Good afternoon. It is a genuine pleasure for me to join our other speakers in welcoming each of you – students, parents, and family members - to “Your” University – CSU Bakersfield. I want to start by congratulating you, students, on two things. First, congratulations on your academic performance to date which has qualified you for admission to a four-year institution. Second, congratulations on making an excellent educational decision. And what would that be? Yes, coming to CSU Bakersfield. Freshmen, you are members of our largest freshman class ever – over 1300 students. Transfer students, you are members of one of our larger transfer classes. You join our continuing students for a record total enrollment of more than 8,500 students for the Fall Quarter, 2013.

Today we are wearing academic regalia (caps and gowns) just as we do at Commencement. Our point in doing so is that, even though you are just starting, we want you to see yourself as graduating from the university. We are prepared to assist you in reaching that goal.

This New Student Convocation was established to welcome new students into this learning community, express our expectations for student learning, demonstrate our collective commitment to facilitating your success, and inspiring you with our belief in your potential to graduate from the university.

Your university experience will be transformative. It will change your life. You will gain new academic knowledge, abilities, and skills, and expand your intellectual understanding of the multiple world views that intersect in our global society. You will better understand the basis on which other people have developed different values, even as you refine your own. A college degree will give you an income over your work lifetime that will be more than $1,000,000 higher than that of a high school graduate. You will be in a better position to take advantage of future opportunities, to improve your family’s quality of life and to contribute to your community.

When I sat in your seat almost fifty years ago at Washington University in St. Louis, I was a first generation college student. My experience was transformative. After I decided to change my major from pre-med to psychology during my sophomore year, my plan was to get my degree and get a job. However, as a result of my active engagement with excellent and supportive faculty members and staff, I was encouraged to continue my education beyond the bachelor’s degree. In the course of that, I became aware of future possibilities and opportunities which had not been part of my
awareness. I went on to complete a master's degree and a Ph.D. I had no idea while sitting in your seat that my career would lead me to become a professor of psychology and a university president.

We, the CSUB faculty, staff, students, administration, and alumni are here to assist you in your transformation and in the achievement of your educational goals. We need to have some of you become the future university professors and presidents.

Because it best exemplifies our commitment to each of you, for several years now I have chosen as the title for my New Student Convocation Address, “You and CSUB: A Partnership for Your Success.” As you begin today as a student at CSUB, we are entering into a partnership with you.

Any partnership agreement includes stipulations about the responsibilities of each partner, along with the benefits to be derived from that partnership. I want to begin by telling you what you can expect from us, then what we expect from you, and end by talking about the benefits of our partnership for you.

**What you Can Expect from us**

Here is what you can expect from us as part of our partnership responsibilities:

1. Excellent academic programs that will advance your intellectual and personal development and assist you in achieving the university's student learning outcomes;
2. Exceptional access to our outstanding faculty who will engage you in a learning-centered environment and challenge you to consider alternative perspectives for looking at your experiences and the world around you;
3. Opportunities for internships and service learning related to your career goals;
4. Co-curricular programs and activities designed to complement your academic program and facilitate your personal growth and development;
5. More than 90 student clubs and organizations that allow you to explore a wide range of personal interests from academic to social to service-oriented; and
6. Academic support services to facilitate your success, retention, and graduation.

As part of our goal to enhance the quality of the student experience, we are working with the Associated Students, Inc. (ASI), the Student Union Board, the Student Recreation Center Committee, and student clubs and organizations to create a vibrant campus life which engages our diverse student body.

**What we Expect from you**

We expect you to be fully committed to our partnership by doing several things:

1. Strive for excellence in your academic work. You might have been able to do well in high school or in community college without giving your best effort. At CSUB you will need to be well-prepared and fully engaged from your first day (tomorrow) and your first class. This is especially true
because most of you are coming from institutions where you were on semesters which are fifteen (15) weeks long, while here at CSUB our academic terms are quarters which are ten (10) weeks long. You cannot afford to fall behind since there would be fewer weeks to catch up. Therefore, give your very best effort at all times.

2. Be proactive in using the resources you need to be successful, such as:
   - seeing your academic adviser;
   - going to your professors’ office hours;
   - getting a tutor when you need one;
   - getting into one or more study groups; and
   - using health, wellness and counseling services and facilities, when you need them.

It is always a smart move to use the resources that will assist you in achieving your goals. It is a high impact success strategy.

3. As you move through our general education program and progress toward declaring a major, you will need to begin to develop a vision for your future – what you want to be doing in 5-10 years in terms of your career and your life. Your major should be related to the career and quality of life you want. There are many roads and many roadmaps. The road you take will depend on where you want to go in your life.

4. Assume the primary responsibility for achieving that vision. We are here to help and to facilitate, but you must take the lead.

5. Identify a mentor who can help you along the path you plan to take.

The Benefits of our Partnership for you

As a psychologist, I often say to students that the college years represent an unprecedented time in a person’s life when they have the freedom to focus heavily on their own development and preparation for their future, often in important discussions with their fellow students and professors. Such opportunities are not generally available to your friends who do not plan to attend college.

You will achieve a set of university learning outcomes in six important areas of academic and personal development:

- critical reasoning and problem solving
- oral and written communication
- discipline-based knowledge and career-based learning
- numerical literacy
- developing skills to become an engaged citizen, and
- developing a well-rounded skill set

These university learning outcomes are contained in a booklet of the same name which will be given to each of you.

When you graduate from CSU, you will be well-prepared to pursue graduate or professional school opportunities or to begin your career immediately, adding to the well-educated workforce our state and nation need to fuel our economic recovery and development.
An Exciting Time to be at CSUB

In addition to the important benefits of our “Partnership for Your Success”, this is an exciting time in your life and an exciting time to be at CSUB.

- As a participant in our first-year experience program, you will have a unique opportunity to begin your university experience by enrolling in CSUB 101 (freshmen) or CSUB 301 (transfers). These small classes will allow you to explore a range of specific topics which are all integrated through use of a common reader – “The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks” by Rebecca Skloot. CSUB 101 and 301 will give you a small cohort of classmates with whom you can establish early and lasting relationships as you experience life in higher education together.

- Our 75,000 sq ft Student Recreation Center has state-of-the-art facilities, equipment, and programs that facilitate physical health and wellness.

- A new 500-bed student residence halls project is now under construction. It is projected to open in January 2015.

- Our athletics program competes in NCAA Division I as a member of the Western Athletic Conference (WAC). All of our sports programs are eligible to compete for Division I Championships. Opponents during this academic year will include: UNLC, USC, Indiana, and Louisville along with many others.

As an enrolled student, you can attend all athletics events free.

Adding to University Traditions

Finally, you have the advantage of coming to a young university. Harvard University, for example, is more than 375 years old. When I came to CSUB from UC Berkeley nine years ago, I was asked often, “What is the biggest difference between CSUB and UC Berkeley?” My response was, “UC Berkeley has a head start of 102 years, having been founded in 1868.” CSUB is now 43 years old. Harvard and Berkeley have long-established traditions which are extremely difficult to change. However, you can still add to our established CSUB traditions. For example, if there is a student club or organization you think we should have, you could start it.

Constructing your Identity and Creating your Future

In my first year as president, I taught a Senior Seminar in psychology on Identity Construction. I said at that time that a person can have an identity by default based on the perceptions of others, or they can construct their desired identity by taking proactive steps of self-definition. We are prepared to engage you where you are now, and where you will be as you use your transformative university experience to take proactive steps of self-definition in charting a course to create your desired future.

We look forward to collaborating with you in our “Partnership for Your Success.” Welcome to CSU Bakersfield — “Your” University.