Zingg points to education's challenges

By LARRY MITCHELL-Staff Writer
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CHICO — Speaking to hundreds of faculty and staff, Chico State University President Paul Zingg Thursday emphasized both the value of higher education and the challenges today of providing it.

He spoke at the annual President's Convocation, which is held at the beginning of each school year. Classes start Monday at Chico State.

This year's convocation was held in Laxson Auditorium.

"California needs places like us. We are indispensable," Zingg told his audience.

In today's "fast-paced global society, we recognize that young college students need an environment in which they can not only study but broaden their horizons, and, indeed, grow up," he added.

Zingg said that he and all of his listeners, when they were in college, had been influenced by mentors "who changed not just what we knew but also what we thought and felt."

Today, this kind of inspiration is needed more than ever, he said.

Unfortunately, colleges and universities — which have the mission of "creating the future" — are increasingly fettered by reductions in state funding, he said.

Today, the California State University system is being funded by the state at the same level it was 12 years ago, he said. But now there are many more students it must educate than there were in 1998 and 1999.

"Over the course of these years, public investment in higher education has disappeared," he said.

California used to be the nation's model for higher education, but not anymore, he said. "We were once in the vanguard with a robust commitment to higher education. We are now on the edge of privatization of public education through (higher student fees)."

Those involved in higher education are "no longer daring leaders of a bold vision" but have become "anxious travelers on a threatening journey," he said.
But, the president said, no one at Chico State should give in to discouragement and resignation.

By staying attentive to changing conditions and being creative, the campus can find ways to thrive, he suggested.

He noted that efforts to boost private donations, grants and contracts offer much potential.

"We earn support because we are demonstrably successful," he said.

And he added, "We will continue to press hard for the reawakening and the resources we need."

Zingg introduced a number of students, faculty and staff who had brought honor to Chico State.

While the president did most of the speaking at the convocation, five others made brief remarks.

They were London Long, the Associated Students president; Russ Mills, chairman of the Academic Senate; Vincent Ornelas of the California Faculty Association; Paula Scholtes, chairwoman of the Staff Council; and Chico Mayor Ann Schwab.

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