

CSUB University Day Address -- 2020

Good morning faculty, staff, alumni and friends. And a special welcome to those who are brand new to CSUB. Welcome to our Runner family.

It's an honor to be with you today as Runners United for Change.

As we begin today, let me first recognize and share gratitude for the native Kitanemuk land of the Tejon tribe that we at CSUB honor and continue to steward.

Every year on University Day, we gather with anticipation and hope, as the countdown begins until we are reunited with our students.

That sense of anticipation and hope is alive and well, but in every other way, this University Day is different because the world is different.

We are living in a virtual world, one we have created out of necessity – and a great sense of urgency - through your dedication and hard work.

When the decision was made to transition to distance learning, ***you responded with initiative and innovation.***

When we needed to devise protocols to keep our campus safe, ***you responded with solutions.***

When we needed to support and reassure our students, ***you responded with compassion.***

Life has placed high hurdles before us. ***You have responded with resilience and resolve.***

Your grace under pressure is a credit to our university and a vital lesson to our students, who learn to become leaders through your example.

And so here we are, screen to screen, rather than face to face. We must remain apart to protect our health.

But I want you to know this:

I miss you. And I know that you miss your colleagues. We all miss the energy of campus.

But the deepest ache – ***one that we all share*** - is knowing we will not be with our students in person.

Distance does not allow us to see the light in their eyes when they make a breakthrough in class.

Distance does not allow us to recognize which students need extra encouragement.

Distance makes communication more challenging.

But we are not discouraged. Or deterred. We will connect with our students. We will support them. We will guide them. We will inspire them.

Our students deserve a real college experience in a virtual college world. ***We will give them that full college experience at CSUB.***

If the year 2020 had a theme, it might be the Confluence of Change: Change related to the pandemic, the economic downturn and, the reckoning of social injustice.

But change, no matter how uncomfortable, is sometimes necessary. At CSUB, we are committed to deep and lasting change.

We, as Runners, have seized the moment. We are *'Runners United for Change.* We will work together this year and the next and the next until we are the university we know we can be and ***should*** be.

I have joined together with 20 other presidents and chancellors of public higher education institutions from across the nation. We have put forth a pledge to eradicate discrimination and racism.

I would like to share with you a few lines from our statement of purpose:

“We stand together intending to leverage the full weight of our positions and power to root out anti-Black policies and procedures.

“We stand together for those who have been mistreated, falsely imprisoned, or have died at the hands or under the gavel of injustice.

“And finally, we stand together to ensure our students, faculty, and staff understand that they are not only invited but expected to join us in this commitment.”

At CSUB, there is no higher priority than to ensure all of our students feel accepted, respected and heard. The Cabinet and I have embarked on our own journey to honor that pledge and have formulated 5 Golden Goals in honor of CSUB’s 50th golden anniversary.

We will:

- Appoint a CSUB Diversity and Campus Climate Team and Develop a CSUB Diversity Strategic Plan, under the framework of the University Strategic Plan.
- Close equity gaps, in accordance with Graduation Initiative 2025
- Improve Diverse Faculty and Staff Hires and develop a Department of Ethnic Studies
- Improve the Student Multicultural Center and include a Black Student Center, that includes resources and programming
- Intentionally engage campus in Anti-Racist training for students, faculty and staff – starting with the Cabinet

On behalf of the Cabinet, I would like to invite you to join us as we read two important works with particular resonance for our times:

- “How to be an Antiracist” by Ibram X. Kendi
- “The Book of Unknown Americans” by Cristina Henríquez

The courageous conversations on social justice have begun at CSUB. It is up to each of us to follow those conversations wherever they may lead. In the words of the late Civil Rights icon John Lewis:

“Never, ever be afraid to make some noise and get in *good* trouble, *necessary* trouble.”

And now I have the distinct pleasure and great joy of recognizing outstanding members of our staff, who model dedication and the highest standards of professionalism and principled leadership.

- **Erika Delamar**, Associate Director of Student Health Services. Erika has emerged as the voice of safety, health and vital information during the COVID-19 pandemic. Erika, thank you for keeping the CSUB community safe and healthy. Nothing matters more
- **Dr. Kenneth “Ziggy” Siegfried**, Athletic Director. Dr. Siegfried has played an essential role in working with our new partner, the Big West Conference, and other constituents on the extremely complex issue of athletic competition in the era of COVID-19. Thank you for your leadership, Dr. Siegfried, and for your commitment to keeping our scholar-athletes safe.
- **Janice Clausen**, Director of Services for Students with Disabilities. Janice has been a tireless advocate for our students, speaking up for those who need special accommodations to access their education. Thank you, Janice, for your advocacy and servant heart.
- **Juan Rodriguez**, Media Production Specialist. Juan has been a superstar on the CSUB communications team, elevating our visual identity through his wonderful videos and still photography. Thank you, Juan, for showing CSUB in such a positive light.
- **Lourdes Nilon**, Director of Corporate and Foundation Relations. Lourdes works diligently to engage CSUB with a number of corporations and foundations throughout the state. Her work has garnered more philanthropic support than ever before in the history of the CSUB Foundation. Thank you, Lourdes, for your work to support our students.

- **Dr. Dwayne Cantrell**, Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management. Dr. Cantrell and his exceptional team in Enrollment Management and Financial Aid have done an extraordinary job of streamlining and updating processes for students. Our Fall 2020 enrollment numbers are **outperforming** last year's total in a time when many students elsewhere are deferring their education. Thank you, Dr. Cantrell, for your leadership.
- **Will Hernandez**, Custodial Manager. Will is the heart and soul who works every day to keep our Bakersfield campus one of the most beautiful landmarks in our county. Will has shown great leadership as a vital member of our pandemic response team, heading our cleaning efforts. Thank you, Will, for your dedication.
- **Tina Williams**, Director of Human Resources Administration. Tina is a CSUB veteran of 23 years who oversees payroll, benefits, HR information systems and other essential duties. Thank you, Tina, for being a wonderful resource for our employees.
- **Dr. Senem Saner** leads the "Philosophy for Children" Program where she and Philosophy students at CSUB facilitate discussions of philosophical issues for local children. Thank you Dr. Saner for opening the minds and hearts of our future CSUB students.
- **Dr. Andrea Medina and Bobby Hartsock** launched a project in our Fab Lab to create face shields for local health-care workers on the frontline of the COVID-19 pandemic. Thank you both for seeing a community need and stepping in to fill it.
- **Dr. Todd McBride**, associate dean of the School of Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Engineering, is a founder and director of a group that provides scuba training and dive trips to local disabled vets. Thank you for your compassionate service, Dr. McBride.
- **Dr. Di Wu currently** serves on the Institute of Management Accountants Board as Global Director. Dr. Wu is the incoming President of the IMA, Wild

West Council; and is a member of the California Society of CPAs (CalCPA) Statewide Technology Committee. Dr. Wu, CSUB is proud you will be representing us on an international stage.

- **Dr. BreAnna Evans-Santiago** is a leader of the Kern Urban Teacher Residency Program, and is engaged in developing a Gates Foundation proposal in collaboration with the Department of Educator Preparation and Public School Programs at the Chancellor's Office. Our Teacher Residency program is a model in California. Thank you, Dr. Evans-Santiago, for your leadership.
- **Dr. Jeanine Kraybill** coordinates the Pre Law Program, advises Pre Law students, and works closely with the Pre Law Advisory Committee, which includes diverse representation of nearly 20 professionals from the Kern County legal community. Dr. Kraybill, thank you for your tireless efforts and scholarship.
- **And I have one more staff recognition:**
University Police Department Chief Marty Williamson.
 CSU Bakersfield has been at the forefront of planning and safety since late January, well before most institutions launched their own pandemic response teams. We have Chief Williamson to thank for that. Chief, you have worked tirelessly – days, nights and weekends – to stay ahead of the pandemic. On behalf of the entire Roadrunner family, I salute you and I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Please join me again in thanking all of our staff honorees. They are wonderful ambassadors for CSUB and exemplars of our mission, which is to serve students.

And now it is my great honor to recognize a student who is serving all of us and our entire region.

Krystal Raynes has been appointed to serve as one of two student representatives on the CSU Board of Trustees. In that role, Krystal will have a vote on the board at a pivotal time in the history of the CSU and higher education.

It is impossible to overstate what this means to CSUB. Krystal is the first student from our university to serve on the board and only the second Roadrunner selected for the honor in the history of the CSU.

We know we have a champion in Krystal, and we are here to support and assist her as she advocates on behalf of our university and region.

Please join me in congratulating Krystal. Well done, Krystal.

Krystal's appointment is another first in a long line of triumphs for our university since its opening day on Oct. 1, 1970, when our first president, Paul Romberg, greeted our inaugural class to California State College, Bakersfield.

It took decades to get to that proud day – a journey measured not in **years** but in **lifetimes**.

Before our campus became a beacon of light and hope, generations of local families were denied access and opportunity here in the southern San Joaquin Valley. A college education meant journeying far from home, an impossible dream for so many.

But leaders in our community fought for the futures of our young people. They demanded access for the sons and daughters of farmers and farmworkers, of social justice advocates and business leaders, of teachers and song writers, of oilfield laborers and executives and other proud Valley residents who work with their hands and hearts to advance our community.

Access was important then. Access is important now.

We have embarked together on a revolution in higher education.

It is not one we anticipated.

It is not one we sought.

But we will make this grand experiment work. We have the technology. We have the know-how. We have the heart. We have the **resilience**.

This moment is a dividing line in the history of education. How we respond will be studied for generations. You are on the front-lines of this new era. I know you. I have served with you. I am proud of you. And I know that you – **we** – can do this.

I leave you with this thought to guide you during the 2020-21 academic term:

Access to higher education is access to a life of choices, a life of possibilities, a life of forward momentum.

Thank you for giving our students that access.

Remember: We are Runners United for Change, and in the words of the great Civil Rights anthem: “It’s been a long, long time coming, but a change is going to come.”

Thank you, my wonderful colleagues.

Let’s show what we are made of this year.

Onward, Runners!