

M. Roy Wilson
Wayne State University
University Address
September 12, 2016

Thank you, Anthony. And thank you all for being here. I appreciate it. A lot has been happening. Whether one has a positive view or not so positive view of what has been occurring, one thing is for sure—our university has not been stagnant!

I'd like to thank Gary Pollard, chair of our Board of Governors, for being present.

Over the past several weeks, I've received requests to mention this or that during this university address. People are justifiably proud of the work they are doing in their area and wish for it to be highlighted. I wish I could discuss **all** the special things that are being accomplished by our faculty, staff, and students, but it simply is not possible today—so to all of you who are doing such great things to move this university forward in so many different ways, let me say “thank you, thank you.”

It continues to be a great pleasure and privilege for me to wake up every morning and come to work with so many committed and dedicated people throughout this university.

Given the time limitation, I wish to discuss just three topics today. However, if time permits, I will take a few questions at the end.

First I will discuss our MISSION.

Second, in order to perform our mission optimally, we need resources. I will provide an update on our Pivotal Moments campaign and also offer some thoughts on maximizing our use of existing resources.

Finally, although my intent is never to focus on one school or college at these university addresses, I know that many of you are wondering about the medical school, how it is doing, and how its challenges may impact the rest of the university. It's such a big issue right now that it would be a glaring omission for me to not to address the elephant in the room.

MISSION

Our mission drives everything we do. We spent a good deal of time over the past two years completing our strategic plan and clearly articulating our mission. I believe that you all intuitively know the mission; in fact, for many, the mission may even be one of the primary reasons you chose to be here. Can you clearly recite it, though? If someone had approached you while you were walking here today and said, “I'm new to Wayne State; can you please tell me what our mission is?” Could you answer with confidence?

I won't ask you to put your hands up, but all of us should be able to answer that question.

Why?

Most of you know that we are currently in the midst of our accreditation process with the Higher Learning Commission, or HLC. This is a normal part of being a university, but it is extremely important.

A team of people have been working on this for more than a year, and will soon submit a 30,000-word report on nearly every aspect of our university, all of which are related to our mission, vision, and values.

But there are other expectations of the HLC as it pertains to our accreditation. They expect everyone who is a part of this university to know our mission. That's everyone: faculty, staff, students, administration; even our Board of Governors. And they're going to ask, randomly, on our campus and in our community. So my earlier scenario about someone stopping you and asking our mission could become a reality. And we must be prepared.

You'll be hearing more about the HLC when we launch the communications plan in November, which will include student engagement led by the Dean of Students Office.

And while the HLC visit is critical, there's a more important reason for knowing our mission by heart. Because it is what we do. Because it's more than words. It's why we exist as an institution. And, it's relevant to every person on campus. It's the glue that bonds us together.

So let me restate our mission:

Wayne State's mission is **to create and advance knowledge, prepare a diverse student body to thrive, and positively impact local and global communities.**

A powerful mission, with three important parts: Knowledge, education, and impact. Let me address each part.

Create and advance knowledge

The university's research efforts lie at the core of our mission to create and advance knowledge. As you all are aware, and as I've mentioned before, this is an area where we have much room for improvement.

According to the National Science Foundation, WSU ranked 43rd out of all public institutions for total R&D in 2003. By 2013, we dropped to 64th. Think about this: we dropped 21 slots over a ten-year period. It's often stated that it is very difficult to change your relative ranking in research by more than one or two slots because all the other peer institutions are doing the same things you are doing to try to improve. Well, we dropped 21 slots, so now we need to claw our way back, defy the odds, and make up the ground we lost over that decade.

There is reason for optimism.

First, we are putting more emphasis on research infrastructure—both in terms of physical plant and people. On a number of prior occasions, I've mentioned the incredible opportunity with IBio, so I won't repeat it now. What I will mention, though, is our renewed focus on biomedical training.

As one of only two institutions in the country with both the BEST (or Broadening Experiences in Scientific Training) grant and the BUILD (or Building Infrastructure Leading to Diversity) grant, we are well positioned to expand in this area and become a center of excellence for biomedical research training. This includes strengthening our PhD programs, which admittedly have been under-resourced.

To this same end, we also have created a new Office of Scientific and Biomedical Training, Workforce Development and Diversity that will lead efforts to establish and administer programs to enhance research training and career development activities for undergraduate, graduate and postdoctoral students through early-stage faculty. Provost Whitfield has appointed Ambika Mathur, Dean of the Graduate School, to lead this new office.

Second, due to a newly negotiated agreement with the Karmanos Cancer Institute, cancer clinical trial research dollars are now being attributed to Wayne State. This should substantially increase our research numbers.

I want to emphasize that this is not some sleight of hand accounting. Other universities and medical schools with cancer centers routinely have clinical trial dollars attributed to them. We're just catching up to the norm.

Third, we have some great research faculty, and research awards have been increasing annually since 2013.

But there are some behavioral barriers that we must break in order to advance in our research rankings. The rankings are based on expenditures, not awards. Unfortunately, our increasing awards are not translating to increasing expenditure. We must work to change the behavior of our investigators and match the increased awards with increased expenditures.

Our research division is not the only part of the university that contributes to creating and advancing knowledge. Examples of how we do so throughout the university, aside from traditional research, are numerous.

Even our performing and creative arts programs—which arguably is as different from traditional research as anything we do—contribute to creating and advancing knowledge.

Incidentally, one of the highlights of this past year for me personally was to watch our student dancers, under the creative and artistic direction of our outstanding faculty, outperform other university teams throughout the country at the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C. at the American College Dance Festival this spring. They were phenomenal.

By the way, the President's Preview on September 16th kicks off the Theatre and Dance Season, and I hope to see you all there.

Prepare a diverse student body to thrive

Preparing our students is the core reason for our existence. This critical responsibility falls to our faculty, and we are fortunate to have terrific faculty in all our schools and colleges. But we all have a role to play in helping our students, starting with attracting more students to Wayne State.

One of our key goals in the strategic plan is to increase our overall enrollment to 30,000 students by 2021.

We've been there before, but right now we're at around 27,504. The trend, however, is pointing in the right direction. For the first time in seven years, our overall enrollment will increase.

Census takes place later this week, but right now the numbers show that we are up about 0.8%. That's not a giant increase, but it's a great start, and it is the direct result of hard work by people across the campus.

This year we welcomed 7,417 new students to our campus—the highest it has been in recent years and a 3.5% increase over last year's very large incoming class. Our increased enrollment is spread out over both FTIACS (1.9%) and Transfers (7.3%). And our enrollment of new master's students has also increased—by 43% over the past three years.

We also have 2,383 international students from 68 countries on our campus.

30,000 is a tough yet attainable goal, and we're moving in the right direction. An average of 2.27% increase per year for the next four years will get us to our goal.

I'd like to note that our enrollment has improved, not just in quantity, but in quality as well. For this year's incoming class, the average GPA was 3.37 and the average ACT 23.9. That means we're attracting a higher caliber of student, while also remaining a place of opportunity for students who haven't necessarily been provided the best academic preparation.

Student success is job number one for us, and in recent years, we have made tremendous progress in our graduation rate.

Our six-year graduation rate will exceed 38% this year, up at least 12 percentage points over the past five years. This rate of improvement puts us in the top 20 public institutions nationally for our rate of improvement over the past 4 years.

Our five-year graduation rate will exceed 36 percentage points, up 11 percentage points over the past four years, and up at least 7 percentage points in just one year, from 29% last year. Our five-year graduation rate now exceeds last year's six-year graduation rate.

Our four-year graduation rate has increased dramatically, nearly twice what it was three years ago.

We won't know until later this week what the official first-to-second year retention rate is, but as of today, the Fall 2015 freshman retention is up nearly 4%.

Students are earning more credits in their first semester—11.7 compared to 9.5 two years ago—and achieving higher grades than ever during their first year of college—57% above 3.0, compared to 47% five years ago. This lays the foundation for continued student achievement and sustained improvement in our graduation rates.

However, we have a long way to go.

Not all students have participated equally in our graduation rate gains. While the graduation rates for Latino/a students have doubled over the past six years, our graduation rates for African American, first generation and low income students have lagged behind.

In fact, black students are only $\frac{1}{4}$ as likely to complete their degree in six years at WSU as white students – one of the largest gaps in the nation.

This is an embarrassment for our university, it is not fair to our students, and there is a moral imperative to make this right.

We have a number of initiatives that should soon bear fruit, including ensuring our undergrads have a path to a degree that can be completed in four years; using predictive analytics to identify students with elevated risk as early as possible; intervening earlier with coordinated support; and identifying and transforming courses that serve as barriers to students.

At the same time, there's more to preparing students to “thrive” than merely doing what we can to help them get a degree. When they leave Wayne State, they should be ready for anything the world throws at them. Part of helping students thrive are the experiences we offer beyond our campus. We have Detroit and Midtown to offer, where students not only experience, but participate, in an urban environment that is undergoing a transformation. But in this world, if our students are to be truly prepared, we need to help them broaden their horizons beyond our campus and beyond our city.

Just last week, I returned from a trip to Korea and China, and visited with several of our partner institutions. I believe that there are some remarkable opportunities to expand on our international collaborations.

In 2015, nearly 650 students studied abroad in more than 20 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America. This is not enough.

I've had the opportunity to study at Oxford during my 4th year of medical school, perform international research and clinical care during my professional career, and travel to countless countries throughout Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America to participate in professional

meetings. I can't overstate the impact international exposure has had on my personal and professional life.

I believe that every Wayne State student should have the opportunity to study abroad. I understand that may not be practical for a number of reasons. But let's aim higher. Let's at least double the number of students from Wayne State who study abroad by 2021 and, equally important, let's make sure that students from disadvantaged socio-economic and educational backgrounds are well represented among these students who study abroad. Wayne State students will be better educated and better prepared to navigate an increasingly globally connected world for having had that experience.

Positively impact local and global communities

Concerning the third part of our mission—to positively impact local and global communities—where do we stand now?

I hope our impact on the local community is obvious, and because of the time limitation, I will not enumerate our many programs that contribute to the economic, educational, health, and general well-being of our community.

On a global scale, the impact of Wayne State's research and programs have been felt throughout the world for decades, but just this week we announced the sale of Wayne State spinoff RetroSense Therapeutics to the global pharmaceutical company Allergan for \$60 million. Their remarkable technology uses gene therapy to restore vision to the blind. The significance of RetroSense's technology to the global medical community would be difficult to underestimate.

Wayne State and Fudan University in Shanghai recently partnered to create a new joint laboratory: The Fudan-WSU Alliance for Stem Cell Translational Research Laboratory at Fudan. We've taken technology that was developed here at Wayne State and will jointly expand it in China, thereby bringing value to health research in the United States, China, and the world.

Our students are proving to be leaders on a global scale as well. Timmy Global Health WSU just returned from a week in the Dominican Republic in August, where about 14 group members saw 439 patients. These students represent both future med students and non-med students who all share a common passion for promoting health equity around the globe.

So, in sum, when you look closely at our mission statement, and give an honest assessment of where we're at compared to where we want to be, I would say we have a mixed bag. We are moving in the right direction and making great gains in some areas, and falling painfully short in others.

But we're tracking our progress in every category, and you can even follow our progress on a reporting dashboard at budget.wayne.edu.

RESOURCES FOR US TO PERFORM OUR MISSION

Amid an environment of inadequate state support and moderate tuition increases, other sources of revenue have become increasingly important. As you know, two years ago, we launched our \$750 million Pivotal Moments campaign.

With a little more than a year to go until we celebrate the university's 150th anniversary and the milestone that ends our capital campaign, I'm pleased to announce that we have made impressive progress in reaching that goal. We're currently at \$590 million of our \$750 million goal.

Earlier this morning, we announced that our Law School will be receiving the largest gifts in its history. Real estate developers, professional sports team owners and proud Wayne Law alumni Stephen Ross and Dan Gilbert have announced their intentions to donate \$5 million each to our Law School, for a joint gift of \$10 million.

Their gifts will create the Benson Legacy Fund for Wayne Law and the Benson Endowed Enhancement Fund for Wayne Law in recognition of Wayne Law Dean Jocelyn Benson and her successful efforts as dean to elevate the Law School's national reputation and prestige.

It feels like we are getting close in our capital campaign, but we're not letting up; we're pushing harder. We still have a considerable amount of funds to raise in the final two years. And as those of you who cycle long distances or run marathons know well, the last half is always harder than the first!

And as we raise funds to meet our campaign goal, we are also working to focus our current resources on areas that are critical to our mission.

We are working to improve our efficiency and productivity. Many of you are familiar with some of our efforts on the academic side of the university. But improving efficiency and productivity are not just limited to these efforts.

As a result of years of underperformance, the Foundation Investment Committee conducted an assessment of its asset allocation and investment policy. This led to many changes including a change in the investment policy and replacing our traditional advisor model with an Outsourced Chief Investment Officer that should improve the investment returns over the next several years.

The university does a lot of great things, but not all are mission critical. We must take a close, hard look at all university related activities and consider their relative importance through the lens of our mission.

In some cases, this may mean that we may need to reprioritize for general fund support; it may even mean a consideration of shedding some things that are useful and desirable but not absolutely critical to our mission. This will undoubtedly be difficult. However, given our limited resources, we must be disciplined and focus on mission-critical areas.

MEDICAL SCHOOL

One part of our university that has been in the news a lot over the past year is our medical school. It may be tempting to draw premature conclusions based on what has happened in the past or what the news is reporting, sometimes erroneously. I'd like to share some of the facts.

As has been reported, last year we uncovered significant financial losses between the School of Medicine, the Wayne State University Physician Group, and a separate entity called the Fund for Medical Education and Research. When all the numbers were in, the deficit amounted to \$32 million.

How we arrived at this situation has already been covered so I won't use our time to go over it again. But I want to make some points about our situation now, and our vision for the future.

First, we've made significant progress in getting our house in order. Our finances have improved – in fact we expect to be fiscally sound by FY 2018. We have instituted new processes in many areas, including, importantly, budgeting and planning. We have new leaders in place, and I have great confidence in their abilities and their integrity. We are taking on issues that have been pushed down the road for decades. We have begun to institute a new culture, one built on our values of integrity, excellence, innovation, collaboration, and inclusion. These are all hard things to do, and ordinarily they would take years to achieve. But they are the right things to do, and we are doing them now, quickly.

We haven't talked much about the future while we're working through these tough short-term challenges, but we are looking far beyond today's operations, and even the current contract talks with Tenet. We have every intention of completing these agreements, and will remain good partners with Tenet and the DMC, but our vision extends far beyond service contracts.

We have the opportunity to build an academic health enterprise that will be a leader in tomorrow's health care world. It will of course include our missions of educating doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and other health professionals, conducting breakthrough research, and providing outstanding care to our community. But our vision must be much bolder. Health care is changing at a rapid pace. Wayne State must be at the forefront of the health care of tomorrow. We must work to close the health disparities gaps that exists, starting right here in our community. We must be the paradigm of excellence in urban health.

We will get there. And you can be sure of one thing—as we move forward, we will be guided by our values in every decision we make.

Recently, as happens in many organizations, we drifted from our values with disastrous consequences. But our values, including Excellence, which I referred to as the “Soul” of Wayne State in my 2014 University address, runs deep. It's been woven into our DNA since our founding as the Detroit Medical College almost 150 years ago. We must stay true to them—and draw upon them for guidance—as we advance into uncharted territory. Our values are our North Star!

CONCLUDING REMARKS

We – all of us at Wayne State, starting with me – have a responsibility. To each other. Our students. Our community. Our future. I am confident that we are on a trajectory to becoming a preeminent, public, urban research university known for academic and research excellence, success across a diverse student body, and meaningful engagement in its urban community.

We have the pieces in place: an ambitious strategic plan that we are systematically implementing; talented and hard-working faculty and staff at all levels; an incredible student body; generous supporters; an urban environment that is transforming and full of exciting potential.

Let's continue to work together and get the job done!

Before we leave today, I want to ask something of all of you. I want you to give some serious thought to how you can help Wayne State University achieve its mission. I want you to write it down on the card we gave you when you came in. You weren't expecting me to give you homework today, but I really want you to consider your role in our university's mission, write it down, and keep it at your desk.

And I'd like to hear what you've written. Please share it with me at president@wayne.edu. I know that your commitment will inspire me, too. And those that inspire me can inspire others, so I will be sharing them with you in various ways, including a blog I will begin writing in the near future.

One question: ***How will you live our mission?*** Keep this question—and our mission—in your thoughts.

Because each of you has an important contribution to make to fulfill our mission, and that is why I am so optimistic about our future.

Together, we can do it. Each employee—no matter what your title or where you work—can help us get there.

Once again, thank you all for coming here today.

Before I conclude, let me note that our football team is looking mighty good this year. I look forward to seeing you at our games.

Go Warriors!