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State of the University Address

“The Accelerating Pace of Change: How Well Are We Responding?”

Dr. Janet Dudley-Eshbach, President

Salisbury University

SALISBURY, MD--In his latest book, *Thank You for Being Late*, Pulitzer Prize-winning author Thomas Friedman points to what he terms an “age of accelerations” that is transforming all aspects of life today. “The book can be unsettling,” said Salisbury University President Janet Dudley-Eshbach, “and I’m left wondering how we humans will keep up with the accelerating pace of change. Is the world spinning out of control? Friedman attempts to adopt an optimistic tone, his advice being that we all must ‘learn to dance in a hurricane.’”

In her Tuesday, April 18, State of the University Address delivered in the Assembly Hall of the Patricia R. Guerrieri Academic Commons, SU’s President reminded her campus audience of achievements to celebrate and build upon while looking ahead to the challenges they would collectively face as the institution moves toward its 100th anniversary year in 2025.

“I am drawn to the image ‘learning to dance in a hurricane,’” she said, “because it suggests how it is possible to thrive and adapt productively, even joyfully, when events around us swirl and leave us questioning the path forward.”

Points of real progress during Dudley-Eshbach's 17-year tenure which newer faculty and staff may not have known:

--Growth in student enrollment from 6,421 to 8,748.

--A more inclusive student body with 27 percent from diverse families as opposed to 11 percent in 2000.

--A successful TRiO-ACHIEVE program for first-generation, low-income or disabled students with a six-year graduation rate of almost 75 percent compared to 68 percent for the non-TRiO group.

--A thriving Honors College which recruited 11 percent of the entering class last fall and now enrolls 438 students.

--A Nationally Competitive Fellowships Office, supporting students who have been winning prestigious awards such as the Fulbright.

--Growing graduate enrollments and the addition of the first doctoral programs.

--Public and private capital investments exceeding \$350 million since 2000.

--Growth of the campus footprint from 144 acres in 2000 to 220 acres today; from 59 buildings to 89.

--Operating budget growth from \$70 million in 2000 to \$176.4 million. The projected State support base budget increase for Fiscal Year 2018 is 6.6 percent or \$3.4 million, the largest percentage increase of any of the University System of Maryland (USM) institutions. Today, faculty and staff salaries are no longer below the median salaries at SU's peer institutions.

--Growth in SU Foundation net assets from \$27.1 million in 2000 to \$70.9 million.

--Growth in hybrid and online courses by 729 percent over the last 10 years.

--The only institution in Maryland selected by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) for its project “Re-imagining the First Year of College.” While SU boasts the highest four-year graduation rate of all comprehensive institutions in the USM, on-going efforts such as its new Advising Center and the AASCU program are hugely important, she added.

--The creation of the Center for International Education and English Language Institute have bolstered international engagement. SU recently was recognized as one of the top 40 master’s institutions in the nation for the number of students who graduate with a study abroad experience. The American Council on Education’s Internationalization Laboratory project is also supporting SU’s goal of recruiting more international students.

--The opening of the award-winning Guerrieri Academic Commons fosters innovation and the synergy between students, faculty and others.

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But there are also challenges, said Dudley-Eshbach: “First, we must change and improve the ways in which we seek to recruit talented students. ... Secondly, we must re-think the ways in which we deliver high-quality undergraduate and graduate education as well as what courses and program content are needed.”

Recruiting is increasingly complex. The number of high school graduates in the Northeast began to decline after 2012. Growth in undergraduate enrollments at the flagship campus, University of Maryland College Park, also impacts recruiting at the

state's smaller comprehensives. "It is imperative that we understand these trends and develop strategies to maintain selectivity and overall enrollment," said Dudley-Eshbach.

The University also must find ways to increase capacity in high-demand areas, she noted. "We know, for instance ... information security, palliative care, long-term care and unmanned aeronautic systems (or drones) are examples of areas in which we could develop certificate programs. We also need ... academic programs that are attractive in foreign markets."

In addition, she encouraged thinking about meeting emerging needs. "What about ways in which interdisciplinary academic offerings might address the growing opioid epidemic in our country" or separating "fact from fiction in an era of 'fake news'?"

And, she added, "Shouldn't *all* students be required to have an alternative cultural experience, whether it's study in another country or ... community service work in a racial, ethnic or socioeconomic environment that is different from the one in which they grew up?"

"How can we move more quickly to adapt our courses and program offerings so that they are relevant and appealing to prospective students?"

Part of her presentation was a moving video about an SU student studying exercise science at The Universities at Shady Grove.

"Ariel Blanco does not have the resources to relocate to Salisbury ... He may even get his degree without ever having set foot on our campus! Moving forward, there will be new incentives for Salisbury University faculty who are willing to offer programs that generate enrollments off site."

The expansion of SU partnerships with the City of Salisbury too may offer new opportunities for enrollments or alternative revenue generation. “We have a great partner in Mayor Jake Day; he and City Administrator Julia Glanz, an SU alumna, will help us as we build partnerships to revitalize downtown Salisbury,” Dudley-Eshbach said.

The President encouraged faculty and staff to embrace the challenge of dancing in a hurricane. “I’m asking that *everyone* heed the call to ensure that Salisbury University remains on the path to becoming an even more robust, more diverse and inclusive” institution of excellence.

For more information call 410-543-6030 or visit www.salisbury.edu.

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