Introduction

I’m really pleased to welcome everyone to my first Chancellor’s update. It’s been a very quick first semester, and I want to begin by thanking everyone for their generosity and support during my transition into the chancellorship.

This is my first update to the WSU Vancouver community. I see these updates as one component of a varied communication strategy. They provide a periodic opportunity—maybe once a semester—to bring the campus community together for updates on some current initiatives, and also to focus on direction. We’re also having ongoing campus conversations around issues of importance to our campus. We’re using Vancouver FYI and other electronic messaging as our primary tool for information sharing. And we will, continue to look for effective ways to engage the campus community in dialogue about the direction of WSU Vancouver.

We have a fair amount to accomplish today. There are a number of things that have come up over the last several months. I want to provide updates on those and then talk about what I think is ahead for WSU Vancouver over the next few years.

But first, the success of our campus depends on people, so I want to begin there.
Remembrance

This is the first time that our community has come together since the passing of Barb Krahn. Barb joined the WSU Vancouver community in 2007 as a member of the FacOps staff. She was the 2011 recipient of the Chancellor’s Award for Staff Excellence. She loved WSU Vancouver and being a Coug. She cared about her job and always did great work. She was widely known on campus for her warmth, giving nature, perseverance and her sense of humor. The two occasions I had to meet with her both ended with me smiling broadly and wondering a little whether she was in charge. Barb will be missed.

I’d like to ask that we observe a moment of silence.

Many people on campus have been asking about an opportunity to support Barb’s family during the holiday season. Our colleagues in Advancement have received some suggested items for the family and have a table along the back wall. They will be accepting cash gifts, gift cards and gifts until December 12. If you have questions or would like to donate please speak with Jennifer Miltenberger.

Recognition

As you know, we had a difficult opening to the year with the very problematic implementation of zzusis. I want to acknowledge the incredible work by so many on our campus to support our students during this transition. I’d like to ask the staff in admissions, financial aid, the
Cougar Center and our academic coordinators to stand and be recognized for the great work they’ve been doing.

I’d also like to recognize our advancement staff. In a very difficult economy they have been doing a terrific job raising money to support our students and to fund the work of our faculty. Last year they helped us raise $3.1 million, which brings our total to $13 million on the way to our $20 million goal. Three weeks ago they also did an extraordinary job putting together the scholarship recognition dinner, which people are talking about as one of our best events ever. I’d like to ask our advancement staff to stand.

One of the things we’re working on is an examination of when and how we recognize the work of our employees. Last year, we established a committee to make comprehensive recommendations about employee recognition. You’ve already received a couple of surveys from that committee. Their work is winding down, and we plan to act on their recommendations in time to implement any changes for next year.

An important tradition on our campus is the presentation of the Staff Excellence Award, which we present at the beginning of each academic year—usually much earlier in the year. In the absence of our opening convocation this year, we decided to wait until today to present the staff excellence award.

I have quickly come to understand how impressive a staff we have on this campus—at every level. Your commitment to the success of our students and of WSU Vancouver is amazing. So, I understand how difficult it is
to select a single individual for the Staff Excellence Award. But the award is also an opportunity to recognize someone who has stood out over the last year for the work she has done and what she has accomplished.

I am pleased to announce that the 2012 Staff Excellence Award goes to Bola Majekobaje. Bola, please come forward.

Bola Majekobaje is the assistant director for student diversity in Student Affairs. I doubt there is anyone here who’s never met Bola. That’s part of her magic. She meets almost everyone. If you don’t know her, perhaps you did not serve with her on one of the following:

- Chancellor Search Committee
- Diversity Council
- Scholarship Review Committee
- Pride Foundation Scholarship Review Committee
- ROAR New Student Orientation Planning Committee

Bola has reignited the Student Affairs Social Committee to encourage fun outside of work. I hear she is a wicked karaoke singer and knows where there is a good Zumba class.

An article written in Northwest Crimson & Gray in spring 2011 reads, “Bola Majekobaje has a friendly smile and more buzz than a liter of Mountain Dew. It’s this perfect combination of warmth and effervescence that makes her the ideal assistant director for student diversity.”
In this role Bola helps the Student Diversity Team develop passion and professionalism. She provides the students leadership as they coordinate events that offer educational opportunities for the broader community and help recruit diverse students to campus including: MLK Day of Service, Noche de Familia, Marquee Diversity Events, the Leadership and Diversity Conference, and Connections.

Reaching outside of campus and into her community, Bola has engaged in events that reflect her personal mission as well as WSU’s mission to “engage as lifelong learners in a technologically and culturally complex world.” Bola has been active as a planning committee member and presenter for the Latino Youth Conference, she presented a workshop for the NAACP Youth Program, and she participates in networking events with Native Professionals Night, Urban League Young Professionals and Say Hey!

One of Bola’s nominators said she completes every task with the mindset of bettering the campus community and students. For example, at the beginning of the semester when students were lined up waiting to sort through their financial aid challenges, Bola jumped in with a smile and a basket of candy to greet them. It’s the willingness to jump in and do what needs to be done, but is not required, that makes Bola an outstanding staff member.

Please help me congratulate, Bola Majekobaje.
What’s Underway

As with any complex organization we have a number of things that are underway at the moment:

I want to thank everyone who participated in the Campus Conversation on zzusis last month. It was valuable for our campus and for our colleagues in Pullman. I also want to remind everyone that we have a second Campus Conversation on whether to become a smoke-free or tobacco-free campus next Monday. If you have questions about either of these, please feel free to ask them during the Q&A, but in the interest of time, I’d like to update you on some other things.

The search for a Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs is critical for us. As you know, the search committee has been finalized, and we are awaiting final approval for the search consultant that will support this process. I want to thank Suzanne Smith for agreeing to chair the committee, and I thank all of our colleagues who have agreed to serve on the committee. We have put together a search committee that will make it clear to candidates that we are a first-class Research I university. I think there are two key factors in identifying a new vice chancellor for academic affairs: the first is momentum in the search process and the second is momentum in Academic Affairs. Both must have our commitment and enthusiasm.

Another area that will have our attention in the Spring is the reaccreditation of WSU by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities. For those of you who don’t know, WSU has a single regional
accreditation for the whole university. Our ability to receive federal funding—student financial aid or grants and contracts—is dependent on us maintaining accreditation. Our April visit will focus on two standards: the standard on mission, goals and outcomes; and standard two on resources and capacity. We also have to respond to the 2009 recommendations on governance and assessment of student learning. An initial draft is nearing completion, and Kimberly Green, director of the WSU Office of Assessment of Teaching and Learning, will be on campus next week to update faculty on preparations for the April visit. Progress on all of these issues will remain a top priority.

We are in the final stages of our move to a standard 5-day course schedule. I want to thank everyone for the work that has gone into planning for this significant change. During my first trip to Pullman, President Floyd reminded me that we were 3 years behind the other campuses in scheduling classes over the standard week. Moving to a standard course schedule accomplishes several goals. It will serve our students by reducing scheduling conflicts and making the path to timely graduation easier. It spreads classes more evenly throughout the day and week and will help alleviate “peak time” pressure on buildings, staff, faculty and parking. It will also create a more vibrant, active campus all week long. I know that some of our students and faculty have expressed concern about their work schedules and research agendas. We take those concerns seriously. We have a committee that is focused on successful implementation and a comprehensive communication plan that will be implemented beginning next month.
I want to update you on iTech Prep, the stem high school that is located on our campus in the Clark College Building. Some people may not even realize that a Vancouver public high school opened on our campus this year. It has taken a lot of work, but it has also been a relatively quiet transition. iTech is planned to be in the Clark College building for 3 to 4 years. This year they are serving 90 9th graders. Each year they will add a class until they are a 4-year high school. VPS has been very open about their desire to build a new school on WSUV property, and we will begin those conversations in the near future. The hope is that we will be able to create a seamless transition to WSU Vancouver for these students. This is a good example of a partnership that is important to the region and to us.

Convocation and Commencement are the two events that traditionally bookend the academic year in higher education. A transition in leadership is a good opportunity to take an eyes-wide-open look at these and other traditions, which we’ve been doing. The cabinet last year opted not to schedule convocation for the current academic year to give us time to agree on its purpose and to review the logistics. We’re taking a look at commencement in the same light. As the number of our graduates increases, we want to make sure we’re using our time during commencement ceremonies most effectively. In our survey of faculty, staff and students after commencement, the timing of our ceremony was an issue for some. This is something that has been brought to me by others, as well. The concern is that the week’s delay between the end of exams and commencement results in a loss of students and faculty who would
otherwise attend. We have an opportunity to determine whether we want to have our ceremonies on the same day as the Pullman campus. While the timing might be better if we move graduation, a consequence of a move would be that the Pullman leadership could not be in attendance. So, we have things to balance. I’ve spoken with commencement committee chair Nancy Youlden and asked that the commencement committee lead us in an expedited discussion of commencement, and I’ve asked Carolyn to work with our academic leadership to make recommendations regarding our opening convocation.

Finally, I want to update you on two initiatives being led by President Floyd. As I said earlier, we are primarily an organization of and about people. The fiscal crisis has been hard on our students—who have seen large tuition increases—and our faculty and staff—who have gone four years without a salary increase. This has been a concern expressed over and over again on our campus, too. While we’re limited in resources, there are things the senior leadership of WSU has agreed to. First, to support our students, we’ve agreed to keep tuition at the consumer price index as long as the state legislature keeps our funding level. And at the Regents meeting last week, the Board approved a proposal for no tuition increase this summer. This will require that we pay close attention to our budget, but I feel strongly that this is a good thing for our students.

By now you’ve also heard that the President has approved a 2-percent one-time payment for all faculty and staff above half time, except those in senior leadership positions. The 2 percent will be included in
the December 10 paycheck. Even more important, salary increases for faculty and staff will be a top WSU priority for the upcoming legislative session.

There may be other things happening that you’d like to know about. But I want to move on to a discussion of what I think is ahead for us longer term. If there are things I’ve left out, please don’t hesitate to ask.

**Ahead**

As I think about what’s ahead for us two broad themes emerge: New approaches to managing enrollment and student success, and Planning.

I want to begin by talking about enrollment management. We’ve been hearing a lot about growth, and we’ve been experiencing it for years. The search materials for the chancellorship position talked about ongoing growth to as high as 7,500 students by the end of the decade. Other estimates put that growth at about double where we are, given slower growth than anticipated. At a recent Board of Regents meeting, President Floyd said he expects WSU enrollment statewide to increase from 27,000 to 30,000 in the next couple of years. He anticipates that growth at WSU Vancouver will be a significant part of that.

Earlier this year, the Association of Public Land Grant Universities and the American Association of State Colleges and Universities released the “Commitment to the Future,” which commits member institutions to work towards improved student access, diversity, student retention and degree attainment while strengthening
educational quality, with the goal of leading the world in postsecondary degree attainment by 2025. The United States is currently 12th in degree attainment, and reaching this goal will require 3 percent compounded growth between 2012 and 2025. Elson and I are both signatories to that statement on behalf of WSU and WSU Vancouver.

Growth at WSU Vancouver is also mission driven. Degree attainment in Southwest Washington is still below that of the rest of the state. We have work to do.

This year we are down 160 students or 118 FTE. Registration for Spring 2013 is also down significantly. So, we’re going to be moving into an era in which we need a different focus on enrollment management. This is not an issue we can address with just marketing or admissions staffs, and it is not one we will address with a reduction in quality. The quality of a Washington State University education cannot and will not be compromised. But we must be more intentional with recruitment and retention as we move forward. Everyone on this campus has a role to play, and we will be calling on you as we develop strategies for enrollment management at the undergraduate and graduate levels.

So how do we get there? There are many variables on our path to becoming an institution that serves more students in an environment of increasing standards.

We’re already doing some things that are essential. We are working to keep tuition increases down, and we have made scholarships the top priority in our Campaign for Washington State. Affordability is key to growth here and throughout higher education. We will continue to be
pressed by the state and by our Board of Regents to operate efficiently and effectively, and we owe that to our stakeholders.

One area that I am asked about constantly—on campus and in the community—is residence halls. Last year, WSU conducted an initial study on residence halls at the urban campuses. We’ve had ongoing discussions, and the Education Advisory Board, a research group with which WSU has a relationship, is in the process of surveying urban campuses that have recently introduced a residential experience. As we see more students who are traveling from outside the area to attend WSU Vancouver, we need to be responsive to their needs. A residential experience is not imminent, but we need to plan for this in the next few years. I also want to be clear that none of our planning anticipates that we will become a traditional residential campus. The needs assessment concluded that demand for housing would be in the range of 10 percent of our students. That means 90 percent of our students will still be commuting to campus.

Our campus community is also becoming more diverse. We have seen regular increases in the numbers of students of color, nearly 1 percent higher over last year. As Clark County becomes more diverse, which it will, so will our student body. We must provide a campus environment that welcomes diversity and creates opportunities for a diverse student body, faculty and staff to succeed. Diversity will continue to figure prominently into our recruitment and retention efforts.
We will need to move more aggressively in embracing technology to support our learning environments. You’ve probably already figured out that this is a common theme for me. It’s one that I am passionate about. WSU is investing resources in the Global Campus to attract students from across the world. But a third of those taking online courses are residential students on one of the WSU campuses. That number will increase as more students look to preserve a face-to-face experience, while allowing time for other work and family obligations.

I’m also concerned about the impact that free and low-cost higher education resources will have on our campus. In the last year we have seen the explosion of resources for those who want an alternative to traditional higher education. While the quality of Massive Open Online Courses and other resources might be suspect, we can’t dismiss them as irrelevant to our work. In the same way that the music industry dismissed the MP3 and the journalism industry dismissed online news organizations because the public would never accept diminished quality, we dismiss Coursera, edX and Canvas.Net at our peril. In this age of big data we are learning more and more about how our students learn, and this research on learning analytics needs to be something we bring to our learning models. We have the opportunity to leverage technology to enhance face-to-face experiences for our students through a variety of approaches.

And it’s not just that we will compete with alternative delivery methods. As an institution that was built to serve its community and that is committed to social justice, I fear we run the risk of creating haves and have nots with regard to students seeking a higher education. Those who
can afford the traditional face-to-face experience will get it, and many many will be forced to rely on online-only experiences. I believe our mission as an institution of public higher education calls for more than that.

And so, I call on Academic Affairs, our faculty and our IT staff to provide leadership that leverages technology and the resources of the Internet to continue to provide a world-class education to our students. We have the opportunity to integrate technology more effectively to meet our enrollment targets, to enhance academic quality and to provide equity. We have the potential to be national leaders here.

The foundation of our approach to managing enrollment will be comprehensive academic planning. This is a process that has begun under interim Vice Chancellor Long’s leadership and will continue under the leadership of our new vice chancellor for academic affairs next year. We have a solid strategic plan that is likely in need of some tweaking and updating, which we will do. But it is through academic planning that we will develop our path to attract new students, retain a larger percentage of those who attend and preserve the quality that is essential to their success and our success.

This academic planning process will require us to assess the needs of our community, to develop program capacity in our current offerings and to develop new programs to meet the needs of Southwest Washington. This process will be led by academic affairs and driven by the faculty.
I want to be clear that the Academic Plan we envision is not simply an enrollment management plan. It will be a plan that focuses on the core elements of our mission, of which enrollment growth is a component.

Our commitment to research must also be front and center in our academic planning. As with our instructional program, our research program must be of the highest quality. That requires both the infrastructure to support faculty research and high expectations for mission-driven research. Our mission to support the communities of Southwest Washington is not just about degree attainment. It’s about a commitment to community-based research and to embrace a research program that has a positive impact on our region. Our research success is dependent, in part, on our ability to attract sponsored research. While a number of factors have contributed to a decline in grant funding on our campus, our identity as a Research 1 institution depends on an increase in grants and contracts.

Finally, our academic planning must focus, in part, on issues of infrastructure. We need to bring greater clarity to our relationship with WSU Pullman. Many processes have been put in place because of a moment in time or a specific issue that needed to be addressed. In some areas we have little connection, where connections should be stronger. In some areas we have no flexibility, where flexibility is essential to our success. One thing I know is that I’m not even sure what all of those things are. I do know that increasing the data available to us for decision-making will be essential in academic planning, and Pullman will need to play a large part in making those data available. President Floyd, Provost Bayly and I have
talked about this extensively, and we have an opportunity to be deliberate in forging our ongoing relationship with the Pullman campus.

Many of our infrastructure needs are internal, though. We are still a very young institution and we have largely been a “ground-up” institution. Our mission driven activities have been led by the faculty, as they should be. But there is also a need for coordination and support of these activities. I have been truly impressed with the ways in which our faculty engage our students and our community in research—both undergraduate and graduate—in service learning, civic engagement and STEM initiatives. These are all important, mission-driven activities. As part of academic planning we must look at where we can bring institutional cohesion and visibility by providing appropriate coordination and support for the work of the faculty.

I’m very excited about this work and the opportunities it presents for our campus. We have achieved so much, and we are poised to achieve so much more. I want to reaffirm my commitment and the commitment of the cabinet to collegial governance and consultation. As we move forward we will discover more about the appropriate governance structures for our campus. We will have passionate discussions and probably significant disagreements. But that is how academic communities come together. We will continue to build rituals and traditions, but our youth provides us with a great opportunity to remain nimble and responsive to the needs of Southwest Washington. We have many partnerships in our community, but key to all of them is
the partnerships we share with each other. And, of course, we must remain focused on student success.

So, as my fifth month comes to a close, I want to thank everyone again for their support and, just as important, for their candor. It has been truly exciting being a part of this community, and I look forward to our work together to advance the great work that we do.

I want to remind everyone that we have a reception in 129, but I would like to take a few minutes to address questions.