

CSUB University Day Address -- 2018

Good morning – and welcome back! What a great day to be part of CSUB. I am so excited to be joining this amazing university and I am so inspired by your passion to serve our deserving students and our community.

Thank you, Provost Zorn, for your kind introduction. I appreciate your strong and steady leadership, and I appreciate you and your team for your hard work in coordinating today's University Day.

I also want to thank the stellar senior leadership team on our campus. I have extraordinary colleagues who are committed to the mission and future of CSUB. Would you please rise when you are recognized.

- Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. Jenny Zorn
- Vice President for Student Affairs Dr. Thomas Wallace
- Vice President for Business and Administrative Services Thom Davis
- Vice President for University Advancement Victor Martin
- Claudia Catota, who has a new upgraded title of Chief Diversity Officer and Special Assistant to the President
- Interim Chief of Staff Michael Lukens
- New University counsel, Andrew Maiorano

And, I am honored to share governance with the Academic Senate and the Associated Student body. I look forward to working closely with Academic Chair, Debbie Boschini, and ASI President Ashley Schmidt.

I also would like to recognize CSUB alumnus, John Nilon who is a member of the California State University Board of Trustees and was the chair of the Presidential search committee. John also is the Chair of my Presidential Transition Team, and his support and expertise have been so meaningful to me. Please rise and be recognized. Thank you, John!

And, of course, I am so pleased that Mayor Karen Goh is joining us today. She is a true servant leader with a huge heart for CSUB and our entire community. Thank you for being here, Mayor! Please rise and be recognized.

And, again, a very warm welcome to our new faculty and staff – you are particularly special to me since we are all starting our CSUB journey together.

Let me begin today's address by honoring the extraordinary work of our President Emeritus, Horace Mitchell, during his 50 years in higher education and his 14 years of leadership at CSUB. He laid a strong foundation to move CSUB forward. We are all grateful for the work he did to bring such distinction to the University in this region and beyond.

Because of his work – and the efforts of all of you– we are truly positioned to Rise as Rising ‘Runners!

We are Rising ‘Runners because we are mission-driven faculty and staff that go the extra mile to level the playing field by educating our students and supporting their lifelong success.

We are Rising ‘Runners because we live social justice. And we celebrate diversity and inclusion as an asset and strength.

We are Rising ‘Runners because of our personal touch that is ingrained in our CSUB DNA. This is a signature quality that defines us and sets us apart from other universities. The spirit of the CSUB personal touch is so noticeable to me and so meaningful to the students we serve.

Let me recognize some of our remarkable Runners who are exemplars of this spirit. Please rise when you are recognized.

Professor of Education, Kristina LaGue, who has implemented new approaches to teacher training that has become a model around the state.

Dr. Vernon Harper, who has empowered collaborative leadership on our WASC reaccreditation and the Graduation Initiative Task Force.

Athletic Director, Ziggy Siegfried, and the entire team of coaches, who have won seven conference championships since

2014, and have supported our scholar-athletes who have had an average GPA of 3.0 for seven consecutive semesters.

Kellie Garcia, who for 31 years has been CSUB's Human Resource Rock Star.

Faust Gorham and his team for being information technology champions at CSUB.

Crystal Montoya and the team of Rosie Perez, Natasha Harris, Alicia Guzman and Sonia Sandoval, in Enrollment Management, who have re-energized student orientation.

Dr. Jim Drnek, Emily Poole and Iliaria Pesco from the Division of Student Affairs who tirelessly coordinate outstanding co-curricular student success programs.

Josiah Castro from University Advancement, whose team hit a 10-year high mark in fundraising

And Ellie Fergon from University Advancement, who coordinates extraordinary events that engage our campus community, donors, and countless alumni throughout the year.

These are just a few examples of the amazing work being done by our faculty and staff. Thank you all!!!

The beginning of the academic year is always my favorite day of the year because it represents a new beginning and a fresh start. That is particularly meaningful to me as I begin my service to the CSUB community.

As your new president, I want to take this opportunity to share a bit about me and what I value – so you can understand how I will serve you and the University and how I will make future decisions.

I am a proud product of the CSU system, and I personally know how transformative a CSU education is. I received my bachelor's and master's degrees from Humboldt State – where I also met my husband, John. When John and I were considering our professional paths after we graduated, we were very intentional about moving to the Central Valley – where we chose to dedicate our careers and raise our family. We knew the Central Valley would be a place where we could work hard, and we wanted every single day of work to be meaningful. We also wanted it to be an investment in making a difference. We have been so blessed that our careers in the Valley have allowed us to follow our dreams.

As you may know, I spent the past 30 years at Fresno State, where I began as a part-time Lecturer for 10 years. I was the recipient of the CSU Doctoral Incentive program and earned my Ph.D. as reentry student and mother of three young children. I joined the tenure track faculty and became a Professor of Psychology where I taught Statistics and later served in virtually

every leadership role in the Academy, becoming Provost and now CSUB's President. Throughout my professional journey, I've embraced four important values:

First: **Student Access and Success**. Like many of you, I intentionally chose CSU Bakersfield because of the diversity and character of the students we serve. Our students are inspirational in so many ways -- I wouldn't trade them for any other students. I want every student who is qualified to be at CSUB to be treated like they belong. We are their hope and in many cases their family.

Let me remind you that 74 percent of our students are the first in their family to attend college. This is important for all of us to remember because we are the ones they rely on to help them navigate their way in higher education. And it's important that we realize collectively that responsibility and that we do everything we can to make them feel they belong at the university and that we are here to support them.

This is where our signature personal touch makes such a difference. It may take more time, more work and more patience to support our students, but it is so worth it in the end. It is rewarding to watch their transformation and know that they are not just transforming their lives, but also the lives of their families and their communities.

Everything we do at CSUB will be focused on making sure that our students get a top education and graduate, and that they are prepared to become the next generation of leaders.

Second: **Fairness and Shared Governance**. We are a big family, so it is important for me to be cognizant of the implications of my decisions on others. I promise to listen -- and make considerations with respect and to be conscientious and diligent about consultation. There will be times that you will disagree with my decisions, but I hope you will always see fairness based on consultation at the center of my actions.

Third: **Passion to Make a Difference**. At CSU Bakersfield, we have the opportunity to impact social justice and level the playing field. *This is where education matters most.*

A recent study by the Public Policy Institute of California found that by 2030, California will fall about 1.1 million college graduates short of economic demand if current trends persist. Economists are projecting that the health of California's economy is riding on what we are doing in the Central Valley. The spotlight is on us, and we take this charge with great seriousness and urgency.

I know we are up to the challenge. I am very optimistic and hopeful about what lies ahead for us – we have an important opportunity to Rise and lift the college-going culture. I am already working with other education leaders here on big ideas

that will dramatically increase the number of college graduates that we are producing for the Central Valley.

At CSUB, we transform the lives of the underserved. This is *honorable* work that we do together. Let's be vigilant and double down on our mission-driven efforts.

Fourth: **Diversity, Inclusion and Free, Open and Civil Exchange of Ideas**. At CSUB, we are proudly a Hispanic-serving institution that welcomes people of all backgrounds. Diversity of persons and ideas, along with inclusion and civility, are fundamental strengths of our community.

You likely know that CSUB is one of the top universities in the country for the social mobility of our graduates, and that we have been named one of the top universities for inclusion by the Wall Street Journal. We've also been recognized by the Carnegie Foundation for our community engagement. And we have recruited and hired outstanding diverse faculty and staff.

We also are committed to engaging one another with authentic respect, ethical behavior and a willingness to hear and listen to all voices as we make every effort to be civil and realize mutual understanding.

Many of the accolades CSUB has earned are the result of the of the University's strategic plan developed under President Mitchell's leadership. We are very proud of the national

attention that we have earned for both academics and athletics.

Over the coming weeks and months, we will be honoring and celebrating the amazing achievements of our strategic plan that has served CSUB well for over a decade.

But now is the time for us to take steps to Rise UP and build a new strategic plan that will take us into the future.

When I was appointed to this position, I was given the charge to build a collective vision based on conversation and feedback from many constituents -- students, campus constituents, community constituents, alumni, corporate partners, and the region.

The vision has to be dynamic. That's why I am committed to what I call a listening and learning tour over the next several months. The new plan, of course, will be critical as we launch the university's first comprehensive capital campaign.

There will be a number of ways for you to become involved in helping to direct our university's future.

First, we will be holding a number of community forums in the coming months to hear from all of you. I hope you will be able to attend the forums to make sure your voice is heard. Stay tuned for more information about the dates and locations.

Second, I'll be asking for your help through a feedback page that can be found at csub.edu/feedback.

On that webpage, we will be asking you to answer two questions:

1. What makes you proud about CSUB?
2. What are the opportunities that lie ahead for CSUB?

Third, I plan to meet with you in small groups so we can have a continued discussion about our pride points and opportunities. Invitations for those meetings will be coming soon.

Fourth, I encourage you to talk with me when you see me on campus – because you will see me a lot! I will be setting aside time most weeks for what I am calling Runner Walk and Talks – where senior leaders and I will be walking the campus to hear what you have to say.

There are also a few other exciting things on the horizon:

- While many thought the state budget would be doomsday for us, we actually got \$1 million more in state funding than we expected. We will be consulting with our Strategic Planning and Budget Advisory Committee for recommendations on the most productive use of these funds.
- We are working hard to gain accreditation from the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. This is extremely important to ensure that our students continue

to have a high-quality education experience and federal financial aid available.

- We're also waiting for positive news from the Accreditation Board of Engineering and Technology, a critical achievement for our engineering programs. This is one of the more rigorous accreditations in any disciplinary area. This is an important one to our employers.
- Our state-of-the-art Energy and Engineering Innovation Center is on the CSU short list of capital projects and we're working hard to put together the funding to make this happen.
- We'll be holding a community celebration of my coming aboard as the fifth president of CSUB and the first woman president. Mark your calendars for May 3, 2019 for the investiture.
- And, of course, CSUB will celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2020. This is one that we will be moving forward immediately to think about how we celebrate this special university.

That's a lot of great news, and there is even better news --the best is yet to come as Rising Runners. I'm eager to serve alongside you to build our bright future.

This is the time for all of us to rise!

I will leave you with an excerpt from a poem by Maya Angelou titled "Still I Rise," a poem that is a message of resiliency, strength and social justice that describes CSUB.

You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may tread me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.

Just like moons and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high,
Still I'll rise.

Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear
I rise
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.
I rise
I rise
I rise.

Thank you.