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## Letter - First Annual Address to the Staff

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## First Annual Address to the Staff

**June 2011**

Greetings to you all; happy summer! We like to think of the summer as a quiet time, but I know that many of you are busy:

- Student Life, Physical Plant and Bon Appetit are busy at the Stockton campus implementing our New Student Orientations and getting housing ready.
- The Alumni Office is getting ready to move into the Alex & Jeri Vereschagin Alumni House.
- University Development continues to recognize our generous donors.
- In San Francisco, the Dental School is in session and getting ready to welcome a new class, while
- In Sacramento, the law school is busy with evening student courses and completing renovations to the Library.

It is never a quiet time at University of the Pacific, but at least those of us in the Sacramento and San Joaquin Valleys can enjoy some warmth and break out our Hawaiian shirts! You guys in San Francisco can pull out your sweaters!

Thank you for taking time away to dialog with me this afternoon. I'd like to send a special hello to staff at the McGeorge School of Law and the Arthur A. Dugoni School of Dentistry who watching this as a webcast. I'd like to thank the Staff Advisory Council for initiating this important event, and for the leadership they provide all year. Thanks as well to your supervisors for giving you this time to communicate with me.

I'm delighted to have the opportunity to thank you personally for your commitment to University of the Pacific, and to speak with you about issues important to all of us at the University. In my remarks today I want to recognize a few of the many examples of staff excellence this year. I also want to recap some of the highlights from 2010-2011, and talk about our priorities for 2011-2012, particularly as they involve planning for the future. I plan to speak for about 20 minutes, followed by an

interactive q & a, so you can ask me questions about whatever's on your mind & I can get feedback from you on the issues you care about. Those who are watching this in Sacramento & San Francisco can participate in the q&a by emailing questions to [president@pacific.edu](mailto:president@pacific.edu). My staff is monitoring that account during this conversation, and will relay your questions to me.

University of the Pacific is proud to employ thousands of dedicated people across Northern California. Our staff is the lifeblood of our operation, working hard every day so that everyone at the University can be successful. In so many instances, you are also the face of the University to the community. In fact, given the huge role our gorgeously maintained campuses play in attracting prospective students and their parents, we should rename Physical Plant the "Department of First Impressions!" This is even more important than just a first impression since parents and students use the conditions of our facilities and grounds as a proxy for judging the quality of our academics.

Each of our staff members across the University plays an essential part in making University of the Pacific a terrific place to work and to learn. You...me...all of us are here to help Pacific succeed in its mission to provide an outstanding education to students. I am tremendously proud when I hear about your efforts to promote student service at the University.

For example, take **Jason Velo**, Director of Student Activities and University Centers in the Division of Student Life, who has done an enormous amount of work this year to improve student events on campus. Holding focus groups to get student feedback. Thinking about policies the University could adapt to make it easier for students to hold events while still being safe. Collaborating with ASuop & the Greek system to throw a massively successful block party last spring attended by 1200 students.

Speaking of student service, I was struck by the story of **Adrian Avila**, Lab Technician for the School of Engineering & Computer Science. Adrian was just given an award by the School's class of 2011 at their Senior Awards Banquet. The award recognized his outstanding technical assistance in special classroom projects. This award is typically given to a faculty member. But this year it was awarded to the lab technician - Adrian - for his extensive involvement in the student's multiple and varied projects.

**Cathy Faust** at the Dugoni School of Dentistry was also recognized by the Class of 2011. Cathy is a Dental Assistant in the Main Clinic. She works closely with students to make sure their clinical experience with patients goes smoothly. She's known for her upbeat, caring and can-do attitude. Just a few weeks ago, Dugoni's graduating class honored Cathy with its annual Rhonda Bennett Award, given to a dedicated employee who exemplifies the humanistic model of education. The award was created in 2001 in honor of Rhonda Bennett, a cancer survivor who works as a cashier in the Main Clinic.

Thanks to all of you for your hard work day in & day out. Know that Pacific is committed to you, as well. I was delighted to hear that in April, **Pacific McGeorge** won the aptly named SWEL award - the **Sacramento Workplace Excellence Award** - recognizing great employers in the Sacramento region. We are committed to offering benefits, programs and training that help you live well and

develop professionally. We are also committed to a workplace that promotes employee health & safety, diversity and security.

We just completed a very exciting year at Pacific. We granted an honorary degree to civil rights champion Dolores Huerta. We were recognized as a top-100 University by US News & World Report, and featured in the Princeton Review's Guide to Green Colleges for the second year in a row. And we announced The Tomorrow Project, a major community outreach program inspired by the Beyond Our Gates initiative. This year we won the Gies Award for Outstanding Vision by a Dental Institution. Natomas Pacific Pathways Prep (NP3), an Educational Pipeline school and partner with McGeorge & the University, was named a Distinguished School by the California Department of Education. Pacific won the Big West championship in women's softball and took second in men's golf. We welcomed Vicente Fox, former President of Mexico, to campus as our Gerber Lecturer and University Commencement Speaker. And we received **more than 21,000** applications from students hoping to be part of next fall's incoming class. Yes -- *Pacific is thriving!!* Thank you for the tremendous part you play in our success.

Let me give you a preview of what's going to be happening over the next year or so at University of the Pacific. One important issue will be **continually enhancing and assessing the quality of the education** we offer our students. We want that education to be superior. To this end, over the last couple years our faculty has collaborated on a set of 7 University-wide Learning Objectives for our students:

- 1) competence in a major
- 2) critical and creative thinking skills
- 3) good communication
- 4) collaboration and leadership
- 5) intercultural and global understanding
- 6) ethical reasoning
- 7) sustainability

The intention is that every Pacific graduate - on every campus, at every level, and in every field - will graduate from Pacific skilled in these areas. It's *not* the idea that every class and every co-curricular event should cover every single learning objective. Not at all. Rather, the idea is that *throughout the course* of a student's whole education, at different points he or she will explore each objective.

We're very happy to have a common set of learning objectives for our students that helps us ensure & assess a high-quality learning experience. But that raises a question - if we expect our students to

learn within these areas - if we need to be strong in these areas to be effective educators - then should we limit the objectives just to students? Might we be better educators if, *as an institution*, we embrace the values we're teaching our students? How can we, as a university and as university employees, reflect or model the characteristics and skills we expect our students to gain by the time they graduate? For example:

- Do we demonstrate a commitment to knowing our field of expertise with as much competence as possible?
- Do we exhibit critical thinking when making important decisions about our operations?
- Do we communicate effectively with one another?
- Are we committed to being a sustainable university?
- Do we demonstrate global and intercultural awareness and sensitivity by being an inclusive university?

In the coming months, you'll hear more discussion about ways that we, as an organization, can model what we expect our students to learn, and ways that we can assess how effectively we are meeting the goals of each of our units, and how well we are modeling the institution's learning objectives.

Let me give you some great examples of how our staff already model our learning objectives. One of the objectives is **effective communication**. Well, **Brenda Carrillo**, Electronic Resources Specialist in the Library, is constantly working behind the scenes to make sure our students have 24 hour access to updated electronic information.

**Or how about "effective collaboration?"** I think many staff units are terrific examples of that. How about the great team of **staff doing personalized scheduling** for our 900+ incoming students? Staff from Engineering, the College, Thomas J. Long, SIS, the Conservatory, the Benerd School of Education, and Student Life have come together and worked tirelessly to make sure our new students get the classes they need. We tell prospective students that we offer a personalized education. Working together, this team is helping us live up to that promise from day one.

Another objective is **intercultural and global understanding**. You can find a superb model of that value in our Thomas J. Long School, where Program Services Assistant **Kathy Kassab** guides international graduate students to success. Kathy not only helps them figure out a study plan and register for classes, she helps them get their campus ID badge, find their classes, and locate housing, transportation, and food. Along the way Kathy has to be very sensitive to cultural difference, helping the students navigate differences in business etiquette and use of

facilities. Through Kathy's support, each international graduate student learns more, connects with others and enjoys the Pacific experience.

Now think about your division, and the work you do. Whether you interact directly with students or not. Does your work align with, say, critical and creative thinking? Effective communication? Sustainability?

I am looking forward to staff participation in this discussion of the value of University-wide objectives. You'll also be key participants in another series of crucial discussions. One of our main goals for 2011-2012 is going to be engaging the whole University in some *strategic planning*. Now, yawn, "strategic planning" sounds pretty boring. But what we'll be doing is actually quite exciting: namely, *developing a vision for Pacific's future*. Right now California and the nation are experiencing MAJOR changes: economic changes, changes in jobs and industries, changes in demographics, changes in communication as our world becomes ever more virtual, and changes in higher ed as the profile of the average student changes, and for-profit and online colleges grow.

If we want to serve students who will be working for the next 30 or 40 years - some in jobs we haven't even thought of yet...if we want Pacific to be strong, distinctive, and relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> century...we need to get out in front of these changes. We need to anticipate change, to lead it. We need to get nimble & get flexible.

So how are we going to figure out where Pacific should be in 2021 or 2031? The University leadership is in the process of developing a strategic planning process to help Pacific & our students thrive throughout the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It'll have several steps. In order to figure out where we should go, we first need to know where we are. We need to pinpoint what Pacific's major strengths are today. What is the "Pacific experience" that makes us strong and distinctive? This will be an important University-wide discussion we'll have with students, faculty, staff, Regents, alumni, prospective students, etc.

Once we've got a handle on that "core identity," the next phase of our strategic planning process will be to think about what directions we should move in as a University, based on the research and feedback we got from all our constituents. Maybe our research will show that we should start thinking more internationally? Or maybe we'll find out that we should embrace, say, online education and nontraditional programs for nontraditional students?

Whatever direction we choose, it'll have the same high quality and commitment to our students associated with the Pacific name today. And we will continue to take pride in offering the best possible services to our students. Planning and working together, we will keep Pacific innovative, healthy and strong far into the future.