

State of the University Address
“Charting a Course for Shawnee State”

Prepared for Delivery by:
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NOTE: THE ADDRESS AS DELIVERED MAY DIFFER FROM THE
PREPARED TEXT.

Members of the Shawnee State University Board of Trustees, students, faculty, staff and distinguished guests.

This afternoon I am proud to offer a progress report on Shawnee State’s efforts to achieve its mission of being a high quality regional university. I will also discuss how changing expectations for higher education may influence how we move forward, and how we go about planning for the future.

I would like to thank Dr. David Todt and the panel for providing us with the benefit of their review of major reports and their assessments of them. They have done a terrific job of framing my address.

A Year of Progress

Before we look forward, let us look back on the last year. How have we advanced our mission to be a high quality regional university?

I will use the university’s Strategic Plan as a checklist for our progress:

Theme: Teaching and Learning

Goal: To be widely recognized as an exemplary public university committed to student success and excellence in teaching and learning.

Our primary mission is teaching and nowhere is our success at achieving that mission more evident than during the Celebration of Scholarship. The Celebration of Scholarship is a unique showcase for the efforts and talents of *undergraduate* students. Nowhere will you find a better demonstration of how Shawnee State is preparing the thinkers and innovators for Ohio’s tomorrow.

The participating students are given the opportunity to present research or exhibit work in a range of disciplines including art, education, mathematics, business, social sciences, humanities, health sciences, natural sciences and engineering technology.

The Celebration of Scholarship is also an opportunity to recognize the faculty who gave of their time to mentor the conference participants. Their encouragement and expertise, very

much appreciated by the students, underscores the quality of undergraduate education that is available at Shawnee State.

That quality is apparent in the professional success realized by our students. Shawnee State students excel on licensing examinations, and 100 percent of our recent pre-med students have been accepted into medical school.

Thanks to the hard work of faculty and administrators in preparing for semester conversion, we are a university that can offer its students new and revised curricula. Every one of the 1,393 courses offered at Shawnee State under the quarter system was reviewed and re-crafted to create 1,164 new semester courses.

A measure of our commitment to excellence is the professional recognition our faculty members have received. They have presented research at national conferences, their work has been widely published in professional journals and they have received awards for the excellence of their scholarship.

Through the vehicle of AQIP Action Projects we have developed new units to help us support the needs of our faculty and our students. We have been successful because AQIP's "bottom-up" approach encourages broad participation. Early accomplishments include the Teaching and Learning Center and the Women's Center.

Last fall, Shawnee State inaugurated its first master's degree program in Occupational Therapy, which was created in response to the needs of our students and the community. Occupational Therapy now requires a master's degree for licensure. In order to continue providing this program, and ensuring a steady flow of occupational therapists to the region, we created the MOT program.

We are always looking for ways to enhance access to a university education. For example, Shawnee State is participating in "Educate the Tri-State" which makes investigating and enrolling in regional universities and colleges that much easier by offering a single web site.

Theme: Growth and Development

Goal: To assure the full development of the University through planned enrollment growth and wise investment in educational initiatives.

Enrollment has grown, expanding the opportunity we offer for a university education. Shawnee State's enrollment has grown by about 20 percent in the last six years – this year marked the fifth consecutive year of record high enrollment. Such robust enrollment growth is an endorsement of our efforts to provide a quality university education.

In order to ensure the continued quality of our education in this period of growth, faculty have been added. The new faculty are teaming up with our more senior faculty to provide a dynamic learning environment.

We will continue to focus on the effects of our recent growth. For example we are in the process of refining a proposal for a University College to enhance the support we provide under-prepared students, and students who have not decided upon a major.

No doubt a major reason for our growth in enrollment is that our tuition is among the very lowest in Ohio. At \$5,838 we are within a few dollars of the national average, and substantially below the state average tuition.

At the same time we are pursuing how to sustain our rate of growth.

No single initiative is more vital to the university's growth than the \$12 million "Poised for Tomorrow" capital campaign. The campaign will support seven different campus initiatives that were developed by listening to students, faculty and staff. We wanted to know their aspirations for making Shawnee State an even finer university. We also listened to area residents to find out how we could be an even greater asset to the community.

The Poised for Tomorrow campaign will support new programs, increase scholarships, fund faculty research and professional development and make possible the construction of new facilities available to both the campus and the surrounding community.

These are all important to the life of a university. Thanks to the work of more than 100 volunteers who share our vision, already more than \$7 million has been committed. That is more than has ever been raised in a capital campaign in this region, and we are confident of reaching our \$12 million goal by April 2008.

Theme: Community

Goal: To increase opportunities for students, the campus community, and area residents by pursuing joint initiatives with the larger community and by cultivating a shared sense of purpose within the University.

To improve intra-campus communication we developed SSUOnline as part of our e-mail system. I also hold monthly "Coffee and Conversation" meetings and meet regularly with governance group leadership. These help keep faculty and staff up-to-date on university activities.

We are also constantly looking to improve the university's web page and we now post the minutes of meetings of the university-wide committees.

Faculty members helped cultivate the university's intellectual life by hosting a variety of speakers who stimulated conversations throughout the campus community. Speakers included: legal scholar Anita Hill; the historian George McClay, and philosopher Alan Wolfe, among others.

Nothing has had a greater impact on the sense of community on campus than our new student residences. With space for more than 600 students, we are a profoundly different institution than 10 years ago. More than ever, we are a "24/7" university, and must find ways to meet the needs of students who are spending more and more time on campus.

To that end, the Trustees approved a bond issue that will fund an expansion of the university center. The project will include a new wing with expanded kitchen and dining facilities, new meeting space for student organizations, and more recreational opportunities.

Throughout the planning of the UC expansion, we have solicited input from students. In fact, student leaders endorsed a new student fee to help pay off the bonds. They recognized the improved UC would be a great asset to students and worth a student fee of up to \$150 per semester.

To improve student life we have also added new intramural programs, again, at the suggestion of student leaders.

So that these efforts realize their greatest potential, we need a strong leader, and we have one in the new Vice President for Student Affairs, Jim Settle. I will ask Jim to stand up and receive a warm welcome.

We are very proud of the local partnerships we have formed to increase learning opportunities and improve the quality of life in the community. We work closely with the Portsmouth City Schools, SOMC, USEC and the Literacy Council, to name a few.

Our students are also deeply involved in supporting the region. Students provide hundreds upon hundreds of hours of community service. I think it's important that as our students are acquiring the intellectual tools to become leaders in their community, they also develop a sense of responsibility for their neighbors.

Shawnee State also assists businesses in the region. Through our Office of Outreach Services, Shawnee State provided training to more than 160 local companies and about 50 government offices and agencies during the last school year.

The Higher Education Environment

Clearly SSU is having a profound impact on our students and on the community, both essential to achieving our mission of being a high quality regional university. As we pursue how we can continue to achieve our mission, we must recognize that the environment in which we operate is not static. The expectations for higher education are changing. As we heard during the panel discussion, widely varying groups are expressing dissatisfaction and concern that higher education is not meeting the needs of its students and society in general. And those needs have been redefined.

I am not convinced that all the criticisms of higher education are legitimate or that suggested reforms would have the intended effect. Nevertheless, the sands are shifting beneath our feet – we had better be nimble.

That became clear last month, during a meeting I attended with Governor Strickland and about 85 presidents of public and private campuses throughout Ohio. It was reassuring to see that the governor is focusing on higher education – he spent 5 ½ hours with us, discussing the same issues that we heard during the panel discussion. The governor made it

clear throughout the day that he wants to take the time to hear from all constituencies before coming to any conclusions. I would say Governor Strickland is being very deliberate and thoughtful about developing his higher education agenda – just what I would expect of a former Shawnee State professor!

I would like to address four of the issue areas that are prominent in discussions of higher education, particularly how they will influence how Shawnee State moves forward.

The four areas are:

- Access
- Affordability
- Workforce Development
- Accountability

Access

Shawnee State has grown by about 20 percent in the last five years. That is an achievement of which to be proud. By growing many more individuals were given the chance for a better life through a university education.

In last year's State of the University address, I set an enrollment goal of 5,300, to expand further the access to a university degree that is central to our mission.

The first step toward that goal is enrolling more students at Shawnee State. In this effort, demographics is working against us. The number of 18-year olds is decreasing. To grow, we will continue to attract more students from an ever-broadening geographic area – and hopefully, from more countries. We will also pursue more of what you might call “grow your own” programs – we will cultivate and encourage more high school students to take the rigorous courses that will prepare them for the challenges of a university education.

We are also making a more concerted effort to pave the way for students seeking to transfer to Shawnee State. Whether they want to study closer to home or they are attracted to one of our programs, we are working hard to ease the transfer of credits and simplify the administrative task of changing universities. This past year we added a new position to recruit and support transfer students.

We will also continue to welcome non-traditional students – the individuals who bring to their studies the perspective of having been out in “The Real World.” They recognize the value of upgrading their knowledge base.

More than other universities, we have always had a good mix of both traditional and non-traditional students, and I think that their interaction in class benefits both groups. However they by and large have been from the area and shared common cultural experiences. To grow, we will have an ever-broadening array of students. As our student body becomes more diverse, more cultures and backgrounds will be represented on campus. We must cultivate

an atmosphere of civility and tolerance. We are a friendly, welcoming campus, and I am confident we can build on that tradition.

We must also jealously guard the principles of academic freedom. They ensure our campus is a safe harbor for intellectual discourse. Our students must be confident they will be able to learn about, discuss, even argue over ideas in a respectful, civil environment. That freedom also protects the ability of faculty to present those ideas in the manner they think will best serve their students.

Attracting more students is just the first step. As we endeavor to increase enrollment, we must focus just as intently on retaining students.

Retention is the priority for Shawnee State for two reasons:

First, state funding and federal financial aid is based in part on our graduation schedule. The goal is to get students to graduation quickly. Unfortunately, the funding does not reflect the challenges faced by many SSU students.

Secondly, getting students to graduation as quickly as possible is the right thing to do. We have an obligation not only to prepare students, but stick by them so they remain in school and earn a degree.

Our efforts should be more effective as we have embraced an enrollment management model that looks beyond admissions. The responsibility of the new enrollment management staff does not stop when a student enrolls as a freshman. Enrollment management remains prominent in the life of students, providing the services that will help them stay in school. To this end we have created task forces on recruitment and retention and are investigating how to integrate them into university-wide governance.

The conversion to semesters will help by giving students more time to adjust, more time to learn, and more time to succeed. I want to acknowledge again the incredible amount of work on the part of faculty and staff to effect this momentous change.

We must be prepared for an array of learning styles and needs, which demands that we stretch our resources in order to respond to those needs. Because of our growth we've developed resources to help us address these challenges. I look forward to leadership from the Teaching and Learning Center to help each of us adapt to our students' needs.

At this point I should mention the new "Ohio Core" high school requirements. They should have the result of better preparing students for the rigors of college. But the first Ohio Core students won't graduate until 2014 – We must fill the "competency gap" until the Ohio Core results in more prepared graduates.

Additionally the Ohio Core will not benefit non-traditional students whose efforts to earn a university education we must continue to encourage and support.

Another group of students who we must encourage are those talented high school students participating in accelerated post-secondary programs. They get a head start on their

university studies, making the pursuit of a degree that much more affordable, which brings us to the next issue.

Affordability

As you know, affordability is a major consideration for students, particularly those from Appalachia. The cost of college is also receiving considerable attention in Columbus and Washington, D.C.

Again, Shawnee State is recognized for providing the opportunity of a university education by charging a low tuition.

Nevertheless, we must recognize that, even with the low tuition, students make a great investment in themselves by attending Shawnee State.

We must be mindful of this burden and the impact it has on students considering a university education. But we must emphasize that it's worth the investment.

I would like to report the likelihood of increased state aid, but unfortunately, indications are that higher education funding will likely be held flat. If a lower tuition cap is imposed, the new budget may actually result in fewer resources.

The special state supplement Shawnee State receives to support its unique mission has declined in recent biennial budgets. We had a victory in that the capital budget passed in December restored \$234,000 to the supplement. I directed the money to ensure student employees continue to receive the number of hours they expected, and at the new higher wage rate.

At the same time state support has been diminishing, the cost of providing quality academic programs has been rising. Shawnee State maintains small student-to-faculty ratios and does not rely on teaching assistants. Additionally individual instruction and tutoring are often required to help students succeed. And, as everyone has experienced, health care costs have also been increasing.

Despite these fiscal challenges we will remain focused on our mission.

Workforce Development

Key to that mission is preparing students for rewarding careers.

However, I don't think the term "Workforce Development," which is heard often in policy discussions, sufficiently captures our responsibility to our students. We are not simply

training students so they are equipped with a particular set of tools that are useful today. Actually to do so would be a disservice to them.

Rather than “Workforce Development” I believe our goal should be to create what I call “Complete Graduates.”

In the knowledge economy, individuals cannot expect to rely on a given set of skills that will serve them throughout their careers. Instead, we educate “Complete Graduates” who possess the cognitive tools to thrive in an environment in which change and innovation are constants.

How fast is the pace of change? The report “College Learning for the New Global Economy” quotes the chairman of Intel Corporation as saying 90 percent of the products Intel delivers on the final day of each year did not exist on the first day of the same year.

“Complete Graduates” will be intellectually prepared for such rapid change. What completes our students is preparing them for a baccalaureate degree. I do not mean to say that every student must earn a bachelor’s degree. Indeed, about 40 percent of our graduates every year earn associate degrees that set them on the track for rewarding careers. But on their way to an associate degree, our students receive an education that equips them for the rigors of a baccalaureate.

Owing to its mission Shawnee State also has a unique obligation to provide non-credit programs to meet the needs of our community. However, all the programs that we offer should be seen as rungs on the ladder leading up to a bachelor’s degree. Every graduate, regardless of the degree, must be a thinker and an innovator. We must imagine that every student may go on to conduct valuable research or will found a company that will become the backbone of the regional economy.

Our students also will be more than just job holders. They will be citizens and individuals. As part of their university degree it is incumbent upon us that we impart the great ideas – and ideals – that will help them understand human events and inspire them to assume a role in shaping them.

Both in the state and nationally there is a significant amount of policy discussion centered around STEM: Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics. I find this a bit curious. Considering that the study of science and math was central to a traditional liberal arts education, when did they become optional? To survive in a knowledge economy, science and math are not optional, nor are they at Shawnee State.

In this area we must be mindful of our responsibility to elementary, middle and secondary school students. They must receive a grounding in science and math so they are ready for the demands placed on them in college.

This vital work is being performed by science and math teachers, many of whom in this region received their degree from Shawnee State.

We are very proud at Shawnee State that one of our graduates, Mari Grace Smith was chosen Ohio's Top Mathematics Teacher for 2006. Mari Grace is with us today. I would ask her to stand and receive the recognition she so richly deserves.

Thanks to Mari Grace and teachers like her, our children will be ready for a world that we can hardly imagine.

Accountability

“Accountability” is another term that appeared often in the reports reviewed by the Learning Community.

Accountability is a function of transparency, which will be a priority of the new Institutional Research office. We have grown sufficiently that we need a single office to collect the many types of data generated on campus, and provide a means by which to access them.

Our accreditation process is also very transparent. We are among the fewer than 200 institutions in the United States approved to use the Academic Quality Improvement Program, or AQIP, as their means of being accredited.

AQIP is a different approach to accreditation that focuses on results rather than inputs. Rather than our scrambling every few years to meet accreditation standards set elsewhere, AQIP is a living process, in which we are constantly reviewing our efforts and developing projects that will advance our mission. The Women's Center and the Teaching and Learning Center are results of the AQIP process and will drive our efforts as we expand our Institutional Research office.

That transparency is also apparent in the work of the university-wide Assessment Committee. The committee, co-chaired by Ken Warfield and Krista Maxson, comprises faculty, staff and students and is charged with overseeing assessment at the institutional, general education, and program levels.

You will notice this assessment work is being conducted on the campus level, as it should be. Our faculty and staff are the ones most familiar with our students and the capacities of the university. I am deeply concerned when such discussions are held in faraway places among individuals with no conception of what we do here. Am I opposed to standardized outcomes testing for college students? Yes, I am.

The Upcoming Budget

This is the time of year when we are working on the upcoming budget. In developing that budget, I have a few expectations.

I expect level or decreased funding from the state, which has been eroding in recent years. Shawnee State is funded approximately \$1000 per FTE below the average of Ohio public universities.

I expect increased costs for providing a university education, and I expect restrictions on how we generate revenue. Not only are lower tuition caps a possibility, but I am always mindful of the many demands placed on the resources of our students and their families.

Fortunately we have reserves sufficient to see us through rough patches, and the university has a top fiscal rating from the Board of Regents.

Planning for Change in Higher Education and at Shawnee State

Budgets very clearly reflect the priorities of an institution, but they are year-to-year exercises. We must have a vision for the university that provides for planned growth, while being flexible enough to adapt to changing circumstance.

The Master Plan we are finalizing will give us a vision for the physical growth of the campus. It shows us possibilities and pulls together a “collective vision” for the future.

The Campus Master Plan includes foot prints for building additions and new buildings; expansion of the campus to the east, north and west; addition of a number of recreation facilities for both intercollegiate athletics and student life; and increased parking for students and special events that bring the general public to campus.

The Master Plan provides a design for physical growth. Now it is time to plan for developing new academic programs, new student life options and new student services. How can we ensure that any growth remains consistent with Shawnee’s mission and strategic goals?

Today I announce a new planning initiative – Shawnee State 20/20

“Shawnee State 20/20” will be rooted in Shawnee State’s mission and strategic plan. It will look at least 10 years into the future. Development of Shawnee State 20/20 will be an open and transparent process, in which we will listen carefully to ideas, proposals, and concerns from governance groups.

Shawnee State 20/20 will set priorities for new academic and student life programming, as well as facilities and budget planning.

Drafting Shawnee State 20/20 will be completed by December 2007 to integrate into 2008 Budget Planning.

Shawnee State 20/20 will give us a process by which to keep track of the larger policy issues I have discussed today and respond to them quickly and effectively.

To begin the process, I will form a Shawnee State 20/20 Steering Committee representing BAQIP and governance groups. There will also be:

- An *Academic Futures Team* led by the Provost
- A *Student Affairs Futures Team* led by the Vice-President for Student Affairs, and
- A *University Initiatives Futures Team* led by the Vice-President for Finance and Administration.

The Shawnee State 20/20 Steering Committee, working with our Director of Planning, Dr. David Todt, and an external consultant, will collect ideas, information and data through a series of open meetings and surveys with all constituent groups. Community input will be obtained through a President’s Community Forum. The data and information gathered will be used by the three *Futures Teams* to develop preliminary recommendations.

We hope to present the Academic, Student Affairs, and University Initiatives Plan to the Board of Trustees early in 2008.

Like the Master Plan, Shawnee State 20/20 will serve as a vision – it will NOT be a blueprint from which there can be no deviation. Its greatest asset will be its flexibility. The plan will guide university-wide planning and resource generation and expenditures.

As the planning proceeds, I will work with the new vice president for finance and administration to insure that we develop new and transparent budgeting process to make funds available for the plan.

Shawnee State 20/20 will be a continuous planning process operating on a cycle of gathering information, planning, taking action, assessing results by gathering information and beginning the next iteration of planning. As circumstances change, new opportunities become evident and Shawnee is faced with new challenges, the planning process will adjust and adapt.

Conclusion

It has been my pleasure to report on all the hard work undertaken by dedicated faculty and staff on behalf of our students and the community. We should all be very proud of what we have accomplished here at Shawnee State.

But there is an old Chinese curse: “May you live in interesting times.” We certainly live in a period of great change. Technology has changed our place in the world, and is constantly creating opportunities to improve how we conduct our work. Our region is changing, for the better. New economic opportunities are starting to present themselves, in no small part fueled by Shawnee State and its graduates.

All this is happening when policy-makers are looking at the nature of higher education, and its role in society.

Again, I think a number of the recommendations on the table are business as usual at Shawnee State. We offer broad access, low tuition, and a focus on undergraduate education.

We are dedicated to providing our students with the opportunity to build rewarding futures, and bear a deep commitment to improving the quality of life in the region.

The challenge before us is how best to continue our work? There is no single answer, instead we have a chorus of possibilities.

Shawnee State 20/20 will provide the planning structure and the vision to help organize those possibilities. And Shawnee State 20/20 will be flexible so that we can respond quickly and effectively to change.

After all, we live in very interesting times.

Thank you for your time.