

MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER
Convocation Address
August 19, 2021

Introduction: Acknowledging the Moment

Good morning, everyone, it is so good to see all of you here - in person, and to have our campus community back today and together again. A more heartfelt welcome to a new academic year is hard to imagine myself ever offering.

I am also very glad to extend this welcome to 49 new staff members and 55 new tenure-track and lecturer faculty who joined us over the course of this last year.

I also want to congratulate the faculty members who earned tenure and/or promotion this year. I know that Provost Avila will be recognizing all of you in his Academic Affairs Welcome this afternoon, but I want each of you to know that I have tremendous respect and appreciation for what you have achieved through your teaching, your scholarship, and your service. Your success contributes to all of our success as a campus community.

As we start out today, I realize that for many of us, this moment is likely fraught with conflicting emotions – from feeling overwhelmed to joyful, from anxious to eager.

It's important to acknowledge the validity of the entire range of our individual states – not only emotionally, but also on cognitive, spiritual, social, and physical levels.

In the midst of that complexity, I have to say that it's difficult to launch myself into this Convocation Address, because of all of the weary and worn phrases we've all heard too many times - "unprecedented challenges," "in these difficult times," and "on returning from a global pandemic..." They're accurate, of course, but at this point in time and considering everything we've been through, they don't convey anything meaningful about what I'm experiencing in this special but deeply complicated moment.

And what is this moment? To me, it's nothing short of an incredible achievement – so much ingenuity, dedication, perseverance, the promise of scientific discovery, and at the most basic level, the reality of human interdependence.

But this moment is also heavy with the weight of grief and loss on so many dimensions. As such, it seems a respectful way to begin this academic year by acknowledging those losses together – allowing ourselves room to miss loved ones, to feel ourselves torn between the need to care for our children and elders and to provide for them, to share our worries over the future of our democracy and the stability of our planet.

We have been through a lot in the last 18 months, and the journey – filled with achievement and so much sacrifice – is still unfolding.

This dichotomy is captured by Francis Weller, a clinician and author – whose work I learned of thanks to our Ombuds Officer, Mark Patterson, and their words provide a challenge of sorts in this

particular moment. He said, “The work of the mature person is to carry grief in one hand and gratitude in the other and to be stretched large by them. How much sorrow can I hold? That’s how much gratitude I can give” (McKee, 2015, para. 44).

I encourage all of us to reflect on that challenge. Whatever sorrows you may have brought with you this morning, and whatever it is that makes you grateful, make them consciously explicit, letting yourself be in those spaces and to honor them.

Then maybe find time today to share them with at least one other person. Connecting genuinely with our own experiences and with each other is necessary to meet what Weller calls “our moral obligation to stay engaged,” which he maintains will “keep our hearts responsive and do the difficult work of restoring and repairing the world” (McKee, 2015, para 124).

Reflecting on Priorities of the Interim Presidency (Spring Address, February 27, 2021)

Admittedly, “restoring and repairing the world” is a tall order – but it is our work to do, in the small corners of the world where we live, work, and dare to have hope for ourselves, our students, and our collective future.

In February, many of you heard me share my hopes for CI. This vision – informed by my own experiences since arriving here in 2018 and from perspectives shared with me from every corner of the campus – described the groundwork we must build now to see the Channel Islands into the next five years and beyond.

I identified three overarching priorities, challenging myself, my leadership team, and the campus community to do a better job of: (1) bridging institutional values, (2) improving communication, and (3) finding a common understanding in relation to shared governance.

Additionally, I identified four specific initiatives for which each division and every member of our campus community hold varying shares of responsibility: (a) advancing racial and social justice, (2) achieving GI 2025 goals, (3) academic planning, enrollment management, and budget development, and (4) navigating COVID-19 as a campus.

I begin this new school year by sharing my assessment of the work we’ve done in these areas over the last 8 months and outlining some potential paths forward. In doing so, I want to acknowledge the obvious fact that I am your interim president, with only ten months’ time guaranteed to lead the campus along this path -- so please trust me when I say that I recognize the practical and ethical boundaries of my current role.

Therefore, what follows is not a blueprint for the campus’s future, but simply my vision for it – my assessment of what is needed to set us up for success in the coming decade, regardless of who it is that is occupying the Office of the President.

Priority 1: Bridging Institutional Values

Our core institutional values span every aspect of our campus and have been grounded within our four mission pillars and throughout the four Initiatives of our 2018-2023 Strategic Plan. Creating a

clear bridge that intentionally merges and aligns our mission pillars with our Strategic Initiatives has been the top priority of my interim presidency.

Until we do so, our path forward as an institution will be continually hindered due to our inability to resolve the core dilemma facing us: how do we honor the values that informed all of the work that built this institution, while concurrently promoting the evolution and development of those values to serve as the foundation for our work in the next decade and beyond.

I am certain that it is our work towards advancing racial and social justice that will serve as the primary bridge that will connect and build coherence across all of our institutional values.

Inclusive Excellence:

We are actualizing our commitment to inclusive excellence through our Inclusive Excellence Action Plan Framework – developed in December 2020 and introduced to the campus community in early Spring.

We have over 90 people from all divisions who are now serving on six Inclusive Excellence Action Teams, or IEATs, with Cabinet-level accountability for this effort. They worked throughout the Spring and throughout the Summer, gathering inventory of CI's programs, initiatives, and accomplishments in advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion (or DEI) – and in the process, giving us a baseline of progress made to date in the six areas after which the IEATs are named.

With this inventory and baseline data in hand, each team is piloting the use of the Equity Lens Framework developed by the President's Advisory Council on Inclusive Excellence (PACIE) to identify equity gaps. We'll utilize what we learn through this experience to improve the tool and then make it more broadly available for individual divisions, schools, units, programs, and offices to evaluate their operations through an equity lens and make improvements accordingly.

Each of the teams is now in the process of developing proposals to address discovered equity gaps through their respective Inclusive Excellence Action Plans (IEAPs), where they will articulate their proposed priorities, goals, actions, benchmarks, and perhaps most importantly, the resource needs for Fall 2021 through Spring 2023.

I am grateful to the people on these IEATs who are currently carrying the weight of this work, and for the entire campus community from which I am confident new leaders will continually step forward, picking up that weight when and where they can.

The analogy of geese flying in formation comes to mind here, where most are drafting behind in the slipstream created by the lead flyer who takes the brunt of resistance until being relieved by another.

In the realm of DEI work, though, those lead flyers absorbing the brunt of resistance have for too long been the very people who have been historically marginalized and excluded from enjoying the full benefit of civil rights, denied access to the best of what the public good has to offer.

Make no mistake: our DEI efforts have been underway from the very beginning of the CI story. But it's been happening largely through the good will and work of those lead flyers – those individuals who've been minoritized based on their race, abilities, religion, sex, sexuality, gender identity,

citizenship status, and more. Institutionalizing this work has always been our challenge, and this is what the IEAP initiative is attempting to do.

But how do we ensure that the patchwork of individual efforts grows into institutional efforts – woven into the fabric of our academic planning, enrollment management, budgeting, teaching, student learning outcomes, and co-curricular planning and processes?

We must now better coordinate with the many groups on campus doing this work and using the structure of Inclusive Excellence Action Teams to create opportunities for connection – leveraging the energies and resources of previously separate groups to come together, joining forces and resources to advance the priorities that our six teams have been authorized to identify.

This does not mean that the goals and work of the various groups advancing racial and social justice are now subsumed under the IEAP Framework. It just means that our IEAT's represent an opportunity for us to join and better coordinate our efforts together –

with groups such as the PACIE, Mission Centers, the Ethnic Studies Council, the new Senate Committee on Equity and Anti-Racism, Faculty Affairs, Disability Accommodations and Support Services, the SASEI team and our HSI initiatives, the various faculty and staff associations such as CHILFASA, BFSA and our AAPI groups, individual schools and units, and with any other groups and individuals who are wanting to find ways to bring coherence to the daunting challenge of our particular moment in history.

All that being said, we cannot lose sight of our campus-wide initiative in relation to the broader context. The sickening violence of racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, religious persecution, ableism, and every other system that human beings have devised to create divisive hierarchies of human value is severe and increasingly unapologetic.

We are watching in real time as legislation enshrining white supremacy are being passed across the nation, censoring and punishing teaching in public schools and universities on the topics of racism, sexism, gender identity, implicit bias, privilege, discrimination, oppression, and other “divisive concepts” (Ray & Gibbons, 2021). And another wave of legislation is actively suppressing access to the ballot box (Voting Laws Roundup, 2021, July).

This is not the systemic response I had hoped for after all the momentum we saw and experienced across the nation and the world the last couple of years.

And if there's one thing I've heard consistently throughout this process, it is that our DEI work requires an ongoing cycle of intentional reflection and action – what Paulo Freire called “praxis.” I ask all of us to reflect on our approach to this work in the context of the backlash to it that we are witnessing, ensuring that our actions are collaborative, coherent, and well informed.

I believe that we are creating something special at CI through our Inclusive Excellence Action Plan, and I want everyone to be a part of it – whether that is through participating directly on an IEAT, providing DEI-related information when it is requested, helping to design and implement initiatives, and/or actively engaging in those activities when they are launched. Please, choose yourself as being impacted by and involved in this work, and help to build it.

As part of this work, we are intentionally focusing on deepening our relationships with the Chumash People and Culture.

I am grateful to Dr. Raudel Bañuelos, who has agreed to stay on contract with us as our Chumash Cultural Advisor following his retirement last December after 40 years of service at CI. With his guidance, we are pursuing specific initiatives to deepen campus relationships with the Chumash, including work this Fall on restoring Sat'wiwa and with the help of Dr. Colleen Delaney on establishing a Cultural Resources Management Team, helping to ensure that our activities on this land meet both legal and culturally appropriate requirements.

Educational Excellence:

In addition to Inclusive Excellence, our continued focus on educational excellence will serve as the foundation for the continued growth and development of our institutional values. Three large-scale but very tangible initiatives are underway to advance this work.

- *Restructuring and Refocusing Institutional Research.* Good data is the first requirement for any plan developed at any level within the University, and for any hope of successful implementation.
- As such, we will be recentralizing Institutional Research within the Office of the President. We are in the process of searching for a new Chief Data Officer & Director of Institutional Research to lead this work, which will begin with a phased process of relocating our data analysts to minimize disruption to the critical projects currently underway in their respective divisions.
- Our overarching goal is to make data more accessible and available to the campus community, to use data to inform our work, and perhaps most importantly, to ensure that we collect the data we need to evaluate student outcomes and our programmatic and institutional effectiveness.
- *Accreditation Kickoff: Town Hall Sept 9 at 3pm.* Additionally, one of our biggest priorities as an institution for the coming years is accreditation. The next phase of our accreditation cycle begins this Fall and culminates in a site visit in Spring 2024.
- Earlier this year we submitted our Interim Report to the WASC Senior College & University Commission (WSCUC), and in late July enjoyed a positive review of that report. With thanks to Dr. Jenn Perry for her leadership in navigating that process, we qualified for pursuing the Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation (TPR) route for re-accreditation.
- Provost Avila will host an Accreditation Town Hall Meeting on September 9th at 3pm. All members of the campus community will be invited to learn about this process and share their ideas on how we should proceed with this crucial step in examining institutional effectiveness and continued improvement.
- And of course, through this accreditation process, we will also be working together to inform the long-term and strategic vision of our institution through our academic master planning and strategic enrollment management.
- *Post-Graduate Outcomes.* While the Chancellor's GI 2025 Initiative focuses our work appropriately on retention, persistence and graduation targets, but what happens after graduation is also critical to understanding and continuously improving our institutional effectiveness.
- This is especially relevant, as many across the nation are questioning and debating the value of a college education, in addition to our focus on social mobility for our students.

- With thanks to Sue Andrzejewski, Amanda Asquith-Caya, Jared Barton, Amanda Carpenter, Jessica Muth, Paul Peterson, and Ritchie LeRoy, among others, we have worked to develop a more comprehensive and rigorous strategy for assessing post graduate outcomes.
- While post-graduate outcomes are something institutions routinely assess, the data sources are inherently limited and obtaining valid measures are extremely challenging due to low response rates, selection bias, and reliance on self-report measures.
- As such, our strategy involves a multi-pronged approach using multiple sources of data examining a number of different outcomes, including graduate school completion, longitudinal employment data at time of graduation, and 1 and 5 years post graduation, salary data through the Employment Development Department, and other additional data points.

I am very excited about our plan. I believe we can become a leader in this important work because we are actively addressing inherent limitations associated with traditional forms of post-graduate data. And ultimately, we hope to utilize this data to better inform our student learning outcomes in relation to post-graduate success.

Student Success

Another theme that bridges our institutional values is student success. As I discussed in my spring address, one thing I learned about CI very quickly is that our mission is all about our students and their success. We may have differences on the best methodology on how we get there, but our student success is unquestionably our common goal. So let's take a look and see how we're doing.

Most Recent Graduation Rates. Let's start with the good news. I know there's been very intentional work to meet our GI 2025 goals over the years through the SASEI team, our local community colleges, and other groups on campus focusing specifically on transfer student pathways and success. Our data continues to demonstrate the effectiveness of these efforts.

As you can see, we have surpassed our 4-year transfer GI 2025 target for the third straight year and are already at an 80% graduation rate. When looking at our 2-year transfer rate, we are at almost 45%, just shy of our interim goal of 46.6%. We anticipate this upward trend and expect to hit our goal of 54% by 2025.

As everyone knows, where we have the most work to do is with our first-time, full-time (FTFT) cohorts. Here is the most recent data regarding our 4-year graduation rates.

As you can see, we are still far short of our 40% target and our interim goal of 32.7% and currently sit at 24.5%.

When examining our 6-year graduation rates, we've made some progress, at 57.5%, but this is substantially below our interim goal of 62.9% and overarching goal of 67%.

Closing Equity Gaps Based on last year's data, the CO's predictive models indicated that we were one of only seven campuses that would eliminate the gap by 2025. However, our most recent data indicates a significant jump to over 8%. Moving forward, we need to disaggregate data to better understand the variability we're seeing among cohorts.

Our Pell gaps have been more stable and persistent. As you can see, our Pell gap has jumped up to over 7% for our fall 2015 cohort.

While we need to examine these data in relation to the contextual factors associated with the pandemic, I don't ever want to rationalize bad outcomes either. And our goal of graduating students in a timely manner has not changed in the face of this pandemic.

Persistence Trends While looking at our final graduation numbers is the ultimate measure of our work, we need to pay equal attention to the relevant data points that are associated with those outcomes.

One of the most important data points that should inform our work is that over half of the students who leave CI before completing their degree requirements do not make it into their second year. With that critical point in mind, where do we stand with our 1-year and 2-year retention rates? Please note, this is real-time data as of yesterday. Our official retention data will be final at census.

We are making progress here. As you can see, the Fall 2019 cohort presented with a 1-year retention rate of 83.1% and preliminary 2-year retention rate of 71.8% – both of which are highs going back to 2015. This progress is extremely important, as the previous baseline rates are not getting us to where we need to be to reach our goals.

And I'm especially excited about the fall 2020 cohort. Keep in mind, they started their academic journey in a virtual environment for one full year, and they are currently presenting with an 82% 1-year retention rate.

Our recent retention data is welcome news.

DFW Data However, we cannot examine retention without examining credit completion and DFW data. Another relevant data point that was highlighted through our 2019 CO equity report indicated that 2 or more DFW's in the first two years was the biggest predictor of students dropping out before degree completion. How do we look here?

You can see that we have a lot of work to do... When examining at least 1 DF or No Credit in the first year, almost 49% of our FTFT cohort had at least 1 in their first year and 54.5% had at least one DFWI in their first year.

These percentages are alarming and are examples of how we need to utilize data to inform our work. At the most basic level, knowing that over half our students who leave CI do so before year 2 and the role of DFW's in the first two years in relation to stopping out, we need to be more targeted and intentional in our efforts to promote year one to year two retention and credit completion.

And this type of targeted work is already happening. Our program chairs and Deans need to continue their work with program review and identifying high DFW gateway, bottleneck courses, and designing interventions to address these challenges. I know this week, the LRC team led by Brook Masters led a workshop with over 20 faculty members to develop more intentional, embedded, academic discipline specific peer support in high DFW gateway classes.

And of course, our PEEPS program continues to support our first year students on varying levels.

In Student Affairs, they've implemented mandatory advising for all FIFT students; our EOP Summer Bridge continues to provide targeted support especially in the first year; our DASS team has implemented a peer mentorship program targeting first year students with disabilities; and in collaboration with Academic Affairs, our HRE team continues to promote our living learning communities targeting our first-year students. I know I've missed other interventions as well.

However, we now need to critically examine the outcome data associated with these programs to assess their effectiveness, learn how we can improve our programs and most importantly, utilize the data to inform which programs we need to scale up.

Capacity and Sustainability

I also referenced this back in the Spring, but it is easy to focus on Academic and Student Affairs in relation to our student success and GI 2025 goals.

However, I believe that all divisions and all programs contribute to the academic success of our students. In University Advancement, VP Ipach and her team and the Foundation Board have implemented a data-informed philanthropy model, where we are investing in programs and initiatives that have demonstrated their effectiveness on student success, as well as academic programs that are demonstrating positive student outcomes and meeting industry and community needs.

In collaboration with Financial Aid, we have also examined our scholarship data to examine if our scholarship recipients are representative of our student body population; our marketing and outreach strategies; as well as our scholarship criteria in more detail to provide more access to financial assistance through scholarships.

As you know, we received the largest gift in our campus' history just a few months ago, \$15 million from MacKenzie Scott and her husband Dan Jewett, bringing our fundraising total for fiscal year 2020/2021 to a record \$20.3 million.

Yet we must keep in mind that the full impact of this gift extends beyond the dollars. This gift is one of the most transformative and monumental in the history of our campus. It has also brought a national spotlight on our work in advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion and the social mobility of our students.

And as a philanthropic gift, it also presents us with an incredible opportunity to inspire, leverage, and secure additional philanthropic support.

Ensuring that the impact of a \$15M gift to the campus is maximized is a huge responsibility, particularly when it is explicitly designated as presidential discretionary funding, and I am serving in an interim role.

With that context in mind, I have asked our Foundation Board to leverage this historic gift by focusing their philanthropic efforts in three broad areas: 1) Academic Planning and Programming, 2) Student Success Initiatives that align with GI 2025 and our DEI efforts, and 3) capital projects required to realize our long-term campus vision.

The intention here is to maximize additional philanthropic investments into programs and projects that have already demonstrated their impact on student success and DEI efforts or have the potential to push our campus forward toward our long-term vision.

So far, efforts to maximize the impact of this incredible gift are demonstrating success. In fact, following the announcement of the MacKenzie Scott and Dan Jewett gift and thanks to the efforts of Vice President Ipach, Dean Andrzejewski and our Senior Director for University Development, Ritchie LeRoy, we were notified of a \$3.5 million gift from the Martin V. and Martha K. Smith Foundation, directed to support a third phase renovation of Manzanita Hall and an adjacent courtyard.

Additionally, I am pleased to announce that our housing partner, Kennedy Wilson, has agreed to a \$1.5 million gift donation to support our fund-raising efforts toward an Early Childhood Education Center; the remaining challenge is to raise an additional \$20 million for construction.

There is no question that the culture of philanthropy that we are building on our campus is paying off for our students, and that making investments in our philanthropic efforts is a solid strategy for helping us to realize their highest academic aspirations.

Along the same lines, while Business and Financial Affairs team is continuing to lead on the logistics of our various capital projects on campus, their contributions toward improving student success involves the examination of one of the most challenging ethical dilemmas facing all institutions: how do we honor our fiduciary responsibilities as an institution of higher education while concurrently removing financial barriers to student success?

Examining policies such as disenrollment for non-payment of tuition from an equity lens is one aspect of this work.

Another is leveraging dollars from the federal Higher Education Educational Relief Fund (HEERF) to better support our students. As of August, more than \$12 million in HEERF aid has been awarded directly to students in the form of student financial aid grants, and more direct financial support for students is planned for this academic year. This has been a herculean lift, and I want to acknowledge the work of Financial Services and Financial Aid in this process.

Priority 2: Communication

I am especially proud of the progress made here because so much of the forward momentum we achieved in the last several months grew out of organic participation by individuals from every division and level across campus.

I've greatly appreciated the level of engagement from our Academic Senate and its Executive Committee, Staff Council, Student Government, our affinity groups (BFSA, CHiLFASA, and the soon-to-be AAPI group), as well as the various Inclusive Excellence Action Teams.

We held several series of Town Hall Meetings on such topics as our response to the pandemic and Fall repopulation, enrollment planning, and the Campus Climate Survey. I also enjoyed holding

office hours when members of the campus community could engage in direct dialogue with me and other campus leaders about their thoughts and concerns.

In all of these examples, what I have learned to increasingly appreciate are the tougher moments when genuine exchanges of questions, assumptions, difficulties, data, and multiple perspectives have been shared in all of their messy realities.

This comes back to what I said back in the spring – we need to embrace and lean into these complex issues and learn to feel comfortable in these often-uncomfortable exchanges.

I look forward to continuing our conversations in all of these spaces and thinking of new ways to connect and continually improve genuine, courageous, and caring communication habits at every level and in every division of our campus.

Priority 3: Shared Governance

An area where we didn't make as many strides as I had hoped is in furthering campus conversations on shared governance. The communication structures we've implemented definitely have some crossover here, but there is certainly more work that needs to be done.

In my last year as Vice President for Student Affairs, I had begun working with the Academic Senate Officers to better define and clarify the meaning and processes of shared governance at CI.

In my discussions with Senate leadership, I know this is a priority for our campus moving forward.

There are some significant challenges currently facing us that we can use to advance this work. Arguably the biggest long-term challenge we face is enrollment, and a strategic enrollment management plan is at the top of our priority list.

However, it is important to note that strategic enrollment management must be driven and informed, first and foremost, by our academic master plan. As such, Provost Avila will be leading these efforts moving forward, as they are absolutely vital to the long-term health, well-being, and identity of our institution. And fully integrating the principles of shared governance in this process will ensure that we are on the path for long-term success.

Of course, we cannot separate budget planning as a vital aspect of this work. In my discussions with senate leadership, we've agreed that if we can make progress on the budget in relation to shared governance, this will pave the way for us moving forward.

On a more tangible level, one of my goals this year is to build a clearer, more transparent, and more active role for our Strategic Resources Planning Committee (SRPC) moving forward. I hope everyone read my budget memo that we sent out on Tuesday morning. While I don't want to rehash too many of the details here, I am very excited about the 2021-22 budget.

The net overall funding increase for CI in 21-22 is over \$6.5M (\$6,592,000) in permanent funding. A portion of this total will cover mandatory expenditures, but the bulk of it is in discretionary funding for budget restoration, Ethnic Studies, and Graduation Initiative (GI) 2025.

Within the GI 2025 funds, 11% must be used for basic needs and another 11% for student mental health. While this increased funding is welcome news, the budget also incorporates a deduction of approximately 30% against new discretionary dollars mandated by the Chancellor's Office across all 23 campuses in order to fund system wide priorities.

Provost Avila will be working with relevant stakeholders in relation to the Ethnic Studies allocation, which was very healthy at over \$626K in recurring dollars. And Vice President Deboni will be developing proposals to address the mental health and basic needs earmarks.

On a related note, I want to commend the Student Affairs team on both our Basic Needs and CAPS programs. While there is an abundance of published research demonstrating the increasing demand for these support programs, there is no research examining the impact of these programs on retention, persistence, and other student success metrics. Our data give me confidence that this increased funding will have a positive impact on our student success metrics overall.

Moving forward, there will be a call for GI2025 proposals and as stated earlier, a call for proposals to move forward the work of our IEAT's.

While SRPC will play a role in reviewing and making recommendations on these proposals, of equal and perhaps more importance moving forward, is ensuring that each division has an internal process for new proposals that is clearly communicated.

While this is already happening to some degree in some divisions, what we're envisioning is a process within all divisions for vetting new proposals – whether they be for additional faculty or staffing lines or programmatic and operational needs –

with that vetting process occurring at each level of the division, based on data, and in alignment with divisional and institutional priorities.

Management at all levels will need to be accountable and responsible for this vetting process. We cannot simply submit a wish list of proposals to the VP or Provost; each proposal needs to be vetted and approved at every level – from the director level to the AVP/Dean level, and then to the VP/Provost level.

That way, by the time approved proposals make it to SRPC, that deliberative body will be safe in the assumption that all proposals have been rigorously vetted, that there is demonstrated need, and that they all represent priorities.

In this context, the SRPC's purpose will not be to evaluate the worthiness of proposals, but rather, to make recommendations based on available funding. We have talked about empowering our leaders at all levels with the autonomy to make decisions in the best interests of their departments and programs, and this requires our leaders to make those difficult decisions and effectively communicate their decision-making process with their teams.

Priority 4: Campus Safety COVID-19 and Beyond

I'd like to also focus on campus safety. I sent a global email yesterday outlining all of the safety protocols and measures that we've taken to inform our repopulation this fall.

Please be sure to review all of the information – there is so much detail involved in each of these areas and our campus safety is a collective responsibility. I am very proud of the work we've done, and with all the pieces in place, it is now up to each one of us to execute our plans.

I want to thank and recognize the work of so many individuals and groups across campus who have engaged in this work. To our colleagues in Environmental Health & Safety, HR, Facilities, Housing, Dining Services, UPD, Communication and Marketing, and to leadership at every level in every division, I am grateful for all of the time, energy, and expertise you have invested in getting us here.

I know that you and your families have sacrificed precious time together over the past many months because of your work. Our gathering here today is evidence of your contributions.

I also want to remind everyone that campus safety, of course, goes beyond COVID. We are continuing our work on the Emergency Preparedness Enhancement Project which was brought about as a response to the series of emergency situations our campus faced in Fall 2018. As part of this project our campus has already invested over \$1.3M to complete Phase I and Phase II of this project.

Like many things we've discussed today, campus safety is a collective responsibility as well, and I have worked with Interim Chief Massey to ensure UPD is providing relevant professional development for faculty, staff, and students throughout the year.

This is vital – because each of us needs to feel confident in our ability to lead and guide students in the midst of a crisis. If you are a faculty member or staff member working directly with students – depending on the crisis situation, students will look to you for guidance on how to respond.

And the requisite preparation is essential for us in effectively navigating whatever crisis situation comes our way.

More information is forthcoming, and we will be collecting data to examine participation across campus, but also hope to collect data on how to improve our safety workshops moving forward. Thanks in advance to our entire public safety team for the continued efforts.

The Road Ahead

I know I covered quite a bit today, so I'd like to highlight the main high-level priorities for us moving forward this year: Accreditation, Strategic Enrollment Management/Academic Master Planning, GI2025/IEAP work, and Post-Graduate Outcomes.

I am looking forward to engaging in this work with all of you, which is all directly related to our long-term planning and strategic vision as we move into our next 20 years.

In closing, I have to say that as hard as our moment in history is proving to be, we have been given the chance to stand back from what our normal once was, to see and assess our realities anew, and to design our way forward accordingly.

I am optimistic that the toughest times are behind us, though there remains much to do to meet our goals and to provide the curricular and co-curricular experiences that our students need and deserve.

I look forward to taking on these challenges with you all. While difficulties surround us, opportunities lie ahead as we move forward, together.

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

I am pleased to shift focus now to members of our campus community whose innovations in meeting the challenges of the moment are nothing short of inspiring.

It was difficult to select an award winner from the nominations received for the President's Student Innovation Award this year. I want to congratulate Cameron Bartosiewicz [Bart-a-sevich] as this year's award recipient. Cameron saw a need in his community and took active steps to address it -- beginning a new nonprofit 501c3 organization to support LGBTQ students called The Youth Pride Association, or YPA. YPA works to promote and foster the acceptance of LGBTQ+ people through education, support and advocacy. Cameron, thank you for your extraordinary work. We are proud to have you in the Dolphin Pod. Cameron.

The President's Teaching & Innovation Award this year goes to Dr. Talya Drescher, Assistant Professor of Education. As one of her colleagues wrote in nominating her for the award, "Students in teaching preparation programs have long lamented some feeling of disconnect between theory (e.g., how people learn) and practice (what to do with real students in real classroom contexts), but this was exacerbated by pandemic teaching and learning where there was no authentic opportunity to practice at all. Talya partnered with other CSUCI tenured and lecturer faculty in Early Childhood Studies and Bilingual Authorization Credentials to bring mixed reality simulations into the virtual classroom. Talya worked with the instructors to plan, develop, prepare, implement, study, and reflect upon mixed reality experiences that allowed close to 100 students to interact with an avatar and to apply their learning within a safety net of support from their instructors and peers." Congratulations, Dr. Drescher.

The President's Staff Award for Excellence goes to Kristi O'Neill Gonzales, described in her colleague's nomination as the heart of the Teaching & Learning Innovations team. As her nominator wrote, "I don't think I'm alone in crediting my interactions with Kristi as profoundly changing my approach to teaching and learning, and my understanding why inclusive and equitized learning environments begin with conscientiously applying accessible design practices... Kristi's passion for accessibility stems from her genuine care and concern for students and a passionate desire to do all she can to ensure every student equity in access to learning." Congratulations, Kristi.

References

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