



FALL CONVOCATION ADDRESS

Chancellor Ronald L. Elsenbaumer
Purdue University Fort Wayne
August 26, 2019

Good afternoon. Thank you all for being here today.

I hope you enjoyed that video. We produced it earlier this summer as a way of introducing our university to the presidents and chancellors of the 10 institutions that are members of the Horizon League. I'm guessing they saw something they liked! I know it makes me very proud every time I see it.

I want to welcome all of our students, faculty, staff, and friends who are with us today. Thank you for being here.

I want to extend a very special and warm welcome to students, faculty, and staff who are new to campus this fall. Welcome to Purdue University Fort Wayne! We are so happy that you joined us!

I also wish to welcome our Ambassadors. The Ambassadors are students who communicate Purdue Fort Wayne's commitment to excellence on campus and off.

I am also very pleased to welcome and congratulate our faculty members who have received promotions and tenure this year. We're very proud of all of you, as this represents an incredible milestone in your careers.

We will be having a special recognition dinner later this fall to recognize your incredible achievement.

We are off to a fantastic start for our second academic year as Purdue University Fort Wayne.

With the historic campus realignment already a year behind us, we are positioned well for the future. We have achieved more clarity in who we are as a university and how we want to convey that to our expanding world of influence.

We have made huge strides in leveraging the prestigious Purdue University brand to advance our institution on every front. The Purdue name is recognized and respected globally, and we continue to embrace it and make it uniquely ours.

We have advanced our new brand throughout Indiana and are making significant inroads into states across the Midwest. Our TV and radio ads, billboards, and digital campaigns have become ubiquitous in ever-expanding new markets.

We couldn't be more pleased that President Mitch Daniels and the Purdue University Board of Trustees have been so incredibly encouraging and supportive in this first year. And we look

forward to charting new territory with them as we continue to define what it means to be part of the Purdue University system.

I'd like to provide some updates and perspectives on a few important measures of our progress and success.

This year we achieved a significant milestone together—and I want to emphasize together. Last fall, we began a comprehensive strategic planning process that took off like wildfire. It was so gratifying to see the entire campus community come together in a spirit of collaboration and to make big plans for the future.

Our Strategic Plan—which is being created and owned by all of you—will guide every aspect of how we continue to shape our new enterprise as Purdue Fort Wayne. With the clarity of mission and purpose that are evolving, this institution will become a force to be reckoned with.

I know many of you in this room participated in that amazing all-day workshop last spring. The energy and enthusiasm generated by the more than 300 people in that meeting fueled the incredible work that took place throughout the spring semester. We will have a similar meeting on Friday, September 13, with the goal of setting priorities and moving rapidly toward putting the finishing touches on our plan. I hope all of you will be able to attend.

I want to especially recognize Jeff Malanson and Krissy Creager as the cochairs of the Strategic Planning Steering Committee—and Jeff for continuing on to now serve as the Director of Strategic Planning Implementation.

We have much to be proud of in terms of student enrollment. We have achieved two years of demonstrated enrollment growth in new students.

We expect to post significant gains in new freshmen, graduate students, and international students when the numbers are finalized later this week. As of today, first-time student enrollment has increased by 4.8 percent, which follows a 20 percent increase in enrollment of first-time freshmen last fall.

We continue to develop and expand our graduate programs, and this fall we have achieved a 22.5 percent increase in full-time graduate students. Having robust graduate programs helps enhance the intellectual life of the university, helps advance our research enterprise, helps create beneficial partnerships with business and industry, and helps us educate and train the next generation of faculty members.

We are also increasing our efforts to recruit more international students. The Purdue brand is recognized and respected around the world, and we must continue to capitalize on the equity

the Purdue name carries. We must provide a welcoming environment, and we must offer the programs and infrastructure they seek.

None of this happens by accident. We have developed and deployed new approaches to recruiting, especially for undergraduate students. We are attracting more and more students from across the Midwest as a result of our aggressive recruitment and marketing strategies.

I want to thank everyone who continues to work so hard on this top priority. I especially want to thank Vice Chancellor Carl Drummond and Associate Vice Chancellor Ken Christmon and their teams for exceptional work.

We continue to attract new faculty who are at the top of their field and who complement our existing faculty. This fall, we have 43 new faculty members joining the university—including 22 tenured or tenure-track faculty and 21 clinical, continuing, or visiting lecturers. It is up to all of us to help them thrive and be successful as they continue building their careers here at Purdue Fort Wayne.

Likewise, we must value and nourish our current faculty by creating a supportive intellectual environment where they can teach and mentor students, pursue their research and scholarly activity, and engage in meaningful service to the community.

We were very pleased that this past year we were able to provide two merit adjustments for our faculty and staff—a service recognition payment in November and a permanent merit adjustment to salaries in July.

There is no mistaking the transformational impact—including the ECONOMIC IMPACT—that Purdue Fort Wayne has on this region and across Indiana. Earlier this year, we worked with an external firm to conduct an Economic Impact Study for the university. The results were astounding.

Our more than 60,000 alumni generate more than 100,000 jobs and \$11 billion annually in Gross Product in Indiana. And the university generates \$269 million annually in the Fort Wayne region alone.

This is the direct result of your work! I no longer wait for people to ask me what is the value of Purdue Fort Wayne—I can now tell them!

This past year our three newest schools—the School of Education, the School of Music, and the School of Polytechnic—came out of the gate strong. In its first year of operation, the Purdue Fort Wayne Sweetwater Music Center has been a phenomenal success. Students are flocking to that program, thanks in large part to the opportunities and experiences they are afforded on the Sweetwater corporate campus.

We need to be nimble and creative in identifying additional opportunities for such partnerships that leverage our academic programs to serve the best interests of our students.

We seized two such opportunities this past year.

One example is the former Park 3000 building on East Coliseum. We toured the building last fall, immediately saw its potential, and set out to purchase it. This required quick action, a significant philanthropic component, and the support of the Purdue Board of Trustees. Just two weeks ago, we announced that the building has been renamed the Richard T. Doermer School of Business building.

Another example is our pursuit of membership in the Horizon League athletics conference. After months of preparation, discussions, and persuasion, we were invited to join the Horizon League, effective July 2020—which we also announced publicly just two weeks ago.

Membership in the Horizon League will dramatically improve the experience of our student-athletes—especially reducing their travel time and time away from campus. Membership will also bring new levels of competition and will create exciting new rivalries that will help build community and support—especially among our alumni.

And while we celebrate these successes, we have some challenges ahead of us.

A significant challenge is that our student housing is now at full capacity for the second year in a row. While on the surface this is a great problem to have, the lack of more student housing will limit our growth if not addressed. We must actively pursue opportunities for identifying or building new housing that will accommodate the increasing numbers of students we are recruiting from outside the region. This has to be a top priority—and we are already pursuing opportunities to expand.

An additional challenge is that we must improve student retention. This is not one person's job. This is not one department's job. It's everyone's job, and we must make it a critical focus for our campus, as it is one of the biggest hindrances to the success of our students and the success of our university.

Two of the pillars of the university's Strategic Plan are 1) putting students first, and 2) creating a sense of place. We continue to create an enriching and successful campus experience for our students, but we must do more.

We must provide the services, amenities, and support that students need and demand. And we must be resolute in providing an environment that is welcoming, stimulating, accessible, and sustaining.

One small, but highly visible initiative we have launched is to place inviting Adirondack chairs and hammocks around campus. But wait, there's more—and scooters will be coming soon! These gestures, large and small, help create an inviting environment for our students.

We absolutely must give our students every reason to be proud to be a student here at Purdue Fort Wayne. And we must ensure they have the resources and support to see them persist through to graduation.

This year, for our first-ever Commencement as Purdue Fort Wayne, we reenvisioned our graduation ceremony. Commencement is the culmination of all that we do—our symbol to our students and their families that a college education matters and that graduating with a Purdue University diploma will change their lives forever.

Central to helping our students get to that point and to transition to the next phase of their lives is to provide a first-rate career services program. This is critical if we are to fully serve our students, alumni, and employers. Clearly, parents want to see that our students get jobs. And we are doing that.

This past year, we completed a university-wide assessment of our career services program and operations. We have restructured the department and hired a new leader, Susan Byers, to rebuild the program and bring it to life. This will be transformational for our students and will address the critical need for a highly educated work force that our region, our state, and our country demand.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide some important updates today. I look forward to greeting each of you personally at the reception.

You know, last year, we talked about Creating Havoc. And I think we've all done a pretty good job of that!

This year, we're going to make some real MASTODON MAGIC!

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