Faculty-Staff Meeting  
Monday, January 14, 2013

Welcome

Welcome back! I hope you had a wonderful holiday and that not too many of you succumbed to the flu that is going around.

We’ve just seen another in our inspiring series of videos on “Why I Teach.” This one features our First Year Seminar Instructors, who help our first-time students get their feet on the ground and learn how to successfully navigate their college careers.

Mark McNamara, as you saw, connects with the students through his own experience of being a first generation student. The passion the instructors feel for ensuring that their students succeed is clear.

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

This morning I’d like to update you on enrollment, various searches, facilities, what the legislative session holds for us, and touch on the status of our strategic planning efforts.

Enrollment and New Students

In case you did not hear, our fall enrollment was finalized at 10,508, an increase of 3.4 percent. We also had the largest freshman class ever at more than 1,700 students. It appears our marketing campaign is paying off.

As of Friday afternoon, our spring enrollment was 9,251. We won’t know the final outcome until after classes start, but it does look positive that we will have an increase.

We experimented in January with a pilot mini-mester. I am pleased to announce that we had 16 classes with 373 students.

These increases are especially important now because we are in a base year – meaning that our enrollment now will help determine our funding for the next two years.

Leadership/Search Updates

We have quite a few searches underway. First, candidates for graduate dean may begin arriving on campus the latter part of this week. Watch Campus Announcements for details on open forums with candidates for this position.

We also have searches in various stages for director of planning and institutional research, the director of institutional effectiveness, and the director of recruitment and admissions.
Finally, I’d like to mention that we are also beginning the search for a new dean for the College of Business. As many of you know, Dr. Abdelsamad has announced that he will return to the faculty at the end of the spring semester.

Moustafa has led the college very ably for 21 years and I want to thank him for his service to the university, the faculty and to the many graduates of the College of Business.

During his tenure, the College achieved and maintained AACSB accreditation for business and accounting, established the very successful Coastal Bend Business Innovation Center, created an on-line MBA program and developed an outstanding faculty. Moustafa, will you please stand so that we can recognize you? [LEAD APPLAUSE]

Again, Moustafa, we are very grateful for your many years of leadership and look forward to continuing to work with you as you bring your experience to the classroom.

Faculty-Staff Campaign

On behalf of the Faculty/Staff Campaign Committee, I would like to thank you for your generosity during 2012. We are delighted with the strong support from faculty and staff – it makes it much easier to convince other funders to provide support when they see that our own employees are committed to the university.

Gifts of any size from faculty and staff help transform the University from the inside out. In case you did not know, you can designate that your gift go to your department, to scholarships and more.

A table is set-up in the lobby where our Annual Giving staff can help you make a gift or provide additional information.

Facilities Update

Turning to our facilities, I’d like to fill you in on a variety of construction and maintenance projects.

- [NEXT SLIDE] Work is on schedule for the Dugan Family Soccer and Track Stadium to open this coming fall in time for our inaugural season of women’s soccer. If you’ve driven down Nile, you can see the metal framing going up for the entrance and locker rooms. This aerial and close-up give you a sense of the progress. Since this aerial was taken, the track has been completed.

- [NEXT SLIDE] Planning is well underway on the University Center expansion. These renderings give a sense of what it will look like. A second ballroom will be added on the other side of the Legacy Room, the Tejas rooms will be opened up and become a lounge area, additional space will be created on the back of the building and the serving and kitchen areas will be enlarged. Construction should begin in early fall with completion expected by Spring 2015.
• Two pre-engineered metal buildings are being placed behind Blucher to provide research space. We have experienced some delays in this project, but the first building will be ready for occupancy in April and the second one in May.

• Construction will begin soon on the first two of four new residence halls, which will be built on the site of the current Rec Sports fields. The first two buildings will be completed by August 2013 and the second two by August 2014.

Names have already been chosen for the new halls. The first two will be named Tarpon and Anchor Halls, recognizing our University of Corpus Christi heritage. The final two will be Compass and Dolphin halls. Each phase will add 150 beds, and when complete will bring our total capacity for on-campus housing to 1,790 students.

• A dining hall is also planned for the area where the Rec Sports Fields now are. It is on the agenda at the Board of Regents meeting at the end of this month as an addition to our capital plan. Construction is expected to start on it by next fall with completion by August 2014. Faculty and staff as well as students will be able to purchase meal plans that allow you to eat for a fixed price.

• Since the new residence halls and dining hall will displace the Rec Sports fields, they will be moved to the Momentum Campus, across Nile from the tennis courts. They will be ready for play in the fall.

• Maintenance and remodeling projects are underway all over campus. Everything from replacing the defective white boards in the O’Connor Building to roof repairs and replacements for the Center for the Arts and Blucher, replacement of the soffit panels on this building and renovations in Corpus Christi Hall to accommodate the Office of Distance Learning and the Center for Faculty Excellence. Look in Campus Announcements for a list of places to expect maintenance activities or renovations.

• [NEXT SLIDE] I’d like to mention a potential project as well – expansion of the library. At this time, it is an idea without a source of funding. As you know, the university has the honor of housing the papers of civil rights icon Dr. Hector P. Garcia. There is a proposal to expand the library to create the Dr. Hector P. Garcia Memorial Wing.

Tomorrow, in celebration of Dr. Hector P. Garcia’s 99th birthday, the formation of the Dr. Hector P. Garcia Memorial Foundation will be announced by his daughter, Cecilia Akers.

This foundation will assist in the university’s efforts to build this wing and create appropriate access to the papers as well as provide recognition for Dr. Hector. You see here some renderings of what this might look like.
Legislative Preparations

The late journalist Molly Ivins used to say politics in Texas is the finest form of free entertainment ever invented, that it was better than the zoo or the circus. Well, last Tuesday, the “entertainment” started again.

However, there’s something else Molly said. “Politics is not a picture on a wall or a television sitcom that you can decide you don’t care much for.” So, from now until the end of the regular legislative session on May 27 and however many special sessions there are this year, we’ll be paying attention.

Last session, the Comptroller predicted a loss of revenue and our funding was cut almost $19 million. We dealt with it through implementing efficiencies, outsourcing our custodial work, eliminating 31 staff positions, and cutting departmental operating budgets.

I recognize that this has meant added stress for many of you as you have tried to do the same or more work with fewer people and fewer resources. I know it is your commitment to the university and our students that has made it possible for us to continue delivering the best possible education and support services.

I want to thank all of you for your positive attitudes and willingness to persevere. All of you make this the fine institution that it is by all the little things you do every day. I want you to know how proud I am to have the honor of leading faculty and staff so committed to our educational mission and the future of South Texas.

You may have heard that last Monday, the Comptroller said Texas has a surplus from the current biennium of $8.8 billion, gave a revenue estimate of $101.4 billion for the next biennium and said the Rainy Day Fund is expected to have almost $12 billion by the end of the next biennium.

That’s certainly better news than we had at the start of the last session. But – there’s always a but, isn’t there?

But unfortunately, there’s some bad news along with the good. Last biennium’s budget kicked down the road $4.5 billion in Medicaid payments and $5.2 billion for public schools and other budget deficiencies, so the surplus is quickly evaporating.

And despite the rosy revenue outlook for the coming biennium, the governor and a number of legislators are still calling for there to be additional cuts in state spending and taxes. Remember the $101.4 billion revenue estimate? Well, the spending cap has been set at $77.9 billion.

On the opening day of the session, Governor Perry said, “… We have to remember that Monday’s revenue estimate is not a chance to spend freely but an opportunity to rededicate ourselves to the very policies that made Texas economically strong.”

So far we haven’t seen a budget bill, but have heard that Lt. Gov. Dewhurst and Sen. Tommy Williams, chair of the Senate Finance Committee, intend to hold a news conference today to discuss it and the bill is expected to be filed tomorrow.
The other piece of our budget puzzle is tuition and fees. We have been forced, as the legislature has reduced state spending on higher education, to raise tuition and fees. Not as much as we’ve been cut, I should add. However, we have heard that it is highly unlikely that the board of regents will allow any increases in tuition and fees this year.

I’m not trying to depress you about our prospects, but I do want us to be realistic. We continue to have strong financial leadership from Kathy Funk-Baxter. That has helped us to weather these tough economic times in the best shape possible and her strong leadership will continue.

We are also lucky to have a strong legislative delegation. Rep. Todd Hunter, whose district we are in, is chairman of calendars, a very powerful position. Without his approval, no legislation moves forward. He is extremely supportive of higher education in general and the university in particular.

On the Senate side, we hear that Chuy Hinojosa will continue to serve on the Senate Finance Committee. He, like Rep. Hunter, is committed to higher education and has been instrumental in getting additional funding for the university.

Rep. Abel Herrero will be returning this session as a member of the Coastal Bend delegation, having defeated Connie Scott. We know that he too, will work tirelessly on behalf of the university. Not all legislators have this same perspective on the value of higher education, however, and will be looking to higher education as a prime opportunity to reduce the budget.

Looking at the legislature as a whole, there are many new faces. Some say that the good news side of that is they will bring fresh ideas, while all acknowledge that much expertise has been lost and there will be steep learning curves.

A number of issues affecting higher education will be on the agenda. These include:

- A proposal to base funding on outcomes such as the number of graduates in high need fields, degrees awarded to at-risk students, the cost to degree, and retention.
- Restructuring Texas grants
- Restricting funding of special items
- And allowing concealed handguns on campus.

Legislative Requests

I ran into a former state representative from Corpus Christi the other day at the Capitol, and he said, the legislative session is about two things: money and who gets it. You don’t get any if you don’t ask, so we do have priorities for funding that we have put forward.

[next slide] First, the A&M System has established three broad priorities. These are:

1) Maintain base funding, including institutional enhancement funds
2) Cover any increase in group health insurance program; and
3) Increase support for financial aid, but not at the expense of formula funding.
We also have submitted two requests for tuition revenue bonds for buildings, with our top priority being a Life Sciences Research Building and our second priority an Arts & Media Building.

Additionally, we have two special item requests for funding outside of the formulas. Our first priority in this area is for additional funding for the mechanical engineering program and the development of additional engineering programs. Our second priority is for a student success initiative that would allow us to extend many of the academic services we know are effective to more students.

As during the last legislative session, I plan to hold periodic town hall meetings to keep you informed about our funding prospects as information becomes available.

Coastal Bend Economic Climate

I’d also like to highlight today some of the positive economic news in the Coastal Bend. The Eagle Ford Shale oil and gas play is driving much, but not all, of the economic boom. Numerous announcements have been made of new plants, plant expansions and more. A few of these include:

- Oxy -- the purchase of Naval Station Ingleside from the Port for $82 million with plans to develop it in phases.
- TPCO American, the Chinese pipe company, is under construction in Ingleside with a $1 billion investment.
- Cheniere Energy -- a liquefied natural gas processing plant with an investment of $10 to $11 billion dollars and 300 jobs.
- The M&G Group, an Italian company, is in the process of obtaining permits for a PET resin plant with an investment of $900 million.
- Baker Hughes -- a $20 million investment in the relocation of 40 existing jobs and creating of 57 new jobs.
- Kiewit Offshore Services is predicting 1,000 new jobs, and
- The Corpus Christi Army Depot expects to add 1,000 new jobs over the next three years.

In addition to raising the general economic climate of the region, these all present opportunities for collaborations in the development of programs and curricula, exchange programs and internship opportunities for our students. For the foreseeable future, there is indeed a bright economic outlook for the Coastal Bend.

Recap & Looking Forward

I know this may be beginning to sound like a broken record, but looking forward, our broad areas of strategic focus are still:

- Maintain academic excellence
- Maintain enrollment expansion with targeted recruiting and strategic program growth
• Expand external funding for sponsored projects, research and development, moving us toward Emerging Research University status
• Engage in serving the community and helping it prosper
• Provide infrastructure to support growth AND
• Do it efficiently and effectively.

As I said in the fall, our specific areas of focus this year, as last year, are retention, advising, distance learning, and developing our capacity to be a learner-centered organization. This past fall, we also added an emphasis on STEM success and outreach.

Our strategic planning committee is at work updating the current plan as well as developing a process for our next major strategic plan update. We expect that process to take place over the 2013-2014 academic year and to engage the community as well as the campus.

I now invite our provost, Chris Markwood, to visit with you about the academic accomplishments of the fall and plans for this spring.

[CHANGE SLIDE TO MOMENTUM SCULPTURE]

ACADEMIC AGENDA

Chris speaks

Flavius speaks

Recognition of an Area

Last year, we started a tradition of recognizing employees in an area of the university. Today, I am pleased to highlight our academic advisors.

The advisors are on the front lines every day with students, playing a key role in academic success. We know that many, if not all, of the advisors are carrying heavy loads and that more advisors are needed. We have been able to add some and will continue to look for ways to add more.

Last year, we began working on greater coordination and communication among academic advisors under the direction of J.P. Regalado. We’re already seeing a payoff, with student surveys showing increased satisfaction with advising. There are too many to mention you all by name, but if you are an academic advisor, please stand so that we may recognize what you do to help our students be successful.

LEAD Cohort

We are committed to supporting the development of leadership skills in faculty and staff members who aspire to serving in leadership roles or who already are and would like to hone their skills. As a concrete way to accomplish that, we started the LEAD program last year. I am pleased to announce the graduation of the first class of twelve. Much of the curriculum involved case studies so that they could engage in a meaningful way in problem solving. In addition to class time and homework assignments, each graduate completed a project. You see the names
of the graduates on the screen. Would you all please stand? Please help me recognize the inaugural cohort of LEAD graduates! [LEAD APPLAUSE]

If you are interested in participating in the next cohort, please talk to your department chair or supervisor about nominating you.

New People

Ordinarily at this point, we introduce our new colleagues, but I’d like to take a moment to recognize one who is no longer with us. [CHANGE SLIDE] Gina Reynolds, a first-year seminar leader who worked with the sociology and psychology learning communities, died at the too young age of 28, on December 1 in an automobile accident. In addition to being a seminar leader, Gina was completing her master’s degree in counseling and was on track to graduate in May. Please join me in a moment of silence.

We have a number of new colleagues who have joined us since our last meeting. I’d like to introduce them through a short PowerPoint presentation.

[SLIDES: SHOW TIMED POWERPOINT PRESENTATION OF NEW EMPLOYEES.

We are pleased that you have chosen to join the Islander family. Would all of you please stand and let us welcome you? [LEAD APPLAUSE]

Final Words

To close, I’d like the opportunity for a rewind … You may recall that I was losing my voice when we met last fall. So, I’d like to end today with the quotes that I was trying to convey then.

Anatole France said, “Nine-tenths of education is encouragement.” And Albert Einstein said, “It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge.”

So, let’s get out there, do some encouraging and awaken some joy … AND have some fun doing it.

Have a great semester!