Imagining Our Future

(Annotated)

A Contribution by Members of the Council of Academic Deans
“We can imagine what the future holds, what it will look like.”

“And the questions we ask about the future we suppose, the future we choose, the future we compose, are in so many respects elevated by the imagination we bring to the task.”

“To imagine is to dare.”

“To dare a new vision for the future.”
“To dare a different path, a different direction.”
“To dare a new level of aspiration.”

Paul J. Zingg, President
Looking Backward, Moving Forward, Spring Address 2012
**Introduction**

In his spring 2012 address *Looking Backward, Moving Forward*, President Paul J. Zingg invited members of the campus community to look *backward* from 2012 to 1887 to discover our institutional DNA and to look *forward* from 2012 to imagine a future worthy of our best intentions. Members of the Council of Academic Deans share this position paper as their contribution to the campus-wide conversation on *Choosing and Building the CSU, Chico Future*.

**Positioning Chico for the Future**

Like other institutions of higher education, CSU, Chico faces the triple challenge of reduced fiscal resources, increasing public expectations and needs, and disruptive innovation—especially in information technologies. We are convinced, however, that if we address these challenges strategically and decisively, we can emerge as an even stronger university and occupy our special niche in the changing landscape of higher education for years to come.

The challenges we face make it clear that we must create our future in very different ways than those to which we have become accustomed. As a university we can—and must—do more than simply muddle through additional bad budget times. Instead of conventional nostrums that merely lead to incremental change, we must build a transformational agenda that ensures our future viability and vitality. We are forced to bring about change more fundamentally and more urgently than ever before. As we celebrate our 125th anniversary, we stand at our inflection point—that special moment of opportunity and potential for transformation.

**CSU, Chico as a Vibrant Learning Community**

The heart and essence of higher education is the learning process: the interaction between students and faculty that results in discovering and rediscovering the joys of becoming engaged, lifelong learners. CSU, Chico is recognized as a vibrant learning community, known for its role in facilitating student learning and student success. That role has been in its institutional DNA since our founding in 1889.

As we choose and build our future, we are mindful of the inscription above the doors of Kendall Hall: *Today Decides Tomorrow*. It is the motto of a university that focuses on the future while carrying forward the best of its past. Its distinctive character has been forged by its enduring values, its inspiring history, its noble mission and, especially, its extraordinary sense of place.
Re-Imagining the Chico Learning Experience

The emerging higher education environment calls into question our long-held practices of teaching and learning and severely questions the efficiency and effectiveness of our historic educational models. We are exhorted to redesign education not to make our traditional models more efficient, but to transform teaching and learning to better engage our students in authentic learning experiences that prepare them for successful participation in the global society of the 21st century.

Given its rich history of innovation in pedagogy and in the use of information and communication technologies, CSU, Chico is well poised to explore and experiment with alternative educational models. The essential question facing us is, how do we re-envision the Chico Experience which is our heritage and the foundation of our identity? What should the Chico Learning Experience of the 21st century look like?

Stated more operationally, “how do we leverage Chico’s current unique learning assets—with insights from the new learning sciences and the adaptation of new technology-based tools—to create engaging personalized Chico learning experiences that mirror the reality of our students’ daily lives as well as the future they will live and work in?”

The new Chico Learning Experience continues the shift from an instruction paradigm to a learning paradigm. CSU, Chico is that special place of exploration, discovery, memory and mentoring. It purposefully engages students in authentic learning experiences that are aligned with the ways in which networked knowledge is being generated, aggregated and disseminated. Faculty and staff are collaborators in learning, seeking and developing new knowledge alongside their students. Students purposefully engage in authentic disciplinary practices, in community with others, that prepare them to be informed, principled citizens, effective problem-solvers and visionary leaders. It is a special place that applies innovative pedagogies and state-of-the-art technologies to enable 24/7 lifelong learning.

Translating Our Vision into Reality

Building capacity for transforming the Chico Learning Experience requires commitment, collaboration and investment for success. As we enter the second decade of the 21st century we must rise to the challenges of this transformation; even while the fiscal chaos puts us on the edge. The University’s stated value of “we are ‘One University’ where collaboration, mutual support and trust, and common goals define our work together” must inform and guide our efforts to re-imagining the University for the future.
Guiding Principles for Academic Transformation

In a world of flattened revenue streams, great pressures to hold down fees, rising infrastructure and benefit costs, increased competition for faculty, staff, and students, and fewer dollars for new investments, we must make choices. Even in the best of circumstances, we cannot be all things to all people. We must choose and sustain a culture of distinction. Members of the Council of Academic Deans agree that the principles that will guide our transformation in the coming years should be grounded in a vision of the Chico Learning Experience and the mission, core values and priorities outlined in the Academic Plan set within the framework of the University’s Strategic Plan for the Future.

As we look forward, we urge all to be mindful of what we have inherited and what we consider worthy of our best intentions. We propose that the following enduring Chico principles guide us forward:

1. **Sense of Community.** Since its beginnings in 1889, California State University, Chico has provided generations of students with unique educational experiences built upon an inclusive learning community of faculty, staff, and students who live, work, and study within a rural Northern California setting. Today, CSU, Chico continues to emphasize the special sense of place and purpose that defined and continues to define Chico State. We aim to be a community connected in our conversations, confident in our strengths, and intentional in our aspirations.

2. **Primacy of student learning and student success.** Above all else, we are a center for active and lifelong learning. Its heart and essence is the learning process: the active collaboration among a community of diverse students, staff and faculty that enables learning opportunities which connect learning, disciplinary practice and public service. We will deepen and expand the “Chico Experience” and make it attainable for all students.

3. **Excellence in faculty and staff.** The most valuable assets of the University are its engaged faculty and its caring staff. The nurturing of excellence in faculty and staff remains a top priority under the new vision. We look for faculty and staff to use their core-competencies to design and deliver high-quality educational experiences that maximize student learning and student success.

4. **Excellence and distinction in our offerings.** CSU, Chico is about so much more than academic programs. But without excellent programs we cannot achieve our mission. Focus, excellence and distinction will characterize our academic offerings—general education, major and graduate programs—not mere growth in requirements and specialized elective offerings. We will follow the principle of “innovation by substitution.”
5. **Superior student support systems.** CSU, Chico has developed a variety of support mechanisms to provide a transformative learning environment for its students. To ensure the continuation of these support systems and increase their scope and effectiveness in an era of shrinking budgets, the new vision calls for innovative approaches to student support. We envision technology-powered 24/7 student support services, leveraging social and digital media—the Chico Learning Network.

6. **Access to the most effective information and learning resources.** Advances in the learning sciences show us how students learn more effectively. Information and communication technologies now make it possible to act on this knowledge. CSU, Chico’s new *Information and Technology Strategic Plan* calls for a further enhancement of the learning and teaching environment, an enrichment of campus connectivity and infrastructure, a further improvement of information and technology service delivery, and a more intentional leveraging of its information and knowledge management resources to ensure the realization of its vision, mission and strategic priorities. Thus, CSU, Chico is very much poised to thrive in the new landscape for higher education.

7. **Innovative learning environments.** The redesign of our learning environments becomes a representation of our new vision for learning. As recently as a decade ago, classrooms were seen as by far the most important space for learning. Since that time, the notion of the ‘classroom’ has evolved and indeed expanded as ‘virtual’ space has now taken its place alongside ‘physical space.’ Digital devices can turn practically any non-classroom space into an informal learning space thereby extending students’ learning environments. We will seek the integration of Chico’s physical and virtual learning spaces into a single integrated learning ecosystem.

8. **Service to the North State and beyond.** We acknowledge the value of service to others in defining institutional character and in measuring institutional performance. We affirm regional public service as an orientation that aligns the benefits of higher education as experienced by our students with the public-good benefits of higher education as experienced by the communities we serve. We are an engaged institution, fully committed to direct, two-way communication with the North State region through the development, exchange and application of knowledge, information, and expertise for mutual benefit.

9. **Lean processes and sustainable solutions.** All facets of the University must be justified and measured in terms of their support of the teaching / learning process and / or of their direct support of research and public service. We will ensure that a focus on learning is reflected in all our policies, administrative practices, collegial interaction and our leadership behavior. We envision a more formal adoption of the principles of ‘lean management’ to accomplish our
management and leadership responsibilities. We will implement technologies and analytics that will help provide sustainable administrative solutions.

10. **Alignment of resources and accountability for effectiveness.** We are all stewards of resources—talents, capabilities, careers, fiscal and physical resources, the environment, and yes, the public good. We embrace the responsibilities of stewardship and we will publicly demonstrate both our educational and our organizational effectiveness. We will develop a performance measurement system that is customized to the University’s and divisional strategic choices and will trigger conversations about whether success is being achieved. We are determined to manage our own destiny, respond to evolving circumstances and seize opportunities that will enhance our mission as a regional comprehensive university.

**Onward!**

Yogi Berra once observed “The future is where you’ll spend the rest of your life.” Given our guidelines for transformation, we can now imagine that future. We understand our strengths and we can boldly play to them and passionately pursue the new vision and a new direction.

We choose to see the current ‘crisis’ as an opportunity to re-affirm our purposes, re-set our priorities, re-visit how we do business and define quality and re-establish our public standing. We can and we will succeed as a ‘place’ and as a ‘choice.’ And we have no doubt that this commitment and the obligations and expectations to translate it into concerted action will characterize our work together for the future of CSU, Chico. So let’s get on with it. Onward!
END NOTES

1 The Governor’s May 2012 Budget Revision calls for additional reductions to the budget of the California State University if the governor’s tax measure fails passage by the voters in the November 6th general election. If this happens, not only will annual state support for the CSU have fallen by a total of $1 Billion in less than 18 months, but this sharply reduced level of state support would likely continue into subsequent fiscal years. Chico State’s total loss of general-fund support under this scenario would be about $33 million during the same time frame.

As the campus launched its second quasquicentennial, President Zingg formally led a historical review of Chico’s institutional DNA—service, civic engagement, altruism, sustainability, public trust, and above all student learning and student success—and developed a new vision for Chico State’s future. It is within this new framework that the campus will address the anticipated further reductions in state support. Our collective challenge lies in honoring our strengths while innovating with optimism. The choices we are about to make will be unique to Chico and will be driven by the review of our capabilities and our aspirations. We are moving onward from 2012 to create our future, mindful of what we have inherited but daring to fire our imagination as did those who championed the Normal School in 1887.

At their May 8, 2012 meeting, the Board of Trustees considered cost reduction and revenue enhancement strategies to address lingering structural deficits from prior state cuts and the possible $250 million trigger cut in 2012-2013. The proposed framework for discussion was the following:

---

CSU, Chico Strategic Plan for the Future; Introduction to strategic priority 1: “California State University, Chico, above else, is a center for active and lifelong learning. Its heart and essence is the learning process: active collaboration among a community of diverse students, staff, and faculty that enables learning opportunities connecting classroom instruction, out-of-class experiences, and service. This collaboration results in discovering and rediscovering the joys of learning and enabling participants to become effective lifelong learners and engaged citizens.”

CSU, Chico Strategic Plan for the Future; Our Vision: California State University, Chico sees its distinctive residential context as an opportunity to create an active, diverse, healthy, caring, innovative, and green learning and working environment” and CSU, Chico Academic Plan, 2007 – 2012; Vision Statement: “The division of Academic Affairs is a vibrant learning community of engaged students and well-respected, dedicated faculty, staff and administrators that is purposeful, inclusive, collegial, respectful and celebrative. We are known for excellence

---
in learning, especially for our role of facilitating student learning and student success. We acknowledge our public purpose by developing, applying and exchanging knowledge and expertise for the mutual benefit of our community and our region.”

iv **Looking Backward, Moving Forward (2012):** “For within this story and these pictures is evidence of certain traits and characteristics that reflect our institutional DNA, that is, fundamental building blocks of our identity and behavior that cannot be denied.”

![DNA double helix with traits and characteristics]

v **CSU, Chico Strategic Plan for the Future; Introduction:** “Above the doors of Kendall Hall is the inscription ‘Today Decides Tomorrow.’ We take these words to heart as we focus with optimism and hope on the future while building on the best of the past.”

vi In 2010, the **American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU)** launched its Red Balloon Project. “The Red Balloon Project is a national initiative to re-imagine and then to redesign undergraduate education for the 21st century.”


viii **The Chico Red Balloon Project:** Re-Imagining the Chico Learning Experience, September 2011: *Translating the Chico Red Balloon Vision into Reality*, p. 6, “The Chico Red Balloon vision challenges us to address the question “If we were to redesign education not to make historic models of schooling more efficient, but instead prepare students for the 21st century—simultaneously transforming teaching in light of our current knowledge about the mind—what types of learning environments might sophisticated Information and communication technology (ICT) enable us to create?”


x **CSU, Chico Strategic Plan for the Future; Our Values:** “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.”
CSU, Chico Strategic Plan for the Future; Value Statement: “We aim to be a community connected in our conversations, confident in our strengths, and intentional in our aspirations” and “We affirm that we are One University where collaboration, mutual support and trust, and common goals define our work together” Strategic priority 5.6: “Strengthen our institutional effectiveness, shared governance and sense of community.” Restoring the Vision of the California Master Plan (2009) “And we must always be guided by the understanding that a university is, fundamentally, a place of people and ideas. We succeed because we build and sustain a distinctive sense of place; we support the people (students, faculty, staff) who comprise our community; and we foster an environment of free exchange and bold imagination. That is who we are.”

Looking Backward, Moving Forward (2012) “Make no mistake about it, one of the main reasons we are here is to enable our students to become gainful members of the workforce of our community and state in the 21st century; to prepare individuals with the capacity to anticipate, adapt, and succeed with the challenges ahead of them in a world of work where so many of the jobs for the mid-21st century haven’t even been invented yet.”;

A Clearing in the Distance (2011) “For behind every decision we make, every argument we frame, every case we build is the recognition that what we most need to affirm is the primacy of student learning and success;...”

Choosing and Sustaining a Culture of Distinction (2008) “We begin this academic year with many important affirmations of who we are as a community, how we are perceived by others, and how we are accomplishing our most important task, the learning and success of our students.”

A Vibrant and Healthy Learning Institution (2007) “At Chico State, there is no higher value than those within our first strategic priority: the development of high-quality learning environments that foster student success both in and beyond the classroom.”

CSU, Chico Strategic Plan for the Future; Strategic priority 1: “Believing in the primacy of learning, we will continue to develop high-quality learning environments both inside and outside the classroom” and CSU, Chico Academic Plan, 2007 – 2012: Goal # 1 “Enhance student learning—both inside and outside the classroom.”

Looking Backward, Moving Forward (2012) “Our state and our university must invest in the currency of our faculty in their disciplines and in the connections among those disciplines, in order to strengthen the capacity and the performance of our institutions of higher education to serve critical societal needs.”

CSU, Chico Strategic Plan for the Future; Strategic priority 2: “Believing in the importance of faculty and staff, and their role in student success, we will continue to invest in faculty and staff development.”

CSU, Chico Academic Plan, 2007 – 2012; Goal # 2: “Nurture excellence in faculty and staff.”

CSU, Chico Strategic Plan for the Future; Strategic priority 1: “We will redeedicate ourselves to student success by re-examining the total education experience of our students, including a) continuing to develop a distinctive and integrative General Education Program and b) designing and delivering distinctive undergraduate and graduate programs” and CSU, Chico Academic Plan, 2007 – 2012: Goal # 1 “Enhance student learning—both inside and outside the classroom, including ‘Offer excellent and distinctive programs.’”

CSU, Chico Strategic Plan for the Future; Strategic priority 1.4: “Maintain superior learning support systems that promote student success,” and CSU, Chico Academic Plan, 2007 – 2012: Goal # 1 “Enhance student learning—both inside and outside the classroom, including ‘Provide superior student support systems.’”

CSU, Chico Strategic Plan for the Future; Strategic priority 3: “Believing in the wise use of new technologies in learning and teaching, we will continue to provide the technology, the related training, and the support needed to create high-quality learning environments both inside and outside the classroom” and CSU, Chico Academic Plan, 2007 – 2012; Goal # 1: “Ensure access to the most effective information and learning resources.”

A Clearing in the Distance (2011) “It means we need to stay on the cutting edge of learning and information technology, but, first
and foremost, as a means to support learning, enable faculty effectiveness, and accomplish staff and management efficiency ...”

xvii The Chico Red Balloon Project: Re-Imagining the Chico Learning Experience, September 2011: Role of Learning Spaces, p. 11-13, “As recently as a decade ago, classrooms were seen as by far the most important space for learning. Since that time, the notion of the ‘classroom’ has evolved and indeed expanded as ‘virtual’ space has now taken its place alongside ‘physical space.’ Digital devices can practically turn any non-classroom space into an informal learning space thereby extending students’ learning environments. The Chico Red Balloon Vision calls for the design, reshaping and refurbishing of learning spaces and learning environments in response to changing pedagogical styles and incorporating new information and communication technologies to address changing student numbers and demography. We support the experimentation with and integration of Chico’s physical and virtual learning spaces into a single integrated learning ecosystem. Learning does not stop once the faculty member has left the classroom. Instead, it marks the transition from one learning mode to another. Hence, the design of our learning spaces becomes a representation of our vision and strategy for learning—intentional, responsive, inclusive and supportive of attainment by all.”

xviii Looking Backward, Moving Forward (2012) “No story rings more true; no story connects more powerfully the work of faculty, staff and students together; no story underscores better what it means to be a place of purpose and performance, grounded in values that connect and inspire us, than the story of our service to our city, region, state and, even, beyond.” CSU, Chico Strategic Plan for the Future; Strategic priority 4: “Believing in the value of service to others, we will continue to serve the educational, cultural, and economic needs of northern California” and CSU, Chico Academic Plan, 2007 – 2012: Goal # 4: “Serve the North State and beyond.”

xiv A Clearing in the Distance (2011): “Our relevance, our effectiveness, our value will be challenged and questioned unless we can find innovative, less costly, and more sustainable ways to ensure our economic vitality and perform our uniquely critical roles. ... And, of course, all of this means we must take the long view.” Choosing and Sustaining a Culture of Distinction (2008) “Of all the threats to a university, often the most dangerous come from within. Not the least of which is the smugness that believes that the institution’s value is so self-evident that it no longer needs explication, its mission so manifest that it no longer requires definition and articulation. For without constant attempts to re-examine, re-define, and re-assert publicly our nature and purpose, we - in fact, any university - can become frozen in internal mythology, in complacent self-perpetuation.” The Information and Technology Strategic Plan, 2011-2015, Goal #3: Provide Effective Administrative Solutions—Provide reliable, secure systems that support university requirements for academic and administrative processes; provide business analysis and technology tools that maximize student, faculty, and staff time and collaboration; and support delivery of targeted communications and services. CSU, Chico Academic Plan, 2007 – 2012: Goal # 5 “Strategically manage resources in support of mission, shared values and vision—demonstrate organizational effectiveness.”

xx CSU Office of Quality Initiatives; CSU Lean Process Improvement Workshops: “Every organization is a collection of processes. These processes are the natural activities you perform that produce value, serve customers and generate results. Learning objectives a) manage/communicate a process improvement effort, b) create ‘current state’ and ‘future state’ process maps, c) apply lean tools/methodologies (Value-Stream Map, Waste Walk, A3 thinking), d) identify and reduce non-value added steps (Waste) and e) learn to create an Action Plan to track and drive improvement efforts.

xxi A Place of People and Ideas (2004): Guided by our strategic plan, and the processes we have in place for genuine consultation and participatory leadership in setting direction for the University, we will demonstrate a real determination to allocate resources in terms of clearly articulated priorities and how those priorities
contribute to making the University more outstanding that it now is in teaching, academic support services, academic reputation and service.” A Clearing in the Distance (2011): “No matter what the source, though, and no matter what the means employed to win external support, there is a common denominator. And that is what the fourth leg of this stool represents. In fact, it is the key to all the other legs as well. For whether we are trying to convince Sacramento that we are worthy of state support, or assuring students that their fees translate into expenditures that clearly and directly support their learning and degree progress, or convincing donors and partners that we are wise and effective stewards of their dollars and their trust, it is our reputation and our claims of distinctive performance that are on the line. We earn support, not because we are intrinsically worthy or, metaphorically speaking, the only show in town; but because we are demonstrably successful and the best show in town.” CSU, Chico Strategic Plan for the Future; Strategic priority 5: “Believing that we are accountable to the people of the State of California, we will continue to diversify our sources of revenue and strategically manage the resources entrusted to us” and CSU, Chico Academic Plan, 2007 – 2012: Goal # 5 “Strategically manage resources in support of mission, shared values and vision.”