

WELCOME BACK
SEPTEMBER 5, 2007
KING CENTER

Good morning. Thank you for joining me as we gather to officially kick off the 2007-2008 academic year at Metropolitan State College of Denver. As I begin, I must say how awed I am by the desire, commitment and effort evidenced by all of the faculty and staff here today.

Author Alex Noble said, “Success is not a place at which one arrives but rather the spirit with which one undertakes and continues the journey.” I believe you, the faculty and staff at Metro State, embody the spirit, which has been the foundation of our journey to preeminence.

Two years ago, when we first gathered together, I laid out a ten-year plan for Metro State to become the preeminent public urban baccalaureate college in the nation.

I am happy to say, we’re coming to the end of the first phase – stabilization. Let us pause, and take stock of where we are in this process. How effective of an environment have we created to move the College forward? How well

have we responded to challenges faced from earlier budget reductions, a declining core teaching faculty and stress between the governing body and those it governs?

I am pleased to report to you that I believe we have done very well! It is clear that the Metro State spirit of passion, perseverance and commitment is resonating throughout this campus. It is you the faculty and staff that have embraced this vision to achieve preeminence. You have worked together collectively to build stability and in two years, we have celebrated many successes.

We have an engaged Board of Trustees who have demonstrated their absolute commitment to this institution. They have embraced the shared governance process, demonstrating trust and transparency. Last night, at a special reception, we honored three former Trustees: Anne Rice, Alex Cranberg and Bruce Benson. A group of faculty and staff as well as foundation and alumni association board members were there to express their appreciation for the leadership and dedication of these Trustees.

It is no secret that when the Board was first created there were some sharp differences among the Board, the faculty and even some of our community supporters. Many of you may have questioned whether the Board was acting in the best interests of the college and in the spirit of shared governance. Like

every new organizational culture, the Board needed time to develop its own culture, values and beliefs. In its four and one-half years of existence, this Board has worked diligently to become a high performing board. Indeed, at its retreat this year, the Board's retreat facilitator, a nationally respected expert in higher education governance remarked that he has worked closely with over thirty boards of trustees, and this board was in his opinion, "exceptionally able." In my view, they have given us a vision of preeminence, they have listened carefully to criticism, they have worked hard to separate their role as policy makers from my role as administrator and they have taken extraordinary steps to bring real meaning to shared governance. I want to take one brief moment to recognize them for their commitment and to express my appreciation for their support.

A key indicator of our completing the stabilization phase successfully was our re-accreditation by The Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. This spring we celebrated a successful and quite positive accreditation site visit. Not only did we receive a ten-year accreditation, but no requests for interim visits were made, as in earlier accreditation processes. HLC, our accrediting body, reported that students value the education they receive and appreciate the accessibility of faculty. While numerous elements went into the accreditation decision, one in particular was the need to complete an academic strategic plan that would guide our journey to preeminence.

Under the leadership of Dr. Joan M. Foster and Dr. Hal Nees, and through the substantial efforts of faculty and staff, this critical direction-setting vehicle has been effectively created and is in the process of implementation. The plan is built around four themes, which are vital cogs to our success. Each theme is being led by a member of the President's VP Cabinet. They are:

1. Prepare students for success in their education, career and life – being led by Interim Provost, Dr. Linda Curran
2. Provide a high-quality educational experience – being led by Vice President of Student Services, Dr. Kathy MacKay
3. Engage, collaborate, and work with the community –being led by Vice President of Institutional Advancement, Dr. Carrie Besnette
4. Embrace and promote diversity – being led by Interim Associate to the President for Diversity, Dr. Myron Anderson

Moving forward, to achieve preeminence we must address the space issues on this campus. Space is the single-greatest hurdle to our planning efforts. Metro State is working with Auraria, CCD and UCDHSC to develop a master plan that will create more space on our campus. Today, there is approximately 2.3 million gross square feet of building space for academic, administrative, service and support uses. It is predicted that the campus will need an additional 1.8 million square feet of buildings to cover existing space

shortfalls and accommodate the expected growth in student, faculty and staff populations over the next 20 years.

Our Trustees have approved an RFP process that will allow the College to work on the design of a Metro State neighborhood, formally called a “node,” at 7th and Auraria Parkway. This neighborhood will create a point of visibility for Metro State and create a space that will allow us to better serve our students as we grow the College. It will allow us to be an active part in bridging the Speer gap. It is my hope that we will have the first of our neighborhood buildings well under construction, if not completed, in three years.

The Auraria master plan is not only a milestone for the campus, but also for the city of Denver. It will be the higher education underpinning of the metropolitan area’s future.

In the meantime, one way we are dealing with the space shortage is to acquire up to three trailers which we hope to have in place by the spring semester. Another way we are dealing with space shortages is to take the steps that are necessary to gain Higher Learning Commission approval to offer degree programs online. A third way we’re overcoming the lack of space at Auraria, and even more importantly increasing opportunities for students, is the “2+2” coordinated degree program with the Community Colleges system. 2 + 2

allows students at certain community colleges to earn a Metro State degree in specific disciplines. The program is underway at Front Range Community College, with plans to expand the majors offered as well as to implement a new 2 +2 program at Aurora Community College.

Statistics demonstrate a strong parallel between student retention and the number of full-time faculty teaching lower-division classes. When I arrived at the College, I set an overall goal to boost Metro State's full-time faculty from 38 percent to a more acceptable 60 percent. We have made great strides in this area. In two short years we have successfully increased our tenured and tenure-track faculty members by 88 full-time faculty, an overall increase of 28 percent.

I also made the commitment to increase the diversity of our full-time faculty to better mirror the faces of our student population. You, the faculty, have helped to make it more of a reality by taking seriously your responsibility in the search process. Since 2004, tenured and tenure-track faculty of color have grown by 58 percent, with African American faculty increasing by 92 percent and Latino faculty by 64 percent.

Fully committed to creating an atmosphere that supports our faculty to stay at Metro State for their entire career, we have also infused an additional \$5.8

million into Academic Affairs. This includes faculty salaries, equity and parity, new positions, staffing support and equipment.

More than a year ago, I proposed a revision to our evaluation processes and a movement toward pay for performance. Over the past year, more than fifty faculty have been engaged in making recommendations to improve my proposal for pay for performance and are now ready to present to the faculty their recommendations. I encourage the faculty to listen to their colleagues with open minds as they present their recommendations.

The Pay for Performance Committee has made a recommendation to me that Metro State form a standing committee to evaluate equity/parity in faculty salaries. Today, I am announcing the first step in formation of such a committee. I am directing Interim Provost Curran to collect and evaluate proposals for the structure and composition of this committee. She will report to me by October 15 and the standing committee will be formed by December.

I am announcing the formation of this committee to allow the faculty to separate the issues around equity/parity from the proposals for Pay for Performance. I ask you to engage in the current conversations around Pay for Performance, to evaluate the ideas on their merits and to move forward expeditiously with the recommendations of your colleagues so that we can begin the implementation processes that they describe in January of 2008.

We are also moving forward in addressing student retention and graduation issues. A Transition Services program was put into place last year as a pilot program. This program provides students with academic support via four approaches: first-year seminar, sophomore retention services, learning communities and transfer services.

This year, we will be working to require conditionally admitted students to participate in learning communities. In Fall of 2008, we hope to have all freshman participate in the first-year seminar, which will help students adjust to college and help them to succeed during the critical first two years. We currently lose 42 percent of the freshman class in the first year compared to national averages of approximately 25 percent. I challenge us to reduce our freshman droop-out rate by 10 percent in the next five years.

And this summer we implemented a new tuition structure, which calls for the same amount of tuition (currently \$1,216.20) to be charged for anywhere between 12 and 18 credit hours. The goal is to increase retention and graduation rates by encouraging students to stay enrolled, take more courses and graduate more quickly, rather than extending their college years and increasing the risk that they'll never finish. It appears to be working as our enrollment for this fall shows that while the number of headcount students has increased by 1.7 percent, the full-time equivalent enrollment has increased by

3.9 percent. We believe that 45% of our credit hour growth this year is due to this change in the tuition structure.

As you can tell, I am very proud of our accomplishments as a college, but truly you—the faculty, staff and students—are the core of our successes. I’ve found that the best work gets done when many people collaborate toward a common goal. Alexander Graham Bell said, “Great discoveries and improvements invariably involve the cooperation of many minds.” The spirit of Metro State is based on great ideas, entrepreneurs at heart and the power of collaboration.

Last April, I officially launched what author and motivational speaker Jim Collins would call a B-HAG—a big, hairy, audacious goal—for Metro State to become a Hispanic Serving Institution or HSI within the next decade. This will entail doubling our Latino student population to 25 percent. Does this mean we don’t serve other students? As, I’ve said before, of course not. But it does mean that we intend to be the four-year institution of choice for the fastest-growing population in the seven-county metro area.

Once we achieve a 25 percent Latino population, this designation will open up a world of possibilities for receiving grant monies for activities that range from faculty development to renovation of instructional facilities to student

support services. These funds would be used for the College to serve all Metro State students, faculty and staff.

Co-chairing this initiative are Dr. Luis Torres, interim assistant dean of Letters, Arts and Sciences and Ms. Judi Diaz Bonacquisti our associate vice president of Enrollment Services.

One element of the HSI project that particularly inspires me is that 67 members of our college community have volunteered to serve on the HSI task force. The six task force subcommittees that have been formed are:

- Assessment: Building a Culture of Evidence
- Recruitment, Retention and Student Development
- Creating a Culture of Academic Success
- Public Relations: Promoting a Tradition of the “Urban-Land Grant Institution”
- Campus Climate: Enhancing a Culture that Respects Diversity
- Faculty and Staff Development, Grantsmanship: Enriching our Faculty and Staff; and
- Curriculum Development: Expanding Academic Excellence

The 67 task force members are charged to look at the barriers affecting their key areas and develop solutions to address and eliminate these obstacles. They will submit their report to me early next year, with the intention of presenting

the final recommendations to the Board of Trustees in February. Our HSI initiative is a true model of how we are bringing many perspectives together to help solve urban problems.

But there are many other examples of internal and external collaborations that are making a difference:

For instance, last month the Fall Professional Development Conference drew more than 400 faculty, staff and administrators with a multitude of sessions to choose from and an informal talk by Joe Blake, president and CEO of the Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce. I can't tell you how proud I am of the conference's planning committee, who spent many hours this summer putting together this invigorating day— "A campus conversation on becoming an engaged community." The conference was a great place to share dialogue and ideas on how to successfully accomplish becoming an engaged community and urban land-grant institution.

In another example, the U.S. Department of Education has awarded Metro State's TRIO High School Upward Bound Program, under the direction of Paulette MacIntosh, \$1.5 million to fund the next four years. High School Upward Bound has operated at Metro State for 33 years, providing educational support services to low-income and first-generation high school students. About 95 percent of the participants go on to college, with usually

about 60 percent choosing to enroll at Metro State, a success rate that MacIntosh credits to the many professors and staff at Metro State who work with these kids.

Photojournalism major Kyle Bisio and Scott Houck, who is the academic media producer in the Web and Instructional Technology Lab, received two Telly awards in the professional division for their documentary film “Social Documentary: Definitions of the American West.” Assistant Professor of Journalism/Photojournalism Kenn Bisio served as executive producer of the film, which was chosen from among more than 5,000 entries from major production houses across the country. The film grew out of Professor Bisio’s Social Documentary course.

Brand Spankin New continues to be a tremendous example of the kind of collaboration across disciplines that enhances the education of our students. Dr. Mick Jackowki and Ken Phillips, chair of the Industrial Design Department, came up with the idea two years ago for a student-run business that designs, manufactures and markets office and home furnishings. This spring the two professors and several of their students visited universities in China to seek partnerships, and a couple of the institutions expressed interest in doing so.

A collaboration that is in the works among the Alumni Association, Institutional Advancement and faculty is “The Apprentice Challenge @ Metro State”—a semester-long contest that beginning in January will pit two teams of junior-level students against each other in a series of monthly challenges designed to test their business skills and savvy.

Along the way, their efforts will be scored by a group of alumni, college and corporate representatives. The students with the highest scores at the competition’s completion will get to visit “The Boardroom,” where their efforts will be viewed and judged by a live audience. The student still sitting in “The Boardroom” at the end of the challenge will walk away with an apprenticeship/internship at a local company and a full scholarship for his or her senior year. The effort will be used to build upon Metro State’s current partnerships, while establishing new relationships in attention-grabbing fashion. The good news is, nobody will hear, “You’re fired.”

This past year, we launched an integrated marketing and communications plan that better defines Metro State's unique mission. The new “Where success begins with you” campaign focuses on the many achievements of our faculty, staff and students.

The telling of personal stories combined with the consistency of key messages has helped bring Metro State’s new brand to life. In another step, today, we

have the debut of this fall's new poster campaign, which drives home the point that "Where success begins with you," applies not to just students, but to everyone at College.

The faculty and staff we're highlighting this fall are:

- Assistant Professor of Physics, Dr. Kamran Sahami
- Associate Professor of Marketing and the Interim Director of the Center for Innovation, Dr. Mick Jackowski
- Health Center at Auraria Director and Assistant Director Steve Monaco and Martha Eaton
- Associate Professor of Human Services, Dr. Shawn Worthy and
- Associate Dean of the School of Professional Studies Kathy Heyl

At the end of this month, the College's new Web site will go live. Today we're launching a campaign to communicate the many exciting changes and improvements to the site. Called The Webolution, over the next month, departments will receive a puzzle piece that highlights one of the six unique aspects of the new site. Among these new features are:

- User-friendly templates with the College's new graphic standards and key messages
- An improved search of the site

- The 24/7 ASKIT Helpdesk that is available to all students, faculty and staff; and
- A faculty and staff directory that includes unique profile pages that highlight your VITA and accomplishments

Collect all six puzzle pieces and you'll have an opportunity to win a digital camera for your department.

As you can see, we have accomplished so much, and our momentum continues to build. Because of you, the College is able to adapt to new challenges, to ensure that our ability to make a difference is secured for years to come. We have a vision. It is your efforts, enthusiasm and persistence that have led to the point that we can begin Phase 2, the Growth and Investment phase of our journey. We have a plan. And already they are producing results. Because of each of you, I can say with great pride that I have the privilege of leading Metro State where "Our success begins with you!"

It's not only a great day to be a Roadrunner, I say that it is the Year of the Roadrunner. It is our time!

Thank you.

Now I'd like to take a moment to acknowledge our employees who have been with us for 5, 10, 15 and on up to 40 years. Talk about passion and commitment! We have 97 full-time employees receiving service awards today. I'm going to ask each group to please stand up as I announce the years of service to Metro State:

- We have 28 employees who has been with us for 5 years
- Here are 25 faculty and staff who are 10-year employees
- Please acknowledge the 11 who've been with us for 15 years
- Would the 12 people who are at the 20-year mark please stand?
- We have 9 employees who have been at Metro State for 25 years
- We have 6 who've been here for 30 years
- Gundrun Clay and Alain Ranwez have been here for 35 years
- And we now have employees who have been here for 40 years, nearly throughout the entire 42-year history of the school: Charles Angeletti, John Kretnetsky, Stephen Leonard and Eugene Saxe.

I thank each and every one of you for your commitment to Metro State. Now I'd like to introduce Faculty Senate President Hal Nees, who will be presenting the Distinguished Service Awards.