

Spring Address 2021

Leading Our Next Chapter

Thank you, Provost Avila, and good morning, everyone.

Thank you so much for making the time to be here today. I know how extremely busy everyone is, so I appreciate you making this a priority for your morning. It's great to be able to connect with all of you virtually today,

I'd like to start out by welcoming new leaders on our campus:

- Our Provost, Dr. Mitch Avila
- And Ms. Becca Lawrence, Executive Director of Equity and Inclusion

I'd also like to express my gratitude to Toni DeBoni and Kaia Tollefson, who have joined Cabinet as Interim Vice President for Student Affairs and Interim Chief of Staff, respectively. In addition, I know many of you have taken on new roles and responsibilities as a result of these transitions, and I want to thank you for your willingness to step up and serve in these new roles for our campus and our students.

Also, welcome to the many faculty and staff members who have joined our academic community in this time of virtual teaching and remote work. You've joined us at such a consequential moment in our history and I can't wait to welcome all of you to campus and meet you in person.

Shortly after then-Chancellor White made the announcement about my appointment to this position, I began to think about the overarching principles and values that I want to guide this interim presidency. And I was immediately reminded of what drew me to Channel Islands. Throughout my interview experience, I talked with many faculty, staff, students and administrators – and it was so evident to me that there was a strong commitment to our mission and shared sense of purpose. And everything revolved around our students and their success – how we serve so many first-generation college students; students from historically underserved and marginalized populations; and most importantly, how we provide our students with transformational learning opportunities, both inside and outside of the classroom. And the foundation for student success is that our campus environment is one that strives to promote a strong sense of belonging and community – not only for our students, but a sense of community and shared purpose for our faculty and staff as well. During my time here, this clarity on the importance and value of our mission has only been strengthened and reinforced.

This clarity will help us lead while our nation struggles with climate change, racial and social injustice, political polarization, and the complexity involved with how we safely emerge from the coronavirus pandemic. When I think about how we've struggled as a nation to effectively cope with these challenges, I immediately think about the social psychology literature. Back in the day, we used to think that the most effective way to unite different groups of people was to identify a “common enemy.” As we've seen throughout our history, this is obviously not sustainable, and we are seeing this reality play out in the national news cycle every day. But what several decades of research has taught us is that the best way to bring different groups of people together is not through a common

enemy, but through a common goal. It is a shared sense of purpose that unites and brings people together.

And to me, that is the beauty of Channel Islands – our collective vision is our main strength. But that being said, we do have differences at CI, and I would say that our differences are not about our mission, but instead focus on our methodology – we all have different ideas on the best ways to achieve our mission-based goals. And as we move forward, we have to embrace and lean into the tensions that our differing ideas can produce. Productive tension is healthy – because some level of conflict, whether intrapersonal, interpersonal, or systemic - is a necessary component of both individual and systemic change. Valuing differences is an attitude and a habit that has to sustain the work we take on every day. But to get to this place collectively, we need to commit ourselves to cultivating the kind of relationships with each other that we want to see in our students and in our elected leaders when differences threaten division. Because if we do not invest the time and energy to navigate conflict and differences in healthy ways, it can very easily and quickly derail our efforts to achieve our goals. But if we do it in a way that embraces complexity rather than trying to reduce complexity to simplicity, the potential for change and success is truly limitless.

More specifically, I want to highlight and point to our mission-based learning outcomes statement. This outcomes statement is very personal to me, and in fact, I've continued to reference it throughout my time here. Because to me, this provides even more clarity and specificity to our mission, and beautifully captures everything we're trying to accomplish as a university. There's a lot to unpack in this outcomes statement, and my interpretation of it involves engaging students in real-world problems and doing so in an interdisciplinary fashion with an awareness and emphasis on diversity, equity and inclusion. Perhaps most importantly, students must then apply what they've learned, so they can contribute to the discourse on potential solutions – ideally as scholars and as practitioners – on micro and macro levels, using the research findings on best practices to inform this work. This will help ensure that our students will graduate from Channel Islands and be fully prepared to not only serve, but to also lead in their communities.

However, this is a tall task – it requires so many aspects of development - a high level of content and discipline specific expertise; leadership skills; an awareness and commitment to equity; the ability to be a critical consumer of information; perseverance through adversity; and a dedication to cultivating a growth mindset throughout their professional and personal lives. And this will require all of us – and all aspects of our university – to pull it off.

Our purpose is clear, as is my charge over the next 16 months. With my interim presidency, I intend to lay the essential groundwork for seeing CSUCI into the next five years and beyond. The following priorities are based on my own experiences and reflections, and the many voices I've heard over the past two months. And I truly believe that if we can move the needle and make some progress in these areas, the foundation for long-term success will be in place for our campus and for whoever serves as the permanent President moving forward.

Bridging Institutional Values

To start out, there are three high level conceptual areas that are vital to this foundation moving forward. First and foremost, we must make strides to bridge better our founding mission-based pillars and our Strategic Initiatives. The four pillars of our mission statement – international affairs,

community engagement, integrative studies, and multicultural engagement – place an emphasis on the importance of unity and the value of diversity. They’ve guided us for 20 years and have resulted in the creation of a university that has been nationally recognized on many fronts. These accolades are not happenstance. They are a direct result of our ability to serve and educate our students within the context of our mission.

But I want us to find ways to better highlight and honor our founding mission pillars within our Strategic Initiatives framework, and bring them to the forefront in fresh, innovative and forward-thinking ways. We need to be thinking about our mission pillars and mission-based centers in 2021 and beyond, while valuing the history of the centers’ work since 2002. I want to incentivize ways to engage faculty and staff in this process. To do this, we need to think about how we can embed this work in our curriculum and co-curricular programming and engage the mission-based centers in this process. And to do so, we need to be focused at every level – in team meetings, in our discussions with colleagues, in the building of our syllabi, policies, procedures, and practices, and in our interactions with students in curricular and co-curricular contexts.

One example that beautifully illustrates this integration is the work of our faculty and students on community-based research projects. I know we have many faculty who engage in this work, but a very recent example involved students in their sociology capstone course, supervised by Dr. Dennis Downey. Dr. Downey’s students partnered with the Community Advocacy Coalition, which is a non-profit social advocacy group in Ventura County, whose focus is to unify the community, organizations and individuals for the common good of our African American residents in this area. The students examined responses from a previously administered survey, which focused on issues of importance to the Coalition’s constituency, and they prepared a report with their full analyses of the responses. In addition to their quantitative analyses, they also implemented a qualitative component to their work and designed and conducted a series of micro-interviews with community leaders about issues relevant to the lives of African Americans in Ventura County. Their analyses are now directly informing the Coalition’s priorities and allocation of resources moving forward. Our campus was founded to meet the needs of our community and this combination of the high impact practices of undergraduate research, service learning and community engagement is a powerful illustration of how we deliver on our purpose.

I want to thank the Mission Based Centers, who help facilitate this type of work across campus, and the faculty and staff who actively engage with our centers. I hope to expand and incentivize these types of opportunities moving forward, but this will require a very intentional effort characterized by improved collaboration, an openness to new ideas, and the promotion of the continued evolution of our founding pillars.

Communication

Something I’ve heard repeatedly throughout my time here at Channel Islands is that we need to improve our communication. While we are still a relatively young campus, we are not the start-up campus we were even just a decade ago. And as such, we need to adapt our communication strategies to ensure better congruence with where we are in our organizational development. More specifically, we need to develop formal communication structures to ensure that our planning and decision-making processes are guided by good data, equity and inclusivity.

To that end, I want to create better structures to ensure equitable access and opportunities for direct communication with campus leadership. I will be meeting regularly with leaders of Academic Senate and will be attending the larger Senate meetings. I will also be meeting with leadership of Staff Council, Student Government and ASI Entities, as well as various affinity groups on campus as often as it is possible for me to do so. But I also understand that not everyone on campus is directly involved with these formal organizations, and I will be holding periodic office hours for open meetings with students, faculty and staff. Throughout this process, I hope to grow a campus culture of equitable, clear, and courageous communication throughout our University.

I ask each one of you to join me in this effort because even more importantly, this approach requires Directors, AVPs, Deans, and Vice Presidents to engage in local discussions to ensure that their decisions are made with a diversity of perspectives being considered. I want to empower our managers with the authority to make difficult and challenging decisions, but to do so through healthy and direct communication with the faculty, staff and students in their areas.

Shared Governance

Shared governance is another area that is vital to our foundation. I know we have a good conceptual understanding of shared governance but there are varying viewpoints on what shared governance actually looks like in practice. As such, I also want to establish some degree of common ground and agreement on the parameters of shared governance, and I hope to build on the progress that was made by the Academic Senate Executive Committee last year, before COVID diverted our lives and attention. I was fortunate to be able to directly work with the Senate Officers on these forums and would like to see this important work through. If you recall, the forums included faculty, staff and administrators. The Officers worked to organize the data that was collected, which provided us with data to inform the next steps in this process.

While the boundaries and parameters of shared governance are always a bit fuzzy, establishing a good understanding of roles and responsibilities is vital to our ability to move anything forward with some assemblance of efficiency. A big part of this is accountability. We cannot move forward in developing an understanding of shared governance without embracing individual and collective accountability as part of this process. We can take it as given that decisions are best made in consultation with the people most impacted by them, but someone must be held accountable for the final decisions. Our understanding of shared governance must include discussions on who is ultimately accountable for the different kinds of decisions we make – and then ensuring that those people are both entrusted with and accountable for their leadership. I will be working with our Senate officers to build out the next steps for these continuing conversations.

Racial and Social Justice

On a more specific and focused level, our commitment to racial and social justice must continue. I'm filled with appreciation for the folks on our campus that have been doing this heavy lifting for years, certainly long before I arrived. And this work has gotten more attention and momentum throughout my time here, but especially during this past year. Our goals for this work are defined in several documents, including our Strategic Initiatives, the 17-point "Racial Justice—A Commitment to Action" of Summer 2020, the 7-Point Framework for Realizing Racial Justice and recommendations from the President's Advisory Council on Inclusive Excellence of Fall 2020.

Many people across campus have been working toward these goals for many years at divisional and departmental levels. While it has been heartening to see broad engagement and enthusiasm for this work, we need to focus it in ways that will bring a sense of unified coherence and cross-divisional commitment to all these efforts. When I assumed the interim presidency, there was, and is, great work happening across divisions, but this work was not necessarily coordinated well centrally.

I want to acknowledge and recognize the work of our President's Faculty Fellow, Dr. LaSonya Davis, and Interim Chief of Staff, Dr. Kaia Tollefson. They were charged with leading our efforts on examining all of our existing guiding documents and recommendations, and using this data to develop a more digestible, tangible and actionable plan moving forward. What I appreciate most about their work is the level of rigor in their methodology. Through this Inclusive Excellence Action Plan or IEAP framework, they developed a more concise and targeted plan while still maintaining and honoring those original source documents.

Perhaps most importantly, our Inclusive Excellence Action Plan Framework fully incorporates the equity and anti-racism work currently underway. The overarching goal of this plan is to ensure that the work occurring across campus be better coordinated, that we avoid duplication of efforts and use of resources, expand the work that is happening in pockets more broadly across the university, and ensure accountability at all levels. In addition, this framework is designed to assess strengths, measure progress, and identify gaps – which will help inform recommendations and resource allocation moving forward.

With the full support, accountability, and enthusiasm for this work in place at the Cabinet level, the coordinated Framework will be launched this semester with engagement at all levels and across divisions. We have rolled out this framework to the leadership of various constituent groups across campus and have solicited feedback and recommendations to fine tune our model. I am proud to say that the initial response has been positive, with an appreciation for cabinet level accountability, cross divisional inclusion, and our efforts to engage more people into this work. Because for too long, we have relied on the same individuals to carry this work forward, and this model is intentional about finding a balance of broader engagement while concurrently ensuring the requisite expertise needed to effectively address these challenges to inform our work. This framework will allow us to be more intentional and better aligned across divisions in our work while providing continuous opportunities for measuring progress and ensuring accountability.

Inclusive Excellence Action Teams are being created now -- guided by me, Dr. LaSonya Davis, and Dr. Kaia Tollefson. These teams will be charged with planning and achieving progress in six focused categories of activity:

1. Provide Professional Development & Leadership Development for Racial & Social Justice
2. Recruit, Hire, and Retain a Diverse Workforce
3. Promote Inward- and Outward-Facing Advancement and Community & Government Relations Efforts for Racial & Social Justice
4. Work Continuously Toward Realizing a Campus Culture of Inclusive Excellence
5. Improve Data-Based Decision Making & Planning Processes
6. Facilitate Student Access & Success

I look forward to partnering with many of you in the months ahead to move this vital work forward. I will be hosting several brown bags in the coming weeks to provide an overview of this process and an opportunity for direct communication and dialogue about our plan moving forward. Please keep an eye out for those invitations.

Graduation Initiative 2025

Additionally, we must not lose sight of our work around Graduation Initiative 2025. My goal is to ensure that everyone on campus is aware of our goals and targets, and perhaps most importantly, where we currently stand in our progress on our graduation rates and equity gaps, so that we can hold ourselves accountable. But graduation rates are only the end-result, so to speak, and we need to be fully aware of the various student success metrics that contribute to graduation – retention and persistence rates; units attempted and completed; DFW rates; academic standing; college level math and English completion within the first year – all while ensuring that we are disaggregating the data by specific groups. And I will ensure that this data is readily accessible to the campus community, which will allow us to evaluate and better inform our interventions moving forward.

This data is relevant for all aspects of our university. Faculty and chairs can continue to assess program specific student success markers; examine bottlenecks and high DFW courses that interfere with degree completion and implement embedded support structures to address these challenges; and utilize this data to inform program review and student learning outcomes assessment. Our skills and habits in using data effectively must be honed and applied to decision making at every level – from academic planning to the hiring of staff and faculty and improving tenure-track density to resource allocation and assessment practices.

I want to acknowledge Enrollment Management and their real-time data dashboards – I check your dashboards every morning by the way – which include up-to-the minute real-time data points on enrollment, admissions status, intent to enroll. The dashboards even break these data down by major and other student demographics. (S29 end, S30 start) Student Affairs will continue their efforts to utilize data in evaluating the role of co-curricular programming and support services in student success, while collaborating with Academic Affairs on the integration of high impact practices. University Advancement is examining scholarship data to assess scholarship recipients from an equity lens and the role of scholarships and financial assistance in student success. They are developing ways to utilize data to better inform and assess their philanthropic priorities and illustrate how philanthropy plays a significant role in student success and eliminating equity gaps. In addition, our Foundation Board is embracing an Environment, Social and Governance values-based investing strategy, which ensures that our investment strategy is in full alignment with our institutional values. The Division of Business and Financial Affairs has continuously utilized data to examine institutional efficiency and perhaps most importantly, they have assisted in navigating the financial challenges brought on by the pandemic and have worked relentlessly in the allocation of Higher Education Relief Funding through the CARES Act. I am excited to announce that we recently received confirmation that our campus will be receiving additional federal funds through HEERF in the amount of \$14.8 million and it is our intention to disperse half of that amount directly to students – in the form of emergency grants and summer tuition assistance.

Because of this cross-campus work, we have seen gains in our graduation rates. When examining our Fall 2016 FTFT cohort, their 4-year graduation rate indicated a 7% increase when compared to the Fall 2015 cohort. This improvement brings our 4-year FTFT graduation rate up to 30.5%. And for the second year in a row, we have surpassed our graduation benchmark for transfer students with an 80.5% 4-year graduation rate. For context our GI 2025 goals for those categories are 40% and 78% respectively. Perhaps most importantly, we also reduced our equity gap in 6-year graduation rates for students from historically underrepresented groups from 9.9% to 2.86%. In fact, the Chancellor's Office just released their Equity Reports for each campus, and in their predictive models, Channel Islands was one of only seven campuses that they predicted would eliminate the equity gap for both historically underrepresented groups and Pell recipients. This model was based on our institutional data and trends. We talked about this report in cabinet yesterday, and I expect that you will be having more discussions about their models and recommended action steps for our campus moving forward.

Thank you, everyone, for your dedicated work each and every day in support of our students on so many levels. While this progress is promising, there is still much work to do, and this also comes back to our Inclusive Excellence Action Plan. I truly believe that the progress we make in our IEAP efforts will ultimately result in improved student success and our ability to realize our GI2025 goals and success for our students post-graduation.

Budget and Enrollment Management

I turn now to consideration of the evolving State Budget. I want to make a point to say that I am so proud of our how our campus was able to successfully manage the \$5.1 million cut we suffered last year to our permanent state-side allocation. As you know, this reduction was our share of a \$299M permanent cut to the systemwide budget. However, while we were able to create a plan to address that significant loss through outstanding work across divisions, it is clear that there is still more work to be done. This academic year, for example, we had originally projected a 5% decrease in annualized enrollment, which would have resulted in a \$1.9M loss in tuition revenue. With spring census being finalized earlier this week, we landed at a 3.2% decrease in annualized enrollment, which will result in a loss of approximately \$1.1M in tuition revenue. These tuition losses will be covered through reserves for this year. Additionally, our auxiliaries' losses in housing, food services and parking are projected to be in excess of \$12M and while we do not yet know what enrollment will be in 2021-22, applications were down systemwide. For budget planning purposes, we will use this year's annualized enrollment in our budget models – one of which is flat enrollment for next year, and gradually building back up to our funded FTES target of 6135 over the next 3 years.

The governor's January budget initially proposed an allocation of \$144.5M in new recurring dollars to the CSU, with \$114.5M for general operations and mandatory cost increases, \$15M for GI2025 basic needs initiatives, and \$15M for student mental health services and technology. The Governor's budget proposal also included \$225M in one-time dollars with \$175M going towards deferred maintenance, \$30M in emergency student aid, and \$10M in professional development. While this was a good starting point, we had to keep this in the context of our \$299M cut from last year, and as a system, we advocated aggressively for a full restoration of our budget. And just last week, the Governor indicated that he would be revising his budget request to include a full restoration.

While this is reason to be optimistic for next year, we cannot lose sight of the longer-term state budget outlook through 2025. While there is an unexpected surplus for next year and a projected 1.9% increase in tax revenue annually through 2025, that is not enough to cover increased expenses over this time. The state is projecting a deficit of more than \$5B in 2022-2023, which will eventually grow to over \$11B by 2024-2025.

In the meantime, I implore everyone on campus, faculty and staff, to work with our colleagues in Enrollment Management throughout the spring and summer to double down on our yield efforts for the incoming fall cohort and to ensure that we are doing all that we can with targeted retention efforts for continuing students. Moving forward, our strategic enrollment management plan will be a top priority for our campus, which must be directly informed by the development of our academic master plan and include equal attention to more data driven and targeted retention and yield efforts.

There is no doubt that the challenges we face today coupled with the experiences of our past, such as the 2008 Great Recession and the projected future downturn in state support ahead of us, necessitate our continued efforts to focus on alternative sources of revenue generation for the campus. We will see this through with a number of initiatives, including the construction of our new solar array, the ongoing work being done with HSI grants, and through the dedicated work of our team in University Advancement.

COVID-19

Moving forward, the health and safety of our campus will continue to be paramount in each and every decision we make. We appear to be seeing light at the end of the COVID tunnel - thanks to the record-shattering pace of vaccine development, increased testing accessibility, and our adherence to behavioral mitigation efforts. Because of this progress, the Chancellor announced that in-person instruction is anticipated to resume this Fall. We are modeling various scenarios in consultation with Environmental Health and Safety, Facilities and Ventura County Public Health and are working to identify our highest occupancy ceiling for the fall as a starting point in our planning. We most likely will **not** be able to mandate vaccination as a requirement for repopulation – there are a host of legal issues associated with this, but I understand that one of the main sticking points is the Emergency Use Authorization designation for the vaccines. That being said, even if the vaccine is widely distributed, we anticipate that varying degrees of behavioral mitigation strategies will still be required as part of our repopulation plan. In direct consultation with EH&S, Academic Affairs is working to develop the fall schedule of classes with various guidelines and cleaning protocols in mind; Student Affairs is working on housing occupancy models, the parameters of co-curricular programming, and student space availability; and we are collectively working to identify guidelines related to staff and faculty repopulation. We will be communicating on our progress and providing updates more regularly, and once plans are solidified, students and families can finalize their plans and faculty and staff will have ample time to incorporate best practices we have learned. In the meantime, I strongly encourage everyone who is eligible and able to participate in the important COVID-vaccine phases and tiers as they become available. We just sent out messaging to the campus community yesterday regarding vaccine availability for the education sector. Please make sure to visit regularly our Spring 2021 Semester website where you can continue to find information about the pandemic, vaccines and campus resources.

In the interim, we are working to identify current options and safety protocols regarding potential study spaces for students on campus and will continue to work closely with Ventura County Public Health on how to best prioritize and scaffold our easing of restrictions as local conditions indicate that it is safe to do so.

I want to take this moment to express my deep gratitude to all of you for the work that has already been done and is currently underway across campus to meet the many challenges that COVID has placed in front of us:

- Many members of our community have ensured that critical campus functions have not been interrupted. From our Contact Tracing Case Management Team, who centralized reporting for COVID cases and developed and implemented our contact tracing protocols; our Solution Center and the team in IT, our custodial staff, Public Safety personnel and more, herculean efforts were taken to ensure that our operations continued effectively and safely. We owe such a debt of thanks to our colleagues in these areas who kept the lights on, so to speak, while many of us worked from home.
- University Events has repeatedly turned on a dime to transform every single aspect of what they do to provide virtual event support and even some virtual instructional support to faculty over the fall.
- I am also proud to announce that our campus received the NASPA Virtual Innovation Award for our work with the Ekxobot chatbot and the Learning Online 101 program. Thanks to Dr. Jill Leafstedt and her team in Teaching and Learning Innovations for their work to provide 24/7 support for students in a truly innovative way.
- Outstanding leaders of our student clubs and organizations pivoted to create meaningful peer-to-peer connections in the virtual world.
- The Island website continues to be a one stop shop for virtual programming, events and support services for our students. Visit theisland.csuci.edu to see for yourself! Thanks to our colleagues in ASI and Student Affairs for this site.
- And our faculty have accomplished much in the last few months, transforming their work in creative ways in the virtual world. For example:
 - Dr. KuanFen Liu, Assistant Professor of Music and Director of the CSUCI Chorus, created a virtual choral space where roughly 60 members of the campus community came together to rehearse, culminating in the University's first ever virtual concert in December.
 - The increasingly successful micro-internship program in the Martin V. Smith School of Business & Economics, led by Drs. Ekin Pehlivan and Cindy Sherman with the support of Dean Andrzejewski, Michele Morris and Paulina Rodriguez, continues to grow with students taking on a single project for a partnering organization that can be done virtually rather than working physically at that organization as they would in a traditional internship.
 - 463 of our Early Childhood Studies students provided virtual STEAM instruction in science, technology, engineering, art and math to local children over the course of the Fall 2020 semester.

- Coming up later this semester, we will get to enjoy the CSU Virtual Arts Concert. Associate Professor of Dance Heather Castillo is involving seven CSU campuses in an online artistic presentation answering the question “What is resilience?”
- In April we will also see a virtual take on the highly successful Science Carnival under the direction of the Science Wizard himself, Professor of Chemistry Dr. Phil Hampton.
- And it’s important to remember that accomplishments are not always those things you can hang on your wall, especially during the extraordinary time that we are living through now. Accomplishments can also be helping children finish their homework, helping to care for ill family members, and finding ways to restore a sense of balance and personal wellness.
- I’ve also heard countless examples of staff and faculty going above and beyond for our students -- from personally purchasing textbooks for students who could not afford them, providing mental health first aid during and outside of office hours, leading fundraisers, creating virtual “hang out” spaces where students could have a fun venue to distract from the stressors of life, and many more.

I can’t begin to express my gratitude for this work and all that I haven’t mentioned. I’m incredibly grateful for you all.

In closing, these are the priorities that will guide my work in the coming months, and I hope they resonate with each of you as well. Leadership happens in every space and level in an organization, and we will achieve our goals only if those spaces are occupied by people wanting to help move us toward our common purpose.

I know there are likely many questions and comments arising for you now after hearing this first campus-wide address from me. As I mentioned earlier, I want to provide a space for that healthy dialogue to occur. I hope you will join me for office hours – look for more information coming soon -- and I look forward to seeing you virtually and hopefully, on campus soon.

Thank you all for taking the time to be here today. Take care.