WELCOME BACK
AUGUST 20, 2014

My welcome back remarks are always partly a reflection of the past year and partly a forward look at the coming year. As I’ve said in the past, “what a difference a year can make.” This year putting together these remarks was a bit more difficult; in fact, I didn’t want to write them at all. On a very personal level, last year was a nightmare, and I did not relish the idea of reflection in preparation for today. I am aware that individually, professionally and institutionally much was achieved last year, and I want to give due credit to those achievements momentarily and to propose some ideas for the future. First, I would like to say some very personal things to each of you. In the past nine months I have come to understand in a very deep, personal way what it is that makes Salisbury University such a unique place. In a word it’s the people, people who care about and support one another despite the differences among us. After Terry’s death, I received hundreds of cards, notes, emails from all of you. You wrapped your arms around me and my sons in many ways and shared your thoughts, prayers, concern, sympathy, and strength. We were overwhelmed and sustained by your kindness. I know that I can never repay any of you; I will forever remember and be in your debt. Tom, Terry, Jr. and I thank from the depths of our being.

Now enough about me, let’s talk about you….or us. We’re all in this enterprise together. As I prepared for today I reread my remarks from past years and discovered a pattern in those remarks….change and innovation. The pattern is not unique to SU; it spans higher
education. A recent article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (July 25, 2014) stated that “over the next several years, at least, new technologies are expected to drastically reshape the way professors teach, and when and where people on college campuses do their work.” Additionally, it was noted that “..many academics, regardless of their status, are increasingly expected to excel in jobs that don’t always match up with their ideal vision of scholarly work.” Today, the topic is the same, but I want to focus our thoughts more clearly on why we, at Salisbury University, are interested in change and innovation. There are many possible reasons to make changes in courses and the processes we use, adding a line to a vita for instance, or gaining national/regional/state recognition personally or for the university, or, perhaps, just personal interest, curiosity or drive. But today I want us to focus specifically on how we use innovation for student success, which is, of course, the primary reason for being here. Responsibility for student success belongs to each of us. I’m not talking about giving away grades or diplomas. I’m talking about maintaining your passion and creativity in your discipline so that you generate genuine student interest, curiosity, work, engagement to ensure that when students leave SU they are prepared for the world they will face....which, by the way, is ever-changing. Let me share what one of your colleagues has to say about change and students. [Ask Steve Durow to stand and introduce him to the audience]. A few days ago there was an article about Steve and the SU glass studio in the *Washington Times*. By the way, if you ever want to complain or whine about your office space, classroom, or laboratory, walk over to Steve’s studio/classroom space. The article described it as having “the look of a back room in a mechanic’s shop. The floors are cold, unfinished concrete, the walls are
bare brick and the roof consists of sheets of corrugated metal...Yet student-artists can be found here most hours of the day during the school year, chatting, listening to the lone boom box, but mostly sweating over wads of molten glass.” A true learning environment. In the article Steve states that his responsibility as a faculty member is “to figure out what his students want to do and help them do it.” This suggests that a faculty member’s job is to learn what a student needs to know, how much of it he/she already knows, and to create a space where students can explore, learn, create. In other words, be successful. Steve also shared that he needs to keep his own creative juices flowing by continuing to create art; he clearly has a passion for his work and his teaching, and his students benefit. Thank you, Steve. This article triggered my memory about many, many, many other examples here at SU of faculty who have and are creating innovative learning environments and experiences for students. Many of you have redesigned your classes, and some of you have experimented with MOOCs and other online resources. Some of these innovations have been around for decades, but are still considered innovative. Some are totally new innovations, and some are just in the planning stages. Any innovation or change in the way we do things is risky business. You have to invest money, time and effort. What if you fail? What if the desired result – student success – doesn’t happen? At SU we have taken some risks on innovation. Have our efforts paid off? Was it work the investment? Allow me to share a few innovations that come to mind. I decided to share in a Letterman-style format, so here are the top 10 innovations in teaching and learning at SU.

**Number 10 – Experiential summer learning.** We think of summer as being quiet around here. In truth there are faculty and students
engaged in some exciting experiential learning throughout the summer. For decades new students have been invited to participate in the Algonquin adventure, led by Dr. Beth Ragan, or the Acadia adventure, led by Jason Curtin. While these are not new innovations, you don’t find them at every university. These excursions have served as an introduction to college life and have taught students skills they have later applied in their college classes and life after college. The adventures have had such an impact on students that they have a reunion during Homecoming week each year. These two adventures have spawned other outdoor experiences for students. This past summer Bill Nelson and Tom Horton offered “Exploring Delmarva: A Water’s Eye View,” in which students earned 6 credits by exploring Virginia’s Barrier Islands and other parts of the Eastern Shore in a kayak. Students enrolled in two other programs explored Delmarva by bike as well as the Assateague Island National Seashore.

Other summer experiences have put students in laboratories. Two projects funded by National Science Foundation grants supported undergraduate research by our students. A group of XX students worked with faculty on emerging technology in science and engineering. They presented their research at a research luncheon at the end of the summer session. Additionally, three physics majors used a $1,000 grant from NSF to fund the construction of a solar-powered e-bike.

Experiential learning opportunities engage students in ways that traditional classrooms cannot. Students connect to the world around them and work to solve real-life problems. These summer experiences were a risk; but they were very successful. **Risky, but worth the investment.**
**Number 9 – Graduate & Research Office.** When I came to SU there was a research office which was not functioning very well and no graduate office. The President bought my argument that if we were to build doctoral programs we needed an infrastructure to support them. We were not sufficiently supporting our masters programs, so they were languishing without a strategic vision or support. Likewise, our research and sponsored programs office was not working to capacity. Within a year of my arrival we invested in a graduate dean, and he began shaping the two functions of his office to support faculty and students. Students, and I would add faculty, have benefited in significant ways. We now have a very active graduate student council, a better managed graduate assistant pipeline, and third party billing (thanks to our colleagues in Administration & Finance) for students whose employers pay for their graduate study. Graduate program directors have received mini-grants for marketing their programs, and we are seeing increased enrollments this year after a two-year decline. Faculty has received support for their research efforts, and our external funding has increased. More importantly, faculty use their research funding to support undergraduate research opportunities for students. All of this investment has led to graduate student and faculty success. **Risky but worth the investment.**

**Number 8 – Living Learning Communities.** Five years ago SU had just initiated living learning communities with a few faculty volunteers. Using summer school revenues, we invested in the communities through faculty stipends and operating budgets. Since then we have grown to 20 communities, and we have documented student academic success as a result. Many universities have learning communities, so what makes the ones at SU so innovative? Rather than create
communities around student interests alone, Melissa Boog and Carey Haddock create communities around student interests tied to curricular offerings. The renovated residence halls have classrooms so that students can learn where they live. The direct connection to a student’s academic plan creates pathways for student success in ways that traditional learning communities at other universities do not. **Risky but worth the investment.**

**Number 7 – International Faculty Housing.** Obtaining approval to offer the J-1 visa to visiting international faculty created opportunities to bring international scholars to our campus. Students need to develop global understandings in order to be successful in life after college. While it would be ideal for every student to study abroad, not all students will have the opportunity. By bringing international scholars to the SU campus, we are able to provide our students the chance to study with someone from another culture. Soon after receiving approval for the J-1, we realized that we needed to provide some kind of faculty housing to attract the scholars we wanted and needed. When the old International Education house became available, it was renovated to serve as housing for up to three scholars. I remember there being concern at the time that the house might sit empty from time to time. That was a short-lived concern. In truth we need a bigger house. This semester we are welcoming nine international scholars, two of which are Fulbright scholars. By providing the resources for international faculty, we have enhanced the learning of SU students and provided them global experiences that will impact their lives when they graduate. **Risky but worth the investment.**

**Number 6 – English Language Institute.** Oh my, this was a tough one. Most people on campus agreed that we needed a larger international
student presence on campus. Dr. Stiegler suggested that one way to attract international students was to develop an English language program. We just about talked this idea to death before we finally agreed to invest the resources into it. Dr. Stiegler promised the executive staff that he would recoup the investment within three years. He broke even the first year, and began to generate revenue in the second year. Today the ELI enrolls about 100 students. The income generated from the fees charged to these students, pays for the instructors that teach in the ELI and provides additional money for faculty travel to teach abroad or to visit potential partners. The growth of the ELI is important to our international students, but it also provides that global experience for our own students as they interact with their peers from around the world. While there is much yet to be done to maximize the benefits of the ELI, I would say that it was risky but worth the investment.

**Number 5 – Social Work in Germany.** Sometimes opportunities just appear. Such was the case with the social work program. SU was approached by UMUC to offer the social work program to military personnel and their dependents on a military base in Germany. Because of our agreement to provide this academic program, the social work faculty has redesigned their entire masters program into 7 week modules to fit within the UMUC model, and they are working to put the entire program online. Offering our programs at a distant site creates logistical issues related to student services such as the library and writing center, but staff in these two programs have stepped up to the plate to work with SU students in Germany. In fact, one student in the Germany program commented on how much a part of the SU community she felt, and how helpful our faculty and staff were.
 Apparently, the “small school feel” can travel around the world. **Risky but worth the investment.**

**Number 4 – Entrepreneurial competitions.** Did any of you follow the Shore Hatchery and Entrepreneurship competitions in the Perdue School this spring? Bill Burke and former dean, Bob Wood, worked with businesses and other donors to create a pool of over $60,000 in prize money. The goal is to attract at least $100,000 in prize money for this year’s competitions. The competitions were open to any student on campus as well as entrepreneurs in the community. Students pitched their new business ideas to panels of judges. In this “real world” environment students prepared business plans, marketing plans, and financing plans. The winners earned money for the start-up of their business. Growing these competitions required time, effort and resources

**Number 3 – Doctoral programs.** Two years ago the Department of Nursing admitted students into the University’s first doctoral program. This fall the Departments of Teacher Education and Education Specialties will welcome 18 students into their doctoral program in Curriculum Theory. Both of these programs, addressing workforce needs on the Shore, were enormous endeavors by the faculty in the departments. Not only did faculty have to build programs from the bottom up, they had to project revenue and anticipate resource needs. In each case the department projected sufficient additional revenue to warrant the addition of faculty lines. [ask program directors to stand]. The nursing doctorate will graduate its first students in Spring 2015, so I think we can say it has been successful in reaching its initial goal. The education doctorate has attracted more students than were
anticipated, so it is off to a good start. Again, **risky but worth the investment.**

**Number 2 – Honors.** In 2010 forty-four students were enrolled in the Honors program. With the departure of the director of the program a task force reviewed Honors and made several suggestions for broadening its appeal, increasing its enrollments, and making it available to students in all majors. The task force recommended, and I agreed, that we needed a full-time director who could devote more time to recruitment, program management and fundraising. Our search led us to Dr. James Buss from Oklahoma City. Jim has been with us for one year, and what a breath of fresh air he has been. In his annual report Jim reported 96 students in Honors for AY2013-14 with representation from all Schools. Thirty-five different majors are represented by the students taking Honors courses. Most of the students who graduated in May 2014 are attending graduate school, and many of them have been offered assistantships for teaching and/or research. We are adding an Assistant Director this year, another recommendation of the task force. We invested resources in Honors because we believed that we had the caliber of student who would benefit from the experience. It appears that once again we were on target. **Risky but worth the investment.** And finally,

**Number 1 – Office of Nationally Competitive Scholarships.** Here we are at Salisbury University, this medium size gem hidden away on the Eastern Shore. Who would guess that our students could compete with students from big-name research universities for prestigious fellowships and scholarships? With much urging from the deans to identify and support students looking for these opportunities, I appointed Dr. Kristen Walton to take a leadership role to identify
students and organize our efforts. She wisely reached out to faculty for assistance for this is clearly an area which “takes a village.” She has met with departments, composed information sheets for faculty and students, brought faculty together to stage interview sessions for applicants, hosted a “boot camp” for interested students, and mentored her share of students. The results are incredible for an initiative which is only two years old. Two students have received Fulbrights; the current recipient is Emily Lembo who is working in Korea. One student also won a Gates-Cambridge scholarship to study chemistry in Great Britain. Additionally, we have had a large number of students win the Gilman Scholarship for international study. This initiative continues to grow. Kristen reports that at least 10 students have expressed an interest in pursuing a Fulbright. Who knew we would be even this successful? **Risky but worth the investment.**

All ten initiatives were risky endeavors that required infusions of financial and human resources. As a University we made these commitments of resources even in poor economic times because we believed our students would benefit. And, they have beyond our expectations. Our budget remains tight with no expectation that additional new monies will come our way. We will have both a new governor and a new chancellor in the coming academic year. We do not know, yet, what impact those two new personalities will have on state and system budgets. We have proven through past endeavors that we are thoughtful and strategic in our choices for new innovations. We are careful in considering potential revenue and expenditures.

So, what new innovations/changes will we invest in for the upcoming academic year? I know that some of you will bring forward initiatives from programs and schools, and I look forward to reviewing
your proposals. For instance, I know that Seidel has been working toward a four-credit model. From an institutional perspective I know we will be looking at three main innovations. Again, in Letterman style.

**Number 3 – Office of Undergraduate Research.** Our new strategic plan indicates that during the next five years we will create a Center for Student Engagement. Currently, we do not have the resources to open and staff a full-blown center. Creating an Office of Undergraduate Research is a baby step in the progression to a new center. It will not be a massive endeavor, but more of a reorganization of current resources to create greater visibility for an initiative that is a point of pride. Faculty and students will have a point person who can assist with the SU Research Conference, travel grants for students presenting at the national conference, and disseminating information about research opportunities. I do not anticipate asking for funding for staff as staffing will consist of a graduate assistant and a perhaps a faculty member with a course release. In a few years we hope to once again host a national undergraduate research conference, and this office will assist the Undergraduate Research Committee in preparing the application and will serve as the point of contact for organizing the conference should we be selected. We have invested in undergraduate research for many years, and we have had great successes. The Office of Undergraduate Research will help us spotlight an activity that is clearly an area of excellence at SU.

**Number 2 – Student Success Collaborative and Digital Measures.** I was so pleased to see so many of you at Monday’s summit that featured sessions on these two new initiatives. You have heard me say that we should work smarter, not harder. These two software platforms will allow us to work smarter. The Student Success Collaborative will
provide you data supported information to guide students to programs of study that best fit their abilities and interests. With the addition of the market place addition, you will be able to suggest careers for students that make sense for the majors they choose. An added bonus is the research component that allows you to use a vast library of research reports at the Education Advisory Board or to request a new study if nothing exists in their current resource center. If student success is what we are about, the Student Success Collaborative provides us useful tools to keep students on track so that they finish and move into the workforce in a timely manner and in a manner that is tailored to their specific needs.

The Digital Measures platform says good-by to binders. Yeah!!! There was great enthusiasm in the room at Monday’s session on this new e-portfolio software. I think everytime someone asked if Digital Measures could do a particular task or provide a certain report, the answer was either yes or we can make that change. Every new tenure-track faculty member will use Digital Measures to create an online portfolio. In six years they will use the portfolio in the tenure review process. In the meantime any other faculty member who is going up for tenure and/or promotion can use the platform to create a portfolio for the process. In addition you can create all kinds of reports such as, the annual Faculty Extracurricular Productivity Report and your annual departmental review report. Enter information once; use it multiple times.

Both of these technology-supported innovations will help you to do your job better and easier which translates to more time to spend on what you love to do, teach. And that leads to student success.
Number 1 – Office of Innovation in Teaching and Learning. I proposed this office last year in my remarks, but, unfortunately, was unable to implement it fully.