

## **2014 President's Fall Address to the University**

### **Dr. Tony Frank, President**

Welcome! It's wonderful to be back here on the Oval to celebrate the beginning of another great year at Colorado State University. Thanks, as always, to the greatest Marching Band in America for its performance here and at so many campus events over the past several weeks – you're amazing.

I'm going to start my remarks today by talking about one student –Alison.

- She wasn't what we think of as an average student –
  - she was a little bit older,
  - a CSU employee, working full-time,
  - taking classes using her faculty-staff study privilege.
- She didn't have a graduate student stipend or any direct financial assistance from her college,
  - but she wrote grants that allowed her to attend professional meetings to present her science.
- Somehow, she managed to work a 40-hour week, collaborate with her Professor Tony Koski on research, and still maintain a 4.0 g.p.a.
- And in August, she graduated with her Ph.D.

Alison Stoven O'Connor was – and is the Extension Horticulture agent in Larimer County – and what she accomplished in five years – while remaining fully committed to serving the people of Larimer County -- is remarkable. And she deserves our congratulations!

Now I mention Alison because of time: 5 years to be exact. Five years can make an enormous difference...in the life of a student – and in the life of a University. As I approach the beginning of my 7<sup>th</sup> year as president, I'm reminded that five years ago this month was my inauguration – here on the

Oval. I remember it was hot, and I think I recall that in my remarks that day, we talked about the University's founding purpose –

- to discover new knowledge,
- to extend that knowledge beyond the borders of campus,
- and above all, to serve students like Alison -- hard-working, persistent, self-sufficient students with enormous drive and unlimited potential.

But we also spoke of the daunting challenges we were facing at that time – challenges that are hard to see now as we saw them then since we now know how many of them resolved. We discussed

- a devastating economic and debt crisis,
- an on-going war with religious overtones,
- a growing divide between the “haves” and the “have not’s”
- and a future that could not be clearly seen in the darkness of the abyss on which we all stood as a society.

Looking back now, with a half decade of history between us and that day, there are few among us who would argue that we are not in a far better position now than we were then – and far better than we had expected to be, if we're honest. At a time when the urge to just crawl under the covers and hide was very real, this university instead rose to its feet, looked that future directly in the face, focused on the fundamental reasons we exist, and embarked on a period of extraordinary progress.

Consider what we achieved, together:

- During a time when our state support declined 30%, our 4-year graduation rate went up 14%, putting us well on our path to attain our stretch goal of an 80% 6-year graduation rate.

- The 1<sup>st</sup> year retention rate is now up to almost 87% -- including the single largest 1-year retention rate increase in CSU's history last year.
- We kept our eye on the ball with 30% increases in academic and student support expenditures and flat spending on administration.
  - We've added 6 new academic departments or special academic units,
  - 13 new graduate degrees,
  - 12 new undergraduate majors,
  - And 17 new undergraduate minors.
- While growing the total faculty 13 percent in five years to keep pace with record enrollment, we've also had a 13 percent increase in women tenure-track faculty and a 17 percent increase in minority tenure-track faculty.
  - 59% of our classes today have 30 students or fewer, and our student:faculty ratio is only about 17 to 1.
    - And while most of that has been accomplished due to hiring adjunct faculty,
    - We're making great progress on being a national leader in how we treat our adjunct faculty – something that will continue to be an area of emphasis for this year and beyond.
- We seized the opportunity provided by the construction environment to build a campus that will serve this university for generations to come...
  - adding 1.3M new gross square feet of space, investing just over \$1/2B – more than 60% directly for academic instructional space. In the last five years, we've built the first new classroom buildings in decades, created exceptional new living-learning communities,

and upgraded every general assignment classroom on campus into technology-enabled “smart” classrooms.

- We’ve done this, of course, in a challenging fiscal environment that forced a 32% increase in the cost of attendance – an increase that none of us welcomed but that we helped manage through an innovative scholarship program we called Commitment to Colorado,
  - fueled by a 158% increase in institutional need based financial aid
  - and an 80% increase in Foundation scholarships.
  - total annual financial aid at the institution has increased \$27M over 5 years.
- The most recent National Science Foundation Higher Education R&D survey ranked us among the top 10 percent in the country – an all-time high for Colorado State University that reflects our tremendous faculty productivity and seven consecutive years of research expenditures exceeding \$300M -- externally funded awards were up 14% this past year over the year before and industry funding of research was up 24%.
- CSU has continued to gain top of mind awareness among people surveyed across Colorado, and the engagement of the university across the state has never been stronger.
  - We now serve every county in Colorado through our Extension and outreach programs, flipping the extension model to allow communities to drive the services they receive;
  - and as a result, we’ve seen a 4% increase in satisfaction of our partners, the County Commissioners, despite funding reductions that both we and they have had to manage through.

- Thanks to the leadership of people like Carol Dollard, Tonie Miyamoto, Brian Dunbar and many others, our campus continues to rank as the most sustainable university in the country in the nation's premier analysis of higher education sustainability.
- We transformed a vision for internationalizing our campus from words on paper to reality,
  - with important new international partnerships,
  - expanded opportunities for global research collaboration and education abroad,
  - and a dramatic increase in the number of international students coming here to be part of our campus community.
- And all of this success has contributed to a 147% increase in private giving to our University over the past five years, with a record high \$143.3 million raised in FY14 alone and unprecedented levels of alumni engagement. In five years, we've increased the number of scholarships we offer our students by more than 200, and we've endowed 4 new faculty chairs.

Behind each of these data points are wonderful stories, progress to be celebrated. Above all, there's the story of a community – our community – that refused to settle even during a time when we had every excuse to do just that. Instead, we kept our focus on moving forward, doing better, and *settling for nothing less than excellence* across every part of this university.

And so with those 5 years behind us, we can – and should – consider our future.

- Now I won't stand here before and say that the future that we face is not without challenges.
  - As you've all heard me say, the long-term solution to the funding of American public higher education remains the greatest challenge of our age; and I believe our response to this will, in part, define our generation.
  
- But that challenge – like a progressive disease – waxes and wanes, and I also can't stand before you today and say that the specific challenges we will face in the next 5 years will exceed those through which we have already passed.
  - And this observation presents us with an opportunity – the chance to choose how we will approach these next 5 years.
    - There is an argument to be made that we have made strong progress, now is the time to consolidate our gains, catch our breath and celebrate the moment. There's much to be said for this line of thinking: we pause too seldom to celebrate amazing successes, and preparing for what CSU will face on the eve of her 150<sup>th</sup> birthday deserves thoughtful preparation and energy.
    - But I cannot help the feeling that this is not what has made CSU who we are. “Good enough” has never been our mantra. We are people who wipe the sweat off our brow, roll up our sleeves, and start on the next task at hand.
  
- CSU is a legacy built by people of enormous courage, who refused to settle for the status quo –
  - – people like John Mosely, who came here to attend Colorado A&M even though he couldn't stay in the same hotels as his football teammates because he was black, and who left school to join the famed Tuskegee Airmen.
  - – people like Polly Baca, who as a young girl sat on a side aisle in her church, wondering if she could someday sit on the center

aisle...and who used that experience as motivation to get to CSU and later to become the 1st Latina elected to a state house of representatives.

- – people like Professor Maury Albertson, who dared to envision a new way for educated young Americans to make a difference worldwide – and transformed his vision into a blueprint for the Peace Corps.
- CSU is the people who continue to inspire us with their humanity –
  - – people like our dear friend Tom Sutherland, who endured years of captivity in Beirut and still retained his spirit of optimism and hope for a future of peace and understanding
  - – people like alumnus Dennis Repp, and Dave & Gail Liniger, whose extraordinary generosity has transformed the lives of young veterans returning from combat in the Middle East to pursue an education here at CSU
  - – and people like three extraordinary alumna
    - Alison Stoven O’Conner, who has transformed that precious resource of time into an education that in turn transforms our community.
    - —people like Becky Hammon, who continue to break down glass ceilings for women in athletics.
    - And people like Amy Rouen Van Dyken whose courage simply takes away our breath – and our excuses.
- And CSU is all those people who will pass through these halls in years to come
  - – the boy on the Eastern Plains who’s only now discovering his passion for learning other languages
  - the girl in Aurora whose success in middle school biology has made her think about a career in animal sciences
  - the high school senior in Alamosa who has a business idea he think could transform the world.

These people will be CSU, and we owe it to them – and all who have gone before –

- to push ourselves and this institution to be better,
- to reach farther,
- and to settle for no less than being the finest land-grant research university in the country.

Land-grant universities were created to put the American Dream within the reach of everyone, regardless of family history, wealth or status. But over the past five years, during the economic downturn from which we still have not fully recovered, many have felt that their own American Dream had been foreclosed upon – pushed beyond their reach. Even more devastating to our country's future than the erosion of our economy has been this erosion of hope and faith in the future. The land-grant university – and its mission of access and opportunity – remains one of the best tools this country has for reigniting that dream -- and the hope, the progress, and the possibility it embodies. When we push CSU to do more, to be better, *that* is our purpose. *That* is our mission.

Can we rest while qualified students are not having the success we know they are capable of?

Can we pause when we can see ways to foster the creative environment of discovery and to deliver new knowledge to our society?

Can we sit back and relax when; with a little bit of effort and investment, we could turn an excellent program into the best of its kind?

Can we turn away when we see there remains inequity in the way our adjunct faculty members are treated?

Can we tolerate the fact that our university does not represent the society we were created to serve?

Can we – for a single moment – celebrate when we know our women colleagues fail to enjoy the same environment we men so often take for granted – an environment of equality, fairness, an environment free from fear?

***Will*** we accept the loss of opportunity and potential that comes with each year we fail to address these issues?

Lincoln once said, “Every effect must have its cause. The past is the cause of the present, and the present will be the cause of the future. All these are links in the endless chain stretching from the finite to the infinite.”

The pride we feel today is because of hard work already performed. And the challenges we face today are the result of yesterday’s work left undone. If we wish to leave – as our legacy – a university with a future filled with more pride in our accomplishments and less with regret at what we left undone – and that means we have work to do.

My father used to say that talking shouldn’t be a verb because it doesn’t do anything. And I suspect that means its time for me to stop talking so this university can get back to doing the work we know is before us.

But make no mistake – this work is not done by committee. It is done in the quiet of the individual human heart.

By each and every one of us.

Each time we answer the question, “Is there work to be done?” with “yes”; “When should it be begin?” with “now”; and “who should get it started?” with “me.”

I want you all to know that there is no one with whom I would rather address these questions than all of you. It has been my honor and privilege to work alongside you at this great University.

Here's to another great year at CSU -- and Go Rams!