics that drive our institution today, and even further into the future, there is one constant! Everything that we do is centered on providing the highest quality global education possible to prepare our students for the enormous challenges ahead. How exciting the future is for our graduates and overwhelming too!

We are moving closer to our 150th anniversary and look forward to celebrating this milestone in our history. I will be seeking your input as we progress through the planning process in anticipation of this important day.

PAUSE

Finally, please remember the pride that exists at Minnesota State Mankato is unprecedented among our peers. It is authentic and based on our real accomplishments and devotion to our students. And, it is exemplified every day in our commitment to excellence.

As I begin my 13th year, I say congratulations and thank you everyone...thank you!

APPLAUSE

Just a reminder, I encourage you to attend Provost Marilyn Wells' address at 1 pm today in this same room.

And, do not forget the cookout taking place at 11:00 this morning on the first floor of the Student Union.

Thanks again everyone.