



# CLEVELAND STATE UNIVERSITY

## Transcript 2020 State of the University Address

October 29, 2020

Video montage (:30)

Good morning, I am Harlan Sands, President of Cleveland state University, and I welcome you to our first-ever virtual State of the University address. What you just heard was the CSU alma mater sung by our own CSU Choir from the floor of the Wolstein Center – what better way to kick off our time with you today.

It has been my privilege and pleasure to be here with you now for the past 2+ years at CSU, and I could not be prouder of how we have moved our University Forward Together, especially over the past 8 months during what we hope is a once-in-a-century pandemic.

### [Overview]

We are now in a time of great challenge and opportunity, and I appreciate all that each of you have done - our extended CSU family of faculty, staff, students, trustees, alums, community supporters, and more - to carry us through this pandemic with compassion, grace, focus, and commitment to our core mission: educating students and producing cutting edge research. I am pleased to tell you that, in 2020, our 56<sup>th</sup> year of existence, the state of our university is very strong.

Over the next 40 minutes, we will tell you the story of “our CSU”, of how we are advancing our brand of Engaged Learning every day, how we are impacting students, our community, our city, and our nation. You will hear from some of our faculty, staff, and students, so that you can feel first-hand what we mean to so many on a personal basis, how we are touching lives, changing lives, and defining our future. We will provide an update on how we are advancing our 7 strategic priorities and talk about our accomplishments over the past year, how we are building upon our strong foundation of teaching and research excellence, taking steps to solidify our finances, advancing and extending our brand, growing enrollments, and investing in our institution in ways that are innovative and forward-looking.

One thing I have learned over many years of working within large organizations is that **success has many mothers, and we need strong leaders at every level to be successful.** Since it all starts from the top, I'd like to begin by thanking Governor Mike DeWine and Lt. Governor John Husted for their strong leadership in Ohio and continued

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2121 Euclid Avenue | Cleveland, Ohio 44115-2214

T (216) 687-2000 or 888.CSUOHIO | W [www.csuohio.edu](http://www.csuohio.edu) | E [admissions@csuohio.edu](mailto:admissions@csuohio.edu)

support for higher education. I'd like to thank Chancellor of Education Randy Gardner and IUC President Bruce Johnson for their leadership and guidance through a very challenging time for all of us. I'd like to thank our Board of Trustees led by Chairman Dave Gunning and Vice Chairman Tim Cosgrove, who are working hard every day to support the great work we are doing at CSU. And to our leadership team here on the ground, our faculty, our staff, our students and all of our CSU supporters for believing in us and fully supporting our collective vision.

In 2020, we strengthened our team with several highly talented and respected, results-driven leaders:

- Dr. Forrest Faison, our Senior Vice President for Research, Innovation and Health Care Strategy. Forrest joins us after a 39-year career in the Navy, attaining the rank as a three-star admiral and serving his final tour of duty as surgeon general of the Navy, responsible for over 70,000 health care professionals around the world supporting our Naval Forces.
- Dr. Kenneth Kahn, our Dean of the Monte Ahuja College of Business who most recently served as senior associate dean of the School of Business at Virginia Commonwealth University. He is widely recognized as an experienced academic administrator, scholar and researcher on innovation and innovation management.
- I'd like to welcome Jonathan Wehner, our Vice President of Enrollment Management and Student Success. Jonathan's 20 years of experience in higher education working on behalf of students at Cleveland Institute of Art and Case Western Reserve University.
- Rita Andolsen, our Vice President for Marketing & Communications, who joins us from MetroHealth with over 20 years of broadcast journalism and communications expertise in real world situations.

AND:

- Vanessa Whiting, a well-respected community and business leader, who was recently appointed by Gov DeWine to our Board of Trustees.

### **[Accomplishments]**

When we talk about our year in review, we must begin with what happened across the US in early March. It is difficult for many of us to remember what life was like "BP" – before Pandemic. So, at the top of our list of accomplishments this year is how we stepped up and responded here on campus.

From the very first moments we learned of the emerging community health threat, we pulled together and prioritized what we needed to do to continue to operate and keep our people safe. We made thoughtful and reasoned decisions, true to our principles of shared governance, rooted in data analysis and tailored to our specific needs, all of this that drove us and set us apart from our peers.

And we did a number of things:

**First:** We developed a campus-wide pandemic-response team to coordinate our actions. The team analyzed our campus footprint, physical plant, and teaching and working schedules, all to figure out how to best develop short and long-term safety protocols that would work for us.

**Second: To keep spring semester teaching and learning on track, we made a decision to close down our campus and to transition more than 1,200 courses to remote instruction.** Through the leadership of Provost Jianping Zhu and faculty Senate president Bill Bowen, we did this collaboratively with time and resources for faculty and staff to do this effectively.

**Third: we began work early on a plan to repopulate our campus with safety protocols to give us confidence that we could return to campus safely.** Our comprehensive “seven layers of personal protection” Plan – masking at all times, 6-foot minimum physical distancing, daily health assessments, enhanced environmental protections, and an aggressive testing, contact tracing and quarantining process - became a standard that was shared across the state. We built in flexibility for students, faculty and staff with varying levels of personal health concerns: we did this with hybrid, synchronous, and asynchronous course options. We engaged over 50 student ambassadors to remind everyone to wear their mask and keep their distance.

**And Fourth: We made an active commitment to creating a culture of compliance and support on campus to both drive needed behaviors, and help get students through.** Thanks to the leadership of our faculty Senate, who worked on their own time throughout the summer, **we were able to offer** flexible grading options to our students over the summer and reach consensus on offering 50% of classes on campus this fall.

**What was the result? The result was our plan is working. Enrollments are rock steady,** retention rates are up, students are staying engaged and, to date, our on-campus COVID-19 infection rate has been slightly less than expected and is generally lower than what we have seen across other institutions of higher learning in the state.

And maybe most importantly, the pandemic didn't slow us down one bit in our drive to execute on our academic, research, student support, and community engagement objectives.

**Let's begin with academics.**

Last year, at our State of the University address, we made a commitment to invest in our faculty, and despite the pandemic, we kept that commitment. We recruited 33 full-time faculty in areas like biomedical research, data analytics and cybersecurity, and applied social sciences, and this stands in stark contrast to many other institutions that suspended their faculty searches during these times.

I'd like to take this opportunity to tell you about two of the new faculty members who joined us this fall: Dr. Kailash Gulsan and Dr. Jingqi Yan. Dr. Gulsan joined us from the Lerner Research Institute here in Cleveland and Dr. Yan joined us from the Albert Einstein Medical School in New York. What is unique about these two individuals is **each of them brings a \$1M NIH R01 grant to CSU** – the first time we have ever brought in two funded researchers at this level. Dr. Gulsan is studying chronic inflammation as it relates to cardiovascular disease and lung cancer, and Dr. Yan is working on better understanding the pathology of autism.

Let's hear from Drs. Gulsan and Yan on how their research will impact CSU.

**In addition to adding new talent, our faculty had a great year attracting more investment in their work:**

- Dr. Debbie Jackson from our College of Education & Human Services was awarded a \$2 million NSF grant to work with CMSD students to enhance a talent pipeline for students interested in computer science and information technology.
- Dr. Meredith Bond, dean of our College of Sciences and Health Professions and Dr. Christine Moravec of Lerner Research Institute, a CSU graduate are co-principal investigators on a new \$1.2M NIH grant to recruit underrepresented minority Ph.D. students to Northeast Ohio.
- CSU was awarded in partnership with Case Western Reserve University, a \$3.1M grant from the Cleveland Foundation to advance something called the Internet of Things Collaborative, a project designed to better integrate internet-based technologies into everyday life.
- And Dr. Anton Komar, director of our Center for Gene Regulation in Health and Disease, is our first researcher to receive 2 R01 grants totaling \$2.7M focusing on how protein mechanisms impact tumor initiation and progression.

**Student and community engagement**

And how are we supporting our students? Many of our students face challenges in getting their education while working, raising a family, and facing economic hardships, and we continue to provide a range of wraparound supports to help them succeed.

In times of need, our community is stepping up and delivering.

Chuck and Char Fowler's \$1million gift to create an expanded Lift Up Vikes! food pantry for students in need that is truly inspirational. This gift also established the Fowler Emergency Grant Fund to assist students with emergency expenses.

We distributed close to \$6 million in Lift Up Vikes! emergency grants and over \$1 million in additional need-based financial aid over the past 8 months all to existing CSU students.

To meet technology needs of our students, many of whom lack basic computers and internet access, we are providing over 800 laptops and 230 hotspots so students can stay connected.

And how about our biggest annual fundraiser, Radiance, that raises dollars for last-chance scholarships? Even though we had to postpone what would have been the event's 10-year anniversary in April, our CSU Foundation raised – virtually - more than \$2 million for these critical student scholarships.

Another sign our community is behind us: Back in February, our seventh-annual One DAY Giving event raised a record \$460,000 from over 2,500 donors, setting new records in both giving and donor totals. In fact, we surpassed last year's total by \$150,000! One day!

One of our students, Nakia Hudson, knows the benefits of this generous support. Nakia is a graduate student, a mother of two and a caregiver for her own mother. Her story shows the spirit of perseverance that is a hallmark of CSU.

**This is why we do what we do.** Thank you Nakia for sharing your story.

We also made the decision, in our time of greatest need, to help incoming students and incentivize them for success. Given how difficult it was for graduating high school seniors and their families this year, we created the CSU 2 for 1 Tuition Promise. Every incoming freshman student who joined us this fall, and successfully completes the fall semester, will get the Spring Semester on us. Any gap in funding, we will fill it.

We are also very much in tune with the challenges facing our upperclassman and graduate students. In addition to the \$6 million in direct student support I mentioned earlier, we enhanced our success coaching and mental health support services. One of the primary ways we connect with students is through our strong partnership with student associations. Now let's hear from Renee Betterson, Student Government Association President, on how she sees her role and how it has impacted our students this year.

Thanks Renee. To support our faculty and students, we could not succeed without the many hard-working staff members who often work behind the scenes on our campus ... the unsung heroes who make our university "run". They are embedded within our Colleges and departments making sure systems work properly, students and faculty are supported, buildings are open and clean, campus grounds are maintained, and much more ... these are folks who don't get nearly the recognition they deserve. I'd like you to meet one of them ... Rose Medina-Lawrence who has gone above and beyond to keep our campus safe.

Thank you Rose for your hard work and dedication.

I am also aware of and appreciative of the individual and collective sacrifice so many of you have made for the greater good to help stabilize our financials. It was difficult, but necessary to take immediate steps to reduce costs given the impact of the pandemic on our state funding and COVID-driven revenue impacts. Although we still have work to do, our enrollment and retention success has gone a long way toward filling our expected budget shortfall and on-campus enrollments.

### **And what about our enrollment numbers and enrollment trends?**

Everything we do is about the success of our students, and key indicators in 2020 give us many reasons to be proud. Why? Because having students choose CSU and stay with us during a pandemic is the best affirmation of everything we are doing to serve them well.

And – thanks to all of your efforts – we had a banner year. Our overall enrollment remains at over 16,000 students –and is within 1.8% of last fall’s enrollment. This is an incredible achievement given national and regional trends where enrollments are down between 5 and 20%. Our graduate enrollment is up for the first time in 9 years, and the overall quality of our students – measured in terms of test scores and GPA has increased.

Even more importantly, students who come here are choosing to stay and continue their education.

Our first-year retention rate is 76.8 percent, up 6 percentage points over the past two years after remaining essentially flat for the previous 6 years.

A special thanks to Nick Petty and our team of graduation coaches– for the work they do across campus to enhance services for underrepresented minority and at-risk students so that each and every student **stays** with us and graduates.

And speaking of retention, our new Parker Hannifin Living and Learning Community is another success story. Our first cohort of 30 students all returned this year ... 30 out of 30. As you may recall, this community gives CMSD graduates studying at CSU two years of free on-campus housing in a unique living and learning environment focused on leadership and success.

**Now that you’ve heard many success stories today about who we are and why we are different**

Our efforts are being noticed by others.

U.S. News & World Report, which is often considered the bellwether of rankings, once again selected CSU as one of the top universities in the nation in its **2021 report** on the Best Colleges and Universities in the U.S. CSU was ranked **119<sup>th</sup> for social mobility, up from 134 last year** and we remain the **#1 public university** in Ohio among “Top Performers on Social Mobility.”

According to The New York Times and Urban Institute, CSU’s graduation rate is seven percentage points higher than expected when compared with other schools with similar populations. We are showing a national audience that what we are doing is working.

At the same time we are pivoting to deal with the pandemic, we, as an institution long committed to access, affordability, and lifelong learning, are thinking hard about how we can do more to help reduce economic and racial disparities in our region and community, and how we combat racism and racial biases. We are challenging ourselves, both in our individual beliefs and collective actions, to advance actions that go beyond words.

At CSU, we are working on 5 specific initiatives:

- A review of campus police department policies and procedures.
- Accelerating the work of the President’s Diversity Council and incorporating Diversity & Inclusion as a pillar of CSU 2.0.
- A rededication to our **Viking Creed**: acting with integrity and civility, embracing diversity and inclusion, and respecting individuals’ freedom of opinion and expression.
- Advancing teaching and learning in the classroom – starting with an “Interdisciplinary Course on Race, Racial and Social Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion – a course taught jointly by 23 CSU faculty from College of Law, black studies, criminology, history, communications, health sciences, nursing, urban studies
- And, fifth, creating a new “Pathway to Practice” program to help underrepresented minorities pursue careers in medicine.

**[Future]**

**And after a year like no other, what will we do next ?**

**There has never been a time like now to** define our own future, and we are hard at work to make this happen. As civic, public sector, and business leaders in Cleveland continue to assess the economic, social, fiscal, and health impacts of the pandemic, **it is increasingly clear that high quality, affordable public education will play a defining role in our collective future.** Our strategic priorities at CSU - to:

**Advance CSU's reputation as a leading public research institution**

**Continue to differentiate ourselves on student success (banner year!)**

**Enhance Engaged Learning**

**Strengthen our role as an anchor Institution for CLE and Northeast Ohio**

**Become a beacon institution to attract students and talent**

**Build financial strength**

**And, Strengthen our campus community**

**All of these 7 pillars will continue to define us.**

Now, more than ever, as we work together to chart our course forward post pandemic, we are going to focus on:

- promoting accessible, meaningful, and affordable education,
- producing workforce-ready graduates,
- enhancing connections to good jobs,
- leveraging intellectual capital to drive innovation and economic growth,
- building the kinds of public-private partnerships that give all of us confidence we can pull together, work together, and make the necessary investments to move us forward together.

Over 80% of our students remain in Northeast Ohio after graduation, with talents and skills that increasingly align with the highest-demand fields in our area. No other four-year institution even comes close to producing this amount of talent that stays here. That's a huge win for our students.

**Here's what you can expect from us in the year ahead:**

**Advancing our CSU 2.0 process.** I'm looking forward to seeing the full range of recommendations from our 5 task forces so we can chart a way forward together consistent with our shared set of strategic priorities.

**I'd like to share three expanded investments with you today:**

First, for FY22, we will aggressively recruit 40 new faculty in the areas of biomedical research and health care, data analytics and cyber security, and smart and sustainable manufacturing. This is in addition to the 33 we recruited last year.

Second, we will add to our cadre of student success coaches to expand this great program. Because it works!

And third, we will make **another \$1 million investment** in need-based financial aid to our students – the second year of this commitment and another way we are remaining true to our mission of accessibility and affordability.

And saving some fantastic news for last, I am also thrilled to announce **2 new \$1M gifts to CSU in support our Forward Together Fund to advance student success**. You will be hearing more details on these gifts soon.

In addition to the gifts, our **CSU Foundation is allocating an additional \$1 million** to support student success initiatives like our 2 for 1 Tuition Promise, a great partnership and it shows all of us are behind CSU.

There really is no better indicator of the great work all of us are doing than when our many supporters step up like this and invest in our mission and our students.

In times of challenge, all of us are tested. We at CSU have more than met that challenge in 2020. And as we move forward together, I look forward to another year of progress as we continue to educate tomorrow's leaders.