

Humboldt State University
Fall kick-off presentation– 17 August 2015

(Note: The images that accompany this presentation are available in a Prezi format, which can be accessed on line [here](#). The hold text in parentheses below indicates where to move the presentation forward.)

(* Welcome slide)

Welcome back to the start of the fall semester and a new academic year!
Would all of you who have joined the Humboldt State community in the last year please stand? Welcome to all of you.

Would the rest of you please take a look around – and make a point of welcoming these newcomers to Humboldt?

I would also like to acknowledge two people who are not newcomers to Humboldt State. Dr. Rollin Richmond, president emeritus of HSU and my predecessor, is here today. Thanks for coming, Rollin. Dr. Alistair McCrone was unable to join us, but, among the three of us, we now represent 41 years of Humboldt History.

The music you have been listening to is La Musique Diabolique, performed by a group of HSU students and recorded here in Arcata. The slide show that you have been viewing was prepared by Hugh Dalton, Graphic Designer in our Marketing and Communications office, and I am also very grateful to him for his help with the visuals for my comments this morning.

This is the Event Formerly Known as Fall Convocation.

I'm calling it Fall Kick-off for several reasons:

(1) Convocation means, literally, coming together. And we can't really do that without the students -- they are just starting to arrive back on campus.

(2) In higher education, convocation is typically a faculty event. I think our focus on community here at Humboldt State must include all the faculty and staff. Thus, the change to "kickoff."

(3) Finally, calling this a "convocation" also sounds like I'll be giving a formal academic speech – and my goal is to be a little more practical and focused on the year ahead. So: Welcome to fall kick-off.

I'd like to talk about three things this morning:

Where are we?

What have you missed over the summer, if you were away?

What are our goals for the coming academic year?

So let's start with where we are – which is the context for everything we are doing.

(* Milky Way)

We can be a little more precise than that.

(* Pluto)

Oops. Wrong planet. Cool. And new information about Pluto over the summer. But not the one we need today.

(* Earth as a globe, seen from space)**(* Zoom in to California inset)****(* Tectonic overlay on Northern California)**

The geology in this region is a fact. It's part of why this is such a beautiful area. This region comes with risks, as a recent *New Yorker* article highlighted, but we deal with those risks through planning and preparation.

Our context is not just space, but also time.

If we go back 65 million years...

(* Ocean floor)

...this area was the ocean floor. Since then, the active geology of this region has converted sediments to rocks, changed those rocks through heat and pressure, and resulted in uplift and erosion.

But perhaps that's more detail than we need right now.

Let's go back a little over a hundred and fifty years...

(* Early map of the area)

...when this land was occupied by the Wiyot people. This map is from our special collections, thanks to Carly Marino, one of our reference librarians. It dates to 1848, when this area was explored by the first Europeans.

One of the elements in our new strategic plan includes strengthening our connections with – and understanding of -- the indigenous history of our region and, indeed, our state. I'd like to ask Vincent Feliz to provide an opening song for us.

(* Photo of dancers, including Wiyot, from the 2015 Big Time)

Vincent is the CARE Services Coordinator here at HSU; CARE stands for Campus Assistance, Response, and Education Services. In this role, he provides direct service and advocacy for HSU students in crisis and general need – one of the many important ways in which we help students. Vincent has a bachelors degree in psychology from Humboldt State and a masters in social work from Cal State Long Beach. He has spent a number of years engaged in American Indian communities, and he is from the Chumash Nation. Vincent?

(Vincent offers a song about resilience and strength.)

Thank you, Vincent. What a great way to start the year.

I think the four-dimensional sense of where we are is important. It's not just about space, but it's about time, as well. We are at this place in our history, at an institution that is 102 years old, connected to those who are part of our history – and to the future we are creating. The future we are making for ourselves, for -- and with -- our students. We are located in an active and evolving environment – and in a changing higher education landscape, as well.

It's an exciting time.

So –

(* “Over the summer...”)

what did you miss over the summer?

(* Photo of Theo)

We have a new interim Provost, Dr. Theo Kalikow, about whom you will hear a little more in a few minutes.

(* New centers for excellence)

We have new physical locations for the Centers for Academic Excellence for African-American Students and for Latino/Latina students – in Nelson Hall East. These Centers coordinate and provide services to students to support their success. The official launch will be on September 1st, and you'll be seeing more information about that soon.

(* Water reduction sign/brown grass)

The University has continued its efforts to conserve water, in the face of a statewide drought. Campus water use has been reduced by 19% since 2013, and this has a predictable impact on the landscaping. In fact, the signs at the Chancellor's Office

say: “Brown is the new green.” We’re doing our part, and we will continue to emphasize conservation of this vital resource.

(* New drainage design in parking lot)

Facilities Management has repaired and restriped some parking lots on campus, making the campus safer, improving the hardscape and our drainage, and creating 24 new parking spaces – every one of which I am sure is in use already this morning. *(Since the Kickoff presentation, I have learned that the drainage project by the parking lots, shown in the accompanying image, was the result of a senior class project designed by students in Environmental Resource Engineering.)*

Ten faculty members were promoted, and two of them were also awarded tenure, as you have seen in the slides before this event began. The Promoted Faculty reception will be held on September 17, and everyone is welcome to attend that event.

Twenty-one new tenure-track faculty are joining us this year. Their photos were in the slide show, too, and they bring an amazing range of skills, experience, and knowledge to our campus. They are part of the future we are creating, too.

But perhaps the most important change over the summer was the budget.

(* \$\$\$)

(After all, what would this event be without a discussion of the budget?)

I’m happy to say that, this year, the budget is relatively good news. The state legislature and the Governor ultimately fully funded the budget request by the CSU Board of Trustees – for the first time in a decade. Much of the additional funding to HSU comes with strings, including for health and retiree benefits, maintenance of additional square footage, a Student Success and Completion Initiative, and other designated costs.

The University Resources and Planning Committee developed its recommendations for the 2015-16 year before we knew about this additional funding. We were hoping, but we didn’t know. Thus, my response to that committee’s recommendations is more lengthy than it might have been, in order to give my rationale for implementing a budget different – and, in most cases, better --than what they had recommended. The committee’s recommendations – and my response -- are available on the University’s website, and I hope you will have a chance to review them.

I want to emphasize that the full-funding of the CSU Board’s request for state allocations does not actually provide extra money for us to spend in the coming year. These funds mean that we don’t have to spend as deeply into our reserves as

we expected in order to implement a faculty salary equity program and to increase the number of class sections required to serve additional students.

We will still be deficit spending this year...but not as much as we originally thought we would have to. With the new funding, we will be able to cut our deficit from (minus) \$2.2 million to just \$700,000. And we fully expect to have a balanced budget next year. That's great news.

(* strategic plan cover)

Just at the end of the spring semester, the University Senate endorsed the new strategic plan. Thanks to all of you who participated in developing that plan. We had hundreds of people – faculty, staff, students, alumni, and community representatives – who provided feedback, made suggestions, offered perspective, and helped, in so many ways, to develop this document.

This is the roadmap that will guide us over the next five years, to 2020.

The four areas of focus begin with...

(* Goal 1 of the strategic plan)

...supporting student success, which we have described as preparing students to be socially and environmentally responsible leaders. Practically, this means that we will increase our retention and graduation rates. And we will do this by engaging students in learning *in this place*.

The second goal in our strategic plan...

(* Goal 2)

is about creating an environment that supports diversity and establishes a welcoming environment for all members of communities. This is about campus culture. Our success in achieving this goal will contribute to student – and faculty and staff – satisfaction and retention. And our graduation rates will increase accordingly.

(* Goal 3)

The third goal is strengthening partnerships with local communities, including the cities and counties, local governments, businesses, and the tribal nations. Achieving this will expand the educational experience for our students, enable the University to be a resource for the community – and for the community to be a resource to HSU. As we focus on our sense of place, we need to include the places beyond the boundaries of campus.

(* Goal 4)

And our fourth strategic goal is ensuring we have the resources to fulfill our mission. In addition to efficient use of state resources, we also need to be looking to philanthropy and external funding to leverage our ability to serve students.

These goals will guide our decision-making, our priorities, and our work over the next five years.

(* Summary document)

A one-page summary document outlines the high-level goals and objectives, and I hope you all picked one up, along with a new pin with the Spirit H, when you came into the Theater today.

I learned a lot in the strategic planning process – about this University, about the communities with which we interact, and about the structures that make sense here at Humboldt. If I were doing this over again, I would approach a couple of aspects of this initiative differently.

The two most significant things I would do differently are these.

(* Revision)

One, I would reorganize the written plan into some different themes.

(* Word cloud in shape of tree)

These would probably be focused on the concepts of sustainability, engagement, diversity, and quality. You see some of these themes in this image. I want to acknowledge that Dr. Noah Zerbe, professor and chair of Politics and chair of the University Senate, played a key role in managing the planning process last year, and he was instrumental in writing and editing the final document. By the time we realized that a different organizational structure for the report would make sense, we didn't have the time to start over. But we both see ways the document can be improved.

(* First page of goals from the strategic plan)

The other thing that I would do differently is to not list names or titles of positions as being responsible for each of the actions in the strategic plan.

(* No names)

Assigning this responsibility was an effort to respond, proactively, to the concern that, if no one were identified as being accountable, then that project would never

get done. But in the process of identifying what is sometimes called “a single point of accountability,” we confused the important message that nothing can happen in isolation at a university – especially at Humboldt State. Every one of us plays a role in student success...in developing and supporting partnerships...in ensuring we are operating efficiently...in being good stewards of our resources...in having safe and appropriate facilities for teaching and learning...in supporting a welcoming climate for our entire community. Everyone is involved. And, in trying to emphasize accountability, we lost some of the message about collaboration, cooperation, and shared responsibility.

This column is still included in the approved version of the strategic plan that is on the University’s website, but please understand this in the context of its original intent. It was designed to support accountability, but success will require broad collaboration.

The implementation of this new strategic plan will require some hard work – and dealing with some hard questions. High among these is the question about what we have to stop doing in order to invest in what we need to do. We must have a clear, shared understanding of how decisions are made, who makes them, how we do that in the context of shared governance, how those decisions are implemented, and how we hold ourselves and each other accountable.

We can do this. We have to do this. This, too, is a goal for the coming year.

(* What’s coming up in 2015-16?)

Big surprise: In the coming year, we’re going to be implementing the strategic plan, with our focus on student success, creating a welcoming and supportive climate on campus, ensuring we have the necessary resources, and strengthening partnerships.

And student success is the most important of these.

(* - graduation photo)

The coming year will have a major emphasis on retention. If the students don’t stay here, they will never graduate from Humboldt. Student success is much more than just the retention and graduation rates, but the reality is that these are the metrics by which we are assessed – and, ultimately, funded. This is where the elements of our strategic plan come together. If students don’t feel welcome, supported, interested, and engaged, then they won’t stay. And they definitely won’t graduate.

Part of the additional funding the CSU – and HSU -- will receive this coming year is a result of a commitment to provide access to more students. I have said for more than a year now that enrolling more students at HSU will require the funding needed to serve those students. Right now, HSU is being funded for 3.2% more

students than we received funding for last fall, and that's about what we expect. Our fall enrollment will be about 8,600 students.

The incoming freshmen class is 1,429 students, and initial demographic data show that 64% of them are female, 40% come from Los Angeles, and 44% identify as Latino/Latina.

All of our groups of students have unique needs to be successful at HSU.

Over the summer, someone said to me that they didn't know what kind of an institution we want to be: the kind of university that brings in new students or the kind that graduates the ones we have. The answer is: We graduate students.

Student success is more than graduation, but retention is a basic requirement to support this. Students stay when they are in good academic standing, when they have strong connections with the faculty and staff, when they are enrolling in the classes they need, when they find meaningful linkages with other people, and when they are engaged in the life of the institution.

(* graduation mosaic)

Let me be very clear about this: We need to help our students graduate. It's our top priority. To do this, we need to understand what our students need to be successful and to graduate. Our student population is unique – in their diversity, in their social and economic backgrounds, and in the distance from their hometowns and their family and friends. Approaches that work at other institutions aren't necessarily the ones that will be most effective for us. Dr. Lisa Castellino and our office of institutional research and planning have done some great work this past year understanding what programs and initiatives have the greatest impact for our students. In the next couple of months, we will have the opportunity to learn more about these findings in a series of open forums. We will discuss, as a community, how we use this information to make decisions about the best ways to help our students. I look forward to those discussions.

And our goals are clear.

(* graduation rate targets)

Here is our recent history in graduating students – and the targets we have set for 2020 in our strategic plan. We have work to do. And to put this in perspective, our current six-year graduation rate is 44%. Just over four out of 10 first-time freshmen who enrolled at HSU in 2008 graduated in six years.

Our target is to move that up to 50% by 2020. That's ambitious. And the students in that cohort *started here last fall*. They are already here. We won't know for a few weeks how many of them will actually return this fall, but preliminary information

suggests the retention number will be about 75%, similar to what it has been for the last several years, so we clearly have a challenge before us.

And to put these graduation rates and targets in perspective, our most recent 44% six-year graduation rate puts us at #18 out of the 23 campuses in the CSU. The current system average for the same cohort of students is 54%.

Our goal for 2020 – the fifth year of our current strategic plan – is 50%, which is still below the current System average.

And the target assigned to us by the Chancellor's Office, as part of the Graduation Initiative 2025, is 53%. That's what we're aiming for.

There is no single solution to improving our graduation rates, and everyone has a role in this. We have many activities underway to address this. One of the challenges is to understand and coordinate all these efforts.

(* advising students)

One of the things that seem to be working is the Retention and Inclusive Student Success initiative – also known as RISS. This effort, which was initiated just two years ago, is beginning to show evidence of achieving its original goals of increasing collaboration, providing more integrated student support, and ensuring multiple safety nets – in both people and technology – to keep students engaged, enrolled, and on track. We need to give RISS the opportunity to be successful, and we will move forward with the search for an Associate Vice President of that area, as originally planned when this organizational entity was established.

Another set of initiatives that seem to be working is a focus on student engagement. One example is Y.E.S. (Youth Educational Services) – a student-directed community service-learning program that has been operational for nearly 50 years. Another example is the Klamath Connection, a grant-funded STEM collaborative that launches today, bringing together about 70 new first-year students in Biology, Wildlife, and Environmental Science and Management in an integrated program of place-based learning.

Student engagement in the context of our location gives Humboldt a distinctive niche that no other college or university in the county can compete with – if we get it right.

(* faculty member)

We have a preliminary plan to increase our tenure-track density, reversing the trend of the last ten years. Increasing the percentage of tenured and tenure-track faculty is part of our strategic plan, and it is part of the planning for the California State University system. Tenured and tenure-track faculty play a key role in

engaging students through teaching, advising, mentoring, and collaborative research, and this is an important element of our plan to address graduation rates.

(*diversity)

This fall, I am looking forward to developing some new ways to work together on campus. We focus a lot here on diversity of identity, and I want to expand that conversation to other kinds of diversity, including cognitive diversity – understanding, appreciating, and using the differences in the ways we process information and in how we communicate with each other – all with the goal of improving communication, collaboration, and understanding. We can apply this approach to maximize the value of the background and experiences that all of us bring to the tasks of solving problems, making decisions, and working together. I believe this approach will result in better and clearer communications – among each other and across campus. We will have clearer and better decisions, and more intentional follow-up and completion. And we will seek input in ways that utilize knowledge and expertise from across the University. I have already started working directly with the University’s senior leadership on this effort, with the goal of expanding this effort across the university.

(* start of the academic year – last fall photo?)

So, as we start a new academic year, I’m looking forward to a number of things in this coming year.

I am looking forward to:

- Seeing students engaged in place-based learning,
- Learning more about how to match the support services we offer to the unique needs of our students,
- Making progress on increasing the tenure-line density,
- Expanding and deepening the ways we understand and communicate with each other,
- Focusing on how we can use professional development to support and invest in our staff and faculty,
- Working with the University Resources and Planning Committee and the University Senate to move toward a sustainable University budget,
- Enhancing relations with the communities around us – the cities, the counties, the tribal communities, our educational partners, and the business community,
- And I look forward to continuing to enjoy and appreciate the spectacular area where we are located and the people who make this so special.

(* campus beauty shot – Founders Hall)

I've asked a couple of other people to say a few words about what they are looking forward to in the coming year.

The first person I'd like to ask is our new interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, **Dr. Theo Kalikow**. Theo has earned degrees in both chemistry and philosophy, and she brings experience as a faculty member, department chair, and dean of arts and sciences at several different institutions, as well as having been president at both the University of Maine at Farmington and the University of Southern Maine. Welcome to Humboldt, Theo – and what are you most looking forward to this fall semester....?

Dr. John Johnson is the new coordinator of the Center for Academic Excellence for African-American students – and a new campus resident, as a participant in the faculty and staff in residence program. So he's living in Creekview now. John, what are you looking forward to this year....?

One of the people who keeps everything running here on campus is **John Smith**, plumber extraordinaire in Facilities Maintenance for almost 7 years and one of the people who received the Staff Recognition Award last spring. Congratulations again, John, on that award. What are you looking forward to this coming year....?

Dr. Julie Alderson is a professor of art history, a Humboldt State alumna – and vice chair of the University Senate. Her scholarship is grounded in a sense of place, with a focus on the public art, land art, and contemporary Native American architecture. Julie, what are you looking forward to this year....?

Finally, we have a new digital communications specialist in Marketing and Communications, **Mike Dronkers**. He's not new to Humboldt County, but he has just joined the University. Today, he is starting his fourth week at HSU, but you may recognize his voice from the 18 years that he worked at KHUM radio. Mike, welcome to Humboldt State – and what are you looking forward to this coming year.....?

Thank you all for sharing your thoughts.

(* campus shot - with people)

I'd love to hear from the rest of you, too. If you have a minute this week, please shoot me an e-mail or send me a note in campus mail, letting me know what you are most looking forward to in the coming academic year.

(* Five C's from spring welcome)

At the beginning of last spring, I listed the "Five C's" that need to characterize Humboldt State. I believe we've made progress on all of these, but we still have work to do. We continue to build relationships – to connect – and we continue to expand and strengthen our linkages and our partnerships. Communication is an on-

going challenge as we seek to keep everyone informed, involved, and engaged. We need to apply more of what we have learned in conserving water to operational efficiencies. We have an amazingly creative group of faculty, staff, and students here who are, literally, creating the future. And we can always do more to celebrate the successes and accomplishments in our community.

HSU has a strong statement of values. They are part of the foundation for the strategic plan – and they are included in the handout you have this morning.

(* Roy Disney quote, paraphrased: “When your values are clear, it’s easy to make decisions.”)

As noted in this quote from Roy E. Disney, Walt Disney’s nephew, our values are critical to our decision making.

(* students on the beach for a field trip)

Through our decisions and actions, we will be building on Humboldt’s niche as a University of Place, where students are engaged in learning that is grounded here.

We often say that people – faculty, staff, students, other residents, even visitors -- don’t end up in Humboldt by accident. Our sense of place is a unique and distinguishing characteristic of Humboldt State. Our *place* permeates all our academic programs...

...from our historical strengths in the sciences and natural resources
to the art that is inspired and produced here
to the poems, stories, and plays that are written here
to the music that is composed and performed here
to the studies of history, anthropology, and politics that are undertaken here
to the teachers and social workers we prepare here
to the kind of entrepreneurs we develop here
to the understanding of history and culture that we provide here....
To the facilities, grounds, and spaces that are located here.

All of these are related to a sense of place – our place – set in this space and time.

But it’s not enough to be here. We need to be engaged here – engaged in teaching, learning, serving, and creating.

(* redwoods)

We are at a geologically active continental margin, in the midst of the tallest (and arguably some of the oldest) trees in the world. We are in a place that has the historical and cultural overprints of indigenous peoples, of the timber and mining industries, of the isolation and self-sufficiency associated with the remoteness that requires partnerships for survival – and success.

(* redwoods with students)

In this place, we have a mission to educate students, to build on our values of social and environmental responsibility. We have ambitious plans to fulfill this mission, and these plans will continue to evolve as we adapt and grow as an engaged community and as a University where students are involved in place-based learning.

(* No fate)

We are creating the future, with and through our students. And to quote – again – the line from the Terminator films, “There is no fate but what we make for ourselves.”

Thank you all for being part of this important process, as we focus on our students, our sense of place, and our collective – engaged – future.

(* Final slide – great year)

In the honored HSU tradition of celebration – we have refreshments outside right now. Thanks for being here this morning – and let’s have a great year.