Good afternoon, thank you Alex. Students, I want you to remember “AWW,” “Alex’s Words of Wisdom.” What he said is very important and his comments are similar to some that I will make as part of my presentation. 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 begin by congratulating you, students, on two important 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 one of our largest freshman classes ever – over 1300 students. Transfer students, you are members of our largest transfer class ever – more than 1,100 students. You join our continuing students for a record total enrollment of more than 9,300 students for the Fall Semester, 2016.

Parents, you are now members of the Roadrunner Parents Association. One part of their vision is:

“the Roadrunner Parents Association is a dynamic volunteer organization dedicated to keeping parents involved in their student’s education, and to supporting programs and services that promote college and financial aid awareness. We welcome your active participation and invite you to join us in promoting student success!”

Today we are wearing academic regalia just as we do at commencement. Our point in doing so is that, even though you are just starting, we want you students, 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 exceptional 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 and diversity of lived experiences that intersect in our local, national, and global societies. 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 more than fifty years ago as a freshman at Washington University in St. Louis, I was a first generation college student. My experience was transformative. I knew that my goal was to have a career that would allow me to “help people”. At that time that goal translated into becoming a doctor/physician. That idea was reinforced because I had very good grades in math and science and a wide variety of people were telling me that I should be a doctor. So I began my freshman year as a pre-med student. In addition to taking the required pre-med courses, I was attracted to psychology courses in my sophomore year.

I decided to change my major from pre-med to psychology after my sophomore year. My plan was to get my degree and find an entry-level position where I could begin to use my psychology background. 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 then began to expand my vision. I went on to complete a master’s degree and a Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology. I had no idea, while sitting in your seat, that my career goal to “help people” could be realized through a different professional path, one that would lead me to become a state licensed psychologist, a professor of psychology, and a university president. As you can tell, my collegiate experience was transformative and yours will be as well.

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

Because it best exemplifies our commitment to each of you, for several years now I have chosen as the theme 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**
This 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 to conduct research as an undergraduate and for internships and service learning related to your career goals;

4. An outstanding staff who provide academic support services and co-curricular programs and activities designed to complement your academic program and facilitate your personal growth and development; and other staff who work to make sure this is an efficient, attractive, and safe learning environment.

5. More than 100 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 retention, success, and graduation, as part of the CSU Graduation Initiative 2025.

Of course, this is only a partial list.

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 that engages our diverse student body.

What we Expect from you
This is what we expect from you. We expect you to be fully committed to our partnership by doing several things:

1. You should always 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 very best effort. At CSUB you will need to be well-prepared and fully engaged from your first day (tomorrow) and your first class.

2. You should be proactive in engaging the resources you need to be successful, such as:
   a) Meeting with your academic adviser;
   b) Going to your professors’ office hours on a regular basis
   c) Getting a tutor when you need one;
   d) Getting into one or more study groups; and
   e) 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 completing a major, you will need to begin to develop a vision for your future – an idea about what you want to be doing in 5, 10 or 15 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. You must assume the primary responsibility for achieving that vision. We are here to help and to facilitate, but you must take the lead.
5. You should identify one or more mentors who can assist you along the path you plan to take.

The Benefits of our Partnership for you
First, 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.

Second, you will achieve a set of university-wide student 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.

Third, you will also achieve a set of student development outcomes, some of which are part of the university’s core values, including:

1. Strengthening your leadership skills.
2. Valuing the diversity of persons and ideas, and
3. Engaging one another with respect, trustworthiness, ethical behavior, and self-reflection.

When you graduate from CSUB, 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). 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.
These small classes will allow you to explore a range of specific topics which are all integrated through use of a common reader. This year’s common reader is by Charles Fishman titled “The Big Thirst”. You and your families will be invited to attend a free special event with the book’s author on October 27th right here in the Icardo Center. Parents, we invite you and your families to share in the experience as well and read the book along with your student/s. The topic is especially relevant at this time as it discusses how the earth’s water supply is going to change.

Our common reader is part of a broader program called “One Book, One Bakersfield, One Kern” where that book is read throughout the community. The Kern High School District has purchased copies of “The Big Thirst” for all students taking their expository reading and writing course. Also through a grant from Wells Fargo, hundreds of books have been purchased for various junior high and elementary schools throughout Kern County which compliment the common reader.

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

- Our new 500-bed Student Residence Halls Complex opened in January 2015. We will build the next phase of student housing as soon as there is sufficient demand.

- Our athletics program competes in NCAA Division I as a member of the Western Athletic Conference (WAC) and all of our sports programs are eligible to compete for Division I Championships. Our 2015-16 season was remarkable as our Men’s Basketball Team won the WAC Championship and competed in the NCAA Tournament in Oklahoma. Our CSUB Softball Team went on to win the WAC Championship and advanced to their first NCAA Regional hosted by UCLA. CSUB Wrestling won the Pac-12 dual season defeating Stanford, Oregon State, Cal Poly, and Boise State, and five CSUB Wrestlers competed at the NCAA Championships in New York.

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 twelve 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 opened in 1970 and is now 46 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, an organization, or a community 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. Go Runners!