Selections from President Janet Dudley-Eshbach’s

State of the University Address

Thursday, November 5, 2009

I thank everyone for coming today, including Salisbury Mayor Jim Ireton, members of the surrounding communities, including the business community and members of the SU Foundation Board. I also welcome our student leaders and, of course, all the faculty and staff who took time from their busy schedules to be here. I greatly appreciate your coming; your support is important to me. Thank you all.

This really is not a formal speech. It is more, I hope, a conversation. Although this is titled the State of the University Address, I will be talking more about the future than the status quo. Let me say, however, that the state of Salisbury University is excellent. We are a robust institution, we are an institution that is on the move and for which there is high student demand. Our University can celebrate many points of distinction of which I will now discuss.

Points of Distinction

- The Perdue School of Business was internationally accredited by the Network of International Business Schools, making it one of only eight institutions worldwide to earn this distinction.

- The newest academic building on campus, the Teacher Education and Technology Center, was named by College Planning and Management magazine as one of the best designed new higher education buildings in the entire nation.
• Based on faculty and staff surveys that were completed at colleges and universities across the country, Salisbury University is one of The Chronicle of Higher Education’s 2009 Best Colleges to Work For®.

• Applications this fall climbed to 7,500, resulting in the most academically qualified and racially diverse incoming class in Salisbury University’s history.

• We are increasingly acknowledged for our environmental stewardship.

• Our faculty consistently earn high honors. This year, two faculty were named Fulbright Scholars and two SU faculty have received patents for their research work in biology. SU education faculty have written a book for recent graduates preparing to enter the classroom. Two faculty were awarded the distinguished Elkins Professorship this year.

• Early feedback suggests that the Fulton School of Liberal Arts curriculum enhancement program is yielding positive results that match the high expectations we have for student learning outcomes.

• For the second consecutive year, SU nursing students achieved the highest pass rate for all colleges and universities in the State, including Johns Hopkins University and the University of Maryland Baltimore, on the National Council License Exam for Nursing.

• SU’s four-year average retention rate is 82 percent. That far exceeds our peer institutions.

• Our students perform well in the classroom and also excel on the athletic fields. Our Division III teams are nothing less than extraordinary year after year.

• And we all know that Salisbury University does very well in the rankings. We are the highest ranking public master’s level university in the State of Maryland. Our reputation
throughout the State and beyond is growing. We are earning our reputation as A Maryland University of National Distinction.

This year and the past year have been extraordinarily busy and productive. We completed our Strategic Plan, our Facilities Master Plan, and our Strategic Enrollment Plan.

**Enrollment**

It is important that you have a sense of where we are going and where we are not going in terms of enrollment. Today, Salisbury University has more than 8,200 students. We aimed for a freshman class of 1,200 and we slightly exceeded that. For the second consecutive year, we curtailed our transfer admissions. In terms of our selectivity, from fall 2007 to fall 2008, SU’s SAT scores for entering freshmen rose nine points. Frankly, when I saw those nine points I thought, “That’s a blip,” for an increase of that magnitude in one year is extraordinary. I was wrong. From last fall to this fall, the SAT scores of our entering students jumped another 10 points. We are competing for some very bright students, and we are getting them.

Now we are recruiting for the 2010-2011 academic year. Our goal is one of level enrollment, not growth, largely because we cannot hire the faculty and staff that we simply must have for enrollment growth. While some may question whether, as a public university, we should strive to become more selective in our admissions process, the reality is that the quality and the number of applications continue to grow, and we will continue to accept for admission the best qualified of our applicants.

It is true that SU did seek designation as a growth institution from the University System of Maryland. That was, in part, to enable us to leverage some of the new facilities we need. These new facilities are not intended to support continued growth in enrollment. They are
desperately needed for the size of our student body, today. We need—let me reiterate—we need more of these facilities for the programs that students have come to expect from Salisbury University, programs which continue to build our reputation.

At Salisbury University, quality is more valued than quantity. We’re not on an aggressive growth plan. Some years ago, former President Thom Bellavance talked about Salisbury as the future William & Mary of the State of Maryland. The College of William & Mary is a Virginia public institution with a small, private school feel and, above all, a reputation for excellence. If there was one message that emerged loud and clear from the strategic planning process, it was that people affiliated with Salisbury University, whether they are current students, alumni, faculty, staff, or others, value the small school feel that Salisbury has. And, like William & Mary, we are committed to excellence.

As we look to the future, some may think of SU as quasi-private because of our success in private fundraising and the attractiveness of our campus. We will continue to focus on high-quality academic programs. Our niche within the University System of Maryland is unique. We are truly student-centered and value one-on-one interactions between students, faculty, and staff. (I am reminded of that song from the TV show Cheers about wanting to go where everybody knows your name.) In any case, we will continue to have the same class sizes. Our student-faculty ratio is 17:1 and that is ideal in many ways.

There will be some changes, however. In the not-too-distant future, we will seek to offer a limited number of applied doctoral programs in high-demand areas. We will see increased diversity among our faculty, staff, and students, and more international students. This will give all of our students the experience of the world in which they will be living and working, and
spending the rest of their lives. We also will see the continued development of facilities and grounds on the east side of campus.

**Budget**

This is where I wish I could provide the proverbial crystal ball to look into the future, but I am afraid that today there is much we do not yet know. Further reductions to our fiscal year 2010 budget are likely. It is also very likely that our fiscal year 2011 budget will be even leaner. We know the State is facing severe budget shortfalls that must be addressed. Since tuition increases could help offset further reductions to our General Fund appropriations, at least in part, it is simply unclear as to what impact the State’s fiscal condition will ultimately have on operations at Salisbury University.

I am not coming before you today with a doom-and-gloom message. We have to have some perspective on this. Is the situation grim? Yes. Have we been in a hiring freeze? Yes. But if you look at other State agencies and you look at other institutions of higher education throughout the nation you will see that many others are far worse off. I frequently encounter employees around campus and I tell them, “I feel badly about these salary reductions and furlough days.” Most reply, “Madame President, I am happy to have a job.” I feel that way, and I know many of you do as well. Still, these are very challenging times, and I am deeply concerned about morale on campus.

I will now say a few words about our State support budget and a few other budget categories. Please understand that our operating dollars—that is the General Fund appropriation, tuition and fees—go into our operating budget. From those operating funds we
pay salaries and benefits for our employees, facilities maintenance costs, departmental operating budgets, and utilities, among other items.

By far, the largest piece in the operating budget is employee salaries and benefits. Most of our operating dollars go to people, and that is as it should be. We do have some auxiliary funds. When students go into the bookstore or buy a meal plan, they are contributing to those auxiliary funds. In addition, we have grants and research contracts that bring in millions of dollars to support faculty research. But let me be clear: The only funds that can be used to pay our ongoing year-to-year expenditures are the operating funds.

Thank goodness Salisbury University has been very successful in private fundraising. Several years ago we kicked off Campaign 2012 with a goal of $25 million. Now we have set a goal of $35 million because we exceeded the original goal. We are at some $30 million now, and we know that by 2012 we will have raised $35 million. And as Vice President of Advancement Rosemary Thomas says, we are not going to stop when we hit $35 million, we are going to keep right on going.

It is important that everyone understand that we are unable, for the most part, to use those dollars from the Salisbury University Foundation, Inc., those private resources, to pay employee salaries and benefits. Operating budget cuts come out of our operating funds. We cannot say, “Let’s take some of these Foundation monies, these private monies, and shift them over.” Foundation dollars do go toward student scholarships to help make the cost of attending Salisbury University more affordable. They also go to faculty and staff development and many other important enhancements.
We were very pleased a number of years ago when an alumna came forward and gave us the funds to build a beautiful garden behind the Alumni House. It is a beautiful addition to our campus, but it does not help me pay our light bill. Funds in those areas I have just described are not fungible. They cannot be moved into operating accounts. When the State cuts our budget, when you read about it in the paper, they are cutting our operating budget. They are cutting our General Fund appropriation.

Similarly, the funds available for capital projects are in a category separate from operating. I am focusing on this point because I am sure there are some who are thinking, “We’ve been in a hiring freeze; we can’t fill the position that was vacated in my department or area, and yet they’re building a new business school.” Please understand that every institution in the University System of Maryland makes a pitch, so to speak, for its new building needs, for the projects it would like to see become a reality. There is, in essence, a project queue. The State then decides how much money over a five-year period it can put toward capital projects. When a capital project is approved and the dollars are expended for that project, it is a one-time expense, whereas the operating budget is ongoing.

It is true that with the current state of the Maryland economy, a number of capital projects will be delayed. Even with the Perdue School of Business, the capital funds have been delayed. Millions of dollars expected in one year will be broken up and allocated over two years. It did not impact the project—it was a way for the State to postpone for one year half the cost of the project. So capital funds are handled differently, and we should feel proud that we have been successful in garnering some of the much-needed projects for our institution.
Several weeks ago I presented our Facilities Master Plan to the Board of Regents. Our current campus is 155 acres. In the Facilities Master Plan, we were asked to address the issue of sustainability—what our campus is doing to become climate-neutral. SU is being recognized throughout the State and beyond as a leader in some of these efforts. We are very proud of this and will continue to seek at least LEED Silver certification for all of our new facilities.

Facilities planning was very complex. It took more than a year of discussions. We wanted our enrollment and facilities plans to be consistent with what we thought was important in terms of the University and its long-term goals. In addition to the Facilities Master Plan, we have created a comprehensive Housing Renovation Plan and a student resident life assessment.

While many people were involved, including former Provost Tom Jones and others, I give much credit to my chief of staff, Amy Hasson, who led many of the discussions. She has a lot of experience with planning in a former life in Baltimore City Planning. One of the goals that emerged is an emphasis on retaining our small school feel.

In the process of talking about our grounds and building facilities, and where we wanted to go, we consulted with many throughout campus. We had off-campus focus groups that included the Chamber of Commerce, the City of Salisbury, the Salisbury Area Property Owner’s Association, the Camden Neighborhood Association and other local community residents. We really tried to be open and consultative, and to solicit as much input as we possibly could.
Despite the construction that we are seeing, existing space is actually far below what we should have for our current student body, faculty and staff. And I point to the 29.9 percent of allowable study space. The 29.9 percent is a reflection of our dire need for a new library.

The second point that emerged is that we have seen, over several decades now, enrollment growth that exceeded some of our expectations and projections. Enrollment management is not an exact science. It is a good news story that we have exceeded our projections. It means that more students want to come here, and once we accept the students, more of them say yes (our yield has gone up year after year). They want to come to Salisbury University and Salisbury University is their first-choice institution.

Let me underscore again that, looking forward, we are going to be very cautious. A lack of facilities space or a lack of funding to hire faculty and staff will restrict future enrollment increases. Demand for SU is strong, but at the present we are just not able to meet the demand. Right now we are on pause.

One of the main points that has arisen is the need for a new library. Our current library was built in 1958 and renovated for 2,600 FTEs. We have three times that many students at SU right now. We had some visitors come to campus recently from the Governor’s Office and the Department of Budget and Management, and when they went into our library and saw how many students were in the library, they were very impressed. I think we even took them down to the basement where we have a dirt floor—I don’t recommend that anybody go there. They left with no doubt in their minds that we need a new library.

The question is when will the State be able to fund it? Because what we are looking at is not a small structure. We’re looking at 200,000 square feet. To give you a sense of size, the
TETC is 165,000 square feet. We are looking at a large facility and a project cost of $100 million, though we may be asked to revise that. I have been asked by Regents if people really use a library anymore; isn’t everything online? And I’ve explained to them that the modern library is not only a depository for books and other materials, it is the academic heart and central focal point of the university.

The new library is in the University System of Maryland’s five-year-plan, but it is not in the governor’s five-year-plan—and that is what we are working on. We have the University System of Maryland’s support and if the State finds it is a high priority and it has not had to delay too many capital projects that are needed, then it could possibly happen within that five-year window. I hope we receive planning money in four to five years for the new library. What we envision is a large, open, welcoming space that will have, I am hoping, some sort of café and space for the Nabb Center for Delmarva History and Culture and instructional support services. So it is a library, but it is a lot more than a library, and we desperately need it.

The library will be located on the site of Caruthers Hall. You will see throughout this process that as we plan for the future there is a kind of order, a sequencing. We need the new business school to be completed before we can tear down Caruthers and build the new library, for instance. There have been quite a number of property acquisitions, and in the vast majority of these cases, it has been the real estate arm of the SU Foundation that has made the purchases. They operate on behalf of SU, but they are not SU. They are a 501(C)3, so when there have been opportunities, the Foundation has acquired properties for us.

The Shoreland Freezer property will be, down the road, the site for new recreation facilities because Maggs Physical Activities Center is so inadequate. It will become home to a
new recreation center, field house, and outdoor tennis center. The tennis courts that are currently on campus will be moved over to East Campus to be with the other athletic facilities. The former Paper People building has become office space for various University offices. The University Fitness Club has been a big success with students. It is already packed.

The former Noland Plumbing Supply building will become the home of our maintenance operations. On the Dresser facility property, which the Foundation will acquire once the demolition of the factory is complete, we see as the site of a future second garage. We also have need for a fine and performing arts center at SU. These property acquisitions represent 33 acres of new land for the University, and in terms of building square footage, we have added 66,000 square feet of assignable building space through these acquisitions.

Students and others are familiar with the fact that we opened our first parking garage this summer. It is a safe and energy-efficient parking garage. I had no idea how “green” a parking garage could be. I never thought I would get excited about a parking garage, but it is a model for other campuses to follow.

Of importance to all of our planning has been the focus on student housing needs. We just can not accommodate 8,200 students with only 1,700 beds. Most of our non-residential students are not commuter students, but what we call “perimeter students” because they live in University Park, University Village and nearby houses that they rent.

I will now share with you the different places where our master planning experts have told us we might put new residence halls. The first one is the Allenwood Shopping Center, which was acquired for us by the Foundation, and it will have 605 beds. We hope to break
ground next year. It is an aggressive timetable, but we like to think that the beds will be available for students in fall 2011.

Once the Physical Plant gets relocated, we could build another residence hall at that location or on the site of those “temporary” housing buildings that have been on our campus for two decades, Dogwood Village.

There are many housing recommendations that came out of this Facilities Master Plan. Please take note that we are upgrading and substantially renovating our existing inventory of residence halls. They are going to be very desirable spaces for new students. And again, we are taking one offline at a time. The first one will be done in January.

I will now share with you the development potential for the campus over the next 20 years. Again, some has already been completed, like moving people from Holloway Hall to Caruthers. We need to do some streetscaping, making it easier to get around East Campus and giving it a more campus-like appearance. Those roadways that are highlighted indicate where we are working with the city, Mr. Mayor, and others to enhance the roadways on East Campus with an eye to student safety above all.

When we go even farther out, some six or seven years, one of the things the campus needs is at least one welcome center. As we develop on East Campus, we are going to have to look for ways for people to cross Route 13 at the north and south ends of campus. The underpass is at the middle of campus. We are either going to need another underpass or two, or maybe even an overpass.

We also mention a glass studio. SU has one of the few campus-based glassblowing programs in the nation. It needs more space, as does Fulton Hall. Again, at the Dresser site we
envision the fine and performing arts center, which would create another welcoming corner. This center would serve the larger community, not just Salisbury University and our students.

If I shared with you today a slide of what the campus looked like in 1975 or even 1990, you would be astounded that this was the campus. Holloway Hall was the first building, then we filled out the main campus, and then we had some athletic fields across Route 13, and now this is what we consider the campus today. We could build overpasses at College Avenue and Dogwood Drive, which would not only provide people with a safe way to cross Route 13, but would also say “Welcome to Salisbury University” whether you are approaching from the north or from the south. These are just some of the ideas that we have.

As you go further in the future, we will need a new classroom building, a new field house and a stadium renovation. Some projects may happen sooner than others if donors step forward and make one of these projects happen. Some projects are not huge-ticket items, and these may happen sooner through the generosity of a donor.

We are trying to grow in a way that does not intrude on our surrounding residential communities. That is why, in part, we are looking to East Campus. And again, 20 years from now, this plan could change substantially.

What I have tried to do for you today is outline not only the state of the University in broad terms, but also our vision for the future. While it is very true that our budget issues loom large and may delay the implementation of some of our strategic planning initiatives, we will move forward. We may face some setbacks, but we will not lose momentum. We can be proud of our accomplishments in recent years while also setting our goals even higher as we look
toward the future. I am going to end on that note. Thank you for coming, thank you for listening.

*A question-and-answer session with the President followed.*