

STATE OF THE UNIVERSITY ADDRESS

President Joe Bertolino

September 24, 2019

Hello everyone and welcome again to the fall semester and the new academic year!

Before I commence my remarks, I want to thank everyone involved in what has been a fabulous start to the year.

Our move-in days, the Week of Welcome, New Faculty Orientation...everywhere I went, there was a flurry of positive activity that shed a good light on our campus and our community.

Our entering class is large at 1,505 students – and highly diverse.

They're also vibrant – check out this short video clip from student involvement day.

Aren't they great! The young woman who was co-commenting by the way, is Kaleigh Garris, a member of the entering class and the current Miss Teen USA!

You'll be seeing more student faces at official events thanks to the new Presidential Student Ambassadors program, who'll assist me in promoting Southern to current students, alumni, special visitors, business partners, as well as friends and family of the institution.

I also want to welcome all of our new arrivals to campus -- if you joined us this summer or at the start of the fall, please stand and be recognized -- welcome to Southern!

We have a lot to look forward to this year – new academic initiatives, the groundbreaking for a signature building, compelling speakers, and dynamic

campus events including Homecoming, Social Justice Month, the 1619 commemoration and the 10th anniversary of our MFA.

Of course this semester is also the culmination of our 125th anniversary, and I hope you'll consider joining me on Friday, October 4 for a Night of Inspiration in the Adanti Student Center Ballroom.

There'll be cocktails, dinner -- and a special performance by Tony Award winner Leslie Odom Jr., one of the original stars of the Broadway hit, *Hamilton*.

Not only will you have a great time, but you'll be supporting a great cause – the establishment of a fund to support our students' basic needs on campus.

It's incumbent on us to holistically help students navigate life's complexities and challenges... even as we focus intentionally on supporting their capacity to learn and ability to persist to graduation.

This is Social Justice in action — and it is what helps to define us at Southern. So please join me on October 4 – a great night for a great cause!

VIDEO:

To put you in the spirit, I want to share with you another in our series of Living History videos, which features an alumnus from every decade back to the 1930s....

This one features Jahana Hayes, Class of 2005, whose journey from extreme poverty took her to Southern, a National Teacher of the Year Award, and finally the US Congress.

(after the video)

Jahana's pride in her alma mater and her commitment to education and its ability to transform lives should inspire us all.

THANK YOU

During the last few months, I've been visiting prospective donors with Michael Kingan, and I can tell you that outside groups want to make an investment in us because they believe in our mission. At a time of enrollment challenges and declining state funding, this private philanthropic support will be critical.

So I want to thank each and every one of you for what you have done -- and what you will do -- to move Southern forward and help us achieve our goals.

As I begin my fourth year as president, I continue to be impressed by the talents and dedication of this community, so I hope you're all planning to stay right here for lunch after this speech, and I'll thank as many of you as I can, in person.

AWARDS

On that note, I'm very pleased to announce the recipients of the inaugural Staff Recognition of Excellence Awards.

We'll be presenting these awards to a group of employees biannually as an appreciation for their efforts above and beyond their job responsibilities; their commitment to our students' success; and their exemplary service to the university community.

As well as a certificate of merit, today's recipients will each receive a free ticket to next spring's Fusco Distinguished Lecture. Would you please step forward as I call your name:

Amanda Mojica, Director of IT Strategic Initiatives and Special Projects

Andrea Carlino, Secretary – Academic Advising

Angela Ruggiero, Assistant Director of Academic and Career Advising

Fran Poole, Associate – Human Resources

Mary Pat Caputo, Director of Marketing and Publications

Paulette Philson, Administrative Assistant – Facilities Operations, Administration

Renee Knight, Office Assistant – Accounts Payable

Sharon DeCrescenzo, Administrative Assistant - Athletics

Shirley Anderson, Administrative Assistant – Buley Library, Administrative Offices

Tonya Nelson, Administrative Assistant – University Police

Congratulations to all of you – and thanks to the President’s Recognition for Staff Employees Committee for establishing this award and reviewing the nominations.

LOOKING AHEAD

Alright, so what are some good things that we can expect to see at Southern in the next nine months:

- As you know, in June last year, we broke ground for the Obama Magnet University School on Farnham Avenue – and it’s scheduled to open in spring 2020. This school represents a signature academic partnership among Southern, the New Haven public school system, and the community, with multiple opportunities for experiential learning for our teachers-in-training. When you drive down Farnham now, you’ll see that the school is nearing completion.
- Other new buildings are on the way. In the heart of campus, we’ll break ground next spring for a new home for the School of Health and Human Services, on the Fitch Street frontage adjacent to Pelz Gym. Design is also beginning for a new, net-zero home for the School of Business, on Wintergreen Avenue – just one of the many great sustainability initiatives that we’ll be embarking on.
- With our trans-Atlantic partner, Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU), Southern has formed a consortium with institutions in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and Shanghai, China, to promote international student exchange, particularly at the graduate level. The first meeting was held in Kuala Lumpur, last year in Shanghai, and we are scheduled to host delegations from our sister schools here next spring.
- We also have a new portfolio of accelerated bachelor’s and master’s degrees that will allow students to complete both in five years. These programs -- chemistry, computer science, psychology, recreation therapy, anthropology, Spanish, history, and sport and entertainment management – offer a time-saving, cost-effective path to a graduate degree.

- Other curricular highlights include the launch of a Master of Arts in Teaching; an Accelerated BS/Master of Athletic Training 3+2 degree; bachelor's degrees in Health Sciences and Healthcare Studies, and an MS-Integrative Biological Diversity partnership with Western.
- More than 40 students are taking part part in SCSU@HCC and GCC this fall, allowing them to take a Southern course on their community college campuses. In addition, the first Early College course (in digital photography) is being offered this fall at Woodland High School to 20 students, and 15 agreements are in place with other schools throughout Connecticut.
- In both of these new initiatives, we're looking to remove the barriers of location, and give students the chance to earn credits and an incentive to achieve a college degree. It's another way to put our mission of access and social justice into practice.
- I mentioned our sustainability efforts, which have earned regional and national attention. If you walk down Farnham you'll see the 3,000 solar panels that we installed in Lot 9, with another 600 on the Wintergreen Garage. Now we are in the second phase, with 2,580 panels being placed on the roof of the Fitch Street Garage and 864 panels on the carport in the rear. This project is fully funded by GE and the Connecticut Green Bank and will provide about 4 percent of our electrical consumption on the East side of Campus
- Additionally, we'll begin the installation of energy efficient fuel cells behind the Energy Center and on the side of Earl Hall, a project fully funded by Bloom Energy. This and the solar panel projects will save us more than \$300,000 in electrical costs annually.
- Last semester, Southern was one of 10 institutions awarded a \$70,000 Promoting Academically Successful Students (PASS) grant from the state to provide additional supports for students of color who have been placed on academic probation/warning.

Fifty SCSU "Rising Scholars," were selected to take part in the inaugural Program and as a result, 64 percent of these students were

removed from academic probation. Southern was consequently awarded an additional \$150,000 for this academic year.

- And finally, this fall we are excited to be launching Phase II of our three-year implementation of the new academic advising model.

A key feature of the new model is the creation of academic advising centers serving related departments and located in physical proximity to them. Last year we began by working with Business and STEM, and this year we will be adding Arts & Humanities and Social & Behavioral Sciences – all should be operating by the spring at the latest.

HIGHLIGHTS

That's a snapshot of the latest developments, and here are some more highlights from across the divisions:

- The new Healthcare Studies degree program launched with 370 enrolled majors. This new program will prepare students for a wide range of job opportunities in healthcare settings and offer a pathway to complete prerequisites for the SCSU nursing program. Special appreciation to Angela Ruggiero for providing academic advisement to more than 600 pre-nursing students during the last five years and spearheading this transition to the healthcare studies degree program.
- The Department of Recreation, Tourism & Sport Management continues to be innovative with new program development. This year they are launching two 4+1 accelerated Master's degree programs and a concentration in Athletic Administration, which has led to their largest Master's program enrollment to date.
- With workforce demands in mind, next semester we will launch a new interdisciplinary major in Arts & Sciences: the BS in Data Science. This major will open doors to high-paying careers for our students.

- CARE – our community research center partnership with the Yale School of Public Health -- had a tremendously successful year, receiving \$4 million in grant awards to deliver programs in New Haven focused on eliminating racial and ethnic health disparities.
- Our Department of Nursing, which celebrates its 50th anniversary this fall, enhanced its status as one of the best programs in the state, if not the nation, with a 100 percent first-time pass rate on the national licensing exam for the traditional B.S.N. program.
- In special education, Dr. Yan Wei recently received an IES grant for almost \$500K, in collaboration with the University of Kansas, for a project entitled “Improving Transition Outcomes for Adolescents with Disabilities: Examining the Impact of Motivation and Self Determination on Student Outcomes.”
- The School of Business has opened a Business Success Center for internships and professional development programs, funded by Wells Fargo. And it is implementing women’s leadership and conscious capitalism student programs -- both also externally funded.
- We’re continuing to extend our community outreach: In the Visiting Scholars Program, last year we presented to 39 different classrooms at schools in Cromwell, Derby, Hamden, Stamford, New Haven, Wallingford, West Haven, and Waterbury.
- Advancing opportunities for women in the sciences, in the Spring we launched a Young Women in Bio event– the first ever to run in Connecticut. 46 young women were in attendance. During the Summer we ran a Coding Camp for Girls in partnership with Holberton School and Travelers Insurance. 21 young women from underrepresented groups attended the two-week program for free.
- Our School of Graduate Studies is continuing the expansion of our professional and continuing education programs. A Drone Academy launched this month, as well as a program in medical Spanish that we’re

offering as a customized delivery to Columbus House here in New Haven and Children's Community Programs of Connecticut.

- Through the generous funding of distinguished alumnus Neil Proto, Tess Marchant-Shapiro and Jonathan Wharton are accessioning the papers of former New Haven mayors Biagio "Ben" DiLieto and John Daniels for ultimate deposit in Buley Library. Next fall, the university will host an exhibition on the papers.
- In an ongoing effort to better connect students with each other and create a sense of belonging at Southern, Student Affairs has launched two new engagement initiatives.
- Thirty-four students have signed up to join a Commuter Cohort, which will help commuters connect with other students, learn about involvement opportunities and resources on-campus, get strategic tips for success as a commuter student, and explore both the campus and the local New Haven community.
- First-Year Fit is a fun, six-week program that meets every Thursday and includes a workout with a student trainer from the Fitness Center followed by a healthy hangout (social event) with a student leader. First-year students who complete the program will win prizes and are eligible for a complimentary Fitness Center membership.
- The Academic Success Center has introduced PALS, a new program promoting better understanding of material discussed in class. Students who attend 5 or more PALS sessions throughout the semester are seeing improvement by a grade to a grade-and-a-half.

Academic success coaching has been producing positive results. Last year, students with below a 2.0 GPA who met with an academic success coach were retained at 72 percent, while similar students who did not see a coach were only retained at 38.3 percent -- a clear indicator of the importance of coaching for academically struggling students.

We need to continue to encourage students to seek academic support. It is

clear that these resources make a difference in performance and persistence.

- And finally – this just in – the BOR has approved the rededication of three of our existing schools as colleges – so we will now have the College of Health and Human Services, the College of Arts and Sciences, and the College of Education. (Business, appropriately, retains its school moniker to keep it aligned with many other outstanding Schools of Business)). This new blend of Colleges and Schools within the University is a sign of our academic and disciplinary maturation.

GRANTS and GIFTS:

We have some great news to share from our Office of Sponsored Programs and Research, where Amy Taylor and her team have been producing excellent results.

- Last year, Southern was awarded more than \$7.6M in external support – about three times more funding than in the previous year – with about 78 percent of the grants coming from highly competitive national agencies including the Centers for Disease Control, National Institutes for Health and the National Science Foundation.
-
- In 2018 we had 85 grant proposals submitted to external agencies; in 2019 we had 127 -- with a remarkable success rate of 48 percent of those proposals submitted.

Our Grant and External Awards recognition event will be held on October 11 at 4 p.m. Please take the opportunity to attend and congratulate your colleagues.

DEVELOPMENT

Speaking of support, our development efforts have also been bearing fruit.

- Our endowment continues its steady growth, from \$29.9 million in fiscal year 2018 to \$31.1 million this past year. This, combined with continuing strong investment returns of more than 8.5 percent, means that for the

first time ever we have the potential to access \$1 million from our endowment.

- Other sources of philanthropy are also bearing fruit. Our 2019 Giving Day was a record-breaker, with \$220,527 donated by 1,338 donors, exceeding the \$125,000 goal by 164 percent.
- This is all good news for our students, as our scholarship programs are healthy and growing. During the last fiscal year, the SCSU Foundation provided \$871,000 for award to 386 students.
- Overall, we exceeded our 2018-19 fundraising goal by nearly \$750K.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Switching gears -- a lot has been going on in the world of Information Technology.

- Following the launch of our new University website, a unified calendar system has been implemented to provide a single location to find and subscribe to campus events.
- An additional 10 learning spaces have been upgraded to the latest technology standards. This ongoing effort has enhanced over 80 academic spaces with modern technology.
- We continue to be first among our peers to implement upgraded Banner features, including the new mobile app and back-office Banner. An improved Banner experience for students will be implemented before the end of the academic year.

ATHLETICS

We had another strong spring season in athletics.

- Kudos to the men's outdoor track and field team who accomplished a "Threepeat" as the NE10 men's outdoor track and field champions.

- Our baseball team advanced to the conference semifinals and we had two USA Gymnastics All-Americans – the first pair since 1986 to be honored in their initial season at Southern.
- We should never forget that these are student-athletes, and here they did us proud: 218 were made the NE10's Spring Academic Honor Roll. They included 82 receiving Academic Distinction for GPAs ranging from 3.50 to 3.99 and 25 earning Academic Excellence with a 4.0 GPA.

ENROLLMENT

Those are the highlights -- now for some realities -- not all bad! Let's start with a look at the enrollment picture...

- First off, I must say that we are very fortunate to have the services of three experienced and talented individuals to guide our recruitment efforts as a new academic year unfolds. Julie Edstrom has joined us as associate vice president for enrollment management, Alick Letang as director of admissions, and Sage Crary Stachowiak as director of financial aid
- To the numbers: We have 3,000 new students enrolled at Southern this fall across all programs, a stable result at a time when overall college enrollment in Connecticut and indeed around the country is in decline.
- Our undergraduate Open House is on Saturday, Nov. 2, and strong registrations are pointing to more than 3,000 guests in attendance, which is an excellent turnout.
- As part of our website enhancements, our student service offices launched a One Stop website, providing more ready access to information and guidance for students. Student waitlists for course registration will also be live for Spring 2020.
- Our financial aid team worked hard this summer to catch up on a processing backlog caused by staffing challenges, ensuring that every complete financial aid application for Fall 2019 was awarded by the start

of the semester and minimizing the number of students dropped for payment issues. A new process for financial aid verification will speed processing time for next year and improve communication and support for aid applicants.

As you know, during the last couple of years I have been stressing the need to reverse our decline in graduate student enrollment. I'm pleased to say, that we're finally seeing an uptick.

- There has been about a 20 percent increase in the size of the incoming graduate class (631 students as compared with 530 at the same time last year, both full and part-time).
- Among our CSU peers, Southern's Graduate School is the largest in terms of full-time students registered for Fall 2019 (as of August 30, we had 723 students versus 496 in the second largest program at Central).
- At the same time, Southern became the largest graduate program in the CSU System in FTE and credit hour offerings after lagging behind in both measures last year.
- While there is still much to do in terms of increasing part-time enrollment and ensuring that all of our programs meet the time constraints and professional needs of working adults, these are positive signs.
- Kudos to Dean Manohar Singh and his team, who have been working to streamline the admissions, registration, and advising processes as well as expanding Writing Center support for Graduate students' thesis and capstone projects – an important step in student retention.

All of this is very good, but there are still some tough realities to face.

- Even as we are bringing in new students, we are losing the ones that we have – and we will never solve our enrollment challenges without improving our retention rates .

- For example, the rate of first-time, full-time freshmen who enrolled in 2018 and are back this fall is 73.2%, a slight improvement on last year, but a significant dip on the 77.9% freshman retention rate in 2017.
- For students who entered as transfers, last fall's class was retained at 72.5%, down from 75.7% and 75% in the two previous years.
- Graduate student retention is 83.9% compared to 84.2% and 85.1% in the two previous years.

As I noted above, we are doing a lot of good work across the divisions with new programs to engage and assist our students. But even with that, our retention numbers haven't moved that much.

- Let me give you one more stark example. We have the lowest graduation rate of Pell-eligible students in the system, at just 38 percent.
- Given our mission, the population that we serve and our commitment to social justice, we should have the highest graduation rate for this population, not the lowest.

Clearly, there are some key internal problems that we need to fix, because things are not going to get any easier.

CHALLENGES

- Community college tuition will be free as of next fall – and we are the only one of the CSU's with a large community college virtually on our doorstep. We don't know for certain how this will play out for us, but the reality is that it is happening, and we need to be prepared for it.
- Private institutions are now aggressively pursuing transfer students from the community colleges, while our own transfer student numbers have dropped.
- Our new transfer headcount for Fall 2019 is 797, compared to 928 in Fall 2018 (full- and part-time combined.)

- Building the transfer population will be critical for us moving forward, as the demographics of traditional-aged students are not in our favor in Connecticut and across New England. Not only is this population in decline, but a growing number of students are not seeing the value of higher education and seeking to build their career paths elsewhere.
- Twelve years ago, our enrollment at Southern peaked at 13,000 – today, after teetering just above 10,000 for the last couple of years, we have a census headcount of 9,817.

FINANCES

Tuition, as you know, is our lifeblood – this year we will be running a modest deficit that we can cover with our reserves (I might add that these reserves are the result of a great deal of hard work and sacrifice – we have managed through attrition and hiring freezes to end each of the last three years with a modest surplus). That WILL NOT happen this year. It is imperative that we arrest our enrollment decline NOW.

There will be no bailout from the state – it's up to us to reverse the trend.

And I am confident that we will – for demography need not be destiny.

NOW WHAT

We have a great deal of talent and many excellent minds on this campus. We must use this talent and these minds to plan.

- We must innovate, and we must analyze data more effectively and make our decisions based on the numbers – even if those are numbers that we don't like.
- As I said earlier, we must ensure that our students' basic needs are being met, and we must ensure that they can navigate toward degree

completion in a smooth and timely manner. Today's students and their families want to know how quickly they will graduate and get a job

- If we don't do it, Sacred Heart, St Joes, Quinnipiac and UNH are just going to do it instead. Students will pay more for flexibility, convenience, faster time toward degree.
- It's as simple as that.

Therefore, the choices that we make today will impact how we look in every way – programs, personnel, resources.

PRIORITIES

We will be tackling the retention issue head-on through three priorities developed after robust discussion last week in the second of two retreats held with faculty and staff leaders from across campus.

1. The first involves transfer students – smoothing their path to come here, and improving the ways in which we orient them and integrate them into Southern.
2. The second involves creating greater flexibility in our curriculum and scheduling. I am challenging our faculty to take a honest and hard look at our curriculum to ensure we are meeting the needs of the students we serve.
3. The third involves helping students overcome financial challenges, by helping them navigate the financial aid and scholarship application processes and enhancing their overall financial literacy.

Using the action steps determined by the retreat attendees, the administration will now take these three priorities, determine next steps, timelines for completion, and stakeholders. We will reach out to other key people on campus who can take the lead on each of these projects and they in turn will be able to recruit others to assist.

You'll find these priorities listed with other important initiatives that I've mentioned previously, on the updated Vision statement on your chairs.

Let me be clear.....these are our priorities for this year. We will complete them “this year.”

In everything we do this year, we should be asking ourselves two questions:

1. How does X meet the needs of our students and ensure their success?
2. How does X help support our institutional priorities?

Those are the questions I will ask each of us all year, repeatedly.

FINAL THOUGHTS

I again want to emphasize -- for us to succeed, it has to be a team effort. So I’m asking you to fully participate in this process, sharing your ideas and concerns with a focus on solutions. Together, let’s build on the good things that are already happening at Southern.

We have a beautiful campus; enviable new science and learning facilities; unique opportunities for student research; faculty and staff who truly CARE about student success; and we’re located in a city filled with culture, intellect, and, not least importantly -- jobs.

For prospective students in South-Central New England and in the tri-state area, we can and should be a destination of choice.

There’s one way you can help immediately – on your chairs you’ll find invitations to the graduate and undergraduate open houses on October 10 and November 2, respectively, along with a card reaffirming our commitment to social justice. Take them and share them and talk up the value of a Southern education.

You’ll also find recyclable grocery bags – again, doing our bit for the environment – with Southern’s brand and a listing of all our social media accounts. I encourage you to follow our accounts – they’re active and engaging – and share all the good news about Southern with your friends and family.

Here's a clear example of the power of social media and how it can benefit us. Alex Morgan, the soccer star who spoke to a full house at Lyman on Saturday, shared the photo behind me on all of her social media platforms, saying that she had a great time at Southern.

The number of likes her posts have received to date, is approaching 300,000 – we should all be thinking of how to amplify the good work we're doing and sharing through social media is a great way to do that.

On that note, I'm going to leave you now with an important community announcement from our University Police.

(After the video)

Isn't that great! And it's already logged more than 30,000 views. So sign up, log in, and help tell the Southern story.

Thank you, have a great semester and now I'll be happy to take your comments and suggestions for the next few minutes before lunch.