

“Turn on the Power!”

Good morning, and welcome to Metropolitan State University's 3rd annual Fall Convocation. Thank you for coming. For all of us in higher education, this is our New Year's celebration. We welcome new colleagues, returning colleagues, and in a few days, our students. This is a time of fresh starts, fresh energy, and a whole year of possibilities.

I appreciate this opportunity today to share with you some of my thoughts about the past and coming year. But first, we have the privilege of welcoming our new colleagues who have joined us since this time last year. I will start by introducing new colleagues in my area, and then I will ask the Vice Presidents and the Director of Human Resources to join me on stage, to introduce new colleagues in their areas. I would ask our new colleagues, as your names are called, to please stand and turn so that your colleagues can greet you.

[President, Vice Presidents, and Director of Human Resources introduce new employees]

As you see these folks in the hallways, tunnels, parking lot, or wherever, please take a few minutes to say hello and get to know them. For now, please join me in giving them a hearty Metropolitan State welcome! [applause]

I'd like to start by highlighting some of the milestones that the University has achieved during the past year. And for those of you who were away over the summer, to share with you some of the adventures you missed out on.

Our School of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice moved from the Midway campus into a beautiful, new state-of-the-art facility, the Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice Education Center in Brooklyn Park. An open house will occur there in early October, and whether you're connected with that program or not, I would encourage you to attend, witness, and enjoy the celebration. That move freed some space on our Midway campus, and the faculty and staff of our Urban Teacher Program have moved from the Minneapolis campus to better facilities on the Midway campus. (The College of Management and our Theatre program will remain on the Minneapolis campus.)

On this campus, as you know, we finally got state funding for our new Smart Classroom Building which is being constructed across the courtyard as an extension of St. John's Hall. ***This was the only project funded in the past year for any MnSCU university.*** During the summer, the old condemned building that used to sit there just got shorter and shorter and shorter. (I *loved* watching that!)

But the contractor accidentally cut through one of our main electrical supply cables and damaged several others, and that's where the trouble began. First the chillers went down and it started getting sticky. Then the server room in IT started heating up. Then we lost all power on this campus, and some people were stuck in the elevators and couldn't see the emergency button because the lights were out! Then the phones went dead.

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And then, all across campus, there was first a murmur and then a chorus and it rose up saying, "Where's the power? We need power! Turn on the power!"

Now the good news is, everybody pulled together and took the initiative to cope with the unexpected. That's what we do at Metropolitan State. We took action and found practical solutions:

- Tutoring simply moved over to the Midway campus and served 80 students that afternoon.
- IT engaged in a methodical, systematic shutdown that saved the integrity of our data and systems.
- Facilities folks rescued our colleagues who were stuck in the elevators.
- And this campus was shut down for a few hours while Xcel Energy rigged up a temporary power supply line.
- By the next morning, things were back to normal, and the power was on.

As I look back over the past year, it feels to me like someone turned on the power at Metropolitan State University. We have achieved a number of milestones.

Last year for the first time in our history, we served over 10,000 students. That puts us among the largest 12% of colleges and universities in the nation. Our enrollments were up by 7.5% over the previous year. And in the MnSCU system, although the 2-year colleges have enjoyed growth in the past year, we are the only university to have seen significant growth.

- Our online enrollments were up by 17%.
- Enrollments in nursing were up 28%.
- Our graduate enrollments were up 25%.
- And our 2010 summer session enrollments were up 14% over the previous year's.

Our outstanding academic programs also achieved a number of milestones.

- Our Management Information Systems (MIS) and Computer Science programs jointly offer a bachelor's degree in Information Security. This summer the National Security Agency and the Department of Homeland Security designated this program as a National Center of Academic Excellence in Information Assurance Education, 2010-2015. [Show framed certificate.] This is a very big deal.
- We got approval for and have launched a new applied Doctorate in Business Administration program – the first in the whole MnSCU system. I've met the incoming class. They are

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impressive. And there's so much interest in the program that we're considering admitting two cohorts a year instead of one.

- We had our first graduate of the new Master's of Liberal Studies program.
- The School of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice got approval to offer a new Master of Science degree in criminal justice (which will open next fall), and they launched a new online program to train corrections officers to work more effectively with the mentally ill. That program is the first of its kind in Minnesota. It is currently being piloted in 17 counties in Minnesota, and it is on track to be rolled out much more broadly in the next phase.
- We launched a new major in Gender Studies, a new minor in Civic Engagement, and we just last month got approval to offer a graduate certificate in Management Information Systems Database Administration.
- Our Social Work program had a national CSWE reaccreditation review. That program has a retention and graduation rate of 97%. Unheard of in social work education! Our site visitor told me in the exit interview that our program is a national model of excellence in multicultural nation. He said, "I think they don't know just how good they are."

It's also been a milestone year in Student Affairs, where Vice President Boyum-Breen has just finished her first year with us. This past year she brought in Noel-Levitz, one of the nation's top student services consulting firms, to survey our students and analyze our student services. On the survey, our students absolutely *raved* about the quality of their academic programs and their experiences with faculty and advisors, but they also confirmed and refined our sense that we need some improvements in our student services.

So what did Metropolitan State do? We turned the power on. The divisions of Student Affairs, Facilities, Human Resources, and others came together, took action, and found practical solutions.

- The Gateway Student Services Center was completely reorganized. New staff were hired, and a four-week training program was launched for the Gateway staff. The hours of service to better fit the needs of our adult students.
- The entire Student Affairs suite in Founders Hall got a facelift and reorganization for a better work and service environment.
- We formed a Veterans Center, which will officially open this fall.
- And Cecilia Stanton and Daniel Abebe co-chaired a Diversity Learning Task Force that's rolling out a totally new and very exciting model of programming that links cultural and academic programming.

For me personally, one of the biggest milestones of the past year was this. We set about to update our Facilities Master Plan. That outlines all of your campus and facilities developments for the next 30 years. Our last master plan, around 2002, called for building out the St. Paul campus, and nothing more,

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even though the state legislature had defined our campus as the entire seven-county metropolitan area. So we set about to update the plan, and that work is still underway. We marshaled a huge amount of urban-planning, student-demand, and demographic data in light of our mission and core values. We concluded, with a lot of help from the Strategic Issues Committee, that we also need a major, highly-visible campus in the West Metro area instead of co-location on the MCTC campus.

MnSCU had been planning to accommodate our growth and space needs by just building more classroom and offices on the two-year college campuses. So you see, we had a problem. But we took a position, and we simply didn't back down. It took five months – five full months of persuasion – but in the end, we succeeded in getting the backing we need from system to complete our master plan with that new vision.

Having our own campus in the West Metro area will allow us to get out of the current, unsatisfactory MCTC co-location as well as reduce our reliance on the Midway campus which does not allow us to fully utilize our facilities in the daytime. Our lease at Midway runs until 2013, and that's the timeline we're working with to establish a new Metropolitan State University campus in the Minneapolis/West Metro area. Obviously, the details are yet to be worked out, but that's the direction we're moving.

Meanwhile, we have plans for this campus beyond the St. John's Hall extension that is currently underway.

- Xcel Energy has generously provided funding for a green project, a wind turbine to be located just west of the Library and energy-efficient exterior lighting that will illuminate the façade of New Main. That will significantly increase our visibility as part of the St. Paul skyline. The lighting will be powered by the wind turbine, and it is all being funded by Xcel Energy.
- We also will go back to the legislature to request for funding for a Science Education Center, to be located across 6th Street from this building.
- We are working on preliminary plans for a new building across from Carboni's, where CCBL now sits, to house Admissions, the Center for Community-Based Learning, and University Advancement.
- The master plan will also include a Student Community Learning Center on this campus.

Some other milestones represent significant operational improvements:

- The Provost and Deans responded, in real-time, to our need for more class sections to accommodate growing enrollments. They took the initiative, engaged in real-time strategic problem-solving, and developed a new strategy that enabled them to offer additional class sections beyond those funded by the state allocation. Thirty-two sections were added last year, and it is estimated that nearly three times as many can be added this year. The additional outreach to our target audiences, and the additional revenues generated by this approach, are saving us in this economically-challenging time.

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- Another big success was the application of LEAN principles to analyze and re-design the Academic Scheduling Process. This streamlining of a complex set of procedures allowed us to schedule classes more efficiently, accommodate growth, increase our space utilization, and generate additional revenues. That solution, too, is saving us in these tough financial times.

Over the past year, under the direction of Vice President Siddiqui, we have made great progress in being able to produce a university budget that is comprehensive, accurate, and strategic. As a result, just recently we have been able to commit, with confidence, to additional funding for things that are strategically important for us.

- Base funding for four additional faculty positions.
- Additional support staff in critical areas.
- And beginning work to improve operations in IT (replacing the out-dated and limited Novell system, advising, and our website).

All of these are shining examples of the dynamic growth process that is characteristic of *successful* organizations in a *fluid* environment. This summer for our retreat, the President's Cabinet all read a book entitled *Switch*, by two smart young academics, Chip and Dan Heath. It is about organizational change, it's research-based, and it's an easy read. I would encourage any of you who are interested in change to take a look at it.

The Heath brothers write:

“[T]o create and sustain change, you've ... got to embrace a *growth mindset* [emphasis added]...[As] Rosabeth Moss Kanter observes in studying large organizations, 'Everything can look like a failure in the middle.' ... That's the paradox of the growth mindset. Although it seems to draw attention to failure, and in fact encourages us to *seek out failure*, it is unflaggingly optimistic. *We will struggle, we will fail, we will be knocked down—but throughout, we'll get better, and we'll succeed in the end...* people will persevere only if they perceive falling down as *learning* rather than as *failing*.”

Let's talk about the year ahead. The power is on! Are you ready for it?

(1) Over the summer I worked with an Ad Hoc Working Group on University Planning, to recommend what kind of planning process would meet our needs:

- Our need for a greater sense of inclusion, connection, trust, and integration across the institution.
- Our need for organizational agility and ability to successfully carry out innovations.
- Our need for continual learning and feedback.
- Our need for inspiration and efficacy.

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For me, that was an extraordinary experience. What a creative, capable, and dedicated group. One person even got a three-hour leave from the hospital to attend a meeting he refused to miss. We are putting the final touches on our recommendations and will be releasing those soon. It's a totally new model. It's a new day. We think it will empower us to do what we need to do, and it will provide lots and lots of opportunities for members all across the organization to plan and act strategically.

(2) Over the summer I also wrestled quite a bit with the issues of civility, diversity, and professionalism. Today, I call on the entire University community to make this the year that we all commit to making both civility and cultural competency the non-negotiable standard for how we live and work together. Not as a hobby, and not just on a good day, but as the bedrock of our work together.

We've all heard about "Minnesota Nice," but we have also have to admit that once you scratch just below the surface, you sometimes find that Minnesota nice isn't so nice. We don't always treat each other here in a professional and civil manner, and that limits us. It limits our creativity, our capability, our vision. Again, to quote from the Heath brothers' book, *Switch*:

"Negative emotions tend to have a 'narrowing effect' on our thoughts...[but] positive emotions are designed to '*broaden and build*' our repertoire of thoughts and actions."

That's what we need, to broaden and build. Please join me in this commitment.

(3) Finally, just this summer we rolled out a program of empowerment training that was developed here in the Twin Cities by a nonprofit called Twin Cities Rise! Over the summer, about 60 members of the University community have been taking part in the Institute's Empowerment Training. (You have seen some of the sessions on the screen.) Those of us in the sessions have found it fascinating, fun, and empowering to explore topics like core values, the connections between thoughts and beliefs and behavior, and what it means to live in "power mode."

During the coming year, I want to share more of this vision of empowerment; right now, we are just starting out. It is our intention to offer this opportunity as it develops, to any university employee who is willing to take advantage of it. More on that later. Perhaps some of you would like to share your experience with the empowerment training with your colleagues over lunch.

I could say a lot more about milestones and new initiatives, but there is a picnic waiting for us! I hope you catch my excitement about the things we have achieved in the past year, and about the opportunities that lie in the year ahead—both the opportunities we are planning on, and the ones that will totally surprise us.

Have a great year! Turn on the power! May the Force be with you!