



VALUING COMMUNITY:
ADVANCING THE UNIVERSITY
THROUGH STRATEGIC
PARTNERSHIPS

Dr. Janet Dudley-Eshbach
President

STATE OF THE UNIVERSITY
ADDRESS

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President

From the first time I visited the Salisbury University campus, I knew that this was a special place. My earliest recollections of our campus include the Spanish professor who was conducting class outdoors; the beautiful, well-maintained grounds and facilities; students playing Ultimate Frisbee on the front lawn of Holloway Hall; energized debate about everything from outsourcing bookstore operations to the meaning of life. I heard from students how the mentorship by student affairs staff and faculty led to a sense of belonging to a community whose members care about each other. I was struck by the fact that all four academic Schools have been endowed with private funds, proof that area philanthropists truly believe in this institution.

I saw that Salisbury University exemplified the higher purpose and importance of education to society, as evidenced by the Institute for Public Affairs and Civic Engagement, the Center for Conflict Resolution, and our service learning programs. It was clear that, with the Nabb Center, the Ward Museum, the Salisbury Symphony Orchestra, WSCL, and high quality theatre, arts and music programs, Salisbury University serves as the cultural hub of the Delmarva Peninsula. From the first visit to campus, this University evokes *quality*. Alumni, prospective students and other visitors to campus see a community that practices active learning, provides a safe and stimulating environment for working and living, and prepares students to assume leadership roles in society.

By many standards, our University is young, having been founded in 1925. From a Normal School to State Teacher's College to University, the progress of the institution is truly remarkable. These last few years are no exception. Largely because of the reputation of our academic programs, Salisbury University consistently has been ranked among the top 10 percent of comprehensive universities nationally. Three SU faculty have received the high honor of being named Elkins Professors: Drs. Peter Lade, Francis Kane and Harry Basehart. Since 2001, six members of the Salisbury University faculty have received Henry C. Welcome Fellowships: Drs. Pandey, Wang, Newton, Quan, Devadoss and Brown. Since 2000, eight SU faculty and staff have received the USM Board of Regents' award for excellence: Drs. Basehart, DiGiovanna, Diriker, Hunter, Madden, Stribling and Whitehead, and Ms. Linda Abresch. Another indication of the quality of our faculty and staff is the fact that the funds we receive in support of grants and research now exceed \$5.3 million. Private and corporate support continues to grow as well.

On the athletic field, we are a University of champions, having won national titles in women's field hockey and men's lacrosse, and we are national champions in men's rugby, a club sport. We are currently ranked 12th among all NCAA Division III athletics programs in the nation.

Our graduation rates continue to be the highest among all institutions in the University System of Maryland. Our graduates very successfully find employment and many continue their studies at the nation's finest graduate schools. Our students truly want to contribute to the betterment of society. Notably, SU's student-organized Relay for Life won a national award for raising the most money as compared to other universities of our size.

We conduct our daily activities on a truly beautiful campus. Just this past September 23, I was informed that the Salisbury Area Chamber of Commerce has given Salisbury University its 2004 award for leadership in contributing to making Salisbury a more beautiful place in which to live and work. This acknowledgement is a tribute to all who work in SU's physical plant and also to the success of our town-gown initiatives.

There are exciting possibilities on the horizon. One relates to our University's partnership on projects at the Wallops Island Spaceport, one of only four sites in the United States from which payloads can be launched into outer space. I'd like to thank Deans Jones and Moore for their involvement in the Mid-Atlantic Institute for Space and Technology and Mid-Atlantic Regional Spaceport projects. There is tremendous potential here for the University and the larger region in terms of cutting-edge research and economic development.

While we have many successes to celebrate, our institution is faced with many challenges, most of which are related to fiscal concerns. In this we are not alone—colleges and universities everywhere are experiencing similar budgetary issues.

STRAIGHT TALK ABOUT THE STATE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

These are challenging times, both for our country and for higher education in particular. Nationwide, politically popular tax cuts and changing priorities have translated into dramatic declines in state appropriations that support public higher education. Meanwhile, the cost of operating an institution such as ours has risen faster than the rate of inflation, primarily due to the rising costs of employee benefits, technology and energy expenditures. Unmet revenue needs have been passed on to students and their families in the form of tuition increases.

Of all the *external* challenges we face—increasing economic inequality among the people of our nation and their opportunities for becoming well-educated, the problems faced by K-12 teachers, the downturn in our nation's economy, a multi-billion dollar war in Iraq, and on-going controversy surrounding diversity issues—of most immediate concern for us perhaps is the largely-ignored matter of the public disinvestment in higher education. The decline in state support could not have come at a worse time. More students want to attend public colleges than ever before, and the expectation is that we will accommodate them.

At Salisbury University, cost-cutting measures—limiting all but essential operations, curtailing salary increases, delaying maintenance projects—have been taken so that the increased costs our students must bear have been kept to a minimum. *We are in the untenable*

situation of trying to build upon our institutional reputation while spending less on the people, programs and services that have over the last decade put Salisbury University in the top tier of public comprehensive universities nationally.

In dealing with the budget reductions of recent years, decisions have been made with an eye to preserving academic program quality. Yet, in some significant ways, our institution is diminished as a result of our revenue situation. We have lost employees and have limited the filling of positions as they become vacant. We have had to delay the conversion of contingent II employees. We have cut back on expenditures relating to our physical plant and grounds.

As we have recruited our fall 2004 class of new students, we have found that Salisbury University is poorly-positioned to compete with other, better-funded universities in packaging financial aid to prospective students. Students who otherwise would choose to attend Salisbury University often accept more attractive scholarship packages from other colleges and universities. As a result, certain measures of the quality of the incoming class reflect the urgent need to increase funding for need- and merit-based scholarships.⁷

Within the context of our very difficult fiscal situation we are expected to do even more. Members of the University System of Maryland's Board of Regents and other State leaders are asking that we achieve even greater *efficiency* and *effectiveness*. In the coming months and years we will have to find new ways to accomplish our mission, and it is in working together that we will find new solutions.

While primarily focused on teaching, our faculty also are expected to be successful as researchers, performers, artists and scholars. How will we support the type of scholarly activities that enhance what takes place in the classroom in the midst of mounting pressure to increase what is often referred to as "faculty productivity"? I've just returned from the College of New Jersey, where I am chairing that institution's re-accreditation review team. Over the past several years, that institution has devised a plan whereby expectations for faculty workload have been met while standard teaching loads have gone from

⁷ In the University System of Maryland, Salisbury University is at the bottom in the percentage of costs covered by financial aid, and SU students graduate with more debt than students at the universities with which we compete for students.

four to three courses a semester, with the possibility of release time for research and other scholarly endeavors. *I will be asking Provost David Buchanan to convene a work group of faculty to explore how we at Salisbury University might reengineer the way we offer courses so that our faculty course load may come more in line with the type of institution we say we are and the type of university we aspire to be.* We should think out of the box, study what is done at the College of New Jersey and elsewhere, and come up with new solutions to address issues of faculty workload.

Those of us at public institutions of higher education must do a better job in explaining to the public the current state of affairs after several years of deep cuts to our colleges and universities. Regents, legislators, members of the general public and others should clearly understand that program quality cannot be maintained in a scenario where revenue streams are severely limited and we are being asked to increase workload even further and admit more students. In the late 1990s the State of Maryland made progress toward improving its System of public higher education; it is unfortunate to see this downward turn.

There are those who would say that this view is too grim. Some time ago SU Professor Connie Richards recalled the period of time she taught in Spain. There, the duplication center had no paper for two months, there was one computer for five people, the books she had ordered eight months earlier never arrived and on the first day of class she taught in a windowless room that had no electricity. She had to secure a key to open the classroom each day and return it immediately after class. The entire semester there had begun a week late because a crane had fallen on the building. Still, people were happy that no one had been hurt. To quote Dr. Richards: “We were in good shape and good spirits!” While our situation is not as dire, at Salisbury University our greatest challenge will be to maintain good spirits despite the difficulties that lie ahead.

We have good reason to be hopeful about our institution’s future. In recent years we have been immensely successful in working with State legislators. Senators and delegates from all parts of the State now know that Salisbury University is an impressive, high quality and dynamic institution. Since we implemented the “SU Day at the General Assembly” event we have expanded our presence and influence in

Assembly” event we have expanded our presence and influence in Annapolis, and the relationships we are establishing there will serve SU well.

Another priority of my administration has been to invite all members of the USM’s Board of Regents and System Office to come to visit our campus. Once they come to know us better, these individuals also become our advocates and, I believe, will work with us to find alternative solutions so that Salisbury University will continue to enhance its reputation and funding streams. For instance, we are beginning to consider the tuition model in place at Miami University (of Ohio). This new approach would enable Salisbury University to operate more as a private college while creating new scholarship funds for truly needy and well-deserving students.

Further, after several years of persistently proposing a tuition adjustment for Salisbury University, one which would bring our tuition more into line with that charged at Maryland’s other comprehensive universities such as Frostburg and Towson, this year it appears we will be permitted to move forward with this proposal. Two things are very clear: We cannot rely on full restoration of State support and we should not overly-burden students with ever higher tuition and fees.

SU’S FOUNDATION BOARD, FUNDRAISING AND JOB ONE: SCHOLARSHIPS

Another solution to the decline in State support clearly lies in seeking alternative sources of revenue. Over the past several years, our fund-raising efforts and the Salisbury University Foundation Board itself have evolved and matured. It is no longer sufficient to boast that SU’s four academic schools are endowed; our success in meeting the goals of our strategic and master plans will depend upon our ability to build upon past fund-raising efforts. We raised \$1.6 million over the past three years as part of the Perdue-Kresge challenge alone; this success is heartening and sets the stage for the institution’s next major campaign. Over the past year our Advancement Division under the leadership of Vice President Rosemary Thomas has been promoting planned giving, a way in which donors can make a difference for themselves and for SU.

The new focus on planned giving has already yielded dramatic results. In just the past three months, the promise of new scholarship money has become reality through planned gifts totaling close to \$10 million, including the largest single gift ever made to Salisbury University. It is through planned giving that institutions of the quality of Harvard University came to boast such huge endowments. Keep in mind that Salisbury University is just 79 years old. Planned gifts take time to come to fruition, and it largely through planned giving that good universities become great. Harvard University was founded in 1636 so they have had a “head start” of 289 years over SU!

Our success in the next campaign, the second major fund-raising campaign in our institution’s history, will determine in part whether Salisbury University can continue to build upon its hard-earned reputation as a Maryland public university renowned for its cut-above-the-rest programs and services. As both former Chancellor Langenberg and current Chancellor Kirwan have commented, “Salisbury University is the jewel in the crown of the University System of Maryland.” Together we must do what it takes to ensure that this phrase continues to characterize SU in the future. We will accomplish this goal largely through private, corporate, federal and state fundraising efforts.

We recently created a new giving club at Salisbury University, one that acknowledges donors who have given at least \$100,000. *This group now numbers 33.* The President’s Club, donors at the \$1,000 level or higher, has grown from 159 to 254 over the past four years, largely thanks to the good work of Director of Development Kim Nechay. To underscore the emphasis I am placing on fund raising, *within five years I intend to double the size of our Foundation’s endowment of approximately \$30 million to \$60 million.*

FACILITIES AND GROUNDS

In addition to the growth in scholarship funds, another major transformation will take place at our institution in the future, a transformation of our physical campus. Salisbury University has grown in reputation and size, and yet our campus facilities have not kept pace. The recently completed Master Plan provides the blueprint for SU’s buildings and grounds for the foreseeable future. This Plan was

developed with the goal of enhancing the campus environment for learning, living, and promoting a sense of community.

Salisbury University is the State of Maryland's only nationally-certified campus arboretum. Through the master plan process, in consideration of fiscal realities, we have rethought our campus landscaping design. Increasingly we will move toward a park-like setting for our campus, maintaining and even increasing open green spaces while limiting the number of high-maintenance gardens and fountains. Private donors have played, and will continue to play, a critical role in our campus design. The Miller Alumni Garden, made possible through the generosity of alumna Anne Miller, is but one example of how a major gift can enhance our campus grounds.

The new Henson Science Hall, which opened in 2002, was our campus's first new academic building in over a decade. It became reality not only because public funds were made available, but also because we were able to leverage public funds thanks to the support of key legislators and the generosity of Mr. Richard Henson.

Now we are on track with the design and construction plans for the next new academic building, the Teacher Education and Technology Complex (TETC), projected at over 160,000 square feet. The new complex balances intimate private space with a grassy quadrangle and vibrant public space, combining an ideal learning environment with ample communal areas. In the 1993 work *To Know as We Are Known*,² Parker Palmer espouses the view that "a learning space has three major characteristics, three essential dimensions: openness, boundaries, and an air of hospitality." We believe that the design of the new TETC captures these qualities. We have secured \$52 million toward construction of the new Complex, but private funding will be needed for equipment, landscaping, and other enhancements.

Our plans for a new library have been included in the University System of Maryland capital projects queue. While State capital dollars likely will fund the majority of the construction cost, we must also identify funding for on-going library operations and, especially,

² As cited in *Change* magazine, September/October 2004, p. 63.

acquisitions. A university's quality is reflected in the quality of its library; in this regard, we at SU have a very long way to go. The new library will reflect the philosophy that a university library should be a place for research, scholarship, learning and for community—a place where students, faculty and others come together to share ideas. Dean Alice Bahr and I have discussed the concept of a new building that includes open areas for community gatherings and an Internet café.

Currently, only the TETC, the library and a parking garage are included on the USM listing of capital projects that will be supported in the foreseeable future. Yet we also are in serious need of better student athletic, recreational and fitness facilities. Until we can construct a new field house, we will examine what enhancements to existing facilities can be accomplished and how we will secure funding for such projects in other than traditional means. We will seek private and corporate support for athletic facilities, including artificial turf and stadium improvements.

Other needs include a new facility for the growing Perdue School of Business, additional space for departments in the Fulton School of Liberal Arts and, in particular, a new performing arts center. Such a facility would not only create a meeting place with more seating than Holloway Hall for large campus gatherings, it would also provide studio and office space for our programs in art, dance, communications, music and theatre. We will explore how we could make a new fine and performing arts center a more immediate reality by partnering with the City of Salisbury to construct a facility that would serve not only the campus, but also the larger community as well.

The new buildings, parking areas and grounds that are called for in the facilities Master Plan will transform our campus. Some of these projects will become reality entirely through State funding, some solely with private funds (like the Scarborough Student Leadership Center), but I predict that most of them will be made possible through a combination of private gifts *and* public funds.

COMMUNITY

Much more than a collection of buildings and people, Salisbury University is a community of learners, scholars, teachers and support

staff. Just what do we mean by the term “campus community?” Perhaps most compelling is Ernest Boyer’s definition. In his work, *Campus in Search of Community*, Boyer writes:

First, a college or university is an educationally *purposeful* community, a place where the faculty and student share academic goals and work together to strengthen teaching and learning on campus.

Second, a college or university is an *open* community, a place where freedom of expression is uncompromisingly protected and where civility is powerfully affirmed.

Third, a college or university is a *just* community, a place where the sacredness of the person is honored and where diversity is aggressively pursued.

Fourth, a college or university is a *disciplined* community, a place where individuals accept their obligation to the group and where well-defined governance procedures guide behavior for the common good.

Fifth, a college or university is a *caring* community, a place where the well-being of each member is sensitively supported and where service to others is encouraged.

Sixth, a college or university is a *celebrative* community, one in which the heritage of the institution is remembered and where rituals affirming both tradition and change are widely shared.

To Boyer’s concepts I would add several perspectives: First, ours should be a pluralist community,³ one that offers many opportunities for debate. How else will we as citizens, scholars and leaders for the future,

³ Pluralism in higher education institutions has the following dimensions: it is diverse by race, ethnicity, gender; socially diverse; politically diverse; multilingual; multigenerational; international; open to different intellectual approaches and perspectives. It promotes academic freedom; providing safe space for debate; it is engaged with community stakeholders. From “Defining Pluralism,” in *Higher Education in a Pluralist World*, a publication of the American Council on Education’s Center for Institutional and International Initiatives, July 2004.

come to terms with the rapid changes taking place in our society and our world community? We learn and work in a place where many opinions and beliefs overlap and diverge. The college years are for students a time not only for intellectual growth, but for “personal and social unmooring, upheaval and, hopefully, reintegration.”⁴ Salisbury University is a place where we are dedicated to critical thinking and, ultimately, the development of values which serve to enhance the condition of society as a whole.

We are a community that emphasizes the importance of character-building. I am heartened by faculty discussions relating to academic integrity, and this fall for the first time, new students were asked to commit to the Salisbury Promise.⁵ Student affairs professionals and faculty serve as mentors to help students take a more active role in and responsibility for their own learning, personal and professional development, and engagement with civic affairs. I encourage additional steps to promote that growth. The new Presidential Citizen Scholars Program will provide new opportunities for students to become engaged in the political life of the community and to develop habits of good citizenship.

All SU faculty, staff and students are agents of change and growth, not just for our campus, but for the community that extends well beyond the borders of our campus. To Boyer’s definition I would add that we are an integral part of the surrounding community. As such, we have a responsibility to strengthen strategic partnerships with residents and businesses in the City of Salisbury and the surrounding counties. The on-going efforts of our Town-Gown Council under the leadership of Dr. Maarten Pereboom have already had a positive impact. Bringing members of the surrounding community to campus was the primary goal of the “Fun Day” that we sponsored this past September 18. We are partnering with the City of Salisbury on a lighting project and a

⁴ *Liberal Education*, Summer 2003, p. 21.

⁵ The *Salisbury Promise*: “As a Salisbury University student I will connect what I learn to how I live; I will demonstrate personal and academic integrity; I will respect diverse groups and individuals; I will strive to bring honor to myself and the University.”

“live near your work” program to encourage SU employees to purchase homes in close proximity to our campus. The University has a major stake in the revitalization of our surrounding neighborhoods. We should strive to provide examples on many fronts for progressive change, tolerance and caring.

Salisbury University is blessed with dedicated faculty and staff. Yet more can be done to empower all employees and students. How can we create a campus community that is more inclusive and supportive?

First, we must reaffirm the importance of shared governance. Through the University Forum, Faculty and Staff Senates, and Student Government Association, representatives of our community work directly with the administration in discussions and debate, while other employees have a voice through their collective bargaining agents. Though at times cumbersome, shared governance processes lead to informed decisions and, importantly, to decisions that have widespread support. Through shared governance we agree to air our concerns in an open environment and attempt to find solutions to the problems we face. For shared governance to work, all participants must energetically engage, set aside parochialism and treat each other with civility as professionals working toward common goals.

Over the past few years when SU employees had no salary increases, faculty and staff understood that sacrifices were necessary as a result of our State’s and the nation’s economic downturn. Although what was happening here in Maryland reflected what was happening elsewhere in our nation, at Salisbury University we must do more. We must make supporting benefits for all full-time employees and maintaining competitive salaries a high priority. This, too, is a matter of community.

learn • live • lead

In addition to our facilities Master Plan, we recently completed another major, broad-based planning effort, the *2004-2008 Salisbury University Strategic Plan*. The four over-arching objectives for special emphasis that emerged from the planning process are:

1. The University will enhance an academic and learning environment that promotes intellectual growth and success.
2. The University will advance a student-centered environment.
3. The University will foster inclusiveness as well as cultural and intellectual pluralism.
4. The University will utilize strategic collaborations and targeted community outreach to benefit the University, Maryland and the region.

Specific individuals have been designated to follow up to ensure that our *Strategic Plan* priorities are implemented. The priorities we have set forth should guide our budget and other strategic decisions.

Collectively, our planning initiatives further the mission⁶ of Salisbury University, and the words *learn • live • lead* encapsulate and remind us of our over-riding purpose. Several years ago, we launched the very successful “Think Salisbury University” marketing campaign. We hope to build upon that earlier marketing effort and our sense of community with the words *learn • live • lead*, to be seen on banners around campus and in publications that are sent to students, alumni, prospective donors, legislators and other external constituents.

While both the facilities and strategic planning processes have come to conclusion, yet another very important effort is just getting underway. I am referring to our Middle States self-study process. This reaccreditation review provides us the opportunity to assess how well we have done to date in meeting our institutional goals. While some of us may be feeling a bit “planning weary,” I urge you to participate in open meetings and groups relating to the self-study. We are fortunate that Dr. Ron Dotterer has agreed to chair the self-study team. Still, as the

⁶ Our mission statement: Salisbury University’s mission is to cultivate and sustain a superior, student-centered learning community where students, faculty and staff are viewed as both teachers and learners, and where a commitment to excellence permeates all aspects of University life. We recruit exceptional and diverse faculty, staff, undergraduate and graduate students and support them as they work together to reach the University’s goals. Serving Maryland and the Mid-Atlantic region, we are concerned participants in responding to the educational, economic, cultural and social needs of our community and believe that service is a vital component of civic life. Our highest purpose is to empower our students with the knowledge, skills and core values that contribute to life-long learning and active citizenship in a democratic society and interdependent world.

once ubiquitous armed forces recruitment posters of Uncle Sam used to read, “we need you!” Agree to serve on a sub-committee, and take the time to complete a survey, if asked. Please make an effort to attend an open meeting on the self-study process that will be held October 14 at 3:30 p.m. in this auditorium. *The Middle States self-study is another way that all members of the Salisbury University community can come together in a common effort to advance our institution.*

At the same time that we have many hopes and dreams for our future, all members of the Salisbury University community can look back and take pride in our collective accomplishments to date. Our graduation rates are the highest in the University System of Maryland, we are among the State’s most selective universities in admissions, and Salisbury University out-performs most other universities and colleges on many other measures of institutional quality. Our alumni demonstrate a high degree of satisfaction with their Salisbury University education. These successes are a tribute to all of *you* who are here today and to those people who could not be here but who have worked so diligently over the years to ensure that our institution would endure through years of fiscal and political difficulties. Take pride in the fact that you have made Salisbury University what it is today, a public comprehensive university that consistently ranks in the top 10 percent of our nation’s institutions of higher learning.

The underlying theme of my remarks today relates to *what is yet to be*. If we are to advance Salisbury University, we must build upon our existing partnerships. We must collaborate in our work together, build upon past successes in our fundraising efforts, and contribute to our surrounding community. If we are to fully realize our mission, we must recommit to the building of strategic partnerships.

In light of the externally-motivated challenges we face, all of us—students, faculty and staff—must take responsibility for finding solutions. We must have the courage and the will to challenge the status quo. Above all, we will need to work together, including our alumni, Foundation Board members and *all* friends of Salisbury University, so that we are successful in achieving our higher purpose: To ensure that today’s students become enlightened citizens who graduate from our institution capable, ready and willing to assume their role as productive, contributing members of society.

Only if we at the University are seen as leaders for positive change and informed public policy will citizens outside the academy come to see the need to reinvest in higher education.

Now, at age 79, our University has matured, but it is still very much moving toward even greater accomplishments. Our partnerships on and off campus are evolving. We are faced with serious fiscal concerns which we urgently seek to address. Still, we can celebrate that ours is increasingly a pluralist, inclusive campus community and that we embrace the tenets of shared governance. Ours is much more of a close-knit community than any other campus in the University System of Maryland. We boast high quality academic programs. As difficult as some problems may appear, the vast majority of students, alumni, and current and past employees are proud to be associated with Salisbury University.

As a public comprehensive university whose academic schools are all endowed through the generosity of private donors, we stand a cut above Maryland's other comprehensive colleges and universities. Our recent fund-raising successes, with even more exciting prospects on the horizon, are cause for optimism and celebration. *This is the way of our future: Building strategic partnerships (to include fundraising) and emphasizing the importance of community.* Together these efforts will take Salisbury University to the next level. Despite our challenges, let us strive to keep in good spirits and agree that in many, many ways we are very fortunate indeed.

I'd like to conclude by thanking all students, faculty and staff for your sacrifice and patience during these difficult years. I am extremely grateful for your hard work, good will and spirit of cooperation.

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