**Faculty Meeting**

**April 24, 2019**

**President’s Remarks**

Thanks to all of our colleagues for a most productive year.

Inevitably, most of us are a bit tired at this time of year. Yet there is a feeling of some satisfaction that many students have succeeded, many classes have been taught, many perspectives have been examined through our scholarship and professional and creative activities—and in less than two weeks, nearly 600 more students will be added to the ranks of the Clayton State Alumni association. And even in uncertain times in higher education—as well as the rapidly and sometimes mysteriously changing social and political environment for higher education—doubts of our value, questions of the appropriateness of our interests, challenges to separate the political from a politically charged social environment—the university and its faculty and staff have worked at the core business of learning—and again, I say thanks for the persistence and the quality with which this has been done.

Both the Huron group with the Comprehensive administrative review, and the internal communication audit, remarked how strategic planning goals served as a driving force influencing our budget and our action choices—and to this we will continue.

Momentum year concept was on track, and became important for student success, as well as other institutional values. The data has led to conclusions appropriate to most students that are different from those we have historically experienced ourselves. Choice out of a menu of courses in not a great thing for most students. “By helping students make a purposeful choice about what they wish to study, institutions help narrow the thousands of course options to a manageable level and align the work a student undertakes in college with their goals, interests and expectations.” Developmental courses hinder rather than help the chances for successes in freshmen courses, especially for mathematics and English. And supplemental support taken simultaneously with credit bearing courses increase the chances for student learning and success. Taking 15 rather than 12 or ever fewer hours increases rather than diminishes student success. And unlike many of us, at least as students, students benefit from being reminded of an academic mind set which, if possessed, and heard from us, will increase chances for student success.—academic mind set has critical elements that our students hear and that they hear from a growing number of campus citizens—faculty, advisors, staff, administrators:

I belong in this learning community. I can change my abilities through effort (a growth mindset). Hard does not mean impossible. I can succeed. This work has value and purpose for me.

These are essential elements to the central premise for inclusion and diversity a sense of “belongedness,” and a reinforcement of that “belongedness” on a regular basis. That for our students and colleagues that we continue through deep dives into the ways we communicate with one another, as noted by our strategic plan. We commit ourselves this spring and into the summer with a review of the ways in which institutional commitments will explore the role inclusiveness across the many differences we have will advance learning—and we express thanks to the university senate for helping the university, through academic affairs, student affairs, and Human resources, to further refine that commitment long held by this institution.

We have made strides in some key student performance measures—first to second year progression rates; six year graduation rates; income or graduate school success for our graduates. We saw the implementation of a unique new partnership with CIMS and Mailchimp for the support of students and invigoration of the ways we explore learning and curriculum; the first Coca Cola Scholars in university history supporting first generation and STEM students who otherwise would not have been able to continue at the university; a model program for support for child care BOOST, in place because of the persistent work and commitment of colleagues like Deborah Deckner and Elaine Manglitz. Upcoming 50th anniversary of the founding of the university—likely announcement of a positive conclusion to first comprehensive fund raising campaign, Greater in Mind.

I close with thanks—faculty senate activities led by Dr. Mark Watson have wrestled with a rapidly changing environment for higher education. Political realities have often created conditions for interactions between campus and external actors—each group frequently puzzled by views that are strange to one group, puzzling to others, and perceived to be breathtakingly obvious to a third.

In all of this I say thanks to Brenda Carr and Faith Morton in my office. I say thanks to the leadership team, including wonderful additions like Dr. Shakeer Abdullah and Chase Moore and Ryan Erlacher—and of course Dr Kevin Demmitt, VP Corlis Cummings, VP Bill Gruska, Vice President Stephen Schultheis.

Our university continues even now, to serve as a steward of place. It is easy to forget the transformational role we can and will play in the lives of students, faculty staff and community—and I thank each of you for how you have contributed to those daily successes.