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**San Diego State University  
All-University Convocation  
August 22, 2013**

Remarks of President Elliot Hirshman

Good morning, everyone. And thank you to Bill and to Josh for your remarks. This theme of community and communications is one you'll hear again and again. I appreciate them really focusing on it. Convocation is a time of great promise, and I'm pleased to be here. But equally importantly, I'm pleased to see all of you here. Thank you for joining us.

I also want to acknowledge the staff members who planned the event, put the videos together. You cannot imagine how many people and how hard they worked to make this all go off smoothly – and it always does. So please join me in recognizing them.

[ Applause ]

I also want to give a special welcome to Council Member Marti Emerald. Marti is a devoted supporter of ours working behind the scenes – sometimes working out in front. So please join me in recognizing her support.

[ Applause ]

This past year, our 115th, has been a momentous year. It's a year in which we met significant challenges and continued our development as a leading public research university. I'd like to take a few moments just to reflect on a small sample of our achievements.

It was a very exciting year for international programs as we continued to emphasize the centrality of international experiences to our academic programs. We were ranked in the top 25 for students studying abroad, with over 1,800 students having international experiences. I want to thank extended studies, international programs, the International Student Center, the deans and all the faculty and staff who contributed. We were also a top producer of Fulbright scholars, with a record 12 students and three faculty members receiving awards. I want to specifically thank Pat Huckle for her extraordinary work.

Our Confucius Institute focusing on Chinese language and culture, was named one of eight model institutes in the world. Sustainability initiatives also received significant recognition with both the Princeton Review and the Sierra Club ranking us as a top university.

Individual programs also received significant recognition. Graduate programs in the College of Business and College of Education were ranked in the top 50 among all public universities by U.S. News. The National Journal gave special recognition for our Compact for Success program, naming it the most innovative program in higher education.

Individual faculty and staff members, as you've just seen, continue to receive distinction. I can only mention a few.

Ilya Kaminsky of English and Comparative Literature is a finalist for the Neustadt International Prize. As many of you know, the Neustadt is often the precursor to the Nobel. If you see Ilya on campus, be very nice to him.

Neil Shigley of Art, Design and Art History presented his work at the National Portrait Gallery of the Smithsonian Institute.

And Madhu Gupta of Electrical and Computer Engineering was named president of the IEEE Society of Microwave Theory. As I said, just a small sample.

Our students, as you heard from Josh, have kept pace. Again, a sample.

Katie Martin interned for the vice president. Not the vice president for San Diego State but Joe Biden, the vice president of the United States.

Greg Allen, our baseball team centerfielder, was named an Arthur Ashe Jr. Scholar for his academic achievement.

Kristin Regini received a post-baccalaureate fellowship from NIH, and Erin Fletcher enrolled in the Ph.D. program in biomedical sciences at Harvard University.

Our students also contributed to our community raising over 100,000 pounds of food for San Diegans in need and registering over 4,000 voters.

It was also a great year for scholarship and discovery. Lisa Hoffman of History published "American Umpire," a book that presented provocative views on American diplomacy and gained international attention.

Jeremy Barr discovered a new human immune system. This was the most covered media story in the history of San Diego State University, garnering over 59,000 page views.

William Welsh and Jerome Orosz discovered a solar system with two earth-like planets, and Aarti Nair and Ralph-Axel Muller identified the brain structures implicated in autism. Truly extraordinary for one year.

Our faculty, staff and student researchers continued to compete at the highest levels for grants, bringing in over \$115 million just in the last year. Again, I can only give a few examples.

Greg Talavera received a \$9 million grant to study risk factors in chronic illness.

Forest Rohwer received a \$4.9 million grant to study the world's coral reefs.

Fletcher Miller received a \$3.9 million grant to create solar power installations, and Bill Tong and Sandy Bernstein received a \$2.8 million grant to prepare students for doctoral study.

These resources and others received from private sources fueled innovation in the last year.

The Zahn Center expanded to focus on social entrepreneurship— and thank you to everyone who worked across divisions and colleges to make that happen.

Wells Fargo created a financial markets laboratory for our students.

We enrolled our first class of Price Community Scholars, expanded the Casa Azteca program, launched our Leadership Certificate and began our doctoral program in physical therapy.

We built out the Donald P. Shiley BioScience Center, and our world-leading cardiac researchers, led by Mark Sussman, launched the Integrated Regenerative Research Institute.

You may have noticed we've also been enhancing our campus with the new Aztec Student Union and the extraordinary renovation of Storm-Nasatir Hall. Built on a hillside, it's quite an architectural feat.

I want to thank everyone who worked on the projects but also a special thank-you to everyone on campus who's been gracious in the face of inconveniences.

We enjoyed the most successful year in San Diego State University athletics: 12 conference championships.

My last acknowledgement goes to The Daily Aztec, which celebrated its 100th anniversary. And, as if on cue, our alumnus David Hasemyer won the Pulitzer Prize for National Reporting.

What a difference one year makes.

At this time last year we faced unprecedented budget challenges, and we discussed a new strategy for our university. A strategy for the new reality facing our state and our nation.

Today, as we start a new year, I want to discuss two components of that strategy. The first component is a focus on increasing our revenues from multiple sources. While we are very, very grateful for the end of state reductions, our state appropriation is still \$81 million below its level in 2001 – 2007, excuse me. Plain and simple, we must generate more revenue.

The second component is to invest strategically. In a phrase, we must focus our resources for results.

These components of the strategy are, of course, integrated. Generating revenues allows us to invest in our programs, and through these investments, we can build excellence and advance the university.

Today, I am pleased to tell you that we have made significant progress. Through the combination of cost efficiencies, revenue initiatives and the end of state reductions, our financial picture has brightened significantly.

We have pursued multiple initiatives for enhancing revenue and together they have made an impact.

To give you one example: In the last year we raised over \$91 million in private funds. That beat our all-time record by over \$15 million. In recognition of this achievement, our division of University Relations and Development was recognized as one of the top fundraising programs in the nation by the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education. I also want to give special recognition to our academic deans, who did an extraordinary job in their role of raising funds.

It's important to note our faculty and staff have been leading donors. Two examples: Carey Wall and Terry O'Donnell endowed a faculty position in musical theater, and the late Henry Janssen gave a gift of \$1 million to support the development of our Honors College.

Funds raised are supporting student scholarships, endowed professorships, a critical expansion of the Library science fiction collection, and our China initiative in Hospitality and Tourism Management, among many other initiatives.

The goal for our comprehensive fundraising campaign is \$500 million and, as of today, we are approaching \$420 million. Please join me in recognizing everyone who's contributed.

[ Applause ]

In the coming year, we must continue our revenue initiatives. Through these initiatives, we can create a path to financial strength – strength that will support our core mission and allow us to control our own destiny.

As a number of speakers mentioned, we've also made progress on the second component of our strategy. Through a series of community discussions, we created a new strategic plan titled "Building on Excellence." Thank you to the hundreds of people who participated in the process. The plan describes dozens, literally dozens, of initiatives in student success, research and creative endeavors and, equally importantly, community and communication.

Initiatives, many of which have already been funded in this year's budget, include investing in areas of research excellence; increasing transformational educational experiences such as study abroad, undergraduate research, internships; integrative diversity initiatives to bring our community together; student success initiatives [such as] writing and math centers, the LGBT center, learning communities for commuter students; building our alumni network and cultural philanthropy; and enhancing the campus environment through the hiring of faculty and staff to fill critical needs and increases in compensation.

Regarding compensation, our budget plan has four components:

First, funds of \$800,000 to support in-range salary progressions for staff and the Equity II Salary Program for faculty members.

Second, funding of \$2.8 million to support the cost of increased healthcare premiums for faculty and staff.

Third, funding of \$3.9 million to support the cost of increased retirement contributions for faculty and staff.

And fourth, funding of \$38 million across the CSU to support salary increases.

In total, we have budgeted over \$10 million for increased compensation for faculty and staff and over \$7 million for faculty and staff to fill critical needs.

These investments do not address all of our needs, but they are a very important first step in the right direction. After a period of significant challenges, our investments in our people and our programs are beginning to create excitement on this campus.

This year, we'll be welcoming many new faculty and staff members to campus. As we do so, I can't help but think of Henry Janssen and the many faculty and staff members who have literally and figuratively built our campus. For the first time in over 60 years, Henry Janssen will not be here with us on the campus this fall. But his spirit and the

spirit of all the faculty members and staff members who came before us, a spirit focused on excellence, will be with us.

Inspired by this spirit, we know that the work we do this year will advance our missions of education, research and community service and lay the foundation for the future development of our university.

Thank you to each and every one of you for everything you do for the university. I am honored to be your president, and I look forward to a great year. Thank you.