

Planning for Change: Address to University Senate

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Good afternoon. It is a delight to be with you today.

As a prelude to our discussion of the state of academic affairs, I would like to put my comments in a somewhat personal context. In the late 1980s I had the pleasure of meeting with Mr. Zhu Rongii, then mayor of Shanghai and a future premier of China. We were meeting to discuss evolving plans for the future of Shanghai and China.

At the time I was representing the National Center for Science, Technology, and Management Training, which was created as a joint venture between the U.S. Department of Commerce and the State Economic Commission of the People's Republic of China.

Zhu Rongii described in detail his vision for the future of Shanghai and the Chinese economy. At that time it was not unusual to meet Chinese government officials filled with visions of a modernized China, so his enthusiasm alone was not unique.

However, Mayor Zhu kept describing how Shanghai leadership was going to turn a sleepy adjacent fishing village called Pudong into a Shanghai suburb filled with 60 and 70 story high rise office buildings, and how they were going to rebuild the "Bund" on the Huangpo waterfront so that it would house banking and investment companies from around the world.

He talked about a high speed rail connection from a new airport that would speed access to Pudong and Shanghai with greater convenience than any other major international city.

He glowingly described an economy that would be booming to the point where the average local income would grow by 300% in ten years. He even proudly unveiled a detailed model of this new city of the future, the model alone taking up half of a large conference room.

To be candid, I had heard such grandiose agendas before. But there was something about the passion, commitment, and thoughtful implementation plans of Zhu Rongji that suggested this was a vision that would be fulfilled.

When you go to Shanghai today you will find that Pudong has developed as he described—the Bund now contains some of the most valuable real estate in the world, a new airport and high speed train connection are indeed spectacularly effective, and the average income of citizens has more than tripled.

A passionate vision backed with the commitment to act can clearly create an exciting future that benefits all members of a community.

And that takes me to the point I would like to make in this address. Having been provost for roughly four months, in my time with you today, I am going to say less about where we are than about where we are going.

In doing so, I would like to stress that we must passionately adopt a strategic vision and commit to the self discipline to take the actions necessary for success. The focus is on the collective "we."

Keeping this in mind, as many of you know, Academic Affairs has established a series of [priorities for 2007-2008](#). When you came in, you should have received a list of these. This constitutes an ambitious agenda but one appropriate for our own aspirations.

This afternoon I will be focusing my comments on five of these priorities. Specifically, I will briefly address strategic planning, doctoral program reviews, the Arts and Sciences Federation, the Academic Core North, and the University System of Ohio.

I have not singled out these priorities because they are intrinsically more important than the others. But each will require a level of consistency in action that will not be easy. Their achievement, however, should provide the foundation for all other changes so essential for our success.

If we are to truly engage in transformational activity for The Ohio State University, we must start with the development of college and departmental strategic plans. The key principle here is remarkably simple. Academic priorities must always drive everything we do.

We must never be in a position where purely budgetary issues drive what we do nor find ourselves thinking of non-academic support activities as determining the limits to our academic aspirations.

This past fall, I asked all of Ohio State's colleges and regional campuses to develop multi-year strategic plans. Some colleges already have well articulated plans but, for others, such plans are still emerging. Whatever their level of development, since September, all colleges have been formalizing plans with a minimum five-year time horizon.

The objective is to have a strategic plan for every college become public by the end of summer quarter, 2008. This will follow the ongoing process to which we are all committed—that of making all issues as transparent as possible to faculty, staff, and students.

The purpose of these plans is to clearly align the goals of the university, its colleges, and their departments. This means that college strategic plans and those of their academic units must be fully compatible. And all of these plans must be similarly consistent with and supportive of the university's Academic Plan, as well as the six value propositions articulated by President Gee in his address to the faculty this past October.

To be effective, such planning requires tough decisions, including the need to refocus priorities and redirect human and financial resources. Indeed, the success of any strategic plan will be determined in large measure by the deliberate and selective placement of resources. And to ensure continuity in objectives, there will be an on-going need to examine levels of success and alternative paths to agreed-upon goals.

The colleges' strategic plans, and the continuing discussion of them, will guarantee that the university moves forward, if by many routes, toward the overarching vision of the Academic Plan.

That goal can be summarized simply as ensuring that Ohio State is the leading public research university in the nation.

Central to achieving that overarching goal is the quality of doctoral education at our institution. Accordingly, doctoral program review will be a critical focus area this year.

As you will remember, recent faculty-driven reviews have found that there is considerable variability in the quality of doctoral programs and students. Fresh approaches to funding doctoral programs were put forward last year by a subcommittee of the University Senate Fiscal Committee.

Under the leadership of Cheena Srinivasan, the subcommittee proposed that assessments of doctoral program quality were critical. In addition, further investments in doctoral programs were thought possible from a central pool of funds created by redirecting an amount of each college's state subsidy.

Unfortunately, a change in state funding decreased the attractiveness of the funding approach that was proposed. But that decrease in funding clearly reinforced the need to focus existing and future resources on only the highest quality doctoral programs.

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School Pat Osmer then created a plan to achieve the main goals of the subcommittee's report.

The plan called for the Graduate School to distribute data on program quality to each college. In turn, each college was to identify programs for enhanced support as well as candidates for disinvestment.

Doctoral programs are now being reviewed to determine the level of support they will need going forward. This is of primary importance to all of us because, in many ways, **doctoral education is a key defining element of any research university.**

At Ohio State, doctoral programs are essential to our role as the state's flagship university. They help identify us as a distinctive national and international resource and certainly are a source of stimulation for outstanding faculty. And, of course, they produce the next generation of scholars, teachers, and researchers.

Our doctoral program reviews will thus be crucial in shaping our reputation in the future and ensuring outstanding contributions to the creation of knowledge—and that goal will be supported annually as we continue our cycles of program reviews at department, school, and college levels.

As a university we have two very noble and inspiring goals, i.e., the creation and transfer of knowledge. If the transfer of knowledge through teaching is reflected in our commitment to undergraduate and graduate programs, the creation of knowledge is clearly reflected in the breadth and scope of outstanding doctoral programs. This must never be lost as we move forward.

Supportive of these dual commitments, we are undertaking an extensive review of the Arts and Sciences Federation. This structure was created in 2003 and was designed to achieve a greater voice for the arts and sciences in university deliberations, provide greater integration of programs, increase the sharing of resources for common objectives, and create efficiencies in operations.

Expectations and actual outcomes, as well as appropriate adaptations, are the focus of this review. The task force created for the review is being coordinated by Vice Provosts Randy Smith and Martha Garland. It involves faculty and staff drawn from all areas of the federation and beyond.

The task force has met with deans and the executive dean; held open sessions for faculty, staff, students and the Arts and Sciences Faculty Senate; and reviewed any information believed relevant to the assessment. It is in the process of now inviting a visiting team of distinguished arts and sciences leaders to review—and, as appropriate—augment preliminary findings.

While we do not know the results of the review, I can say that this is *clearly one of the most important internal structural assessments we will undertake this year*. We must have a strong arts and sciences faculty supporting truly world class programs.

We should always remember that budgets and financial models are means to ends—they are not ends in and of themselves. The constant question we should be asking is “how can we focus resources on those areas of greatest importance given institutional goals?” The issue should never be “how we can justify continuing existing organizational structures and processes.”

I believe that the outcome of this review will be guided by such a commitment.

A related priority is the development of a plan for what is being called the Academic Core North.

This is the section of campus that is bounded on the south by 17th Avenue, on the north by Woodruff, on the east by High Street, and on the west by Tuttle Park Place.

Starting with this campus corridor, we are launching a totally new approach to capital planning.

Currently, we renovate or construct one building at a time in response to the needs of a particular college. This college-centric process has resulted in some landmark buildings but has also caused unhealthy competition for dollars and led to duplication of facilities, as well as the inefficient allocation of support staff and facilities.

The integrated approach to be applied in the Academic Core North calls instead for collaboration, different ways of designing and assigning facilities, and a longer-term vision that will add value to the university as a whole. Within the corridor we will focus on academic initiatives of the entire area, a region of campus accounting for about 60% of the instructional credit hours offered each year.

Modifications to take place within the Academic Core North through 2020 include the phased demolition of a number of buildings, including Lord and Brown Halls, as well as the construction of new facilities for at least five different colleges. This campus region will be characterized by interactive learning areas, pedestrian-friendly green spaces, and increased square footage.

Such holistic, integrated planning will allow for discipline-based districts that coexist with and promote interdisciplinary interactions. It will allow units to retain their identities, while integrating them for the good of the whole.

We expect that this more efficient, more collaborative approach will serve as the capital planning model for the future—and it will significantly address our deferred maintenance issues.

A similar sense of working for the “good of the whole” is reflected in the recent creation of the University System of Ohio. This is perhaps the most ambitious higher education initiative ever undertaken in our state. And it is wonderful to see that commitment being reinforced—even in the face of very difficult state budget issues.

Governor Strickland has said he wants Ohio’s colleges to boost their enrollments by some 230,000 students over the next 10 years. To help reach that goal, the legislature voted last summer to freeze public college tuition for the next two years. It simultaneously committed an extra \$150 million to higher education over the next biennium with a primary focus on STEM areas.

Board of Regents Chancellor Eric Fingerhut has made it clear that the additional appropriation is not to be a reward for past performance. Rather, it is to be an investment in a reinvented higher education system of the future. That new vision, the University System of Ohio, promises a new era of cooperation among the state’s 13 universities and 23 community and technical colleges. It also calls on those institutions—including Ohio State—to differentiate their missions and build distinctive, focused areas of excellence.

A 10-year master plan is now being devised by Chancellor Fingerhut in cooperation with the member institutions of the University System. The plan will address both affordability and quality, and it will set specific goals for improving performance by students and institutions.

Chancellor Fingerhut has met with the Senate Steering Committee and shared his goals and aspirations. President Gee and I, as well as other university representatives, have been meeting with him regularly to assist with this process.

It is clear that the coordination and differentiation needed for overall system success will require considerable discussion and planning. That is why the University System—and Ohio State’s role in it—are a priority focus for us this year.

As the roll-out for the University System continues, I think we can take heart in the unprecedented priority being accorded to higher education in Ohio, and the public recognition for something we all know to be true—that Ohio State is the flagship campus for the state of Ohio. Our task is now to work through the implications of that status in ways that facilitate and enhance the momentum we are now experiencing.

Of course, we also have other, more home-grown reasons for being optimistic about the future. There are many indicators of the ever increasing stature of academic affairs at Ohio State.

One such indicator is the quality of the freshmen welcomed into classes last autumn. These students are the best-prepared in Ohio State history. Their average ACT score is 27, compared to 23.9 just 10 years ago.

This year we also have a record number of students who graduated at the top of their high school classes. Fifty-three percent were in the top 10 percent of their graduating classes. Last year, that number was 43 percent.

And ten years ago, it was 26 percent. Each of us will benefit from this improvement every day in our interactions with students.

While we are on the subject of the increasing accomplishments of our undergraduates, let me remind you that one of our students, Jessica Hanzlik, was recently named a Rhodes Scholar. Jessica, who is double majoring in physics and French, is Ohio State's fifth Rhodes Scholar and our first female student to be so honored.

The ability to attract world class talent and then provide a nurturing and stimulating intellectual environment in which they can excel is one hallmark of a great university. Clearly, this is a characteristic of our university!

Our faculty have also never been more impressive in their accomplishments. This year, for the fourth time in the last five years, Ohio State led the country in the number of faculty chosen as fellows of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. The 15 fellows named this year bring Ohio State's total number to 142, making ours one of the largest contingents of AAAS fellows in the country.

In another measure of faculty achievement, our research expenditures have reached an all-time high of \$720 million. Ten years ago, it was only a third of that total.

In addition, through the Targeted Investments in Excellence program launched last year, Ohio State researchers are addressing some of today's most important scientific, social, and cultural issues.

As you will remember, ten Targeted Investments programs were chosen for central funding. At the end of their first year, reports on the Targeted Investments programs were evaluated by the President's and Provost's Advisory Committee, the senior vice president for research, and by the vice provosts and me.

These assessments revealed that all of these programs have made significant progress toward their goals. Selective faculty hiring has moved forward, significant grants have been procured, and new cross-college collaborations have been initiated.

What is clear at the end of this inaugural year is that our Targeted Investment initiatives, spanning the research spectrum from the soil to the stars, are indeed enhancing the academic stature of the university.

Our university will also be well served by several academic structures that were created last year. We evolve as an institution as needs change, and that should be reflected in our core structures.

The College of Public Health was established, and four new academic centers are promoting interdisciplinary opportunities for faculty and students. They include the Center for Microbial Interface Biology, the Newark Earthworks Center, the Center for Family Research, and the Center for the Study of Religion.

Still other academic structures have new colleagues at their helms. This past year, we appointed three interim deans.

They include Matt Platz of the College of Mathematical and Physical Sciences; Steve Mangum of the Fisher College of Business; and Sandy Stroot of the College of Education and Human Ecology.

I am delighted to note that Karen Bell, Dean of the College of the Arts, and Joan Herbers, Dean of the College of Biological Sciences, agreed to accept reappointment.

Also, Bud Baeslack, Dean of the College of Engineering, has been appointed Executive Dean for the Professional College Cluster. In addition, Charlie Wise came to Ohio State from Indiana University to become the Director of the John Glenn School of Public Affairs.

Ohio State is fortunate to be able to call on the talents of all these academic leaders.

Still other partners contribute in countless ways to the academic integrity of our institution. Our Senate leaders have worked tirelessly to ensure that the university runs more smoothly, more ethically, and more effectively.

I would especially like to acknowledge the efforts of Chris Zacher, the secretary of the University Senate; Rick Herrmann, chair of the Senate Steering Committee; Robert Perry, chair of Faculty Council; and Dick Gunther, who as Faculty Council vice chair, will succeed Robert next year.

I would also like to acknowledge our fine staff and student leaders; the deans of our colleges and regional campuses; my outstanding colleagues in the Office of Academic Affairs; our staunch advocates on the Board of Trustees; and, of course, the members of this University Senate.

Together, and with the leadership of President Gee, we are poised for even greater institutional successes. These achievements will be based on the professional and personal successes of all faculty, staff, and students.

As you heard in the president's address last fall, Ohio State is clearly poised to move from excellent to eminent, from visible to visionary.

If that sounds ambitious, think back to Shanghai in the early 1980's, a city with poor infrastructure, decaying buildings, and a past grandeur believed by some to never be relived. And then think of the goals identified by a future premier of China, those goals becoming a shared vision, that vision guiding commitments and investments, that implementation being adjusted to changes in environments, and a reality that today surpasses even elevated aspirations.

Whether building a new city or a public research university determined to be the best on this or any other continent, there is one underlying process that determines success. We must prioritize our efforts, organize them strategically, and work collectively to realize that vision.

That is what The Ohio State University is doing. That is what this year's priorities are all about. And that is why I find it so exciting and satisfying to be part of this university at this time in its history. I look forward to working with all of you in making the decisions that will continue us on this exciting journey.

Thank you.

I will now be happy to respond to any questions you might have.