

California State University **Northridge**

**Faculty Retreat Keynote Address
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(Prepared text for delivered remarks)

I. Introduction

The theme of this year's faculty retreat stems directly from a new vision for Cal State Northridge that I presented in the 2007 convocation address. That vision—Cal State Northridge as a regionally focused and nationally recognized university—is based on past and current characteristics of the university, but sets an aspiration for changing the university's reputation nationally.

We have brought copies of the convocation address, and I would love for you to take it with you and read it.

To reiterate the vision: California State University Northridge should remain regionally focused but become nationally recognized as one of the very best regionally focused universities in the country.

The purpose of this speech today is to speak directly to the role and work of faculty in helping Cal State Northridge attain that vision.

To accomplish this purpose, I am going to walk you through four steps this morning.

- First, briefly, I'll explain how this vision was developed.
- Second, I'll spend a bit of time explicating and clarifying what this vision does and doesn't mean.
- Third, I will specifically lay out the role that faculty individually and collectively can play in achieving this aspirational vision.
- And fourth and finally, I will remind you of the nature of the university's accomplishments that are so meritorious that I call for national recognition for how we accomplish our regional mission.

II. So let's begin with the development of the vision itself.

What was its genesis?

While there are a number of factors that came together to shape my thinking, appropriately, the presentation I gave at last year's faculty retreat was an important stimulus for this new vision.

How many of you were present at last year's faculty retreat?

My comments last year described enduring characteristics of Cal State Northridge including that from our beginnings our academic programs met regional needs and served people from this region. Much of the speech, however, was a chronicling of the numerous accomplishments of members of this university community and all of the ways in which this university achieves distinction.

The response to this speech was very interesting to me, but both gratifying and puzzling simultaneously.

Positive because the audience enjoyed it, liked it and understood my message.

Puzzling to me because the speech I gave at last year's faculty retreat is a speech that I have given multiple times over the past 7 years. Puzzling because the singular and collective achievements of this university are well known to me. Yet it was clearly a positive surprise to many in the audience that there are so many high profile accomplishments.

I believe, as well, that in that audience after the speech there was a great deal of personal and professional pride in being a member of the Cal State Northridge community.

After the address, several people in the audience urged me to deliver that speech elsewhere on campus; urged me to promulgate the message of excellence and distinction that they had just heard about their university.

I left last year's faculty retreat with an urgency about the need to spread the message of the university's excellence in how we serve our regional mission.

The reaction to my remarks reminded me again of how important it is to communicate and celebrate the accomplishments of our faculty and staff. I understood again that folks may know what others in their departments or colleges are doing—or they may not!!—but they do not seem to know of the accomplishments of other parts of the university.

Two other significant pieces of work came together last spring and summer, which added to the impetus provided by last year's faculty retreat speech and helped shape the development of the "regionally focused, nationally recognized" vision for the university.

The first was the culmination of the university's planning process, which was a bottom-up process and affirmed the university's commitment to its regional focus and mission. The plan declares that we focus

...on fields of study that are relevant to the economic and social betterment of the region—taxation, nursing, physical therapy, public sector management and teaching mathematics and English as a Second Language are examples.... We are an academic community that is vital to the growth of the region. We offer a large array of programs and services that are directly relevant to our communities and that engage our students in their chosen field.

The other additional shaper of my thinking was the results of a market research study done of potential students and of our alumni.

Here are some summary statements taken from the market research that summarize the positive, yet largely undefined, reputation of Cal State Northridge:

- We have a high level of name recognition, yet people have little understanding of our academic programs and activities.
- The overall impression is good to neutral.
- There is general agreement that we have an attractive campus that offers a suburban/urban experience.
- Cal State Northridge is thought to be a place to get a good, solid education.
- And people think of us as doing a good job of preparing students for success “in the real world.”

In short, what we learned is that people tend to think of us as good, but outside of one or two programs that they have some personal experience with, they aren’t quite sure why.

So, to summarize, the impetus for the development of this aspirational vision was threefold—last year’s faculty retreat speech and the response to it; the outcome of the university’s planning process, a bottom-up process which affirmed the university’s commitment to our regional focus and mission; and the results of market research in which we learned how both alumni and potential students view Cal State Northridge.

III. So, what do I mean when I describe my vision for the future of Cal State Northridge as regionally focused and nationally recognized?

Does this vision represent something new for the university? Does it represent a new set of expectations for faculty work and rewards?

At the risk of redundancy, let me restate this aspirational vision: California State University, Northridge should *remain* regionally focused but should *become* nationally recognized as one of the very best regional universities in the country.

The university’s mission from its founding has been regional and that mission remains constant. The vision for the university’s future represents no change in that fundamental mission. From materials documenting the intent of those who founded the university, to historical decisions made by the university’s faculty about which academic programs to offer and support, to the present day university plan and planning process, we repeatedly reaffirm the centrality of our commitment to this region. Think of words such as “applied,” “practical,” and “relevant.”

We are regional in the academic programs we offer, we are regional in how we offer those programs, and we are regional in that the scholarship of our faculty is for the most part applied and relevant to issues and needs of the region.

For the past seven years, in public pronouncements and materials about the university, we have positioned the university by describing and articulating our regional focus as “California State University, Northridge is the intellectual, economic, and cultural heart of the San Fernando Valley and beyond.”

If you heard last year's faculty retreat speech, or this fall's convocation speech (or read it!), then you are familiar with at least some of the reasons why I would argue that Cal State Northridge fulfills its regional mission to a high standard, to such a high standard that the university deserves to have a reputation in the greater Los Angeles area for how effectively we achieve that mission; that the university deserves to have a reputation across the state of California for the excellence with which we serve our region; and that we deserve to have a national reputation for how well we fulfill our regional mission.

Much of the work done at Cal State Northridge, while regional in focus, *already* receives national recognition within individual disciplines, communities and spheres of influence. While teaching students of the region and in disciplines that contribute to the region, our faculty produce work that is nationally and internationally recognized. Yet, what has been missing is recognition within the L.A. Basin, the state, and the nation for that overall university excellence.

This vision for our future does not ask faculty to do a different kind of work. Rather, this vision asks you to *sustain* the focus of your current academic programs, scholarly activity, and engagement with the region. Instead, the vision says that individually and collectively you and the university you serve deserve to receive greater recognition.

The major changes necessary in order to accomplish this vision are in how we present the university to ourselves and to the outside world.

I have challenged the Division of University Advancement to find ways to spread the word and communicate the accomplishments of our faculty, staff, and students in such a way that they do become more widely recognized—across the campus, in the region, and nationally. My goal is that the excellence of our individual units becomes more widely known and translates into recognition for the university as an institution.

IV. What is the charge to faculty?

First, and most important, understand and celebrate this regional mission.

Also most important, be proud of the university you are part of. Don't publicly disparage, but stand tall. We are part of a higher educational system in the U.S. that values research universities and small liberal arts institutions over all others ... yet we educate the students for the country's future.

Sustain your commitment through your academic programs, through how you engage with the region, in the ways in which you teach, and in your scholarly and creative activities.

Talk with one another—you may be surprised to learn what kinds of impressive work your colleagues are doing. You may even find common interests for collaboration.

And “brag” about your own work, about the work of your students, and about the work of your colleagues—to your colleagues, your dean, to me, to University Advancement.

One way you can do this is to call or email or fax University Advancement directly. You can call extension 2130, or email pubinfo@csun.edu or pubrels@csun.edu, or send a fax to x4909. Don't be shy. We want to know about your accomplishments! All of these numbers are printed bi-

weekly in @CSUN, which is distributed to all faculty and staff. We also have handouts with this information.

V. University Accomplishments

Finally, as promised, I will remind you of the nature of the university's accomplishments that are so meritorious that I call for national recognition for how we accomplish our regional mission.

I saved this for the end because there are so many! We won't have time for me to mention them all.

These are literally just a sampling. There are many more that I don't even know about!

With the exception of just a few that I wanted to share again, these are all *new* accomplishments since my speech at the faculty retreat last year. And they barely scratch the surface of the thousands of examples of published or presented scholarly and creative activity that our faculty produces each year.

First a few that point out the merit of our university as a whole, then some from the colleges.

- Cal State Northridge has provided credit classes to more than 500,000 students and awarded degrees to about 190,000 graduates since the university's founding in 1958.
- Cal State Northridge ranks second in the nation among all master's-level universities in graduating students who later earned research doctoral degrees from 1995-2004.
- According to the May 7, 2007, issue of *The Hispanic Outlook in Higher Education*, for the second year in a row, Cal State Northridge ranked fifth among U.S. universities in awarding bachelor's degrees to Hispanic students. CSUN also ranked highest among California schools, awarding a total of 1360 bachelor's degrees to Hispanic students in 2005-06.
- According to *Diverse Issues in Higher Education*, California State University, Northridge is 11th in the nation for the number of bachelor's degrees awarded to all minority students. Cal State Northridge educates the largest number of Armenian students outside Armenia, the largest number of Central American students of any university in the U.S., and the largest number of mainstream deaf students of any university in the country.
- Cal State Northridge remains California's leading public university in preparing students to become teachers, according to the most recent data from the state Commission on Teacher Credentialing. More Cal State Northridge graduates were awarded California teaching credentials during 2005-06 than from any other Cal State campus, and from all UC campuses combined.
- Cal State Northridge led the entire Cal State University system this year and last year in the number of students selected for special scholarships to encourage the pursuit of doctoral degrees.

- The Department of Student Outreach and Recruitment received grants from the U.S. Department of Education totaling \$2.2 million to increase the number of students attending college from underserved communities.
- Cal State Northridge students swept the screenplay categories with four 1st place honors, landed the top documentary award, and won 2nd place honors for animation at the annual California State University Media Arts Festival. Students from 15 CSU campuses submitted 230 entries.
- Emeritus professor of music and conductor of the Wind Ensemble, David Whitwell, was selected last spring to receive the Academy of Wind and Percussion Arts' "Man of the Year" award. He says that during the time he taught at CSUN (1969-2005) "we had one of the strongest student bodies in the nation."
- The university has launched the nation's first and only interdisciplinary minor in Spanish-language journalism. Housed in the Journalism Department, it is designed to prepare students to work in both English- and Spanish-language media, with the goal to improve coverage of Latino, Spanish-speaking communities.
- A team of Cal State Northridge Marketing students who are members of our campus' student chapter of the American Marketing Association won national honors last spring, taking home the Outstanding Communications Award for developing an "outstanding" communications plan.
- Two teams of Cal State Northridge Information Systems students won first place in the Information Technology Competition, held last spring at Cal Poly Pomona. The competition tests students abilities to use technology, including web design, application development, and telecommunications and business systems analysis, to further business opportunities. The teams competed against teams from Cal Tech, UCLA, USC, UC Irvine, UC Riverside, Loyola Marymount, Cal Poly Pomona, and other CSU schools.
- Marketing professor Franck Vigneron was awarded the *Academy of Marketing Science Review's* Best Paper of the Decade award. His work investigates the motivations of luxury brand consumers.
- Cal State Northridge ranked 9th in the nation for the number of master's degrees in engineering it awarded in 2006-07.
- A team of engineering students, advised by Mechanical Engineering professor Stewart Prince, last summer placed seventh out of 80 universities from around the world, and was the only California group to place in the top ten, in the Formula SAE challenge, an international open-wheeled, formula-style race car challenge sponsored by the Society of Automotive Engineers. The group competed against many universities known for their engineering programs, including Stanford, UCLA, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, and others.
- Beatriz Cortez, director of the Central American Studies program, has been named Salvadoran of the Year, by the Salvadoran Leadership and Education Fund (SALBF) for her continuing efforts in helping students achieve their dreams, promoting education and encouraging students to become involved with the community.