

Good afternoon, and welcome to the fall all-faculty meeting. Fall semester is well under way, and I hope that your semester is going well. Time flies, and academic time seems even faster. We will be at midterms before we know it. But before we get too much further along in the semester, I want to thank you for taking some time from your busy schedule to attend today's meeting. Next year, you can already pencil in the fall all-faculty meeting for Thursday, September 3, so we can have our meeting at the start of the semester. Today, I want to spend a little time celebrating last year's accomplishments, and then talk a bit about the challenges and opportunities that await us this year and in the following years.

First I want to welcome, again our new full-time tenure track faculty to William Paterson. Seventeen new full-time tenure track faculty have joined the ranks, and I ask that they stand (and please stay standing) as I read their names—and please hold applause until all names have been read:

- In the College of Arts and Communication, Dr. Clive (Clive) Oh, and Ms. Jennifer Owlett, Department of Communication
- In the Cotsakos College of Business, Dr. Rahi Abouk and Dr. Lawrence Verzani, Department of Economics, Finance and Global Business, and Dr. Murugappa Krishnan, Department of Accounting and Law
- In the College of Education, Dr. Ranita Cheruvu, Department of Elementary and Early Childhood; Dr. Noreen Moore and Dr. James Alford, Department of Educational Leadership and Professional Studies; and Dr. Pei-Lin Weng, Department of Special Education
- In the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Dr. Richard Huizar and Dr. Fanny Lauby, Department of Political Science, and Dr. Stephanie Rivera Berruz and Dr. Elizabeth Victor, Department of Philosophy
- In the College of Science and Health, Dr. Salimur Choudhury, Department of Computer Science; Dr. Sharon Puchalski, Department of Nursing; and Dr. Yalan Xing, Department of Chemistry
- In the David and Lorraine Cheng Library, Ms. Cara Berg, Reference Librarian

I also want to acknowledge those faculty who have been promoted and those who have been awarded tenure. These are truly milestone achievements that we happily acknowledge today (and please hold your applause until all the names have been read):

From assistant professor to associate professor,

- Sandra Alon
- Corey Basch
- Judith Broome
- Lorra Brown
- Jyoti Champanerker
- Michael Figueroa
- Ismael Flores-Marti
- Sue Mankiw
- Loretta McLaughlin Vignier
- Jan Mohlman

- Robin Schwartz
- Gladys Scott
- Rosa Soto
- Jim Tsiamtsiouris
- Christopher Weaver

From associate professor to professor

- Cyril Ku
- Geraldine Mongillo
- Stephen Newton
- Michael Peek
- Cesar Perez
- Robb Rehberg
- Madeline Rosar
- Darlene Russell
- David Slaymaker
- Maria Tajes

And those faculty newly tenured

- Sue Mankiw
- Loretta McLaughlin Vignier
- Jim Tsiamtsiouris
- Kenneth Wolf

Let's give our newly promoted and tenured colleagues a well-deserved round of applause.

This meeting also gives us a chance to recognize just some of the accomplishments of the past year. And this really is just a small taste of all the good work that took place last year.

In the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, this past year saw the completion of the curricular approval process for the new PsyD in Clinical Psychology program. Faculty and staff in the college and at the University are now recruiting for the first class, which will start in the new program in Fall, 2015. The college also hosted its second annual College-Wide Conference in November, 2013: "Whose University?: The Future of American Higher Education;" the event was attended by over 600 William Paterson students, faculty, and alumni members over the course of the day. The third annual conference is scheduled for October 29 on the topic "Digital U: The Evolving University in the Internet Age."

In the College of Science and Health, two departments received reaccreditation this past year: Communication Disorders and Sciences was reaccredited by the Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology, and the Computer Science Department was reaccredited by the Computing Accreditation Commission of the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology.

The College also hosted its 8<sup>th</sup> Undergraduate Research Symposium, with over 120 participants from nearly 30 colleges and universities, with a Keynote address by Sir Harold Kroto, Nobel Laureate and the Francis Epps Professor of Chemistry.

This past year the College of Education received two major grants: A \$3.2 million grant from the United States Department of Education for a “Leaders as Learners” program , which provides scholarships for 40 teachers to obtain master’s degrees and principal certification. It also funds leaders in residence to work in 12 schools in the Paterson Public Schools and a series of institutes for current leaders in the district. The grant is headed by Dr. Kevin Walsh, in the Department of Educational Leadership and Professional Studies. The second grant was for \$2 million from the New Jersey Department of Education “Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge,” to help NJ set up a quality rating improvement system for early childhood programs, family childcare programs, infant-toddler programs, Headstart, and public school pre-kindergarten throughout the state. After the system is established, the WP team, headed by Dr. Holly Seplocha (Department of Elementary and Early Childhood Education) and Dr. Pamela Brillante (Department of Special Education and Counseling), will provide evaluations for these programs.

In the Cotsakos College of Business, Ruth Midence, a Global Business major, was awarded a Gilman Scholarship to study in South Korea. Through the efforts of Associate Professor Mike Chao and Adjunct Professor Annette Baron, May ’14 graduates Crystal Stecher and Michael Rainone received full scholarships to study for a Master’s in Science degree in Human Resource Management at Lingnan University in Hong Kong. The college also saw its largest ever National Sales Challenge competition, with participants from 35 US Colleges, and students from Scotland and The Netherlands as well.

The College of Arts and Communication this past year celebrated the opening and launch of the new High Definition Television Studios in Hobart Hall. This \$2 million project improves the educational opportunities for the students in the Communication program, providing knowledge that will help prepare students for careers in the media industry. The college also saw the completion of much needed renovations in the Music Department, including a completely renovated state of the art Recital Hall, new practice rooms in Gaede Hall, and new seating in Shea Auditorium.

Cheng Library launched ChengFind, an online tool known as a discovery layer, the intent of which is to transform and streamline online information seeking and research. ChengFind is now the default search tool on the Cheng Library home page, and it provides **simultaneous searching** of 100 databases, the entire library catalog, 80,000 e-books and archival content. Cheng Library is also engaged in the creation and distribution of digital content via the Cheng Library Digital Archives. Content includes

- 46 issues of the *Pioneer Times*
- Most *Kokoon* and *Pioneer* yearbooks from 1925-1990
- 1200 issues of the independent student publication *The Beacon*, dating from 1936
- The Hobart Manor papers
- University history in reports, sketches, and images, and
- Undergraduate course catalogs, dating from 1978

Faculty members continue to benefit from the strong collaboration with and support from Instruction & Research Technology. For example, this past year Dr. Anthony Bundy, an Assistant Professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Professional Studies, has been making effective use of video in his classes. His graduate students have, with some assistance from IRT, developed and created videos for their presentations. Also making use of multimedia to enhance his classes is Dr. Chris Weaver, an Associate Professor in the English Department. In his recent "Monsters and Haunted Houses" class, he had his students create and upload audiovisual essay projects that included text, images, and videos. Chris then collected these projects, making them available on a web page he has hosted on a service called weebly.com.

From Student Development, 65 student-athletes were members of the fall 2013 Dean's List, and 154 student-athletes had grade point averages of at least 3.0, both of which were increases from the previous year. In spring 2014, 25 student-athletes were inducted as inaugural members of Chi Alpha Sigma, an honor society for junior and senior student athletes. These inductees maintained a minimum GPA of 3.4. Over the past two years, the Residence Life staff has been working in partnership with our Academic Support staff to develop new tutoring resources within the Residence Halls. The program, called PALS – an acronym for Peer Academic Leaders - has produced positive results. The overall resident student GPA has improved over the past two years by .05, from a 2.73 in Academic Year 2011-2012 to 2.78 in Academic Year 2013-2014. Importantly, during this same two year period we have seen an increase in GPA in Overlook South, our first year student building, of .12 - from 2.49 to 2.61.

We had a milestone this past May: We graduated the first students from our first doctoral program, the Doctor of Nursing Practice. Eleven students successfully completed their studies and were hooded at commencement. We will see our second class walk across the stage at the 2015 Commencement, and will also be seeing PsyD students in the near future. Included in that graduating class are two William Paterson employees: Dr. Jill Guzman, Director of our Counseling, Health and Wellness Center, and Dr. Sharon Puchalski, a new faculty member in the Department of Nursing.

I also want to welcome back two of our faculty who have completed Fulbrights this past year. Dr. Payton McDonald is back with us after a year in India where he studied classical Hindi music. Dr. McDonald will be conducting some performances this year growing out of his Fulbright experience. Returning to us as well is Dr. Emanuel Onaivi, back from his Fulbright experience in Ethiopia, where he continued his research activities and presented a series of public lectures. Welcome back and congratulations once again on your Fulbright experiences.

And on the Fulbright trail as well, welcome back as well Drs. Sandra Alon, Heejung An and Carrie Hong from the College of Education, and Dr. Keumjae Park from the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. These faculty members just recently led a trip to South Korea, supported by their Fulbright-Hayes grant. During this trip, our faculty worked with students and area school teachers in studying South Korean history, culture and the educational system, and also worked on developing middle and high school curricula for New Jersey students.

I also want to publicly thank the Faculty Senate and the AFT for co-sponsoring and offering the Student Success Conference this past May. As we will discuss in more detail later, the topic of Student Success will continue to be a central focus at the university this year—and years to come.

I also want to bring to your attention an additional initiative this year. Over the summer, a group of faculty and staff led by co-chairs Dr. Christine Kelly and Jeff Wakemen (with Jeff’s departure, Francisco Diaz has stepped into this role) worked together to develop a plan to reinvigorate civic engagement at William Paterson. Civic Engagement is a key tenet of the University strategic plan, and with our redesigned University Common Core, we are uniquely positioned to truly integrate civic engagement with our academic and student development work. On Wednesday, October 22, we will be hosting a Civic Engagement Day. Look for more details in the next few days.

Again, these are just a few examples of the work that you all do every day here at William Paterson--work that sometime seems to go for granted. But our students know, and they do appreciate all that you do.

As we continue moving forward this year, and as we plan for longer-term efforts and activities, the remainder of this presentation will address two significant challenges that face us now and for the long-term future of William Paterson University: 1) Continuing to improve student success; and 2) Using our resources effectively and efficiently.

Let’s start with student success, as that is really at the heart of what we do here. Faculty are front and center in what we do to improve student success. As a university, we will not – we cannot – meet our student success outcomes without faculty leadership and faculty input.

At William Paterson, we define student success as *“making sure that our students are learning what we say they are learning, have the skills and abilities we say they should have, are successfully progressing through their education, and are successfully graduating in a timely fashion.”* Given this definition, we have set specific outcomes for retention and graduation. In general, we seek to increase our 4- and 6-year graduation rate to at least the level of our peers here in New Jersey, and at or above the national norm for institutions such as ours, and we seek to increase our first to second year retention rate to at least the norm for New Jersey institutions that are our peers.

Why do we need to do this? First, let’s just quickly review our current performance in these areas as compared to our peers. These are the most recent national data, and that means the data is two years old.

New Jersey Peers	% Graduated in 4 Years	% Graduated in 6 Years	Retention %
Montclair State	28	62	81
Rutgers-Newark	26	59	83
Rutgers-Camden	29	58	78
William Paterson	16	47	77
Kean	16	44	77

Since this data was published, we have seen some areas of improvement, but this improvement has not been consistent. We increased our 4-year graduation rate to 17.9% for the graduating class of 2012, and then 19.8% for the graduating class of 2013; but then we dropped to 18% for the graduating class of 2014. Our retention rate for the class of 2012 (returning fall 2013) dropped to 74.8%. Preliminary data shows an increase in retention for the class of 2013 (returning fall 2014), but again, there is not consistent improvement.

Why do these numbers matter? Shouldn't we be more concerned with the quality of the education our students receive? Yes, of course, quality is essential (and we need to do a better job assessing and documenting our quality, but that is another conversation). These numbers do matter because people are paying attention. President Obama has repeatedly highlighted his administration's concern with these numbers; our national legislators are concerned; our local legislators are concerned; the media highlights these numbers almost daily; our parents are concerned; and it is difficult to tell the story of the successes of William Paterson when we first have to confront these numbers.

In the end though, why these numbers really matter has little to do with outside attention. These numbers matter because they tell us that we have too many students who start college with us, and leave—some to transfer, some to never return; we have too many students who leave here with debt and no degree; we have too many students who stay here for a 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> year and incur additional debt. This is an educational, and, I think, a moral issue. We need, all of us need, to encourage, support, advise and mentor our students toward timely success.

But, and we all hear this statement often, our students are different. They are not as academically prepared as students at other universities; they work more; they have more family and personal issues to overcome—our students need that extra time.

Yes, our students face these issues, and many others. However: Our students are not so different from the students at Montclair, at Rutgers-Newark, and at Rutgers-Camden. Academic preparation (as indicated by SAT and HS GPA) levels are not significantly different; Socio-economic data (Pell grants and loan amounts) are not significantly different; even the one measure that we can see where William Paterson students show a measurable difference, self-reporting of how many hours worked outside of school (our students self-report about 3-4 hours more per week than our peers) is not a significant difference. Our student success measures cannot be explained as "our students are different." Let's think about it this way: We have accepted these students into our university. We, as a university, will work with (and I mean WITH—students have responsibility for their education) our students to help them succeed—to help them learn, grow and move toward graduation in a timely manner.

How will we work with them? We will need, as a university, to provide the academic support our students need to learn. We will need, as a university, to provide the student development support our students need to engage in school. We will need, as a university, to provide the financial support our students need to stay in school. The phrase "as a university" is key here. Student success requires a university commitment. Students alone, faculty alone, advisors alone, student development staff alone,

financial aid alone, administrators alone—none of us alone can do this. Only all of us together can do this.

We have started on this path and we need to consistently continue on this path. We have started with the development of a Student Success Team, a cross-divisional team that keeps growing as we identify more needs. We have started with a conference on academic success sponsored and run by the AFT and the Faculty Senate, and we plan to continue this discussion this year with a series of Student Success Forums. We have started some specific interventions with students: additional Supplemental Instruction in key courses; additional peer leaders in First Year Seminar; linked courses for first-year students so that students see familiar faces as they go from class to class. We have started with efforts by faculty in some of our departments and colleges.

But these are just starts. We need also to continue to improve our early alert system so that faculty concerns lead to student interventions. We need to monitor student progress toward graduation, and help students see how they can move toward graduation in a timely fashion. We need to provide financial support for our students as they move toward graduation. This is one area where we have made some changes that do seem to be making a difference. The university, using existing resources, created Student Success Scholarships. Students who completed 30 credits with a 3.0 GPA or better by the start of their second year received a \$1000 scholarship. If they hit 60 and 3.0 by the start of their third year, the scholarship continues, and to 90 and 3.0 at start of fourth year. Students who didn't quite make it to 30 and 3.0 can work their way back in. This fall saw the first of these awards, and what we found was about a 7% increase in the number of first year students who met the 30 and 3.0 standards this year as compared to last year.

In one sense, these are relatively easy changes. But we will probably also need more complex and time-consuming changes. We need to look carefully at our course scheduling and course sequencing. We want to make sure that we are not creating additional hurdles in the manner in which we schedule and sequence our degree programs. As noted, this is a complex issue that will need all of our attention.

As we always do anyway, we need to continue to review our academic programs to make sure that what we are offering to our students meets changes in our disciplines, changes in societal needs, and changes in student demand. Curricular review is what we do, but we do it carefully to make sure we continue to offer a high quality education.

Not only content but pedagogy as well, of course, matters. Our students today are not the students of 10, 15 or 20 years ago. It is not the case that they are less motivated or less prepared or less qualified for college—but they are different. They have been taught differently in high school; they learn differently; they are immersed in technology and social media (without necessarily knowing how it all works or understanding how it affects them). “Google” is a verb that means to get answers. These are our students. So when we focus on student success, when we work together to provide academic support, student support and financial support, we are not doing it because our students are “different” from other students; we are doing it because our students are not the students from the past; they are the

students of the present and the future. They are our students, and we will work with them on their academic journey.

Working with the AFT and the Faculty Senate, we will have a series of Student Success Forums this year. The first of these is scheduled for Friday, October 17, 9:30 to 12:30, in the Ballroom. And yes—we will have lunch at this meeting. All faculty are invited and encouraged to attend as schedules permit. There will be other sessions at different days and times, so if you can't make Fridays, other times will be available. We know that in order for student success to take place, faculty are key, so this meeting and the remaining meetings are essential to hear what we need to do as we move forward.

Now, all we need to do for Student Success alone is a significant project—we can do this, but it will be work. However, we also have an additional challenge ahead of us. The university is in sound financial shape. We have made commitments to continuing to increase full-time faculty where needed and where possible, and we have also made commitments to revitalizing our academic buildings. The new academic building is well underway at the site of the old Coach House, and once that project is complete, we will move on to the renovation of Hunziker Wing and Hunziker Hall. We also have to consider what we wish to do with our residence halls on campus. The Overlook buildings are nearing the end of useful life without significant and costly renovation or rebuilding.

While we work on these projects, we still must focus on our core mission: Student Learning. As we do this, we will find that we will be operating for the foreseeable future in an environment of continuing limited resources. State allocations have been flat for the past few years—and while that may not sound like such a great deal, compared to most other states in their support of public higher education, flat state allocations is a pretty good deal. Nonetheless, “flat” means there is very little room for growth. It is also likely that there will be increased pressure for reductions to state allocations. New Jersey, for anyone who picks up a paper or listens to the news, is not doing all that well economically. There are continuing budget shortfalls and long-term expenses that will combine to put a damper on any possible increases in state allocations.

This also comes at a time when William Paterson, like so many other public state universities, has seen basically a flip in funding. Instead of the state paying for the majority of the cost of education, and students paying a smaller share, student tuition now makes up about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of our budget. And there is no appetite anywhere for any sizeable increases in student tuition. We cannot expect our students to keep paying higher and higher tuition.

In sum: The current financial model for public state universities such as ours is in trouble. With diminishing state support and little ability to increase tuition, financial models that plan for continual increases in revenue are not all that sustainable.

So, again, what will we need to do?

First, we need to improve our new incoming student numbers and improve our student retention. Every student we retain is a student we do not need to replace with a new student. Financially, retaining



current students is far more cost-effective than recruiting ever greater numbers of first-year students. VP Ross and his Enrollment Management team are working on bringing in more (and more academically prepared) students, but the demographics are troubling. High school graduation rates are declining and show little sign of any improvement in the near future. All colleges and universities are fishing in an increasingly smaller pond. We will need to look to other populations—adult and other non-traditional students, graduate students, international students—to help us meet our enrollment goals. And as we bring in these students, they, too, will have unique learning needs that we will need to work with.

As we work to bring in more academically prepared students and also work to retain more of our current students, we will also need to be even more effective stewards of our current limited resources. We will need to look closely at course enrollment data, including average class size. We will need to be as efficient as we can be—always with the focus on educational quality. We also need to look carefully at our use of adjunct faculty and overload.

We know that in a number of programs we are seeing enrollment growth necessitating the need for adjuncts and overload. And we also know that many of our adjunct faculty bring much needed special expertise and talent, and our students are appreciative of the mix of full-time and adjunct faculty. At the same time, as a university in total, we have seen significant increases in adjunct credit hours and costs, while at the same time our overall university enrollment has not increased at a comparable rate and we have increased the number of full-time faculty.

Let's take a quick look at the numbers:

<b>Adjunct Credit Hours</b>						
College	FY10	FY11	FY12	FY13	FY14	5 yr % increase
COAC	1481	1493	1529	1544	1577	6.5%
CCOB	484	442	552	611	637	31.6%
COE	964	1122	1007	904	942	-2.3%
CHSS	2389	2557	2486	2362	2467	3.3%
COSH	1595	1802	2011	2179	2232	39.9%
Other	59	71	75	61	76	28.8%
Univ	6972	7487	7660	7661	7931	13.8%

In 2009-10, the university had 6,972 credits taught by adjuncts; in 2013-14, that number had climbed to 7,931, an almost 14% increase in adjunct credit hours.

<b>Adjunct Expenses</b>						
<u>College</u>	<u>FY10\$</u>	<u>FY11\$</u>	<u>FY12\$</u>	<u>FY13\$</u>	<u>FY14\$</u>	<u>5 Yr % Increase</u>
COAC	\$ 1,703,613	\$ 1,791,537	\$ 1,834,653	\$ 1,853,032	\$ 1,971,658	16%
CCOB	\$ 556,839	\$ 530,665	\$ 662,378	\$ 733,358	\$ 796,315	43%
COE	\$ 1,108,456	\$ 1,346,179	\$ 1,208,000	\$ 1,085,354	\$ 1,178,052	6%
CHSS	\$ 2,747,247	\$ 3,068,037	\$ 2,983,151	\$ 2,834,631	\$ 3,083,799	12%
COSH	\$ 1,834,773	\$ 2,162,878	\$ 2,413,339	\$ 2,614,767	\$ 2,789,928	52%
Other	\$ 67,847	\$ 84,846	\$ 90,028	\$ 73,222	\$ 95,247	40%
Univ	\$ 8,018,775	\$ 8,984,142	\$ 9,191,548	\$ 9,194,365	\$ 9,915,000	
<b>% +(-)</b>		<b>12.0%</b>	<b>2.3%</b>	<b>0.0%</b>	<b>7.8%</b>	<b>24%</b>
<b>\$ +(-)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$ 965,367.13</b>	<b>\$ 207,406</b>	<b>\$ 2,816</b>	<b>\$ 720,635.22</b>	<b>\$1,896,225</b>

The cost for adjunct teaching was at \$8,018,775 in 2009-10; in 2013-14, that cost (and yes, there were salary increases) had grown to \$9,915,000, an increase of a little less than \$2 million dollars. We also added 24 full-time faculty in the same period.

<b>Student Credit Hours</b>					
<u>University</u>	<u>9-10 Totals</u>	<u>10-11 Totals</u>	<u>11-12 Totals</u>	<u>12-13 Totals</u>	<u>13-14 Totals</u>
<b>Total</b>	256,623	266,621	268,542	266,279	265,004
<b>yr by yr change</b>		3.90%	0.72%	-0.84%	-0.48%
<b>5 yr Change</b>					3.27%

We have seen some growth in student enrollment and student credit hours, but the growth in student credit hours is 3.27% over the last five years, and we have actually decreased the number of student credit hours in the past two years.

This does not mean faculty members are working less—not at all!

What it does mean is that we are seeing increases in our costs that are not matched by increases in our revenues.

So, once again, what do we do?

We will need multiple efforts to help match our needs with our resources. I know there has been a great deal of concern that what this means is that we will need to increase course sizes, and we will have to teach huge classes.

That is not necessarily the case. We have, for the most part, very reasonable and sustainable course enrollment limits that are pedagogically sound. In some specific cases, Deans and Chairs, following discussion, may make minor adjustments to these current limits as they review the pedagogical needs of the program, but overall the issue can best be addressed by increasing scheduling efficiencies.

<b>Average Class Size</b>					
<b>University</b>	<b>9-10 Totals</b>	<b>10-11 Totals</b>	<b>11-12 Totals</b>	<b>12-13 Totals</b>	<b>13-14 Totals</b>
<b>Total</b>	19.58	19.59	18.63	17.67	17.37
<b>yr by yr change</b>		0%	-5%	-5%	-2%
<b>5 yr Change</b>					-11%

As discussed at the Senate in September, as a university, our average course size has decreased from close to 20 in 2009-10 (undergraduate and graduate, fall and spring) to 17.37 in 2013-14. We can argue all we want about how we calculate average class size, but how we calculate has not changed in five years—the result of the calculation has.

Deans, Chairs and Departments are being asked to look at and consider methods for improving that average. But please note: Increasing class size is NOT the goal; using our limited resources effectively is the goal. Class size is just one way to count. We will need to look at many ways to help us use our limited resources wisely. For example, though I know all departments already do this, we may benefit from looking more closely at how we schedule and sequence our courses. This can have the added benefit of improving student success.

We also need to look at non-contractual reassigned time. We need to do this not only to look at costs, but also so there is consistency and equity in how we use non-contractual reassigned time. We will also look at the Assigned Release Time for Research Program. NOT to reduce it, but to make sure we are providing this important support consistently, equitably and in line with the contractual agreement for ART. And we need to look at many of the non-teaching and administrative activities we ask of faculty, so that we are allowing our faculty to teach and engage in research, scholarship and creative activities.

We will need to look at all of this: Increasing our enrollment and retaining more of our students (which will mean more resources for what we do), and managing in multiple ways how we effectively use these resources.

This is a challenge. This is the challenge that faces us here at William Paterson. It is a challenge faced by our peers here in New Jersey as well as at almost all other state universities in the country. We are not alone in facing these economic challenges and we are in better shape financially than many other state universities. We have the ability to work together on these challenges, so I ask all of you to consider what we can do to ensure educational quality in these challenging financial times.

I will let loose a bit of my inner geek now. There is a scene in Lord of the Rings, The Return of the King. King Théoden of the Rohirrim is facing battle against overwhelming forces. He has few allies, and he has just seen one of his greatest allies leave him on the eve of battle. The troops are dispirited. They think that the coming battle will be too much, and that nothing but defeat and death await them. One of Théoden's men approaches the King: "Too few have come. We cannot defeat the armies of Mordor." And the King responds: "No. We cannot. But we will meet them in battle nonetheless." Spoiler alert here: The battle is won, but the King dies—please don't draw any connections here. But do focus on the message: We are surrounded by challenges, and sometimes they may seem insurmountable. But nonetheless, we will meet them.

Thank you, and let's move on to the rest of the semester.