

## University Meeting May 18, 2010

Greetings everyone. It's wonderful to see you today on this beautiful spring morning. In a few days, we will be back together at the XL Center in Hartford to send our 2010 graduates out into the world. In the meantime, we have a little business at hand to conduct.

As you know, I give a comprehensive "State of the University" address each August, and I am sure I will have much more to share with you at that time. I do have a few things to share with you today.

### GOOD NEWS

- Last year, we were named a **Great College to Work For**, an award based on the input of you and your colleagues.  
We have applied for the designation again and will know by this coming August.
- We were again named to the **President's Honor Roll for Community Engagement**. (This is a national award given by President Obama.)
- The Princeton Review has just named us a **Green College**.
- Our Business Information Systems students recently received first-prize at their National Conference for the website they created for the Covenant Soup Kitchen.
- Four visual arts and communication students produced a series of public service announcements for the 2010 Census that were selected to appear on CT television stations.
- Eastern topped the CSUS system in the state charitable giving campaign — I think that makes four years in a row. We're the smallest school, but we have a BIG HEART!
- A higher percentage of our students gave blood during the Red Cross blood drives than any of the other 3 CSUS schools or UConn.
- We received word earlier this spring that we are approved for design funds for our Fine Arts Building. (**APPLAUSE**) That's the critical first step in seeing that facility rise into the sky about three years from now. Congratulations to the Performing Arts and Visual Arts faculty—your dreams are bearing fruit. At that point, we will turn Shafer into a dormitory, adding another 240 beds to campus.
- We have received word that graduates from this year's class are going to graduate school at such places as Yale Medical School, Harvard's Environmental Management Program, the University of Chicago, Cal-Berkeley, and others.
  
- We know that dollars are tight, but through redeployment of staff and approximately \$7 million in grant funds to support the **Academic Services Center** and the Liberal Arts Work! initiatives, we are moving forward on our Strategic Plan. Now we will be turning our attention to assessing our progress this next year.
- We are well on our way to being prepared for October's NEASC site visit. We have had University-wide participation through committees, focus groups, and electronic messaging.

### BUDGET

I want to spend a few minutes talking about the budget. I know you will have heard some of this already, but we have been working diligently now for some time to maintain an atmosphere of transparency and openness in regards to the budget, and I pledge to continue that commitment. You have heard me say that we are in year two of a five-year problem.

With a projected state deficit of \$3.88 billion in FY12, I think we are wise to focus on one year at a time. Here's where we are at.

1. We balanced FY09 and FY10, largely due to your sacrifices and frugal budget management. You took pay freezes and furlough days to help get us through this. Thank you, thank you, thank you. In fact, even now, we are saving about a million dollars in this last quarter due to your willingness to delay or eliminate expenses.
2. Our Ad Hoc Budget Committee continues to meet and share its findings with the campus community. Through their support, we prepared a spending plan that received accolades in Hartford when I presented it earlier this month. Trustee Messina said that we were to be commended for our work at Eastern and that we did not do "conservative budgeting" at Eastern, but rather, that we did "aggressive budgeting."
3. Let's look at FY2011.
  - a. Everyone is due their raises come July, and that will cost us \$1.7 million.
  - b. We also have to prepare for the 27<sup>th</sup> payroll coming up in 2012; another \$2.7 million.
  - c. We are working hard to build up a reserve in consideration of NEASC Standard #9. This will help us deal with unanticipated expenses, such as the \$300,000 dishwasher we needed to buy this year.
  - d. The worst news I have received is that the state has already announced budget cuts for this coming year that amount to \$13 million for the system and \$2 million for Eastern.

We think we can manage the cuts and additional expenses, but I ask you now, in advance of FY2011, to be frugal as always with your budgets. We will continue to hold open unfilled positions and curtail other normal expenses as best we can.

As we move forward, I think it always helps to put things into perspective. North Carolina is dealing with a 20% cut in higher education funding. In California, faculty and staff are taking 24 furlough days. We are in relatively good shape, and if we stick together, we will get through this.

I say "stick together," but I want to make sure that we don't sound like a passive group of victims sitting on the street corner, waiting for the end to come. At Eastern, we are proud of our collective spirit but equally proud of our collective intellectual capacity. Part of our answer to the budget challenges we face has been the EASTERN WORKS-\$SMART initiative that we began more than a year ago.

I have asked Ken DeLisa and Dennis Hannon to give us an update on our highly successful Eastern Works-\$smart program. As they will describe, we have made managing our budget everyone's business at Eastern. Each of us can help by coming up with cost-saving ideas. By sticking together and working to find solutions, we will manage through these challenging economic times. Now, let's review the Work Smart Program.

### **Introduction of Undergraduate Research**

All 18 of our Strategic Plan initiatives have now been implemented — the "Exemplary Programs" initiative was recommended by the PAC on May 7. This initiative is a voluntary, pilot program to identify academic programs of excellence and those with a plan for reaching their potential of excellence at Eastern.

The project will support internal self-study and external peer review to provide the data and analysis for assessment of excellence.

I am very pleased to introduce our next agenda item. We have been conducting undergraduate research at Eastern for many years, but, as you all know, we recently reached a milestone that marks a new era at our University. I am referring to the approval of the Liberal Arts Work! graduation requirement by the University Senate this spring. **(SLIDE)**

I want to thank Nicole Krassas, Nancy DeCrescenzo, and the other members of the Liberal Arts Work committee for all their work in making this major initiative a reality. I also want to note that one of the keys of the success of the Liberal Arts Work! initiative will be the work of our Career Services Office.

With Title III funds, we have been able to expand services, especially to help students access those pre-professional experiences. One of the hires was Cliff Marrett, an Eastern alumnus and a strong advocate for experiential learning. Cliff, please stand.

Over time, all of our students will meet this requirement through a well-conceived program of pre-professional experiences, all designed to provide an experiential application of the excellent liberal arts education students receive in the classroom. Albert Einstein once said that “The only source of knowledge is experience.” I truly believe that connecting our liberal arts core to experiential learning will become our University’s competitive edge in the educational marketplace.

There are four ways in which students can meet the graduation requirement.

In addition to undergraduate research, which by our definition includes creative expression such as visual arts, performing arts and other creativity, students can also meet the requirement through internships, paid cooperative education placements, and service learning courses. Today, we want to focus on some examples of undergraduate research occurring at Eastern, one of the four components of Liberal Arts Work!

### **Historical Context**

According to a literature review done by Professor Drew Hyatt, undergraduate research began about 40 years ago at MIT. Within a decade, undergraduate research had been adopted by liberal arts institutions as a means to reenergize teaching through student projects that required in-depth inquiry and analysis.

Undergraduate research initially concentrated in the areas of science, mathematics, and engineering, supported by such funding from the National Science Foundation’s “Research Experience for Undergraduates” and other programs. The success experienced by liberal arts colleges served as the impetus for further expansion of undergraduate research to other sectors of higher education. National organizations like the “Council on Undergraduate Research” and the “National Conference on Undergraduate Research,” founded in 1978 and 1987 respectively, have grown substantially in membership.

Eastern is a Council on Undergraduate Research member, and both organizations have grown in terms of the diversity of disciplines within each organization.

While undergraduate research began in the sciences, it is now commonly found in the social sciences, humanities, and arts programs as well.

In fact, as found on its website, the Council on Undergraduate Research broadened its mission in 2002 to include all academic institutions and academic fields, and in 2005, held its first institute on “Mentorship, Collaboration and Undergraduate Research in the Social Sciences and Humanities.”

At Eastern, we have just celebrated our Ninth Anniversary of the Research Conference and Exhibition sponsored by the School of Arts and Sciences, and the Excellence Expo, sponsored by the School of Education and Professional Studies.

There were about 200 presentations given at these two conferences, supported by upwards of 75 faculty mentors.

At this year's conference, we heard about the trip that political science and environmental earth science students made to Jamaica to build a wind turbine, aided by research they conducted prior to their trip.

Two students received NASA fellowships to study fuel cell technology. If you saw the work of our visual artists, I am sure you were amazed as I was at the creativity of the sculptures and the beauty and diversity of the two-dimensional art. Other students are conducting research into autism, geological erosion, and robotics, and still others are engaged in sophisticated scholarship in the areas of art history and theatre set design. One student completed a sociological analysis of Frankenstein. That's amazing!

We are going to hear from three faculty/student groups today about their own research projects. First, we will hear about a pre-school literacy program in Willimantic; second will be the interdisciplinary Norwich 9 project, and third, a Marine Biology experiment on the coral reefs of French Polynesia.

I think it's very telling that all three projects have the ultimate goal of solving a social or global problem or examining the human condition. Our faculty and students want to be part of solving the world's challenges.

**Conclusion:** The fact is, regardless of major or career interest, every one of our students benefits from developing their research and analytical skills. While the liberal arts core provides a broad range of academic skills and a world perspective that students will be able to apply and adapt to situations throughout their lives, the Liberal Arts Work! component, including research like we heard about today, will give our students the ability to compete for jobs in a challenging economic environment. In so doing, they will engage communities while confronting and solving society's challenges, as liberally educated people who are fully prepared to assume professional and leadership roles in our great democracy.