

Convocation Address
Honoring Our Past – Building the Future
August 19, 2022

(Slide 1) Good morning, everyone. Thank you all for being here today, whether in person or via livestream, and welcome to this formal kickoff for our Fall 22 semester.

(Slide 2) As many of you know, Ventura County lost a champion last Friday night, as our Ventura County Board of Supervisors Chair, Carmen Ramirez, tragically and unexpectedly passed away. She was the first Latina elected to the Oxnard City Council, the first Latina elected to the Board of Supervisors for the county, a fierce advocate for environmental and social justice, and such a dear friend and ally of our University. Please join me in honoring her memory with a moment of silence.

(Slide 3) I welcome all of you this morning not only to the start of the new academic year, but also to our first 20th Anniversary celebration event of the year. CSUCI officially turned 20 years of age on August 16th, and we'll be celebrating our two decades of existence and accomplishments throughout this Fall and next Spring. Shout-out to Jessica Chiang, one of our alums who is now our graphic artist who designed our 20th Anniversary artwork.

(Slide 4) It was a much smaller but no less mighty group of faculty, staff, and administrators who gathered somewhere very near here 20 years ago – I believe it was in the large conference room on the second floor of Sage Hall, Room 2030 – where they came together to set the direction for CSUCI's very first academic year. In fact, we could ask President Emeritus Dick Rush who is here today all about those early days. Welcome, Dr. Rush, and other honored guests, including Foundation Board members Linda Dullam, Kevin Cruz, and Bill Kearney. I would also like to welcome our Vice President of Alumni & Friends, Sandy Garcia. Thank you for joining us today.

(Slide 5) I'd like for us to take a minute right now and reflect. Where were you 20 years ago today, exactly when CI's first academic year was being launched? [Pause.] Were any of you here for CI's first year? What have you been through in the last 20 years of your life? Who have you lost, and who have you gained? Where were you living that Fall, and what were you working on? [Pause.]

Now, think about all that you've been through as an individual over the past two decades. Then multiply that exponentially, once for every person who has worked and learned here since 2002, and we can begin to understand the magnitude of what's been accomplished over the past 20 years in bringing a brand-new university into being.

Whether you were here from the start or came to CSUCI 15, 10, or 5 years ago, or even ago, we are all part of that legacy and part of this University's future. Our 20th Anniversary theme speaks to that exact reality. And it's such

Welcome to New Colleagues

I'm so glad to see so many familiar colleagues and new faces in the crowd today. And I am very pleased to welcome everyone who has joined us since the beginning of 2022 - the 38 new faculty members – 20 on the tenure track and 18 lecturers, 45 new staff members, and 13 new administrators. This is not to say that we're fully staffed, but we are clearly and steadily building our way up from the thin-bench reality that many units across campus had become accustomed to.

I want to acknowledge and congratulate our faculty members who have received tenure, and for some, promotion to associate or full professor. These milestones in the career of an academic are profoundly meaningful. My heartfelt congratulations to each of you on comiou

Our four Strategic Initiatives sunset in 2023, suggesting that work must begin on developing a new strategic plan. However, I disagree with that conclusion for the simple reason that we are not beginning that work this year. **(Slide 15)** We have spent every month since I became Interim President in January 21 planning strategically in a number of areas that are all vital to the long-term health and success of our University. This includes our:

1. Academic Master Plan, Charting Our Course
2. Plan for achieving GI2025 goals and equity priorities
3. Plan for DEI praxis, our Inclusive Excellence Action Plan and associated Teams.
4. Integrated Tw 0.608rt (l)-2.5k ()vincea (liq 5k[(I)2.1 (n)0.8 (t)-4y)0.8 (t)-4ytt

University will engage with these sets of guiding questions, from their varying divisional and program perspectives.

Institutional Growth & Development

(Slide 20) Having great faith in our students, most of whom are also beginning their third decade of being, leads me to an intriguing parallel. **(Slide 21)** I also have great faith in this University and in the people who lead this University to truly lead—to be an example, sorely needed in this world, of trustworthiness, integrity, resilience, academic excellence, and the kind of respectful collegiality that makes compromise and self-government possible.

(Slide 22) The tricky thing about placing faith in other human beings, however, as [C. Douglas Lummis](#) explained, is that faith is only necessary when the possibility of failure is real. A rock requires no faith in it to fall to the ground when it's dropped; a rose in bloom requires no faith for it to be fragrant. **(Slide 23)** But people, can fail to warrant our faith. This is why Lummis calls faith the key democratic virtue. **(Slide 24)** We invest our faith in each other because of the reality we want to bring into being – not because we're guaranteed of others living up to our hopes or expectations.

(Slide 25) All that being said, I do have great faith – and great confidence – in our students. Yes, they will make mistakes. They will.

cognitive flexibility to navigate the successes and inevitable disappointments that come with invention on an organizational, institutional scale.

(Slide 34) And while we feel a strong bond with our colleagues who were here 20 years ago – some of whom are still here today – we are in a very different place now. **(Slide 35)** We have 20 years of experience behind us with data to inform our work. Through our experiences, we have begun to develop clarity about who we are and who we serve. **(Slide 36)** I think about being a Hispanic Serving

The preliminary 6-year graduation rate for the 2016 cohort is 55.8%, with less than one additional percentage point expected once summer graduates are included. While this figure is still higher than earlier cohorts, we are short of our interim target and need to make progress to meet our GI2025 goal of 67%.

(Slide 42) With regards to our transfer students, I am proud to announce that we will meet our 4-year graduation target for the 4th consecutive year. Our preliminary 4-year rate for the 2018 new transfer cohort is 77.5%, and we anticipate this to increase by approximately 1 percentage point when summer graduates are included.

The preliminary 2-year Spring graduation rate for the 2020 cohort is 39.1%, though we

expectations about their level of engagement at CI in relation to their overall success are at all-time lows – on some measures having fallen 20 or more percentage points since 2019. This is true for nearly every topic surveyed – from expecting to seek help when having difficulty with coursework; to thinking that support services will be available to them; to anticipating the need to write more than one draft for a paper; to expecting interactions with people of a race or ethnicity or with religious beliefs other than their own, and many other behaviors associated with student success.

We don't know exactly why our incoming first-year students expect less. We don't know if their lower expectations are due to the pandemic or to a combination of existential threats now normalized in the lives of today's children and adolescents. It is worth our taking the time and care to consider the value of healthy expectations, and to realize that we are in a unique position to help the young people in our care to develop and build them. We need to create an all-encompassing campaign to explicitly teach our new, first-time students what their success requires them to expect of us and of themselves. This is very easily a place where we can all contribute directly. I look forward to seeing how this necessary, cross-divisional effort will take shape in the coming weeks and months.

Cross-Divisional Collaborations

(Slide 47) And this is something that I've seen better facilitated and developed over the four years that I've been with CI – the commitment to authentic, cross-divisional collaboration and partnership that is required for student success. We're moving beyond the idea that collaboration means simply informing each other of what we're doing in our various divisions. Instead, I've seen a number of ways in which we have worked diligently to overcome decades of conditioning in the broad world of higher education to consider student success the province of Academic Affairs alone. If there is one thing we've learned in the last two decades – here at CI and through the literature more broadly – it is that every single division, program, and employee plays a role in our students' success.

(Slide 48) A case in point is the work done from March through October of last year, by six Inclusive Excellence Action Teams – each of which included membership from all divisions, faculty, staff and administrators - whose work led to the creation of Channel Islands' first Inclusive Excellence Action Plan. This included a budget line for these initiatives, and our cross-divisional Strategic Resource Planning Committee – again with representation from all divisions and levels of the university – deliberated to prioritize and provide me with funding recommendations. **(Slide 49)** Of course, we cannot yet claim any substantial progre

Brook Masters, and Dr. Sohui Lee for leading this effort, as well as Crystal Gomez, Lysandra Garcia, Megan Eberhardt-Alstot, and Jamie Hannans for their leadership and engagement; and of course the faculty who are doing so much of the heavy lifting here: Drs. Mary Adler, Stacey Anderson, Emily Spittler-Lawson, Nancy Park, Geoff Buhl, and Brook Ernest.

(Slide 56) And I want to also recognize our Interim VP of Advancement, Ritchie LeRoy and the entire Advancement team, as well as our Foundation Board, for their work in facilitating the unprecedented level of support from our community which made the First-Year Experience Initiatives possible.

CSUCI Initiative for Mapping Academic Success

(Slide 57) CIMAS: The CSUCI Initiative for Mapping Academic Success program launched in Spring 2022 to support students who were struggling from the ongoing pandemic and the cumulative stressors associated with it. For seven different cohorts of 12-15 students, CIMAS provided faculty-led weekly sessions, alternating academic workshops with regular check-in sessions. The students who took part in the CIMAS program saw an increase in their GPAs, units taken, and retention rates. The roots of CIMAS date back to 2017, when Dr. Elizabeth Sowers, Sociology, and Monica Rivas, now Director of Academic Advising, collaborated on creating what they called the Sociology Student Success Workshop, which was implemented by Dr. Sowers and Dr. Leslie Abell. This program was named a 2020 Program to Watch by Excelencia in Education. In January 2022, Drs. Sowers and Abel created CIMAS, building from their model, as well as a professional development program to prepare faculty to lead the weekly sessions. Congratulations and thank you to all whose work led to this promising intervention for students, including the faculty who taught in the program and Drs. Dennis Downey and Michelle Hasendonckx, who helped launch and oversee the CIMAS pilot in March.

Post-Graduate Outcomes

(Slide 58) As many of you know, we launched an initiative last year to more broadly and rigorously assess and measure post graduate outcomes as one facet of social mobility. This was a cross divisional collaboration involving Academic Affairs, Career Services, Institutional Research, and the Office of the President. This work is being led by Dean Sue Andrzejewski, Drs. Miguel Hellester Delgado, Paul Peterson, Matt Zivot, Amanda Carpenter, Kaia Tollefson, and Jessica Muth. I also want to recognize Dr. Jared Barton who did much of the heavy lifting for us early on. We've launched a webpage with descriptive findings and are currently employing regression modeling to identify predictors of post graduate success as it relates to high impact practices within academic programs.

Middle Leadership Academy

(Slide 59) One of the greatest challenges facing higher education is how to maintain our fiduciary responsibility as an institution of higher education while concurrently eliminating

financial barriers to student success. I want to thank a cross divisional team from Student Affairs, Enrollment Management, and Business and Financial Affairs for their work on examining and recommending changes to our disenrollment for non-payment of tuition policy. This work is so important, and it represents a hole in the research literature. I'd like to recognize Dr. Michelle Hasendonckzx, Dr. Ernesto Guerrero, Anna Benscoter, Colleen Forest, and Sunshine Garcia for blazing a new trail through their work in the Middle Leadership Academy.

CSUCI Sustainability Policy, Goals, and Actions

(Slide 60) Roxane Beigel-Coryell has been an effective leader in helping to design and marshal support for our sustainability policy and several goals and initiatives – and has done an exceptional job of engaging faculty, staff and students in this work. One notable program will launch this year, the Green Revolving Fund. The GRF is an internal fund for financing energy and water efficiency projects, with \$250,000 in one-time seed funding. Proposals will be invited from students

response from our community has been remarkable, with early childhood education having been identified as one of the most pressing regional workforce and service needs that will be addressed through our academic programming and research.

(Slide 64) Performing Arts Theater: We are also moving forward with the initial planning phases for our Performing Arts Theater, which will be located adjacent to Gateway Hall. Again, our capital planning team, along with our faculty and academic leadership, have been working together during these initial planning phases. We are in early days on this project in terms of securing the funding needed to proceed, but this long, talked about project is no longer a pipe dream. I have good cause to be hopeful – more details to come soon - and look forward to seeing how this facility will impact our Performing Arts, students, faculty, and programming opportunities.

Conclusion

(Slide 65) And so there we have it – incredible projects underway in every division, including a number of significant new construction projects, alongside of needing to absorb and respond to the sobering enrollment scenario we are facing. There is much to celebrate and much work to do.

Thank you all for being a part of the Channel Islands story, and for weaving your ideas and your contributions—past, present, and future—into the fabric of our University.

President's Awards for Student, Faculty, and Staff Excellence

And now, I would like to introduce the recipients for the President's Award for Student Innovation, Faculty Teaching and Innovation, and Staff Excellence.

President's Award for Student Innovation

(Slide 66) Our student innovator is Sheradyn Ruef, a Computer Science student, Data Analyst Student Assistant for Career Development and Alumni Engagement, and last but not least, a President's Scholar. She was nominated for having "established several post-graduate outcome data projects which have a significant contribution to CSUCI and our regional communities."

Sheradyn's work has helped us share our student success stories with external communities and help programs further identify their post-graduate outcomes. Her nomination letter said, "Ms. Ruef is an engaged student who possesses strong values and ethics required of professionals in the technology industry. While her work ethic is stellar, it is her ingenuity, positive demeanor and professional skills that tremendously impress us."

Please join me in congratulating Sheradyn. I know from our conversations that she is tremendously honored by this award; she would prefer not to make any remarks today. Congratulations again, Sheradyn. It has been such a pleasure getting to know you in your role as a President's Scholar.

President's Teaching and Innovation Award

(Slide 67) The President's Teaching and Innovation Award I award to Dr. Ekin Pehlivan, Associate Professor of Marketing in the Martin V. Smith School of Business & Economics. Dr. Pehlivan has been acknowledged by countless CI community members for her dedication to our students and focus on her data-driven pedagogy. From launching the Business Analytics and Data Storytelling minor to the launch of CI Solutions (previously known as the micro-internship program), Dr. Pehlivan inspires her peers with the amazing work she has accomplished.

In one of the many nominations she received, the nominator wrote "Dr. Ekin Pehlivan is a teacher, friend, mentor, and role model; however, she is more than that to me. She is family. When you have someone who genuinely and consistently cares about your best interest and is not afraid to provide genuine feedback, there is no other word than family for that." Another nominator said, "Ekin is one of those professors whose dedication and passion inspires everyone around her. Her passion for teaching makes it so easy to find a passion for learning."

Please join me in congratulating Dr. Pehlivan.

President's Staff Award for Excellence

(Slide 68) The President's Staff Award for Excellence is awarded to Megan Eberhardt-Alstot, our Teaching and Learning Innovation's Learning Design Lead. Megan is yet another example of excellence, clearly recognized as such through the multiple nominations from colleagues and students that she received from across the University. According to one colleague, she is a "dedicated lifelong learner who inspires and motivates others." A student