



10-20-2021

Pres. Christopher Callahan's Inaugural Address

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Recommended Citation

Callahan, Christopher, "Pres. Christopher Callahan's Inaugural Address" (2021). *Presidential Communications*. 79.

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PRESIDENT CHRISTOPHER CALLAHAN

President Christopher Callahan



Pres. Christopher Callahan's Inaugural Address

OCT 20, 2021



Thank you, Randi.

Randi Holguin was a superb student leader during what was the most difficult time in the 385-year history of American higher education. She helped lead us through the pandemic. I am so appreciative, and I was honored to serve with her. So, thank you, Randi.

I'd also like to thank our chair, Norm Allen. I like to think of Norm as the quintessential Pacifican, a double Tiger, and the only Pacifican who has served as president of ASuop, president of the Pacific Alumni Association and Chair of the Board of Regents. I will tell you he works tirelessly every day on our behalf. I couldn't imagine a better partner as we continue on this journey together.

To our other regents and former regents who are here today, a truly stunning array of talented, smart, diverse and passionate leaders who are focused on one thing: the success of our university. As are the university leaders you see behind me: the cabinet, our great deans and our leaders representing students, faculty, staff, alumni and our community. Great partners and leaders all. I'm proud to serve with you each and every day.

Our last two presidents are here: Provost Maria Pallavicini, who selflessly served as our interim president, and Pam Eibeck, who tirelessly devoted herself to our university for a decade. I'm so appreciative of the efforts they put in and that they are here today.

Speaking of former presidents, Don DeRosa and Karen could not be here today, but I can assure you they are watching from home in North Carolina. I remain inspired by Don's call in his inaugural address, urging us to be pioneering and risk taking. I am grateful for his advice and his friendship.

Jean and I would also like to thank our family, friends, neighbors and colleagues who came from across the street and across the country to join us today. And yes, a very special thank you to our wonderful boys, Cody and Casey.

Finally, to the entire community that makes up this amazing university, our students, our faculty, staff, alumni and community leaders across all three of our campuses, you've made Jean and me feel so welcome. University of the Pacific has truly felt like home from the first day we arrived, and we are so appreciative of that. Thank you.

Nearly two years ago now, when the regents named me as our 26th President, I was brimming with confidence over what we might be able to do together for Pacific and for higher education.

Today, after having watched our regents and faculty, students and staff, alumni and donors respond to the global pandemic and respond with grace, empathy, creativity and fierce determination, I am more confident than ever in our future.

In my first State of the University Address, six weeks ago, I proclaimed a goal that many thought was rather audacious—perhaps even a bit arrogant—that within 10 years University of the Pacific would be the best student-centric comprehensive university in the United States.

Bold perhaps, but I remain supremely confident that it is a goal well within our reach because of our great strengths. And our strengths lie with you, our people. I firmly believe that our pathway to achieving this goal of being the best-in-class university will be to rely equally on the great traditions of California's first and oldest university—traditions and values that underscore our mission—combined with a bold spirit of innovation and entrepreneurship on how we move forward.

In short, I believe we need to preserve, protect, nurture, and grow our “why”—our purpose, our reason for being—while completely transforming our “how”—how we break down and break through barriers to innovation, how we embrace entrepreneurial thinking, and how we design our university to excel in the highly competitive 21st-century higher education landscape.

This blend of tradition and innovation is nothing new at Pacific. In fact, it is deeply embedded within our DNA. At Pacific our tradition *is* innovation.

Let's take a moment if we could and soak in today's beautiful setting here on historic Knoles Lawn amidst the majestic giant sequoias and American sycamores. We are surrounded by Pacific's history and rich traditions, iconic images of California's first

university. But take a closer look, and you will also find our stories of breathtaking innovation.

Behind me right here sits Knoles Hall, named in honor of our longest serving president, Tully Knoles. The building and those around it, the only use of collegiate Gothic architecture on a West Coast campus, conjure up images of the earliest traditional American college campuses found on the East Coast, steeped in tradition.

Yet, there was President Knoles, who was perhaps our ultimate innovator and risk taker. He led a bold effort to physically move Pacific 70 miles from San Jose to Stockton nearly 100 years ago. Right across Knoles Hall, we see Burns Tower, a beacon for Pacificans and visitors alike for generations. The tower is named in honor of Robert Burns, who served as president for 24 years and drove transformational change with his call that we must ‘pioneer or perish.’ Under President Burns, our university became independent. We created our schools of engineering and pharmacy. We brought to Pacific the McGeorge School of Law in Sacramento, and what is now the Arthur A. Dugoni School of Dentistry in San Francisco.

Our past successes have been built on this mix of tradition and innovation, and now more than ever our future success will be predicated on these dual themes.

Our tradition starts with our mission to serve students and create the next generation of great leaders for California, for America, and for the world. Our mission, our purpose, our “why” is stronger, more important and more relevant today than ever before. We remain and we must continue to remain laser focused on the success of our students.

We provide a small college experience in a comprehensive university setting, the best of both of these educational worlds. We focus on and are expanding experiential learning opportunities, which combine deep learning, while serving our great communities in critically important ways.

We live by our values and principles of diversity and inclusion each and every day and pledge to become a national model in diversity, equity and inclusion.

Ultimately, our core foundation continues to be built on the extraordinary cadre of master teachers, working with students in small settings and personalized learning environments. I hear over and over again from our alumni, *that* is what makes Pacific such a special place. We need to preserve and protect that mission and those core values.

But at the same time, we need to dramatically change our “how”—how we go about running the university. We need to design programs and systems with the student experience always top of mind, looking at each challenge through the eyes of our students.

We need to create new revenue sources to reduce our dependence on tuition. We need to develop new entrepreneurial partnerships. And we need to create fully online master’s and certificate programs for lifelong learners, while at the same time redoubling our commitment to on-the-ground teaching for our undergraduates and many of our graduate and professional students.

We need to streamline our far too often frustrating bureaucratic processes. We need to break down silos between and among us. We need to shed territorialism and turf protection. And we need to move collaboratively and transparently but with a sense of urgency. And we need to do it all together.

I am confident we will do all of that and reach our goal within the next 10 years.

What makes me so confident?

First, we've already made tremendous progress in the past 16 months despite the global pandemic, and we are building upon an amazing foundation. That foundation starts with our people. We have passionate, smart, diverse and dedicated students. You've heard from

two of them today in Scout and Randi. And of course, you've already heard the remarkably gifted students from the Conservatory of Music, the first Conservatory of Music established on the West Coast.

We have inspiring faculty who change the lives of our students. Master teachers, such as Courtney Lehmann, recognized earlier this year with the Hasenkamp Award by Phi Beta Kappa as being the best college professor in Northern California. Sasha Joseph-Matthews, who just created a CEOs of Color in Residence program right there at our Eberhardt School of Business. Allen Wong at the Dugoni School leading efforts to serve special needs communities across San Francisco and Northern California. Melissa Brown, who leads our seven community legal clinics at the McGeorge School of Law in Sacramento. Veronica Bandy at the Thomas J. Long School of Pharmacy, who ran "operation immunization." The only thing Veronica did was deliver more than 12,000 life-saving vaccines to students, faculty, staff, and many of our neighbors across all three campuses. And my friend, Professor Gene Pearson, now in his 51st year of teaching at University of the Pacific and doing it better than ever.

These are unbelievably gifted, passionate and dedicated professors. And that is a great foundation upon which to build.

We also have talented and dedicated staff, and we saw them on full display during the height of the pandemic. People like Scott Richardson and Tom Harper, police officers who during the height of the pandemic, when all of our campuses were closed, took it upon themselves to give impromptu tours for prospective students and family members.

Allison Dumas, who has been focused on the success of Pacific students for 36 years, and who is just as passionate about our students today as the day she started. Daniel Walker, who worked to make sure our iconic carillon in Burns Tower will continue to play for years to come. all the while awaiting the arrival of young Fox Benjamin Walker, now three weeks old. And then there's Cathy Wooton and Steve Whyte, who between them have served this university with

distinction for 43 years. Cathy and Steve led the efforts for today's ceremony, just days after hosting a record-breaking attendance for homecoming and two years' worth of commencement ceremonies.

These are truly extraordinary colleagues and a great, great foundation to build upon.

We also have a strong vibrant alumni base, as demonstrated just 10 days ago when we had a record 3,000 alumni participating in our homecoming, the largest homecoming crowd in 25 years.

And we have an unbelievably rich array of 24 talented, loyal and dedicated regents, led by Chair Allen, who are squarely focused on the success of our students at our university.

These are all great foundations to build upon.

But I'm also confident that we will achieve our goal because I have already seen the great advances these teams have made in changing how we operate, and doing that during unbelievably challenging times. Teams have been working together across disciplines and departments in new ways, all with a laser focus on the success of our students.

Our great deans and faculty working with Provost Pallavicini are designing new plans to retain and graduate more of our students with new student success programming. Our student life team, led by new Vice President Maria Blandizzi, is changing how we serve our students while creating a new Pacific spirit, really rekindling the spirit built by our friend in Pacific legend, Judy Chambers. We are redoubling our efforts to ensure that Pacific is a national model for diversity, equity and inclusion under the leadership of our very first Vice President for DEI, Mary Wardell-Ghirarduzzi.

We are modernizing our enrollment operations to work across units, schools and colleges to bring in even more talented and more diverse students under the leadership of Vice President Chris Ferguson, and to ensure that University of the Pacific is a national

university—not a local university, not a regional university—a national university.

We are designing new and better ways to operate while developing new partnerships and revenue-raising initiatives under the leadership of Vice President Ken Mullen. We are installing new computer systems to better serve our students, ensuring they have a seamless experience in any aspect of their Pacific lives, thanks to the Pacific technology team and Vice President Art Sprecher.

We are growing attendance and school spirit at our athletic events, while our amazing student athletes continue to perform at the very highest levels on the field and in our classrooms under the leadership of Athletic Director Janet Lucas, our coaches and her great team.

We have new ways to communicate with Pacificans here and around the world with new social media channels, along with new digital and print products thanks to the leadership of Associate Vice President Marge Grey and her talented team.

We are about to finish our \$300 million “Leading with Purpose” campaign. And we are developing plans to accelerate fundraising and partnerships under the vibrant leadership of new Vice President Scott Biedermann.

We are truly off to a great start, and there will be many more successes to come as we continue to work together.

Importantly, let's remember who we are, and how good this university is already. How we view ourselves is critical to our future success.

I have found many Pacificans to have a remarkable modesty about them. Some find that endearing. Some find that charming. I don't. I have to be honest; I often hear the phrase “hidden gem” in describing Pacific. So, what if we all agree today that we vow to retire that phrase.

This is an outstanding institution with an amazing history, great people and forward-looking programs. We are California's first university. We are the first university in California to be co-educational. We are ranked in the top 100 among U.S. colleges and universities according to The Wall Street Journal and Times Higher Education and in the top 20 of all colleges and universities in the American West.

Our alumni have career earnings in the top 2% of all colleges and universities, eclipsing Ivy League schools and many of the other so-called elite universities. We are located in three fantastic cities in one of the most coveted regions of the world to live here in beautiful Northern California.

We are University of the Pacific and we should be Pacific Proud. And working together we will achieve our goal of becoming the best student-centric comprehensive university in the country within the next 10 years.

Now if I may end on a personal note, for those of you who have not gotten to know Jean and me, know that this is indeed a team effort. I suspect many of you already know and are getting a sense of the impact Jean is already having on our great university. Jean and I are truly honored and humbled to be with you at Pacific as we embark on this new journey together. A journey that will transform this already excellent university, drawing on our rich past and traditions, while creating new pathways through entrepreneurship and innovation to be the best university of our kind in the country. And we so look forward to taking that journey together with all of you.

Thank you.

Delivered at the president's investiture ceremony on Knoles Lawn on the Stockton Campus