

Provost's State of Academic Affairs Speech
University Senate
February 26, 2015, 3:30 p.m., Drinko Hall

Good afternoon. Thank you for your invitation to speak today about the State of Academic Affairs to the University Senate and to our university community at-large.

Since my address to you last March our academic community has seen some changes and transitions. Of course the biggest news of the year is that we welcomed Dr. Michael Drake as the university's president. Let me tell you, working closely with President Drake has been a delight. In addition, we have made several other leadership appointments in colleges:

- Professor Karla Zadnik was appointed dean of the College of Optometry;
- Professor Charlene Gilbert was appointed dean and director of the Lima campus;
- Professor Anil Makhija was appointed dean of the Max M. Fisher College of Business;
- And, in last year's remarks to the University Senate, I mentioned that Professor Trevor Brown had been appointed director of the John Glenn School of Public Affairs. Trevor remains with us, but is now a dean. As you know, a few weeks ago, the school became the John Glenn College of Public Affairs. Through the university's faculty governance procedures—including unanimous support from the Council on Academic Affairs, the Senate, and the Board of Trustees—this new college was created. This change positions us well to educate future students in public service and policy and to facilitate the scholarly work of our faculty.

In addition, I made a couple of important OAA leadership appointments, including:

- The appointment of Professor Jennifer Evans-Cowley as vice provost for capital planning and regional campuses;
- And the appointment of Professor Kay Wolf as the vice provost for academic policy and faculty resources.

In addition to the leaders I specifically mentioned by name and title, would all of the members of the OAA leadership group please stand and be recognized? Thank you. I appreciate all the things you do for this institution. Believe me, I couldn't get through a single day without you.

I also want to recognize and thank the members of the University Senate for the important work you all do for this university. One thing that my colleagues and I believe that is very important is that we include the voices of students, faculty and staff in the decision-making process. The University Senate provides an outstanding vehicle for some of this input, and I thank you for never saying no when asked to participate in our shared governance process.

In the summer of 2013 the OAA leadership team held a series of discussions to frame our direction moving forward over the next few years. These discussions led to the creation of six priority areas, which I presented to you last year. I want to begin my remarks today by providing a brief progress report on these priorities.

Our first and arguably most important priority is an effort to enhance our undergraduate, graduate and professional students' experiences. Our overarching goal here is to bring in bright, promising students and commit to providing them with the best educational experience possible as they work toward graduation and successful careers in their post-Ohio State lives.

To this end, we have made progress on several fronts. For example, we continue to expand the Second-Year Transformational Experience Program or STEP, a program designed to connect our second year students more closely with faculty. Last June, I appointed Professor Linda Martin to assume oversight of all the academic components of STEP. With her leadership, this year we have approximately 1,300 very actively engaged STEP student participants. For next year, we have already recruited more than 100 members of our faculty and expect to recruit 2,000 students for the next cohort. I thank Vice Provost Wayne Carlson and Vice President Javaune Adams-Gaston for their leadership on STEP.

We also have begun work to provide more assistance for our international students who come to Ohio State. We rank among the top ten destinations for international students in the United States, and we have more than 6,000 international students from 118 countries on our campus. Vice Provost William Brustein led three groups of faculty and staff in discussions on how we might enhance the Ohio State experience for our international students by better coordination of the services we provide. We are currently diving into the recommendations made by these groups in order to create more effective infrastructure and programs for our international students.

We have also worked this year on our career services for students. Vice President Adams-Gaston and Deans and Vice Provosts Pat Osmer and Wayne Carlson have led this effort. This fall we held the first ever campus-wide career and internship fair. Thousands of students from all majors, programs and degree levels met with 250+ employers. It was a great success. In addition, we are keenly aware that not all masters or doctoral students aspire to an academic career. We are therefore working on ways to help those students explore future career options, in addition to the traditional academic career path.

Lastly, we continue to create and build new solid academic programs at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. For example, we launched our new undergraduate data analytics degree program in the fall. All indications suggest that it will be a great success. Several other new and innovative programs are on the drawing board as well.

A second important priority for us is establishing Ohio State's footprint in the eLearning world. Working with our academic units, Vice President and Chief Information Officer Mike Hofherr and his team made significant progress in this area over the past year. We joined the Unizin Consortium to expand our role as a leader in the national conversation around digital course content, course software, and course analytics. We have met the classroom technology standard in 100 percent of the current centrally-supported classrooms, improving the consistency of the educational experience as teachers and students move between classrooms. Our colleges are in the process of creating 15 new online general education courses for Autumn Semester 2015, which adds on to the 10 courses that were launched in the fall. These courses

will provide additional options for our Ohio State students and at the same time provide dual enrollment opportunities for high school students. I believe all of these developments are indications that we have become much smarter in the way we use technology to create enhanced experiences for our students. I thank all who have been engaged in this activity—it's critical for our future.

Our third priority area is to improve access and affordability for our students. If you have been keeping an eye on the news recently you know that this is not only a priority for us at Ohio State. President Obama, Governor Kasich and our state legislators have all made this their issue as well – and for good reason. Student indebtedness continues to grow: almost 60% of our students leave Ohio State with debt when they graduate. And, the high cost of education affects access. I fear we could be heading toward the day when only the well-to-do can afford to go to a place like Ohio State. This is simply not the goal of a great land-grant institution like The Ohio State University.

So what are we doing?

For one thing, Ohio State has become part of a national consortium called the University Innovation Alliance, which has brought us together with leaders at ten other universities to address the problem of access. For example, we are looking at ways to use predictive analytics to make sure all our students can succeed at Ohio State and, more importantly, complete their degrees in four years. Another example: At the Mansfield and Newark campuses learning communities for first generation students have been formed to foster student success. Why is this important? It's simple. We believe that increasing student success translates into student's completing degrees in a timely fashion and this can lead to significant student savings of the cost of education.

We continue to look for ways to find additional streams of revenue to operate the university, as well as ways to streamline our operations, so that we are spending our money as wisely as possible on teaching and discovery. For example, we recently released an RFQ on an innovative energy and sustainability initiative with a goal of becoming smarter about our energy use, supply, operations, and expenditures. We hope this approach will strengthen our sustainability efforts and also provide new resources for our academic core.

And, we are working to develop a long-term funding strategy to increase the amount of financial aid that is available for our neediest students: aid that will help them avoid student debt that accumulates while they are here. Increasing financial aid was just one of many concrete recommendations that came from a group charged with examining ways to increase access and affordability for our students here at Ohio State. This group was led by Vice President Dolan Evanovich. We will be following up on other recommendations from this group in the near future.

Our fourth priority area is the development of our Discovery Theme Initiative. Going forward in this century, I am convinced that *collaboration* will be an important defining feature of research, scholarship and creative activity. With this idea in mind, a fundamental tenet of the development of our discovery themes has been to find solutions to the world's most

complex problems using a collaborative approach that includes the hiring of new faculty colleagues who complement the great faculty who already call Ohio State home.

We have made significant progress over the past year toward this goal, thanks to countless hours of discussions and faculty input and also to the efforts of Vice Provost Mike Boehm and Vice President Carol Whitacre from my office. We launched the first funded initiative in data analytics, which is being led by Dr. Philip Payne, chair of the Department of Biomedical Informatics. We are currently searching for 39 new faculty members for data analytics and we made our first hire early in January in our outstanding Department of Mathematics. In addition, we have chosen six other initiatives for funding and have authorized 42 positions for these initiatives. I thank all the faculty members who have been engaged in creating these initiatives—they will have a significant impact at Ohio State as they are rolled out.

Our fifth priority area is to make sure our faculty evaluation and rewards structure adequately captures the life of a 21st century member of our faculty. To this end, I appointed an ad-hoc committee to conduct an initial assessment of our evaluation and rewards structure and identify areas we need to consider during this discussion. Their report identified three key areas to consider:

First, is the importance of citizenship—Ohio State's land-grant mission has always connected its academic mission to this key word. We must find ways to incentivize and reward activities that build connections across the university. That is, make sure that we reward those activities that help advance connections, collaborations and community within and across our colleges, academic departments and centers. Such mutual support works to elevate the stature and recognition of the faculty as a whole.

Second, the committee noted that Ohio State has evolved in recognizing the importance of team and trans-disciplinary research and teaching in both basic and applied fields. The ways in which we typically evaluate this work are not always reliable or consistent, however. But it will be increasingly important as we look for ways to encourage collaboration and cooperation across the institution.

Third, the committee recognized the importance of engagement with the world outside Ohio State. Community-based activities done by our faculty and student engage community members at the local, national, and global levels as partners in teaching and learning, research and discovery, and outreach and engagement. The STEAM Factory is a wonderful example of this kind of engagement, and I recognize and applaud this effort—you are making a difference. We need to recognize the growing importance that these activities have in our future and reward them accordingly. I have asked Vice Provost Kay Wolf to follow up on the good work of this committee and with further discussion create actionable items that move us forward. You will hear more about this in the coming months.

The sixth and last of our academic priorities is enhancing the arts at Ohio State and our connections with the Columbus arts community. One key initiative is the development and enhancement of our Arts District. Last fall, I assembled an Arts District Steering Committee, with divisional dean of arts and humanities Mark Shanda as its chair. I asked the committee to

make recommendations to me about the programming and facilities in the district. I received their report yesterday. I am very pleased that at their January meeting the Board of Trustees gave approval for a formal planning process to be undertaken for the arts district, including planning for new facilities for the School of Music. The work of the group chaired by Dean Shanda will be incorporated into this formal plan, so that in the end we have a comprehensive view of the district and its activities. This is a significant step forward for the arts on and off campus. I want to recognize Executive Dean David Manderscheid and his colleagues in the College of Arts and Sciences on their efforts in enhancing the arts.

That's a brief summary of our progress on the six academic priorities on which we have been working over the last several months. Key to this progress has been the participation of countless faculty, students and staff who graciously agreed to serve on a variety of committees, task forces, and working groups charged with studying these issues. I thank you all for agreeing to share your time and expertise with us—your input was invaluable.

In addition to this summary, there are a few other updates I want to make sure you are aware of.

- Last month I announced that Professor Valerie Lee was stepping down from her joint position as Vice Provost of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion and Vice President of Outreach and Engagement. Valerie has done great work in these roles. I am thrilled that Professor Sharon Davies has agreed to lead the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, starting in July. And, we will shortly launch a search to find a Vice Provost for Outreach and Engagement with a goal to have someone in place by July 1. We have formed groups to closely examine the mission, function and activities of these two offices with an eye toward maximizing their impact internally and externally. This work is ongoing.
- On a related note, we want a strong Office of Diversity and Inclusion because we are all committed to inclusive excellence in our academic community of diverse, innovative and productive faculty, students and staff. To rethink, to revise and to re-energize our faculty hiring approaches, as a first step I asked Drs. Hazel Morrow-Jones, Mary Juhas, and Valerie Lee to develop diversity training for search committees and to use the discovery theme hires as a place to begin this effort. To start, they hosted multiple training sessions that focused on searches for the 39 faculty members for the Data Analytics Collaborative I mentioned earlier. To further develop this training, our campus recently hosted experts from the University of Wisconsin's Women in Science and Engineering Leadership Institute to discuss how their training techniques might be incorporated into our approaches. This "train the trainer" workshop for faculty and academic leaders helped us look with greater clarity at our own perspectives, particularly how our own biases affect the recruitment process. Ultimately, I envision having these kinds of training sessions for all searches we conduct across the university. I believe they will make a difference in creating the more diverse campus we seek and need.
- We continue to attract national and international conferences to The Ohio State University. These gatherings enrich us all. For example, in October Ohio State hosted

ScienceWriters2014, the largest annual conference for science writers in the country. More than 400 science writers attended representing the New York Times, Washington Post, Wall Street Journal, NBC News and many others. It was a great opportunity to showcase Ohio State and our faculty. Next year the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions will be here thanks largely to efforts of Vice Provost and Director of Libraries Carol Diedrichs. Attracting this group to Columbus and our campus was really a coup—we will be joined by 4-5 thousand colleagues from around the world—this is a great opportunity for us to show the world what we have here.

- Next, we are currently working on the institution's enrollment plan for the next five years—that is, what patterns of enrollment are we likely to see for undergraduate, graduate and professional students in the near future. This plan will be presented to the Board of Trustees later this year. I want to thank Vice Provost Randy Smith and Vice President Dolan Evanovich for their great work on this effort.
- Finally, I also want to mention one more important activity that has begun. Vice Provost Randy Smith is leading the university's ten year reaccreditation exercise. After his splendid leadership of the semester conversion process, I couldn't resist asking him to take on another enormous university enterprise. He is thrilled. That reaccreditation process will culminate in a campus visit by a team in March 2017. Among many things, the process is a wonderful opportunity for us to do some self-reflection on our future.

I hope you agree that a lot is going on in OAA and that we are making progress toward academic goals we have set for Ohio State.

While there are a lot of good things happening at Ohio State we are faced with some challenges as well. I thought I would outline four of these challenges at this time.

First, there is a growing chorus of voices that are questioning the value of higher education and whether or not the investment that students, their parents, and the state make in our universities is worth it. This may be understandable. Over the last several years the cost of going to college has increased faster than just about anything else, and this can be seen in the increasing debt our students and their parents are assuming for an education at a place like Ohio State. I know that no one in this room questions the value of an Ohio State education—we know we make a difference. Nevertheless, I believe the onus is on us to prove it to the rest of the world not just by stating it as fact but demonstrating it in measureable results.

I had the pleasure of kicking off the third annual Ohio State Student assessment conference earlier this month. The subject matter of this conference is central to demonstrating our results. We must keep measuring the learning that takes place in our classroom and laboratories and in our many programs outside these traditional educational settings. Doing so demonstrates the value we add. And, we must tell this story. We also need to do a better job tracking our students once they leave Ohio State, not with a few anecdotes about students who make it big, but rather with comprehensive data that demonstrate that the experience at Ohio State adds value to their lives. And this value should not only be measured by salaries and

economics, but also by the quality of their relationships with others, their overall impact on society, and their overall satisfaction with life.

The higher education space is actually getting crowded with educational ventures that offer alternatives to the traditional bricks and mortar experience, such as 100% on-line programs. And for some students this approach to education and training may be ideal. But, our students have come here for a more traditional experience. Nonetheless, I think it is a mistake for us to assume that students, parents, government officials and the media will automatically continue to value what we do here as much as we do. We have more than 15,000 great stories to tell every year as our students finish their degrees and move on to new experiences. We simply need to make sure everyone hears those stories and hears them often.

A second challenge is linked to the issue of value and accountability, and that is the question of how exactly are we going to finance our efforts going forward. One thing is very clear. Our traditional sources of funds to support our teaching, research, and outreach missions—namely, student tuition and state subsidy—can best be described as flat and I believe will remain so into the future. President Drake, CFO Geoff Chatas, and I continue to look for new sources of funds to support the great work that goes on here at Ohio State. These sources include initiatives like our comprehensive energy management project, which is under consideration right now; increasing private support from our very generous alumni and friends; and looking for ways for us to become more cost-effective and efficient in our operations. In the end we want to keep an Ohio State University education affordable for our students, yet at the same time support the good work of our faculty and staff and do so at a competitive level.

A third challenge is making sure the teaching and learning that goes on at Ohio State matches the talent level of our students. As has been the case for the last several years, the freshman class we welcomed to campus in August collectively is the most academically gifted group of students we have ever had here at Ohio State. This poses an interesting challenge for us all: Are we providing the greatest academic experiences we can for these truly outstanding students? Are our academic programs relevant for what our students need when they leave here? They certainly deserve innovative, high quality programs. After all, our students put their futures in our hands and not some other excellent institution they could have chosen to attend. Along with this comes the question: Are we constantly updating our teaching techniques and skills to deliver the very best instruction for our students? President Drake and I have had many conversations on this point over the last few months. I know you will hear more from him on this topic over the next several months. Being truly the best teaching and learning institution in the country should be a goal we pursue as passionately as being the best place for research and discovery.

The last challenge I want to mention gets to the heart of our identity as a university. We are a comprehensive university with great teaching and scholarship spread across the breadth of the institution. I talked a bit earlier about our efforts in developing our discovery themes so that we can be true global leaders in the some specific areas within Health and Wellness, Food Production and Security, and Energy and the Environment. I believe that once developed these initiatives will enhance our university's reputation as a leading place for the discovery of new knowledge. However, we do have another great challenge in front us during this rather tough

financial time: That is, how do we support the further development of our other areas of excellence in research, scholarship and creative activities? While the discovery themes can and will touch all 15 of our colleges, there are many other areas of excellence that are deserving of support as well, areas on which our reputation as a leading, comprehensive, public institution is built.

One such area is at the very heart of our university—the arts and humanities. The arts and humanities make up a significant part of our academic core and have added significantly to the reputation of this great institution. I don't think there are any in this room who doubt the value of a great liberal arts education, an education that is grounded strongly in the arts and humanities. No matter what major our students choose it is vital that they learn to deal with change, develop communication skills and a world-view, enhance their creative energy and abilities, and learn how to attack and solve problems and think critically. The liberal arts provide students with these so-called "soft-skills;" they are an important part of their education. Equally important is the research and creative activities of our arts and humanities faculty and students who add knowledge and insight to our world about what it means to be human. However, I am concerned about what appears to be a disengagement of our students from the arts and humanities. Over the last five years we have seen a more than 20% decrease in the number of credit hours taken by our students in the arts and humanities even though the size of our student body has grown. And there are many signs that this is not just an Ohio State phenomenon but rather an issue at other institutions as well. For example, the *Chronicle of Higher Education* recently reported that there has been a 6.7% decrease in foreign language enrollments since 2009. I find this incredibly baffling—if anything, we claim to have become a more global society in this same period of time.

I strongly believe we can and should lead a national effort to preserve the liberal arts at our institutions of higher education—they are important. As a start, I am pleased today to announce a new Discovery Themes Initiative that we will invest in over the next five years—a \$5 million central commitment to the arts and humanities that includes \$2.5M in recurring dollars and \$2.5M in cash. We have several goals in mind for this initiative. First, like investments in our other discovery themes, we expect that an end-result will be the creation of an enhanced worldwide signature presence that better defines The Ohio State University in the arts and humanities to the world outside of Columbus. Second, the initiative should bring our students and faculty together in a collaborative framework. That is, we hope that this initiative is cross-campus and inclusive. Third, and also very important, I hope that this initiative can contribute to a reversal of what appears to be the national trend I described a few minutes ago. That is, we prove what we say about the value of the liberal arts and its core, the arts and humanities, and how this time-tested educational approach positively impacts the world. I am confident that we can lead this effort nationally.

I have asked Vice Dean Susan Williams from Arts and Sciences, working in tandem with Vice Provost Mike Boehm from my office to lead this new discovery theme effort. I hope this new initiative is the first of others that will help us strengthen and focus our investments on other areas of the university that have established excellence and are sources of pride.

I close by thanking you for this opportunity to apprise you of the state of academic affairs. I ended with some challenges in front of us. But please know this: I do believe that we sometimes overly fixate on the challenges we face and don't celebrate the greatness of this place. We have great students, great faculty, and great staff who all perform at a high level every day. I appreciate your efforts and want you to know that I and my colleagues in the Office of Academic Affairs are here to facilitate your work whenever and however we can. Thank you for your attention today and more importantly for the great things you do on a daily basis.

President Drake and Professor Gerber, this concludes my remarks today. I am happy to take some questions if time allows. Thank you.