Welcome Back 2011

_It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us._

This quote from _A Tale of Two Cities_ by Dickens is a perfect description of our world today. It could have been written yesterday to describe our economic situation, the political climate, our social mood, and, even, higher education. From across the country we hear news reports of renewed attacks on tenure rights and faculty workload. Faculty and staff are being retrenched in record numbers, budgets slashed, and degree programs decimated. Politicians are arguing more than they are collaborating, and the economic roller coaster continues.
With all of this as a backdrop I ask: Are we in the best of times or the worst of times at SU? By now, you should know that I am the optimist...I believe times are good, and, more importantly, I believe there is hope that tomorrow will be better. You may be wondering if I am living in reality. How I can say that times are good? We have not had raises in four years, and we endured three years of salary reduction. I can certainly understand if your morale is low and if you are fearful that what you hear about other institutions will soon be on our doorstep. However, I know there is much for which we should be grateful, but feelings and beliefs must be supported by data and documentation, so let me share with you some of my evidence, some of my documentation to support my argument that life is good here at SU.

You were just introduced to 21 new faculty. You chose them because they are smart, know their respective disciplines and show promise as excellent teachers. Last year we started the year with 18 new faculty,
and we have just placed an ad for an additional 16 tenure-track faculty
to join us in 2012. Keep in mind we filled these positions during a hiring
freeze. That we were able to hire new faculty is evidence that the
President, the Executive Staff and your dean value the importance of
maintaining a strong academic program and understand that the
avenue to student success is created by exemplary faculty.

Faculty maintain their excellence in teaching by pursuing and sharing
their research and creative activities. During the last academic year,
faculty received about $350,000 in travel and professional development
funding from state and foundation funds, not including sabbatical
salaries. These monies allowed faculty to attend and present at state,
national, and international conferences and to conduct research
around the globe. The University Research Council provided almost
$25,000 in research mini grants, and the SU Foundation awarded an
additional $34,000 to support scholarly and professional development
activities for faculty. Providing this level of support is critical for faculty productivity and, ultimately, student success.

Two groups of faculty have followed in Ron Gutberlet’s footsteps to redesign two more of our large enrollment courses that will create efficiencies in course delivery while maintaining quality of instruction. These faculty were supported in this effort with a $20,000 grant from the University System of Maryland and a $20,000 match from SU.

Beginning this fall faculty in nursing and respiratory therapy will be able to prepare their students in a state-of-the-art medical simulation lab. Efforts by the SU Foundation, the Office of Finance and Administration, and faculty who wrote and were awarded numerous grants made this new instructional space a reality. In the future the faculty will be able to use this lab to provide continuing professional development for medical personnel on the Eastern Shore. In that way, this instructional space becomes a revenue generator for the program. This type of
collaborative, entrepreneurial work will be required more often in the future to maintain and advance the high quality of our academic programming.

So, what was the return on university investment in faculty and programs? First and foremost, our students were successful. Last academic year we graduated over 2000 students. Faculty included students in research activities, and 33 students presented their faculty-supported research at the National Undergraduate Research Conference in Ithaca, NY. As a result of mentoring by SU faculty, Junior Jessica Johnson became the third SU student to win an EPA Fellowship. Faculty teaching continues to contribute to SU’s growing recognition and distinction. Faculty worked with students in the living/learning communities and in freshmen seminars, indicating their willingness to engage students inside and outside of the classroom setting.
New programs have been successfully launched, and existing programs have reached new heights. Fulton initiated several area studies minors, such as European Studies and East Asian Studies, to support students who want to study abroad. Every school has increased its international offerings so that students have many options from which to choose.

The English Language Institute has grown from an initial 6 students to at least 45 students for this fall. STEM activities have increased as we have focused on graduating more STEM majors and teachers. Our STEM enrollment is up an impressive 30% from five years ago. The increase in enrollments is partly the result of activities such as the first ever Science Camp at SU and the first Eastern Shore Tournament of the Maryland Science Olympiad. Teacher education faculty efforts to create a partnership with Worcester Schools for the preparation of new teachers resulted in a national award from the National Association of Professional Development Schools.

The influence of excellent instruction continues even after students graduate and serves as an indicator of the support provided to
academics. One former education student received the Milken Award for excellence in teaching. And this year, SU was represented by 9 out of 24 county teachers of the year. The Health Professions Advising Program helped place 11 students in medical school, 1 in dental school, 2 in pharmacy, 3 in veterinary medicine, and others into other therapy occupations.

Our investment in you also resulted in the publication of 194 refereed journal articles, book chapters, reviews and creative works. Faculty also authored or co-authored 16 books or monographs last year and participated in 71 juried shows, performances and exhibitions.

Faculty work also garnered numerous individual faculty recognitions.

- Stephen Adams – awarded the 2011-12 Robert W. Smiley Jr. Fellowship in economic history by Rutgers

- Jill Caviglia-Harris – awarded the 2010 Kenneth G. Elzinga Teaching Award by the Southern Economic Association
• Howard Dover – awarded the prestigious Joan Throckmorton Award for Creative Excellence in Direct Marketing by the Direct Marketing Association of Washington Education Foundation

• Gary Harrington – who received a Fulbright Fellowship as Distinguished Chair in Lublin, Poland has been extended for an additional year

• Jim Hill – received the “Exceptional Merit Award” at the International Exhibition sponsored by the Portrait Studio of America

• Pat McDermott – successfully argued the first Sarbanes-Oxley case before the Federal Administrative Review Board

• Nancy Mitchell – won the prestigious Pushcart Award for her poetry

• Stephanie Moore – received the Catherine Prelinger Award for Research by the Coordinating Council for Women in Research
• Clara Small – received the Harriet Tubman Lifetime Achievement Award from the African American Tourism Council of Maryland
• And,
• Don Spickler – voted by students as SU’s Outstanding Research Mentor for 2011

In addition to the faculty work mentioned above, external funding of scholarly and creative activity provided additional support to faculty. Sixty-two faculty submitted 117 grant proposals, and 73 were awarded (more than in past years). These awards funded projects ranging from the scientific with the medical simulation lab to the arts with the Maryland Summer Center for the Arts. Increasingly, external funding is allowing you to create programs and research agenda that support student learning and success. Many of these awards as well as other faculty scholarly and creative endeavors are featured in the inaugural edition of Re:Search magazine, which will be available sometime next week.

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Even with all of the evidence that this is the best of times, I sense weariness among you. You have taken on overloads, larger classes and more service activities. You have done all of this without raises and with three years of furloughs....mostly, without complaint. I want to personally thank you for maintaining the excellence for which Salisbury University is known. As the President said earlier in her remarks about salary, we know we must do something, and we will need your input to figure out what that should be. I urge you to participate in the discussions to come.

It is clear that the University has invested heavily in you and the academic programs at SU with much success. We cannot stop our momentum; we must continue in the pathway toward excellence. To paraphrase Dickens, we have opportunity before us in the coming academic year. How do we embrace our opportunities and translate them into new successes? As in the past, much will depend on how we work together and support each other as we undertake the following.
1) Assessment. We have received the initial response to the PRR we submitted at the end of the spring semester. The reviewers made 3 recommendations, all focused on assessment: the assessment of general education; the assessment of student support services, such as the CSA, supplemental instruction and Disability Services; and the assessment of institutional effectiveness. We have discussed assessment in committees, in the Faculty Senate, and in departmental meetings. While I appreciate the various philosophical viewpoints and truly enjoy the back and forth, the time for discussion has come to an end. In five years a visiting team from Middle States will arrive on our campus. They will come armed with our self-study completed the year before, and they will ask not only about our plan but also how we have implemented it and, most importantly, how we have used the results to inform decisions and make improvements. We will implement the first of many assessments of general education this fall. I request your full cooperation to make the cycle of
implementation, analysis and improvement go as smoothly as possible. Implementing our assessment plan will be our largest endeavor this year.

2) Creative and entrepreneurial academic programming. Our liberal arts based curriculum will remain critical to our mission, and must be adequately supported with personnel and other resources. However, as you think about new courses and programs, it will be necessary for you to think in new ways. This generation of students seems to be the most challenging that higher education has seen, and they (and their parents) are not hesitant to voice their expectations for academic coursework that is relevant to their goals and life plans. In order to engage this demanding generation of students we need to think differently about what we offer and how we deliver instruction. We already have fine examples at SU. The environmental studies program is an interdisciplinary program that combines the humanities, social sciences and natural sciences to create coursework focused on
preparing students to be knowledgeable about various perspectives of the environment and to work in professions that focus on the many facets of the environment. This program has been so successful that next fall it will become a stand-alone department with faculty who will hold appointments in two schools. The International Studies program is another example of an interdisciplinary program whose enrollments are increasing dramatically. As one of our more rigorous programs, it requires students to learn a foreign language, to study abroad, and to develop a broad view of the contemporary world. The GIS program in geography prepares students for work outside the university by assigning them to projects that start with real-life questions and result in real-life solutions. Perdue Hall has been designed with special work spaces that place students in real business environments, and the medical simulation lab creates realistic opportunities for students to provide patient care without endangering lives. There are others, but my point is this.
With limited resources available it will be critical for you to demonstrate that new projects or programs are collaborative, creative, entrepreneurial, AND can lead to student success.

3) Honors. Last year I appointed a task force to examine the state of our honors program and to make recommendations related to growth, size, and participation. The task force completed the report and presented it to the Faculty Senate Honors Committee which endorsed the majority of the recommendations. The Faculty Senate charged the Honors Committee to continue working with Academic Affairs this coming year. Jay Carlander, whom I introduced earlier, will serve as Director for this academic year. Dean Olmstead and Dr. Kristen Walton have agreed to co-chair a national search for a new director. We will be looking to the Honors Committee for faculty to serve on the search committee. While change is difficult at best, we are presented with a wonderful opportunity to grow our Honors program. I look forward to working with the Honors Committee on this endeavor.
4) Faculty Development. According to surveys in my file and conversations with faculty, several years ago there was a promise to create a center for faculty as a part of the strategic plan. Unfortunately, tough economic times put the project on hold. As we begin planning the Academic Commons, I believe the time is right to focus on this project again. We already have the nucleus of a center with the ID&D group. Although a faculty center would include much more that teaching with technology, this is a good place to invest and begin to grow. I look forward to your input as we once again move forward on this item as a companion to the CSA in the Academic Commons.

5) Speaking of the Academic Commons brings me to the fifth area which will require our attention in AY 2012. As the President stated earlier, there is great hope that the Academic Commons will move forward in the queue and that we will all see a new building emerge between the TETC and Perdue Hall. This year you should expect to hear more about planning the space, and, as the
current Capital Campaign comes to a very successful end, more about how we will finance this new project through state dollars and private donations. All of this begins with a search for a new library dean, and Dr. Pereboom has agreed to chair this search which will begin this fall. The Academic Commons will be a priority for years to come.

In conclusion, SU attracts high quality students because of the effort each of you puts into creating excellent academic programming for them. We need your continued efforts to maintain and surpass the excellence we have achieved. I have great faith in the future because I have great faith in you. To return to Dickens one final time: At Salisbury University

It is the best of times, it is the age of wisdom, it is the epoch of belief, it is the season of Light, it is the spring of hope, and we have everything before us. Let’s go forward together to ensure that our students are successful and that Salisbury University continues to be a Maryland University of National Academic Distinction.

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Thank you and have a great year!