

**President's Faculty and Staff Meeting
January 9, 2012**

[Slide 1]

Good morning! I hope everyone had a wonderful holiday and came back refreshed and ready to go!

Wasn't that a wonderful and inspiring video?

This is the second in a series of videos celebrating what a Texas A&M-Corpus Christi education is all about – a challenging yet supportive educational experience with faculty and staff who get to know and work one-on-one with students.

In this case, Kakali Battacharya is committed to utilizing 21st century instructional methods to find ways to motivate and inspire students to learn.

If you are interested in participating in the “Why I Teach” series, please contact Provost Chris Markwood.

Today, I want to highlight some of our accomplishments over the fall in the context of our strategic plan as well as take a look forward.

I'll lay out the major areas of focus and our capable provost, Dr. Chris Markwood, will fill in some details a little later.

I also want to spend some time on how state and national issues are affecting us and how we will stay focused on our mission as we go forward.

But first, in case you have not seen them, I wanted to show you our new university flag and bring a special visitor on stage.

We first unveiled our new flag at the state of the university event, but without our usual gale force wind blowing, it wasn't easy to see it.

[next slide 2] here you can see that it keys on our colors and brings in a nautical theme consistent with the university's location.

And now our special visitor ...[fight song starts, Izzy comes through audience and on to stage ... high fives Killebrew and Markwood ... does a dance to a few bars of fight song ... and exits stage].

[next slide 3:]

Thank you, Izzy!

It was time to replace the Izzy “suit” as it was wearing out and more than a little “ripe.” After a series of focus groups, we have adopted this slightly updated Izzy with a smaller mask, less restrictive and hot suit, and board shorts that reflect our Texas coastal location a little better than a grass skirt! You’ll see on the screen an explanation of the changes and the URL where this graphic can be found.

Turning now to a little drier subject ... our strategic plan is built around the three overarching themes of excellence, engagement and expansion. We have ten major goals within that framework and many strategies and action plans. We can’t do everything at once, so there have to be priorities. Working with the cabinet, I identified the following five priorities.

They are: [next slide 4] [one slide with all, but fly in as Dr. Killebrew says them]

- [click] maintain academic excellence.
- [click] maintain enrollment expansion with targeted recruiting and strategic program growth.
- [click] expand external funding for sponsored projects, research and development.
- [click] engage in serving the community and helping it prosper.
- [click] provide infrastructure to support growth.

Let’s look at these one by one.

- [next slide 5] maintain academic excellence.
 - Maintaining academic excellence is our bottom line. It must be the driving force behind all that we do.
 - I told you last fall that as our academic leader Dr. Markwood would be engaging the campus in how we will look and function as a 21st century institution of higher education dedicated to excellence.
 - Specific areas of focus were to be retention, advising, distance learning and developing capacity to be a learner-centered organization.
 - Chris is going to update you in detail on these initiatives in a few minutes.
- [next slide 6] Maintain enrollment expansion with targeted recruiting and strategic program growth.
 - Because of how we are funded by the state, to maintain our financial stability, we must grow. However, it must be strategic growth in enrollment along with strategic program development.
 - [next slide 7] We have grown fairly consistently since admitting freshmen and sophomores in 1994 as you can see in this slide.

- [next slide 8] We have done this by focusing our recruiting efforts in major metropolitan areas as well as locally. In the smaller inset map you see that most of our enrollment came from the Coastal Bend in fall 1993. In the larger map you can see that our enrollment is now from all over the state, but especially the major metro areas.
- However, we have not perhaps been as strategic as we needed to be in our approach. Under the current situation, with cuts to financial aid and continued economic concerns, it will be more important than ever to get it right.
- We are already seeing some softness in enrollment numbers. Our certified enrollment from last fall was 10,162, up just 1.3 percent from the previous fall.
- This spring because of a change in process, we don't have good "like day" comparisons. However, it appears that any increase will be slight.
- Understanding who our students are is vital. [next slide 9]
 - We are 80 percent undergraduate, 18 percent master's and two percent doctoral students.
 - We continue to have a predominantly female enrollment at 62 percent.
 - Our campus is more and more diverse ethnically. We have no majority ethnicity and are getting closer to being designated as a minority serving institution rather than solely a Hispanic serving institution.
 - Also, 35 percent of our students receive need-based Pell grants and about 50 percent are the first in their family to attend college.
- When we look at growing enrollment, retention is as important as recruitment.
- Although we are moderately selective in admissions, as you just saw we have many first generation students as well as others whose K-12 experience did not prepare them as well as we would like.
- We must support the success of those we admit with the appropriate expectations, programs and tough love.
- We had a preliminary visit from Noel-Levitz, who has given us some good suggestions on recruiting and retention and we have our enrollment management task force at work. Again, Chris will fill you in on details on these initiatives shortly.
- On the academic program side, we have been strategic in the programs we have added, understanding that we can't be all things to all people.

- In a recent review by the coordinating board of low performing programs, our attention to this proved beneficial.
- Looking to the future, we do have a number of programs in various stages of development and Chris will be giving you the details.
- [next slide 10] expand external funding for sponsored projects, research and development.
 - On the research side, a longer-term goal is to be named an emerging research university by the coordinating board. In the shorter term that means being intentional about building our research capacity.
 - I'd like to share a few of our successes in funded research from this fall. [next slide 11]
 - [double click] Riccardo Mozzachiodi --\$173,973 National Science Foundation grant to show how brain circuits change when an animal encounters an aversive stimulus.
 - [double click] Darek Bogucki -- \$800,000 grant from the Gulf of Mexico research initiative to investigate fate of petroleum in the environment from the Deepwater Horizon spill.
 - [double click] Joann Canales – a USDA-funded project known as “CULTIVAR: Connecting Underrepresented Latinos to Integrate Values and Academic Resources.”
 - [double click] Deborah Overath -- \$136,854 U.S. Fish and Wildlife and Texas Parks and Wildlife grant to provide information to resource managers for the recovery and reintroduction of the endangered south Texas ambrosia – which I'm told does not involve coconut, oranges or marshmallows.
 - [double click] Mary Jane Hamilton – a grant from the Obama administration to work with key military leadership and training staff to identify replicable strategies to align enlisted health care training and nursing academic credit. This extends an existing three-year grant focusing on Texas veterans.
 - [double click] Luis Cifuentes – \$750,000 National Science Foundation funded research coordination network on climate, energy, environment and engagement in a semiarid region that will develop an innovative model for conducting interdisciplinary region-specific sustainability research closely tied to the needs of highly engaged local stakeholders.

- On the development side, [next slide 12] although we have just finished a capital campaign that brought \$37 million to the university for scholarships, endowed professorships, program start-up and building, our quest for the funding that allows the edge of excellence must be continuous.
- To increase our capacity for private fundraising, we are engaging the deans in this process more. In fact, they all attended a workshop with development staff this fall.
- I would also mention that when we go to foundations and corporations for funding, they want to know if our own people support the institution. I am always proud to say that many of our employees give back to the university through the faculty staff campaign, which allows you to support the department or program you designate.
- In calendar year 2011 year, 42 percent of employees contributed.
- My congratulations and thanks to all of you, but special kudos to the employees in the college of nursing, who led the way once again with a 97 percent participation rate!
- The 2012 campaign is underway and I'm sure Trent's staff will be happy to help you. In fact, they are providing information and forms in the lobby.
- [next slide 13] engage in serving the community and helping it prosper.
 - We must never forget that we are a public institution, and as such we must be intentional about serving our local community and the needs of the state.
 - The primary way we serve our community is through education and the economic and social benefits of an educated citizenry. But our engagement in the community must extend beyond that.
 - [next slide 14] BoldFuture for the coastal bend, the community visioning effort which we provide leadership for, is one example. We saw that for the university to prosper, the community must prosper and BoldFuture is a way to help steer the community in a positive direction.
 - [next slide 15] the business innovation center is another good example of how we are serving the community and giving our students opportunities for learning at the same time.
 - Many faculty include academic service learning in their classes. In fact, Karen Middleton's leadership and managerial effectiveness class was featured prominently in the *Caller-Times* recently for their work for Foster Angels of

South Texas and Christmas in November boxes for service members in Afghanistan.

- We would like to be more intentional in the area of academic service learning, however, and Chris is going to tell you more about this and the work of the “Beyond the Core” task force.
- [next slide 16] provide infrastructure to support growth.
 - We are in challenging times, but through careful stewardship we are doing everything possible to provide the infrastructure necessary to support growth.
 - By infrastructure, I mean physical infrastructure and our human capital, our most important infrastructure.
 - Although we did have to cut 31 staff positions, the good news is that our hiring freeze has been suspended and we are filling critical positions that come open.
 - In addition, because they are funded from dedicated advising and distance learning fees, we will be able to hire an advising director as well as two instructional designers to help support faculty.
 - Provost Markwood is also working hard to make the most of funding available for faculty and has been able to authorize filling 30 faculty positions.
 - On the physical infrastructure side, we are at the point where major building projects on the island have been completed and none are currently on the horizon.
 - [next slide 17] however, we do expect ground to be broken in march for the soccer and track complex on the momentum campus.
 - Speaking of the momentum campus, demolition is complete on the side where ball fields were located. The three buildings that remain will be used for storage of grounds equipment and for a police substation.
 - Should there be a miracle and funding become available, our priorities for major buildings [next slide 18] are for life sciences for students in the newly renamed college of science and engineering, fine arts for students in the newly created school of arts, media and communication, and additional library space.
 - Expansion of the University Center is also a need, but funding for it will come from student fees.
 - Some projects, either recently completed or started, will help us make the best use of the space we do have.

- Renovations in Corpus Christi Hall made space for disability services and distance learning as well as reconfigured space for it.
- We're also creating a center to welcome prospective students and their families [next slide 19] adjacent to lee plaza at the site of the former college of business computer lab. This is an illustration of how it might look.
- Work underway or starting soon includes conversion of the blucher conference room to research space and installing some modular buildings behind blucher for lab space.
- I've teased Kathy Funk-Baxter about creating a trailer park on campus, but she assures me what she has chosen [next slide 20] will not look like the pictures on the right [click], but more like those on the left [click].
- [slide 21] Also, I'm sure a few of you will be glad to know that Starbucks should be opening soon, along with Subway.
- Plans are for the bottom line deli in the O'Connor building to open after spring break. I know Dean Abdelsamad will be especially pleased about the bottom line deli!
- We'll also have Simply to Go, a mobile cart providing breakfast, lunch and snack items at various locations around campus.

[next slide 22] I'd like to turn now to what is happening at the state and national level and provide a little perspective on how that is affecting us.

On the state level, let me give you the good news first. The comptroller recently certified sufficient revenue that cuts to higher education of \$250 million in fiscal year 2013 will not be triggered.

That is very good news.

Nonetheless, it doesn't mean we should all relax and think a rosy future is guaranteed. As I get ready to talk about what may happen ... I'm reminded of a quote said to come from Mark Twain ... "predictions are very hard to make – especially when they deal with the future."

But here goes ... for the foreseeable future, despite rising sales tax revenues and lower unemployment, the Texas funding picture is still very shaky.

Some of the factors include the uncertainty over school finance, underperformance of the margins tax as well as some of the accounting tricks used to balance the budget this biennium. Some predict that we will begin the next biennium with as much as an \$11.9 billion deficit.

In releasing her revenue estimate in mid-December Comptroller Susan Combs cautioned that “economic troubles elsewhere in the nation and the world could cause problems.” She said that “the overall picture is one of slower-than-normal recovery with above-average risks of a new recession.”

The National Governors Association and National Association of State Budget Officers have said that although state revenues nationwide are slowly rising back toward pre-recession levels that they are still being impeded by unemployment and a shrinking amount of federal money.

They also said that at the same time, increases in Medicaid spending are expected to consume a larger share of state budgets in the coming fiscal year and that these patterns mean there will be little left to restore higher education budget cuts from recent years.

To give you some perspective on the direction of state funding in recent years, [next slide 23] in 2001, state funding accounted for 52.6 percent of our revenue. In 2011, it was 36 percent.

We have made up some of that with increases in tuition and fees, with students now providing 29 percent as opposed to 22 percent of our revenue.

However, if we are to keep higher education affordable for our students, then increases in tuition and fees have to be approached very cautiously.

Congress is also making changes to Pell Grants, which 35 percent of our students receive. In December Congress voted to preserve the Pell grant maximum award at \$5,550.

The trade-off to save \$11 billion over the next decade was to reduce the income level to receive the maximum Pell award from \$30,000 to \$23,000 and reduce the number of years Pell awards can be received.

What does all this mean for us?

We will continue moving forward. But we will also continue to budget and spend conservatively and look for ways to be more efficient, such as making summer school more profitable.

Being conservative and efficient is what has kept us sound so far.

If we are wrong in assuming that the budget roller coaster ride has not ended, then we will have money to invest.

If we are right in our assumption that there are still dips to weather, then we will not be gutted when they occur.

Yes, it’s a nail biting kind of time, but also an invigorating time to be in higher education. You can think of roller coaster rides as just plain scary or you can think of them as thrilling.

Or maybe some of both. That’s how I see it.

I'd be lying if I tried to pretend I wasn't concerned. But I'm also excited about the opportunities we have to rise to these challenges and reinvent ourselves as a 21st century institution of higher education.

Now, it's my pleasure to turn this over to Provost Chris Markwood, to talk in more detail about the academic agenda.

[Chris speaks]

[Flavius returns]

Thank you, Chris. I'm sure you all know by now that Provost Markwood likes to foster a friendly environment that makes coming to work a pleasure -- but that he also has high expectations for what we can all accomplish together.

I'd like now to introduce new colleagues who joined us since our last meeting through a short PowerPoint presentation.

[show presentation of new employees]

Would all of you please stand and let us welcome you? [lead applause] we are pleased that you have chosen to join the islander family.

Next, I'd like to take note of a few folks or areas that have received major awards or appointments this fall. Would each of you stand when I call your name and remain standing? Please hold your applause until all have been named. [next slide]

- [double click] first is Pam Meyer who was named a Regent's Professor by the Texas A&M University System Board of Regents.
- [double click] Vanessa Jackson received a pen southwest book award in fiction for her book, "small displacements."
- [double click] Evan Ortlieb received the jerry johns promising researcher award from the association of literacy educators and researchers.
- [double click] Richard McLaughlin was appointed to the outer continental shelf scientific committee, which advises the bureau of ocean energy management.
- [double click] Ross Bernhardt won first prize in the Amadeus choral composition competition in Spain and also traveled to England to hear the premiere of another of his award winning choral works by the Phoenix Singers of Shrewsbury.
- [double click] Edward Tyndall's documentary "Reconvergence" was selected for inclusion in the International Independent Film Week at Lincoln Center in New York.

- Also, the division of student affairs received the Ted K. Miller achievement of excellence award from CAS, the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education.

Let's give all of these folks a big round of applause! [lead applause] as always there are many, many more I could have mentioned – but we would have been here a long time!

I'd also like to give special recognition to a group of faculty and staff. Among us we have a dedicated group of faculty and staff who consistently volunteer to help with island days, which are the events held on Saturdays several times a year to bring prospective students and their families to campus.

There are too many to name you all individually, but I would ask that if you volunteer to help with island days, please stand so we can all give you a big round of applause for what you do for the university. [lead applause]

Thank you! We want you to know that your efforts are not going unnoticed and that they are appreciated!

I want to thank all of you for what you do every day for the university and our students. Working with such dedicated people in such a beautiful setting is truly an honor.

We have recently hosted various visitors from the A&M System offices as well as consultants or program reviewers. All remark on what a beautiful campus we have. But they also comment on the great feeling there is on this campus – how the commitment and cooperation are so evident.

That's something I pledge to do my part to ensure we never lose.

[next slide 25] I hope all of you have a wonderful semester!