

# CHICO STATE Inside

Volume 36, Number 2; October 13, 2005.



## Connecting the Dots

The enthusiastic approval of our Master Plan by the CSU Board of Trustees in July recognized the clarity with which we have connected the physical development of the University with our Strategic Plan. We have, though, other “dots” to connect and a common framework for those connections. Let me suggest a way to visualize the work ahead, a strategic paradigm, in effect, based on a hexagon.

The six elements, the six vertices, of this hexagon are the University Strategic Plan, the Master Plan, our enrollment plan, our academic plan, our advancement plan, and our budget. They connect to each other through the University’s Mission Statement, which provides a fundamental articulation of our identity and purpose. Its elements are familiar to all of us. We are a predominantly undergraduate university serving our state and region through instruction, research, creative activity, and public service. As a residential campus, we emphasize the importance of a rich co-curricular life for our students. We seek the purposeful integration of liberal and applied learning, and we aim to achieve high distinction for a selected set of programs and activities in support of student learning and a broad body of knowledge. As rich as this text from the mission statement is, though, it prompts two questions: Is it sufficiently clear and compelling to merit broad support and to achieve institutional distinction? And is it appropriately focused in order to convey a sense of the University’s niche within the CSU, California post-secondary education, and even the larger world of American higher education?

What, I believe, we have to add to our Mission Statement in order to answer these questions most affirmatively is a declaration of our values, that is, to make more explicit those properties and attributes that define us. For, as the mission provides context, values reveal character. Both are critical in determining the priorities we set, the choices we make, and the image we convey. Moreover, their articulation and enactment greatly determine whom we attract to the University—students, faculty, staff, friends, donors, and supporters—because individuals seek identification with institutions wherein they find values and goals that reflect their own.

Within a few weeks, I will provide the campus with a draft update of our Strategic Plan. I emphasize draft and update. This draft is the result of the asking and the listening I have been doing with Chico State’s various constituencies, even before assuming the presidency. The draft reflects my observations as a result

of this activity and my desire, intention, and even responsibility to add my voice to our conversations about distinction and direction. Further, this is an update because the format and basic structure of the current Strategic Plan (first adopted in October 1995 and updated in February 1999) are sound.

Yet, you will find something entirely new in this draft update—a values statement. These are its suggested elements:

- We stand for academic freedom and a strong sense of intellectual community characterized by reason, respect, civility, and openness of expression.
- We seek to be a community connected in our conversations, confident in our strengths, and intentional in our aspirations.
- We teach not only with the command of our disciplines, but with the force of personal example, enabling us to transmit knowledge effectively through integrity, intellectual honesty, kindness, and enthusiasm.
- We promote active learning, curiosity, the importance of scholarship and its application, and an educational culture that recognizes the relationship between the learning that occurs in our classrooms, studios, and laboratories, and beyond through clubs, service engagements, social interactions, and other expressions of a full and healthy student environment.
- We share a commitment to academic excellence and will communicate high expectations to our students.
- We pursue diversity, not just as an idea to embrace, but as a community to form.
- We emphasize both the quality and spirit of services to our students, employing “student friendly” policies and practices that foster student achievement and aspirations and progress to degree.
- We acknowledge not only the obligation of service, but also the value of service to others in defining institutional character and measuring institutional performance. We particularly recognize our responsibility to serve the needs and enlighten the lives of our constituencies and neighbors in the North State.
- We celebrate a distinctive institutional culture through a keen sense of place and deep respect for our natural environment.
- We affirm that we are “one University” where collaboration, mutual support and trust, and common goals define our work together and the spirit of its engagement.

Such values—and others that the forthcoming discussion of our Strategic Plan may identify—constitute, in fact, the very idea of our University. I look forward to a broad and engaged conversation about this matter as we define our values and as we organize our efforts around them to achieve greater distinction for our Chico State. ~



*President*