



Cleveland State University

Office of the Provost and Senior Vice President

August 29, 2011

Dear Colleagues:

Today, we begin another academic year here at Cleveland State University. It is a year with great potential for us to continue to build an outstanding public university.

Last year, it was difficult at times to see the bright future for our institution. The uncertainty of the state budget created anxiety, and the reduction of state support occasionally dampened our individual and collective aspirations.

But, together, we met the financial challenges that were imposed upon us. We absorbed a substantial reduction in state support through a transparent, participatory process that enabled us to make difficult, but strategic decisions about the allocation of critical resources.

While the fiscal clouds have not dissipated completely, we should be emboldened by our demonstrated capacity to meet difficult challenges. This recent experience is a reason to be optimistic in the strength and vitality of our university.

There are many other reasons to be optimistic that our future will be even brighter. In my opinion, the best barometer of future success is the quality of people who have chosen to become members of our academic community.

This summer, three new academic deans commenced their service:

- Craig Boise, Dean, Cleveland-Marshall College of Law
- Meredith Bond, Dean, College of Sciences and Health Professions
- Sajit Zachariah, Dean, College of Education and Human Services

These outstanding academic leaders chose to bring their experience and abilities to Cleveland State because they relished the opportunity to join an institution with a strong faculty that was poised for additional achievements and increasing prominence. Their decisions are a testament to your historic success and your future potential.

Last week, we also welcomed 16 new full-time faculty members. These teachers and scholars have excellent credentials in diverse disciplines – ranging from art to biomedical engineering. I ask that you mentor and support them, because they represent the future of our university.

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And today, more than 1,300 new freshmen enrolled at Cleveland State. The median high school GPA of these new students is 3.24. The median ACT is 21.6 – a median that exceeds the national average for the second consecutive year. These objective metrics establish this incoming class as the most academically prepared in the history of our university. These men and women had other options, but they chose to come here because of the excellent educational opportunities that you provide to them. I ask that you challenge and inspire them.

In addition to attracting outstanding new people, our university continues to attract more interest and support in other ways.

For example, three of our colleagues recently received grants from the National Institutes of Health:

- Associate Professor Barsanjit Mazumder received a \$1.75 million grant to continue research on his discovery of a new mechanism that controls inflammation. Dr. Mazumder's research could lead to new drugs that could safely and effectively block the progression of inflammatory diseases, such as arthritis and cardiovascular disease.
- Associate Professor Xue-Long Sun received a \$1.25 million grant to develop anti-coagulants that are safer for stroke and heart attack victims. Dr. Sun's work could help reduce many of the dangers associated with existing drugs.
- Associate Professor Bibo Li received a \$1.8 million grant to continue research into African Trypanosomiasis, a disease that kills thousands of people in sub-Saharan Africa.

Two months ago, we also learned that the National Science Foundation awarded a \$1.3 million grant to a team led by Professor Joanne Goodell. The funding will create the MUST STEM Fellow Program, the first graduate teacher program in Ohio to use the UTeach model.

These four grants are excellent examples of the significant scholarship and research that is being conducted by our faculty all across campus. All of this activity improves Cleveland State's reputation as an ascending research university.

We also continue to attract significant philanthropic investments. In May, we hosted our first annual "Radiance" scholarship benefit. This event raised more money than any fund-raiser in the university's history, and I am confident that this annual benefit will become even more successful in the future.

Even more significantly, on June 28, President Berkman announced that Monte and Usha Ahuja have committed \$10 million to support our university. Their generous investment will be used to accelerate the growth and to enhance the stature of our business college. In recognition of their extraordinary generosity, the Board of Trustees has named our business college the Monte Ahuja College of Business Administration.

These achievements continue to generate excitement and pride on our campus. And this enthusiasm and optimism is shared by our alumni and friends in the broader community. Everywhere I go, I sense that our institution is ascending in impact and stature – that, together, we are making a difference for our students and our region.

To sustain this positive momentum, we must increase our commitment to our students. In my judgment, the most important academic imperative is improving the retention and graduation rates of our undergraduate students. The future of our university depends on the efficacy of our efforts. More importantly, our students' futures depend on our commitment. Each of us shares a professional and moral obligation to support the success of our students.

We must also enhance our scholarship and research productivity. We are developing and implementing a variety of initiatives to encourage scholarship and research that will help to enhance the university's reputation and expand humankind's knowledge and understanding.

In order to achieve these two broad objectives, we must develop a budget methodology that will guide us in allocating resources more strategically. This methodology, which will be based on quantitative factors and qualitative metrics, will also ensure that these important decisions are more disciplined and equitable than decisions based on anecdotal impressions or temporary pressures.

In closing, I want to reiterate my confidence that we will accomplish these important objectives. The institution is strong – and we are getting stronger.

I also want to reaffirm my commitment to support you. And I remain grateful to you and President Berkman for the opportunity to serve as your provost.

Best wishes for a productive and rewarding academic year.

Sincerely,

Geoffrey S. Mearns
Provost and Senior Vice President
for Academic Affairs