Spring Faculty Meeting
May 5, 2015

Thanks—while yesterday was a beautiful day, I am sorry we spent it outside—thankfully the day ended, with apologies to DH Lawrence, in **Hollow Men**, not with a bang but with a whimper—really laments from students faculty and staff alike that I didn’t get lunch. On a serious note, a review of some of the actions of the day gives us an opportunity to review our current communication strategies for such events, and an opportunity to build on our generally effective response.

My intention is to be very brief, and to reserve the right (as is with the congressional record) to revise and amend my remarks before publication. We begin with a word of thanks—for a successful year under interesting times—the uncertainties of external conditions for us and higher education in general, whether it is the changing debate about the role and functions of higher education both in the state and the nation, a thoughtful and a most successful provost search (which brought record institutional participation, and questions about our future that brought many great answers and some new questions). Thanks to the committee and the leadership of Dr. Elaine Manglitz for their exceptional work.

The new Science Building is coming close to reality, and the general assembly approved 1.4 m to begin planning and design for renovating the academic core. There is a scheduled open house for a film production facility at Huie Hall and a fully developed new program in film and media, not waiting for others to move forward with this program. The year brought another acknowledgement from the AJC that we are one of the top work places in metro Atlanta—party to follow. The year brought another year of acknowledgement from US News and World Report that we are 8th among public comprehensive college in the south. With work by campus and leadership by Robert Vaughan, the year saw our recognition as a Carnegie Commission classification for community engagement, one of 5 public institutions in Georgia, and one of 361 nationally. The National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) recognized the first year advising and retention center for its first year advising award—which is likely to be followed by later awards as student success continues to grow. During FY 15, 25% more students received a scholarship from Clayton State than in the previous year. Dollars awarded to those students saw a 35% increase, thanks to a 99% increase in the number of scholarship dollars raised. We have more to do, but the work continues to be increasingly successful.

I am calling for volunteers to participate in an update of our strategic plan. There are clearly opportunities to revisit our perspectives on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, to review the mission and vision of the institution, and certainly to have serious conversations about not only goals, but far more specific and far more quantifiable goals. We have some opportunities to make some ground breaking steps in the next few years and be seen as leaders in categories such as community engagement, life, as well as workplace preparation for the 21st century. We have already begun to create models for ways in which universities and communities can be partners for learning. We can be a model for institutions that succeed in the important and vital work of managing issues of similarities and differences—diversity—and have concrete programs that give power and knowledge to our students to lead on such matters while they are here, and after they succeed in our classes. We live in a society in which issues of race and class and gender and even the people we love are among things that are real—and for which we must find a safe context within which to learn and to dream. We can help our campus and students through leadership in addressing those and other learning issues.

I draw from American Marathon achiever—winner of the Boston and New York Marathons and Olympic medal winner, Meb Keflezighi, the crafting of excellent goals—the goals must have personal meaning; a good goal must be specific; a good goal is challenging but realistic, and a good goal has a deadline—not bad advice for us as we craft next steps for our institution.

I recently spoke with a student while walking through the university center. The conversation was about whether I had run and finished the Boston Marathon—I said I had. She asked what I wore. I indicated that since it was cold, I wore a long sleeve T-shirt and tights—all in black. She asked whether I wore my PACE pin. While I admitted I had not—weight considerations, I marveled at this example of how PACE’s commitment to partnering academics with community engagement has begun to work!!

I close with a statement discovered in a TED Talk with Sarah Lewis. “We thrive not when we have done it all, but when we believe we have more to do.” And I believe we will continue to thrive—and for that, I remain grateful daily for the colleagues we have here at CSU.