



October 2, 2013

Colleagues:

As the second month of my service at Fresno State comes to an end, I want to provide an update for you on what I have been doing and my most immediate priorities for the academic year.

Let me begin by sharing that I have never been happier in my life. The combination of a challenging professional position at a great university coupled with the deeply personal meaning that comes from returning home is unbelievably thrilling. Mary and I are inspired and energized by the warm welcome we have experienced from across the campus and throughout the Valley.

In these first two months, I have spent a great deal of time introducing myself to as many of you as I can. This has occurred in formal meetings and informal exchanges in elevators, hallways and in The Pit. I have asked for your feedback – in person and in writing via our website. Hundreds of you have taken me up on the offer. Thank you! I will respond shortly to this feedback.

There is much to celebrate at Fresno State. We have record student enrollment of 23,000, including the most talented and diverse students from throughout the Valley and across the nation and world. We have a highly committed staff and a thriving faculty, including 48 new faculty members joining us this fall and a similar number now being recruited to begin next fall. We continue to be actively engaged in research that enhances the quality of life in our region and beyond. We also continue to act as a convener of groups focused on important topics. The Water Summit that we hosted on [August 3](#) is a great example of our impactful work in this area.

We will build on our strong 103-year foundation by emphasizing success and excellence in everything we do. First and foremost, we will accelerate our progress in enhancing student success. We can and will increase our graduation rates and better prepare our graduates for the rapidly-changing work force. We will invest strategically in programs with proven results in this area.

We will also invest more resources in our faculty and staff. Yes, this will include the first salary increases in several years. The specific terms of such increases are being negotiated by the CSU with the bargaining units. Equally important, we will strengthen our professional development

programs for faculty and staff. I want everyone to grow and thrive at Fresno State!

We will utilize technology in more effective ways that advance all of our missions. This effort will include new investments in our IT infrastructure as well as an exploration of a new tablet initiative for students and faculty to begin in fall 2014.

I have begun visiting each of the schools and colleges across campus and I have participated each week in Academic Senate meetings. I am very impressed by all that is happening. These interactions confirm for me that Fresno State is ready and eager to advance to new levels of academic prominence. I want us to be the best regional public university in the West and eventually in the nation. I believe that this is fully within our grasp over the next several years if we all work together as "one Fresno State."

I am equally focused on strengthening existing and developing new relationships with alumni, elected and appointed officials, and business and community leaders. I have had positive initial meetings with the Foundation Board of Governors, the Agricultural Foundation Board and the Alumni Association Board. I have also met with alumni in Los Angeles and Washington, D.C. This month, I will meet with alumni in San Diego. My recent trip to Washington included meetings with Senator Boxer, Congressmen Costa, Denham, Nunes and Valadao, and Congresswoman Napolitano. I also met with Undersecretary of Agriculture Wotecki. All expressed their strong support for Fresno State and willingness to assist us whenever necessary. We will need to increase public and private support to sustain and enhance our academic and athletic programs.

I have made two trips to the CSU Chancellor's Office in Long Beach to meet with Chancellor White and his staff. While we discussed a number of items, I have used these opportunities to make progress on my top non-academic priority this year – securing \$30 million to upgrade our aged electrical infrastructure. I am optimistic that we will have the funds to begin this mission-critical project in 2014.

I have launched two Cabinet-level searches and made appointments to campus boards and committees. The search for a permanent Provost was launched last week and the search for a new Vice President of Student Affairs begins this week. I anticipate strong pools of candidates for both positions. My first two appointments to the University Advisory Board are Bulldog alumnae Gena Strang-Behrens and Zoua Vang. They bring exceptional skills, relevant experience and tremendous energy to this key advisory board.

Finally, Mary and I have thoroughly enjoyed participating in campus/community events, including (but not limited to) the Ag One Barbecue, Bulldog Pantry, a tour and welcome reception with Arts and Humanities faculty, pizza with the Chemistry Club, a Mexican

Independence Day Celebration, a lecture by actor Delroy Lindo, a public debate by students in the Free Speech Area, a dinner celebration of the opening of the Meyers Family Sports Medicine Center, the opening of Valley Farm at Chaffee Zoo, and personal visits with and watching the volleyball and football teams. If that were not enough, I took a ride over Fresno with the Sheriff's Department in a doorless helicopter (wow!), I taped a commercial on campus with a live camel and I travelled to Hawaii for the football game and back to Fresno in one day! What a vibrant campus and community!

I promise to keep you updated in the weeks and months ahead. Our future is very bright! And if our future is bright, so is the future of this great Valley.

Go Dogs!

Sincerely,

Joseph Castro, Ph.D., M.P.P.
President