

**FALL 2009 OPENING ADDRESS TO
SOUTHEASTERN FACULTY AND STAFF**

Thursday, August 13, 2009

Introduction

Good Morning. It is a pleasure to welcome everyone back as we prepare for the start of another fall semester. I trust that everyone had an enjoyable vacation this summer. Before we get started with today's program, I would like to first recognize and honor our retired faculty and staff with us today and ask them to stand. Thank you for your service! Next, I would like to introduce our University Executive Team:

Ms. Sharon Robinson – Vice President for Student Affairs

Mr. Ross Walkup – Vice President for Business Affairs

Dr. Charles Weiner – Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs

Dr. Doug McMillan – Vice President for Educational Outreach and Project Development

Dr. Claire Stubblefield – Special Assistant to the President, Director of Diversity and Affirmative Action Officer

Dr. Bryon Clark – Dean of Graduate & University Studies

Ms. Liz McCraw – Dean of Enrollment Management

Mr. Dan Moore – Executive Director for Information Technology

Mr. Kyle Stafford – Executive Director for University Advancement

Mr. Keith Baxter – Director of Intercollegiate Athletics

Mr. Alan Burton – Director of Public Information

Dr. Ken Chinn---Chair of our Faculty Senate and

Mr. Scott Hensley---President of our Staff Association

And also my wife, Joan

Please join me in expressing appreciation to this talented group of individuals for their service.

AFFIRMING IDENTITY

I will begin my remarks today by discussing the importance of understanding and affirming our identity as a University.

First and foremost, we are Southeastern Oklahoma State University, a comprehensive regional, public university serving a diverse student body. We are a university committed to innovative teaching and learning through academic and student life programs with a solid liberal arts and science foundation. We are Southeastern and that is something that we should all embrace. As we continue to celebrate our centennial this year, I would ask that you take a moment to reflect upon how many lives have been shaped and guided by this institution over the past 100 years. And during your time here as a faculty or staff member, think about the positive impact that you have made on the lives of others. Think about all of the students who have passed through these halls and have gone on and been successful in their chosen fields.

Think about all of the history, traditions, and culture that have been and continue to be a part of this University. For example, each year during the holiday season, we hold a Candlelighting ceremony in this very auditorium, an event that dates back to December 18, 1921. Think about and appreciate this rich heritage the next time you walk across our Magnolia tree-lined campus and see our students entering Morrison Hall, the Henry G. Bennett Memorial Library, and the Russell Building.

Our Emeritus Professor of History David Norris has brought our past to life in his fascinating book about Southeastern. He notes, of course, that formal education in this area pre-dated Southeastern. The first educational institutions in our area were well respected schools run by the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations, and this cultural heritage endures at Southeastern today.

It was exactly 100 years ago that President Marcus E. Moore and Vice President Elihu B. Hinshaw were busily preparing for the first fall semester at Southeastern, which was then a teacher-training “normal school.” The first faculty, many just beginning their careers, donated the books that became the core holdings of Southeastern’s first library. Henry G. Bennett, Hallie McKinney, and Paul E. Laird were some of those first professors whose names are memorialized in our campus geography today.

From the beginning, Southeastern was a coed institution with innovative academic schedules that would enable working teachers to advance their education during school breaks. There were many challenges along the way. In the summer school of 1915, a record number of students enrolled due to new teacher certification requirements in the state. President William C. Canterbury, known for his pragmatic and unpretentious approach, created a well-organized “tent city” for a couple hundred male students behind the school. New students

adjusting to life in the dorms might try to imagine what it would be like adjusting to living in a tent in the middle of the summer! We are honored today to have in our midst the grandson of President Canterbury, Mr. Bob Story.

It was in 1920, under the leadership of Henry Garland Bennett, that Southeastern became a four-year college offering a Bachelor of Arts degree. The continued importance of the teaching profession was evident in the opening of the Russell Building that year, named after a prominent education professor at New York's Columbia College.

In the mid-1930s, Southeastern became one of the very first colleges led by a woman president. Kate Galt Zaneis was controversial for a number of reasons, such as calling faculty meetings at 7 a.m. When she called a meeting even earlier, at 5 a.m., some of the professors arrived in their pajamas as a protest! In spite of these and other controversies, she was a pathbreaker in instituting equal pay for equal work.

In the 1940s, Southeastern entered a new period of stability and growth with the presidency of T.T. Montgomery, for whom this auditorium was named. Another key leader who developed the institution we know today was Allen Shearer, who served as Dean under President Montgomery and then followed him as President for most of the 1950s and 60s. We gratefully recognize their accomplishments as well as others who served Southeastern at all levels, including such outstanding educators and leaders as E.T. Dunlap, Tom Houston, James Morrison, Eugene Slaughter, Bloomer Sullivan, and Doc Parham.

The early faculty, staff, and administrators at Southeastern came into education to seek not just a job or career but a calling; not making a living but making a life. They were all involved with creating the tone and culture on this campus—ordinary people doing extraordinary things—and look at what they accomplished. We need to ask ourselves, how do we give back? How do we serve? We need to remind ourselves, as they did, what brought us into this profession initially—students and teaching.

It is this legacy that we must carry on, because we will begin to move forward as a University only after we fully appreciate our past. Indeed, a profound appreciation of our history helps to shape our identity.

Our students need to see themselves reflected in the environment around them – in the curriculum, faculty, staff, and in the faces of their classmates – to avoid any feelings of invisibility or marginality that can hinder student success.

Our students need to sense that they belong to a larger, shared community.

Those students who feel that their own needs for affirmation have been met are more willing and able to engage with each other across lines of difference.

Affirming identity is not contradictory to, but a prerequisite for building community. Those students who feel left out of the process do not readily

participate in community-building activities and thus do not have a full appreciation of our identity.

BUILDING AN IDENTITY

I mentioned earlier the importance of our history in terms of where we are now and where we are going. It is always amazing to me, when you reflect upon the previous academic year, just how much was achieved by our students, faculty, and staff at Southeastern. These accomplishments add to our history and help to build our identity.

STUDENTS

Our students carried on the Southeastern tradition quite well in 2008-09. For instance, Southeastern's **Ticia Burkhalter** was one of two students nationwide to receive the 2009 Frank Newman Leadership Award, which honors outstanding civic leadership.

Another Southeastern student, **Keith Watkins**, was named a Brad Henry International Scholar and studied in Wales.

Among many other student achievements this past year:

Dale Daniel earned first-place honors in the Regional University/ Community College competition at Research Day at the State Capitol. The authors of Southeastern's research project were presenters **Dale Daniel, Tucker Harrison, Kati Crawford, Michael C. Pilkington** and project mentor **Dr. Nancy Paiva**, Associate Professor of Chemistry at Southeastern.

The Southeastern Chorale, under the direction of **Dr. Stacy Weger**, performed at historic Carnegie Hall in New York City on June 2.

The Southeastern women's basketball team compiled a 21-8 record and earned an invitation to the NCAA Division II Tournament.

The Southeastern softball team advanced to the NCAA Division II South Central Super Regional and won 53 games for the second year in a row.

The Southeastern Rodeo team had three competitors qualify for nationals – sophomore **Ryan Von Ahn** and senior **Trevor Connolly** were the Team Roping National Champions. Southeastern finished second in the National Men's team standings.

The Southeastern Oklahoma State University flight team placed 11th overall at the National Intercollegiate Flying Association National Flight Competition.

Southeastern also placed 12th overall in the flying events at the national competition. A total of 28 teams competed, with Southeastern earning the highest national ranking among the four-year schools in Oklahoma. These were some impressive accomplishments, to say the least.

FACULTY-STAFF

Our faculty and staff also accomplished a great deal during the 2008-09 academic year. In the interest of time, I will cite just a few examples:

Oklahoma Gov. Brad Henry appointed **Dr. David Conway**, director of the Southeastern Aviation Sciences Institute, to the Oklahoma Aeronautics Commission.

Dr. Conway also serves as president of the University Aviation Association.

Dr. Robert McFadden, Professor of Music, was presented the 2009 Music Teachers National Association Foundation Fellow Award.

Dean of Students **Camille Phelps** was honored as Educator of the Year by the Tulsa branch of the NAACP and the Christian Ministers Alliance of Tulsa.

Sharon Morrison, director of the Henry G. Bennett Memorial Library, received the Mountain Plains Library Association 2009 Unsung Hero Award.

Professor **Wayne Jones** was the 2009 recipient of the Dr. William E. Tarrants American Society of Safety Engineers Outstanding Safety Educator award. Southeastern's recipient of the 2009 Oklahoma Higher Education Conference Excellence in Teaching Award was **Dr. Jennifer Hicks**.

And **Dr. Claire Stubblefield**, Special Assistant to the President, Director of Institutional Diversity and Affirmative Action Officer, was honored with a scholarship in her name sponsored by the Tulsa Christian Ministers Alliance and the Tulsa Chapter of the NAACP.

Let's congratulate all of these outstanding representatives of Southeastern Oklahoma State University.

FACULTY-TENURE/PROMOTION

A number of our faculty members received promotions and/ or tenure during the past year and are to be congratulated:

Dr. Stanley Rice, Department of Biological Sciences, was promoted from Associate Professor to Professor

The following faculty members were **promoted from Assistant Professor to Associate Professor and received tenure**:

Dr. Kimberly Donovan, Department of Behavioral Sciences

Dr. Jennifer Hicks, Department of Behavioral Sciences

Dr. Nancy Hill, Department of Educational Instruction and Leadership

Dr. Brad Ludrick, Department of Biological Sciences

Dr. Susan Morrison, Department of Educational Instruction and Leadership

Dr. Virginia Parrish, Department of
English, Humanities and Languages
and

Dr. Claire Stubblefield, Department of Educational Instruction and Leadership

DOCTORATE

Also, **Dr. Michael Reed**, Department of Health, Physical Education and Recreation, received his doctorate.

Let's offer a round of applause to all of these faculty members for their hard work and dedication.

UNIVERSITY-WIDE

On a university-wide basis, Southeastern's John Massey School of Business received accreditation this year from the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business-International. Southeastern is one of only four Oklahoma schools to hold this accreditation. This is a remarkable achievement, and the entire Massey School of Business faculty and staff are to be congratulated.

Southeastern Oklahoma State University received a federal grant of \$1.16 million over the next four years to continue the Native American Excellence in Education program. The project, collaboration between Southeastern and The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, with the support of the local public schools, provides support and training for 12 Native American students in completing a pre-service education program that leads to a Bachelor of Education degree.

Southeastern Oklahoma State University once again earned high rankings from "Diverse Issues in Higher Education" magazine. According to the publication, Southeastern ranks sixth in the nation in awarding undergraduate degrees to Native American graduates in all disciplines combined.

All accomplishments – student, faculty and staff – should be shared and celebrated by each person in this room. We are a team. We are a community. And we are all part of Southeastern's identity.

Let's once again recognize all of these achievements with our applause.

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

From a financial perspective, this fiscal year, Southeastern's Educational and General I (E&GI) total projected revenue is \$41.714 million. We were fortunate, along with other public universities in OK, and received \$1.538 million in federal stimulus funds to backfill the revenues. State appropriations represent a decrease of \$788,000 compared to last year, dropping to 46.6% of total budget revenue. The percent of state appropriations has declined over the past 4 years from 52.5% in FY 2006-2007 to the present rate.

Major E&G I budget increases include:

Mandatory costs (employee health care, debt service payments, and energy costs)

- Scholarships
- Increase to reserves
- annualized FY 2009 faculty/ staff salaries
- And accreditation costs.

Our budget philosophy was planned around our University mission and strategic commitments, with an emphasis on contingency planning and increasing our projected unobligated reserve balance.

Our total E&G I projected expenditures for FY2009-2010 is \$41.223 million with the key allocations budgeted to Instruction (50.9%), Academic Support (6.4%), and Student Services (8.4%).

Academic and academic/ student support services continue to receive primary emphases (65.7%) reflecting support for the teaching and learning environment and the university's comprehensive approach to student development. In our continuing effort to maximize funds devoted to instructional/ academic support services, the administrative costs percentage dropped to 8.6%, remaining well below the 16% cap requirement of the State Regents.

Because of the difficult economic times, we made the decision to not raise tuition rates this year. Also, for the second year in a row, we are offering a Textbook Reserve Program to assist our students in holding down costs.

Obviously, we hope that better days are ahead as far as state allocations, but in the meantime, we must continue our efforts in conservative budgeting, contingency planning, private fundraising, and grantsmanship.

CONCLUSION/HOW WE MOVE FORWARD

In August of 1976, I taught my first class at Southeastern in Room 222 in this very building -- Morrison Hall—and I still remember that very day. I look out in the audience today and see close colleagues, friends, and mentors from those early years. I have been one of you, I have sat where you have sat, I have taught in the same classrooms that you have taught, and I have traveled the same journey-- and indeed, I am still traveling that same journey. I have been through the hard times of the early and mid 80's and the revenue shortfalls in Oklahoma from 2002 through 2005/ 06.

Our administrative perspective will be one of serving the university and its constituencies. We serve among equals. We cannot become someone we are not or place ourselves above the institution and its noble calling.

Being content to be a mirror of whatever age or era we find ourselves in just doesn't call for much from within. The determination to be known as a university with a vision, mission and identity will call for something deep within each of us. It will call for commitment, for discipline, for determination to reach and stretch beyond where we are now.

I ask today that you join me as we, together as a team, make a commitment to rededication and to continual improvement through returning to our very core—the vision, mission, commitments, values, and expectations that shape our identity. We must have integrity and we must be courageous—with courage to seek advice and counsel from our colleagues---not being content with what is now but rather what Southeastern could be---together stretching our imaginations and our sense of what we can do to make a greater impact on the world. How we all work together will shape and reaffirm Southeastern's future identity.

We must make sound decisions based on what is best for this institution and its students. During the decision-making process, we must continually ask ourselves:

Are students better served by the decisions made?

Is the environment for teaching, learning, service, and research enhanced by the decisions made?

Are the institution and its employees better off because of what has been decided?

Our future depends upon the development of relationships based on trust, respect, caring, and clear communication to complement this basic foundation for decision-making.

We must not be afraid of change, and realize that positive change requires shared leadership. That means that everyone in this room today is a part of that process.

Southeastern's mission remains that of providing an environment that enables students to reach their highest potential. By having personal access to excellent teaching, challenging academic programs, and extracurricular experiences, students will develop skills and habits that promote values for career preparation, responsible citizenship, and lifelong learning.

We are at a very critical time in the history of the University. Critical, but at the same time, exciting. Exciting because we have the opportunity to renew, revitalize, and reinvigorate Southeastern as we move forward together.

You are destined to be here at this moment to continue the building of something very special---something that not every faculty member or administrator is given the opportunity to participate in throughout their entire career---the building of the second century of Southeastern Oklahoma State University.

This university has never allowed its spirit to be broken despite facing significant obstacles and challenges throughout its history. Embrace the challenges that lie ahead and the daily pressures that may arise but do not forget the sacrifices of those who have gone before us. Then and now it is our passion for this institution---the fact that we truly care about why we are here and what we are doing---that has made the difference.

In conclusion, I want to express my personal thanks for your support and constant encouragement. Joan and I have always been honored to be a part of the Southeastern family. It is truly a privilege for me to serve as Interim President of Southeastern Oklahoma State University.

Joan and I wish you a happy, successful, and very productive year!