Good morning!!

I want to do a few things this morning—and probably to the relief of my colleagues, I will not be presenting a top ten list of things first year students would be doing this year—

But I do want to do three things: First, I want to share what I think the purpose of this session is. Second, I want to share some observations about attitudes about yourself and the university that you might consider developing. And finally, and moving from the attitudes, I want to suggest a few behaviors you might consider

First then, what are we doing here? Convocation: (noun) a group gathered in response to a summons—

A convocation is a group of people formally assembled for a special purpose, mostly ecclesiastical or academic

Here, make you dress up in interesting garb—you in color coordinated T-shirts, we in academic regalia

One of two campus wide celebrations in regalia for us—this event as a start

And graduation, or commencement, as a celebration of accomplishments, and the acceptance of a credential physically demonstrating that accomplishment

As Dr. Stephen Gavanzzi wrote: “We celebrate these entrances and exits because students are our lifeblood. The incoming freshmen class comes in with great potential to learn and to grow, to expand their sense of individuality alongside an expanding set of experiences that center on a sense of belonging to their alma mater. In turn, the graduating seniors go out with great potential to demonstrate the skill sets they have developed, to advance their career aspirations while concurrently making important contributions back to society writ large.”

And so convocation brings with it the notion of ceremony, the notion of purpose, and the notion of partnership—because we indeed celebrate together as Lakers, we work to develop ways to work together to discover and implement strategies for success—and your success will be measured in learning—the learning of new things, the fashioning of strategies to learn how to learn, and hopefully finding, as so many of us have done, the sheer joy of learning.

And it is not simply to move from this convocation to the graduation you will experience in 4 years that will require a constant state of learning—it will be a survival skill to cope with the world we have now and will continue to have in the future.

According to David Schilling, “Buckminster Fuller created the “Knowledge Doubling Curve”; he noticed that until 1900 human knowledge doubled approximately every century. By the end of World War II knowledge was doubling every 25 years. Today things are not as simple as different types of knowledge have different rates of growth. For example, nanotechnology knowledge is doubling every two years and clinical knowledge every 18 months. But on average human knowledge is doubling every 13 months. According to IBM, the build out of the “internet of things” will lead to the doubling of knowledge every 12 hours. Those who do not learn how to learn effectively will not succeed.

To be a university graduate, you will have to continue to learn, and to be a graduate you will dramatically improve your chances to succeed by a whole array of measures. While it is true that you don’t need to be a college graduate to succeed, college graduates (even after loans) have a much higher chance of a higher income, of owning a home, of having better health, or experiencing travel, of having children who are also successful. There are no guarantees in life, but there are steps you can take that can improve your odds for achieving each of these things. You have started along the right path by choosing to come to CSU, and being here today.

So our first task, to define a convocation, to find why you are here at this event, and why you are attending the university, is set. So what is the second task? It is about attitudes.

And not a reference to Antoinette’s rap “I got an attitude.” Or a whole variety of contemporary raps that I cannot quote here including statements about he or she got attitude.

Nope—mine is old school—probably really old school—attitude as defined in social psychology: “an attitude is an expression of favor or disfavor toward a person, place, thing, or event (the attitude object). Prominent psychologist Gordon Allport once described attitudes "the most distinctive and indispensable concept in contemporary social psychology."

And the attitudes I want to discuss are attitudes you have about yourself and your learning at the university.

Two decades of research by Stanford psychologist Carol Dweck—that our abilities are not necessarily fixed, but can be changed over time—and that cultivating growth rather than a fixed ability perspective has hope for measurable and scalable improvements in your performance

you belong here

you can improve your ability to succeed by working with us

you can succeed—disappointing results ought to be used as a motivation for continued work rather than retreat from efforts—to seek help rather than surrender

and that working with us, you will find what you learn has meaning and purpose

10-12% improvement in graduation/persistent rates—not accomplished by any single step, but a combination of institutional activities—and a 4-5% change annually

Comparisons—growth—I need to try harder or use a different strategy

Leads to increased efforts and a positive strategies

Increased academic engagement and performance

Fixed—I am stupid at this and I don’t want anyone to know

Leads to decreased effort and negative strategies

Decreased academic engagement and performance

Often it is seeking out alternative ways to succeed: My approach to basketball—I cannot dunk, and I will not be getting taller anytime soon--I can work on my shooting—and practice will get me better

I am the first in my family to attend and graduate from a university. Several of my colleagues here are also the first in their families to graduate from college—all of us experienced the imposter syndrome early in our career—I was afraid I didn’t belong in college, that I could not succeed, and that if I asked questions or asked for help, I would be found out as an imposter.

As I shared with many of you during orientation, you do belong here—traditionally half the applicants here are not accepted. It does not say there is a guarantee—but it is to say you have proven yourself capable of the work. And faculty, Center for academic success, career services, advising, faculty, staff, want to see you succeed—and knowing you have already proven that you have the ability to succeed means that you have no excuse for not seeking our help to do just that. So, if you already have that attitude to succeed and learn, excellent. And if not, as Patty Labell said, I have a new attitude.

The third and final topic for me—some behaviors to consider—many of them are shared by lots of people: study hard, get your rest, eat well and avoid the freshmen 15, do not overconsume alcohol or substances, make a budget and stick to it, and again likely some other advice you will share only privately. Let me share six:

Be open to new ideas—listen and take some time to come to judgment—you will meet people and ideas that are different from you—ask questions, listen, take notes or record on your phone, think about those thoughts before deciding what your reactions will be—sometimes new ideas can make us feel threatened or uncomfortable—my request is for you to get to a place in which you can articulate for yourself what those ideas are—what about them you find discomforting or wrong, and how you can articulate responses to those ideas, especially responses with evidence

Ask questions to people who work here—about classes, about their experiences with school, about Clayton State

Be very, very careful about social media use—once a tweet or Instagram or old people facebook is posted, it is out in the web—people take screen shots and search archives even if you erase something. Sometimes being young will work as an excuse—but more likely than not, it will not be—

Be respectful always of other individuals—work together as partners in learning to not take advantage of others physically or emotionally, to share the responsibility of looking out for the safety of others, and ask for help or support from public safety or faculty or counseling if you believe that the basic right of each of us to say yes or no to social circumstances we face has been threatened

If something seems like a dumb thing to do, that may very well be because it is a dumb thing. Parties on Tuesday night. Convincing yourself you will wake up at 5 AM to study for an exam the next day.

Go to class or long on to on-line classes in a timely basis. Our course management systems for classes note a time and day when you log on—so do it frequently.

Finally, find people to tell about yourself—your hopes, fears, ambitions, and dreams. We are about the business of finding ways to make dreams real—and we are here to help you create alternate plans to achieve them. I was reminded of the Old Testament claim “Where there is no vision, the people perish…” But whether it was Thomas Edison or Albert Einstein or a Japanese proverb, “A vision without execution is hallucination.” And I conclude with Joel Barker’s observation: “Vision without action is merely a dream. Action without vision just passes the time. Vision with action can change the world.”

And together, and to change your portion of the world, you will make dreams real.