



President's Convocation Address

August 18, 2009

Welcome to the beginning of the 96th year of Humboldt State University. This is my eighth year as your President, and there hasn't been a dull moment yet, but I keep hoping. I have one very important message for you today, and I repeat myself from this occasion last year because the message is so critical to our future. HSU must change the way it operates if it is to remain relevant and attractive to students, faculty and our region.

Before I launch into the details of this message, I draw your attention again to the new faculty, staff, and administrators who have joined our community. We are fortunate that they bring important resources to our campus and have the potential to change our lives. Let's help them get going and use their expertise as we work to effect positive change.

Let's begin with the bad news. The CSU has been told by the Governor and Legislature that it must reduce its budget by \$564M. This reduction translates into a cut for HSU of about \$12.2M. HSU's cut would have been more than \$15 million without the CSU Board of Trustees' recent student fee increases. Even with the fee increases, our students are still paying the lowest amount for comparable institutions in this country. The one-time salary savings from furloughs reduce the

current year's shortfall by \$6.2 million. After the fee increases and the furloughs, HSU still must plan for a reduction of \$6 million for the 2009-2010 fiscal year. In fiscal year 2010/11, we will need to further reduce our expenditures by about \$6M to make up for the salary money saved by this year's furloughs.

Furloughs are an excellent mechanism to preserve jobs in the CSU while at the same time protecting retirement and other benefits. Furloughs also mean that some of our responsibilities will take longer to complete or will need to be delayed. Furloughs are not a mechanism to increase our workload. We should all work with our supervisors, managers and academic leaders to prioritize the use of our time in the best interests of the mission of the university.

How are we going to achieve these reductions? The Vice Presidents and I have assigned budget reductions to the major units of the university based upon the budget reduction principles that we enunciated in June of this year and which are available on our budget web site. We will work together to adjust these assigned amounts as needed during the year. In addition to the salaries saved by furloughs, we will meet these reductions by reducing recruitment of new employees, by not filling positions opened by retirements, and lastly, by elimination of some positions. In addition, there will be restrictions placed on non-essential travel, supplies, services and equipment. Our plans to meet the additional expenditure reductions required in 2010/11 will ultimately require more reductions in faculty, staff and MPP levels as well as maintaining restrictions in operating expenses. These

general plans have been reviewed by the University Budget Committee and the Senate leadership.

These are drastic reductions, and they emphasize the point that I have made for several years at HSU. We need to find additional ways of bringing new resources to our campus in order to support the quality of the education we provide to our students. We have begun to do this over the last few years by starting to build an Advancement Foundation that now manages more than \$19 million in endowments and other assets which last year distributed over \$600,000 to campus programs and scholarships. We also received over \$3.5 million in new gifts from a significantly larger base of donors. Also, it is worth noting that construction has begun on the new Schatz Energy Research Center building; the University's first gift funded building. We continue to be grateful to Professor Peter Lehman for his leadership in this effort and to Mr. L.W. Schatz for his generosity. In addition, at the end of the last academic year, we created an HSU Enterprise Foundation whose mission is to operate some auxiliary enterprises of the university and to manage property owned by the university for the benefit of the educational program of HSU. Over time and improved economic circumstances, these entities should increase the university's independence from state support.

We also need to recognize our faculty and staff for their efforts in bringing resources to campus in the form of grants and contracts that also enrich their research and scholarship. This last year, you brought more than \$14.5M to campus that also enhanced the educational

experience for our students by involving them in research. Let's also welcome our new Dean of Research and Graduate Studies, Dr. John Lyon, who has come with some good ideas about how we can further increase the research dollars that our faculty and staff bring to campus. These resources do make a big difference in the quality of the education we offer to our students. Many of us became faculty because of the start we got working with faculty members doing research years ago.

One of the real advantages that HSU has for students and some faculty is a dedicated ocean-going vessel, the Coral Sea, that is used for teaching and research. However, these ships can be very expensive to maintain especially in the face of the budget reductions that the state has imposed upon us. We all owe a big vote of thanks to Dean James Howard and the Captain of the Coral Sea, Scott Martin, for securing contracts from the U.S. Geological Survey and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration that make our vessel self supported.

One of the consequences of the budget crisis is that the CSU must reduce the number of students that it educates if we are to continue to offer high quality programs. In 2010/11, the CSU will reduce the number of enrolled students by nearly 33,000 FTES which is about a 9.5% reduction from current enrollments. HSU is being asked to reduce our FTES by 6% which means that we will have 422 fewer FTES on our campus during the next academic year. This will help us to reduce our expenditures somewhat, but not enough to meet the \$6M reduction we must take from our 2010/11 budget. This decrease in

student numbers unfortunately comes at a time when our Student Affairs and Enrollment Management folks have become increasingly successful in attracting students to HSU. This current semester we have the largest ever first-year class at HSU building on four years of success in raising our student numbers. Even though we must reduce our enrollment next year, we have developed many of the tools we will need to rebuild our student numbers when the state's financial situation improves.

The Western Association of Schools and Colleges will return early in 2010 to complete the Educational Effectiveness Review prior to making a judgment about our reaccreditation. You will hear shortly from Professor Greg Crawford who is providing faculty leadership for our WASC review. The initial WASC review team made several important recommendations. Among them was the following:

A critical ingredient to this future will be the degree to which HSU can come together, unite around its emerging vision, and sustain a process for making good use of data and for making optimal decisions about its future. If HSU is able to create a compelling common agenda for which there is broad support among its constituencies, it seems that HSU will rise in the CSU system, in drawing power, and recognition.

Professor Crawford, Vice Provost Burges and their colleagues, the Provost and the Cabinet for Institutional Change have made progress on this recommendation, but we still have a long way to go. I ask that each faculty or staff member consider ways in which s/he can move

this agenda forward and would remind each of us of our vision arrived at by a faculty, staff and student group when they developed the strategic plan for HSU in 2004 which in shorter form is: *We will be stewards of learning that makes a positive difference.*

Let's turn now to some of our accomplishments and a few initiatives that we will try to move forward in the coming year despite the resource challenges. Later this morning, you will hear from one of our faculty, Professor Mary Glenn, who is an excellent teacher and who clearly engages students by means of her fascinating research studies. She is one of many such faculty that we have on our campus who integrate their research, their teaching and their community outreach to make HSU a great educational opportunity for students. I also remind us all of the success of two of our faculty, Professors Amy Sprowles and Jacob Varkey, who brought more than \$1M in grant funds to HSU from the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine. These funds are supporting a number of our students who are learning about stem cell technologies and engaging in fundamental research. These students will help form the workforce that is likely to produce new therapies for a number of human diseases.

I had the pleasure last year of being invited to watch the filming of a documentary on our campus directed by Professor David Scheerer. I watched as actors played their parts and students learned how to manage the technical machinery and participated in managing the filming. David's work was funded in part from a \$1M grant from the MacArthur Foundation. This is yet another example of how our faculty

engage our students in their scholarship to the students enormous benefit.

Next month, Professor Steve Sillett, who holds the Kenneth L. Fisher Chair in Redwood Forest Ecology, will be featured along with the Redwoods on the cover of National Geographic Magazine and in a Documentary that will air on the National Geographic TV channel.

Over the last several years, we have created several new entities on campus that are serving our students, faculty, staff and the community well. The California Center for Rural Policy grew out of our collaboration with the Humboldt Area Foundation and College of the Redwoods. It was begun in 2005 and receives substantial financial support from the California Endowment and other granting institutions. We were fortunate this year to be able to attract an HSU alum and long time member of this community, Connie Stewart, as its Executive Director. The CCRP is engaged in a variety of studies on the North Coast including studies of poverty, a rural health information survey, a Rural Latino Project and others. This work involves faculty and has provided internships for more than 50 students. The CCRP is a great example of the integration of research and teaching that serves the North Coast community well.

About six years ago we created the Office of Economic and Community Development to work with faculty, students and businesses in the community to make the expertise of the university available to our region. Three years ago, the OECD partnered with the local Small Business Development Center to compete for the Lead Center for the

Small Business Development Centers for much of Northern California. They were successful, and we recently merged the OECD and the Lead Center together to create the Office of Economic, Community and Business Development directed by Kristin Johnson. The OECBD manages more than \$5M annually and has been very successful in finding private matches for the federal money supplied by the Small Business Administration. This organization has provided substantial support for regional businesses as well as opportunities for faculty and students to work with local businesses. The OECBD has launched a competitive intelligence service that has conducted market research for dozens of local companies and connected local businesses to our faculty. This summer it created a statewide, paid internship program for HSU students and placed our students throughout the state. Several of them have been offered employment at the end of their internship. The office has also initiated the Tribal Economic Development Network with support from the US Department of Agriculture thanks to the ongoing efforts of Suzanne Burcell, one of our faculty members. These are just some of the good things that faculty, staff and students are doing together to ensure a quality education for students and to provide service for our community.

Our Student Affairs group recognized the growing importance of Latino students on our campus and created a student mentoring program. This program has resulted in a substantial increase in the retention of Latino students as well providing opportunities for advanced students to become mentors for first-year students. This last

year, 98% of the students who participated in the mentoring program registered for the current semester. I am particularly pleased that Student Affairs has created a Veterans support program located in the new Learning Commons. Kim Hall continues to provide passionate leadership for this endeavor.

HSU is also continuing to improve the physical campus. Unfortunately construction projects do result in some disruption to our daily lives. Parking is going to be tight on Thursday and Friday of this week because our contractor will be paving Harpst Street. So come to the picnic today and there will be some free JackPasses available so you can leave your car at home and take the bus. The College Creek student-housing complex is slightly ahead of schedule and will accommodate 434 more students on campus next Fall as well as adding attractive new buildings to one of the main entrances to the university. Shortly after the housing is completed, we will have a new, all-weather soccer field situated in the middle of the new buildings with new locker rooms just off of LK Wood. The Kinesiology/Athletics building and the new entrance to the Redwood Bowl will also be finished soon. If you haven't given yourself a tour of the new building you have a treat in store. There are remarkable new faculty research labs and wonderful teaching spaces in this building not to mention a beautiful new swimming pool. The new Learning Commons and Internet Café are taking shape in the library building. This project is the result of an excellent collaboration between Student Affairs, Academic Affairs and our Facilities group. These changes will reestablish our library as the

center of the university for our students and faculty and demonstrate to potential students that HSU understands the significance of the digital revolution for access to information. We recently completed the renovation of Harry Griffith Hall and have finally given our engineering faculty a place where they can all be together. We've also acquired the Mill Street house at the corner of Plaza Avenue that will allow the University to transform this important campus entryway. All these accomplishments are due to the leadership of retired vice president Carl Coffey and his successor Burt Nordstrom.

As I noted above, the next two years will be difficult for us, but the budget struggles we face also provide real and infrequent opportunity to make changes at HSU that will provide the basis for future successes. These are some of the initiatives that we hope to continue and expand and start in the next few months. Our WASC reviewers recommended that we base our decisions at HSU as much as possible on data. That recommendation supports the plan that the vice presidents and I believe is important to the future of our campus: the creation of an Office of Institutional Research. Accordingly, we have allocated some scarce funds to begin this effort in the coming year under the direction of the Provost's Office.

Shared governance has been an issue of concern on this campus for many years. Some of our sister campuses have developed models of shared governance that they believe are very effective. The vice presidents and I will work with the Academic Senate, the Staff Council, the Cabinet for Institutional Change and Associated Students to

identify faculty, staff and student leaders from other campuses and ask them to spend some time on our campus and advise us about ways that we might restructure shared governance at Humboldt to make it more effective and representative of the views of faculty, staff, students and the administration.

Humboldt State University must work to enlarge the numbers of courses that we offer fully online as well as hybrid courses using both digital technology and traditional methods of instruction. Despite some outstanding examples such as Professor Kathy Munoz's work in Kinesiology and the Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching, we need to encourage more faculty to develop online courses and to use technological approaches to improve learning. Accordingly, the Offices of the Provost and President will work together to design incentives to encourage faculty to adopt the technologies which pedagogical research has shown clearly to be effective.

In the last few years under the leadership of Professor Guy-Alain Amoussou, Dean Ray Wang and others, we have been successful in attracting an increasing number of international students to our campus. This is advantageous for several reasons not the least of which are the opportunities such students provide for our domestic students to experience other cultures. We will continue to support these endeavors with some increases in the budget and the recruitment of a full time director for the office of International Students.

The WASC process has encouraged us to consider a number of changes at HSU, but none have been as significant as the effort

initiated, with significant courage, by our Provost, Robert Snyder, to prioritize academic programs as a means of identifying programs that need to change or even disappear. I believe that years from now we will look back at this effort as a true example of shared governance that facilitated important change for HSU since a faculty committee evaluated the programs and made recommendations to the Provost. This is not an easy time to be an academic administrator, and it does demand real courage to make changes that will benefit students for decades to come.