



COMMUNITY CONVOCATION

AUGUST 12, 2021

WELCOME - JACK SHANNON

It is so wonderful to see our Lasallian community gathered together here today. When I delivered my first convocation remarks back in August of 2019, I took for granted our ability to meet in this theater. After the past 18 months spent navigating our way in the face of a global pandemic, I no longer do so. Instead, I am most grateful that we can enjoy the blessing of each other's company today.

Together and by association, through the hard work of you and many others beyond this room, with the prayers and support of our Christian Brothers, and not least by the Grace of God, we have managed to somehow make it to today – the beginning of our 2021-2022 academic year.

As we open this academic year in community, I would like to use this moment to revisit a framework that I shared in the spring for our working together as a Lasallian community of educators to realize our shared objective of a stronger and more vibrant university that ever more effectively serves the needs of our students.

Reflecting upon the symbolism of the Signum Fidel star on the façade of Barry Hall, there are five questions I propose we ask ourselves before making a decision or taking an action.

The first question, "Is it Lasallian?"

If we are to be successful as a Lasallian community, we must inspire and infuse our daily work – together and by association – with our core values of faith in the presence of God; concern for the poor and social justice; respect for all persons; a quality education for our students; and an inclusive and supportive campus community.

The second question, "Does it support the development, growth, and success of our students?"

If we are to be true to the teachings of de La Salle, our students must always be the focus of our actions and thoughts. We have been called to educate and support our students as we walk alongside them in their journeys. Through their academic studies and research interests. In their athletic, extracurricular, and campus activities. As they provide service to our community and society. And, ultimately, in making their timely progression to earning a degree and starting a career.

The third question, "Does it help with more effectively telling 'the CBU Story'?"

Emulating the modesty and humility of the Christian Brothers whose name we share, our university oftentimes has hidden our lamp under a bushel basket. While admirable, such an approach is no longer a viable one in a marketplace where we must compete with other universities and colleges for what will be a decreasing number of new high school graduates over the next decade. Instead, we must more effectively and more strategically elevate and broaden public awareness, appreciation, and recognition of our university and the life-changing work we are doing.

The CBU Story must be told by each of us as well as by our many alumni and supporters. All of us need to be cheerleaders for our university. Within the Mid-South region. Across the nation. And throughout the Lasallian world.

The fourth question, "Does it help make our university more financially secure and sustainable?"

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While our Lasallian mission is our greatest asset, we also must confront and address the age-old conundrum of “No money, no mission.” As we begin to celebrate our sesquicentennial, we cannot take for granted the university’s fiscal health and future viability.

If we are to make high-quality educational opportunities accessible for more students and their families, we must continue to invest in things that will drive enrollment growth. Things that will improve student retention, persistence, and graduation rates. Things that will dramatically increase annual fundraising and substantially grow the endowment portfolio. And things that will derive the greatest possible benefit from our scarce available resources.

The fifth and final question, “Is it a smart, strategic, and necessary investment in our people, our programs, and our campus?”

The people of a university are its most important resource, closely followed by the quality of its facilities. Going forward, we therefore need to support, develop, and equip you, our faculty, staff, and administrators, with the necessary resources. While this will not be easy, it is something that is long overdue and absolutely essential for us, as a community of Lasallian colleagues, to undertake the important work we have been called to do.

I believe that these five questions can provide a useful framework as our campus community embarks upon a number of important initiatives this coming year. Paul Haught and I will be touching upon some of these during our time together this morning. But, first, I would like to invite Paul to come forward to introduce the new members of our Lasallian community.

PAUL HAUGHT’S REMARKS

COVID-19 and 2021-2022

I’m going to take the next several minutes to provide updates and announcements mostly related to my oversight duties in Academic Affairs and to share some of my perspectives on the new academic year. These remarks begin with the need to affirm that as we start the year, everyone will need to wear masks in the university’s public spaces, including in the classroom. This policy also applies to our professors as they teach. Like all of you, my patience with the whims of the pandemic has worn thin, and I regret the renewed inconvenience of having to require masks despite our collective compliance with CBU’s vaccination requirement. Nonetheless, we need to continue to utilize this simple safeguard as we hold out hope for an upsurge in vaccinations by the greater public and a coinciding reduction in COVID case counts. As a parent of a child who is not yet vaccine eligible, I am personally grateful for your cooperation with this requirement.

One other COVID-related item for the faculty came out of Academic Council yesterday, which is to affirm the need for seating charts again this fall. I will share this again in a follow-up email communication.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Shifting now from the gloominess of the pandemic to more inspiring items, the broader work of the university has remained energetic throughout the summer, and there are numerous accomplishments and initiatives to enumerate and applaud as the work of your colleagues.

Beginning with the School of Sciences, many of you have probably noticed the large building being assembled in the parking

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lot adjacent to the softball field. This facility will support the clinical education of our health sciences students in the PA program and in Nursing. Our vision is that this much needed facility marks only the initial—and indeed temporary—phase of a much more robust investment in infrastructural support for health sciences at CBU. In the meantime, don't be surprised to see the occasional pink flamingo and vinyl lawn chair make an appearance near this rather fine portable structure.

Congratulations to our PA colleagues on their students' strong performance on the PA board exam, where this year's graduating class so far has a 100% first time pass rate, currently outperforming last year's very good 91% first time pass rate. This is a vitally important metric for the PA program's accreditation, so kudos to Gary Tooley and the team.

Staying in the School of Sciences, this is the inaugural semester of CBU's newest Master's degree program, and I need to thank Serge Salan and Alex Happ for their efforts to co-coordinate our Data Science degree and Divya Choudhary for mapping out a path to get this done. Dr. Happ, along with Dr. Sam Alperin in Education, have also been busy this summer as CO-PIs of an NSF Noyce Grant which is aimed at building capacity for preparing future STEM educators. Congratulations, Alex and Sam, on this grant and thank you for investing your time on this innovative program.

Visions of a new facility also continue to occupy the work of our Engineering faculty as they have put together an incredibly thoughtful plan for a new innovation lab building. Thanks to Engineering Dean, Dr. Malhas and Mark Billingsley and Mike Clancy in Advancement for your efforts to mobilize the fundraising efforts to move us closer to groundbreaking. Dr. Malhas and the Engineering chairs spent the first half of the summer busily putting the final touches on their self-study for ABET reaccreditation, with a site visit scheduled for later this fall. Looking ahead, the School of Engineering is preparing new program proposals for bachelors degrees in Engineering Technology, Construction Management, and Environmental Engineering. Finally, congratulations to Dr. Randel Price for being named Associate Dean, which gives him oversight of the school's graduate programs among other duties.

In the School of Arts, I want to thank our colleagues in Behavioral Sciences for their sustained efforts to build out a proposal for a new Master's degree in Counseling. Once it clears the approval process, this degree promises to become a transformational program for the university, one that would complement our recent growth in health sciences, while adding a valuable and timely emphasis in behavioral health. If all goes as planned, this proposal will receive vetting by the Board of Trustees later this fall.

One relatively quiet but significant development for the School's Education Department and for the University as a whole is an unexpected new collaboration with the highly respected Memphis Teacher Residency. For those unfamiliar with it, Memphis Teacher Residency, or MTR as it is commonly called, has provided specialized teacher preparation in Memphis since 2008 in partnership with Union University. Its graduates are highly sought after by regional schools, which is partially reflective of MTR's so-called medical model for educator preparation. Sadly, MTR found itself in sudden need of a new university partner this year when it fell out of mission-alignment with Union, when Union announced stricter and arguably more exclusionary moral codes around sexual identity. Thus, just at the time when we at CBU were making preparations for commencement, and just as our newest Dean, Dr. Ben Jordan, was hoping to get a little vacation in before the storm of work hit, we had to bring our teams into dialogue about how CBU might be able to help. Thanks to the feedback of the Education faculty and with Dr. Rosetta Mayfield-Burford's and Dr. Jordan's leadership, we were able to identify an immediate academic pathway for MTR's reading specialist students. Moving forward, we are in active discussions with MTR about how CBU might support and benefit

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from a partnership around MTR's core residency program, and I look forward to seeing how that develops.

As if that wasn't keeping our Education peers sufficiently busy, Nancy Wilder and colleagues were in the midst of their own accreditation work, preparing their self-study—now submitted—for CAEP accreditation and renewal of state teacher and teacher leader endorsements. A big thank you to all of Education faculty and staff!

This is a big transitional year for our colleagues in the School of Business. Dr. Lydia Rosencrants was installed as dean earlier this summer, and has been moved by the widespread commitment she has seen in her colleagues to the Lasallian values that drew her to CBU. Dr. Rosencrants is continuing the work of her predecessor, Dr. Joe Turek, in pursuing ACBSP accreditation this year, and we both thank Joe for his leadership for the past three years and for laying the foundation for the school's newest stand-alone bachelors' degrees in Management, Marketing, and Finance.

Earlier this summer, we announced the installation of Dr. Divya Choudhary as Dean of Graduate Programs. This division of the university is a temporary placeholder as Divya leads a strategic planning effort to affirm an identity, structure, and growth plan for our the enrollment management and student support operations for our graduate programs. Divya's contributions in this area have been substantial and much needed, especially in creating pipelines for international students to obtain degrees in graduate engineering and now Data Science. She has a great team to assist her efforts led by Erica Mitchell in Graduate Admissions. I also want to salute the excellent work of Jessica Morris, who oversees CBU's dual enrollment activities in addition to serving double duty in Graduate Admissions. Dual Enrollment continues to grow in strategic importance for the university, and Jessica has been an outstanding liaison with the university's school partners.

As with Graduate Programs, we're also looking to review and optimize the design of what has most recently been CBU's College of Adult and Professional Studies. Dr. Dale Hale graciously agreed earlier this summer to parlay his experience and leadership in online and distance education to help us find a new and sustainable footing for our academic offerings for adult and non-traditional students. We cannot thank Dale and his incredibly talented team in the Center for Digital Instruction sufficiently for their mission-salvaging efforts this past year, and I'm excited to work with him in this new and vital venture. Stay tuned for more announcements from CDI as well including a new podcast series on a range of important academic topics.

Plough Library has now gone live with its digital archive, containing over 1500 searchable artifacts. You can find this on the Plough Library home page under "Brother Leo O'Donnell Archives." Thank you, Kay Cunningham and the Plough Library team.

This fall, ITS and the Registrar's Office will be implementing an updated version of Degree Works that will include a new dashboard design, Student Educational Planner, and student/advisor interface. The updated Degree Works will include responsive design that will adapt to the user's device. Thanks to Scott Summers, David Corlew, and many others. But will it work with my abacus?

David Corlew and his ITS colleague, Alex Bland, are part of a major interdepartmental team working to implement our Starfish retention and advising platform that we started to utilize last spring. We are very close to achieving full launch of Starfish, which will allow us to bring increasing sophistication to our advising, student support, and student success efforts. A quick thank you to Dr. Lurene Kelley for her work to keep the momentum going this summer during our leadership transition in Student Success. Also, when you get prompted to join or receive training on Starfish, please follow the prompt.

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In CBU's Honors Program, Program Director Connie Beck will be adding a new twist to the program's tradition of community engagement and service with the introduction of a New Honors Lasallian Advocacy Project and an associated Lasallian Advocacy Colloquium. Look for more information about these programs in the coming weeks.

Career Services and Financial Aid collaborated to streamline and re-invent the "On-Campus Student Employment Program," utilizing Handshake as the primary platform for all on-campus job postings. Career Services Director, Amy Ware, asked me to remind you that if anyone still needs to hire a student employee this year, please contact Career Services and stay tuned for their unfolding of a new Career Readiness Badge Program for on-campus student employees.

Dr. Dan Harper and Melissa Luttmann—along with Matthew Cardoza in Admissions, and Divya Choudhary—have been working to bring in a large group of new international students. Their efforts have helped double our total international student population over last year while forging new connections within the global Lasallian network and beyond. Among other things, it's that network that has allowed us to welcome a new colleague coming to us from La Salle Bogata, Dr. Jairo Isaza-Castro, who will soon be joining our faculty in Economics in the School of Business. Dr. Isaza's scholarship and pro-labor activism made him and his family unfortunate targets of personal threats at home, and it became necessary for them to seek asylum outside Colombia. Through the work of the President's office, Mission and Identity, International Initiatives, Human Resources, and the School of Business, CBU is proud to provide refuge for this talented scholar and his family. Welcome, Jairo. We're glad you're safe, and we're glad you're here.

OUR NEWEST STUDENTS

Many of you have heard me repeatedly over the past year expressing concerns about the likelihood of academic weaknesses in the incoming class due to their experiences completing their high school careers in COVID-disrupted and under-resourced schools not designed for effective online teaching. My concerns have unfortunately been realized as evidenced by a larger than normal number of students starting out at CBU in remedial math and English. We will swiftly get to the root causes of this development, and we will take strategic and clear action to improve the academic profile of next year's class. In the meantime, our colleagues are already stepping up to support this year's students and meeting them where they are. I have been moved by the deep and Lasallian commitment by our Math and English chairs and faculty to prepare this year's class for long-term success at CBU, and I thank them all for making the necessary adjustments to support our newest CBU students.

The summer has also been a season of change in our Student Success division. I can't say enough good things already about our newest colleagues, Dr. Ahmad Sims and Dr. Levertis Meeks. With their guidance, we will soon be making progress to fill one of our greatest academic needs, which is to provide regular and reliable testing services for students with accessibility needs and students who require alternative testing times. Plans for the fall semester are in development, and I look forward to sharing those with you soon. The entire Student Success team has provided an extraordinary amount of effort and support this summer to advise and register the incoming class, and there are a few people I'd like to recognize for their standout work. In addition to Dr. Meeks, I want to thank Justin Bowles and Scott Geis for stepping in to make sure that we once again have a high quality, mission-centric, and transformational CBU 101 program. What a special group of Lasallian educators to have brought together around this important first-year experience program.

Earning a special place in my heart for their above-and-beyond service this summer are Connie Beck and Sarah Woods. Together, they came to the rescue when we needed their talents and can-do spirit. Their leadership established an immediate

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tone of confidence, competence, and joy to uplift the new student orientation program. Our student leaders were equally amazing for making their newest peers feel welcome and supported, but it was Sarah and Connie's reassuring presence that enabled them to shine. Would Sarah, Connie, and the entire Student Success team please stand. Thank you all for your superb service!

ACCREDITATION

Just a few final notes before I close.

This December, we will receive final word on our SACSCOC reaffirmation of accreditation for our 10 year decennial review. We provided our formal responses last spring, and we are optimistic that we were able to address the concerns of the onsite committee.

The PA program continues to make good progress in advance of its next accreditation visits in fall 2022. Thanks for the help of Matt Suda for wrangling the program's data and for Amber Hall and Lisa Harrison for their efforts on clinical site recruitment and preceptor assessment.

The next accreditation visit of any sort for CBU is in October, when ABET will be conducting a virtual review of our Engineering degree programs.

CAEP, which was mentioned earlier, will be on campus in spring 2022 to review our Education licensure pathways.

I will be convening the Calendar Committee promptly to review the 2022 summer calendar and recommend calendars for the next two academic years. I will be working closely with Faculty Assembly leadership, among others, to ensure that the calendar recommendations will develop out of a goal-driven and mission-aligned process.

Meetings have already begun taking place between Enrollment Management, Marketing and Communications, and the Academic schools to ensure tighter integration, transparency, and improved outcomes for undergraduate recruitment. The will is there across the board to achieve needed improvements and to bring in an excellent class, and we will be working very actively throughout the year on this critical work for our mission and for our bottom line.

Lastly, CBU has engaged the services of Casagrande Consulting to review faculty and staff compensation. Full time faculty will receive a survey next Monday from the faculty task force to assist its work on this initiative.

Thank you for your time this morning. I look forward to working with all of you this year and wish you all safety and wellness as we continue to weather this challenging pandemic while welcoming our students and colleagues back to campus.

STATE OF THE UNIVERSITY – JACK SHANNON

Thank you, Paul.

At the outset, I would like to provide an update regarding the university's fiscal situation, as I suspect that this may be on the minds of many of you.

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Over the past 18 months, the University's financial position has been significantly impacted by added costs and revenue losses associated with COVID. Federal dollars from the Higher Education Economic Relief Funds (HEERF), as well as the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), have helped to mitigate those costs and revenue losses. On behalf of our community, I would like to acknowledge and thank our Finance colleagues, particularly Ron Brandon and Laura Haddock, for their incredible work in securing these funds for us.

Actual expenses related to COVID were \$1.3 million and lost revenue was \$2.9 million. As the pandemic has negatively impacted our students as well, the University has disbursed \$1.6 million in emergency aid grants to students and we expect to disburse \$2.3 million more in the coming months. By the end of this fiscal year CBU will have received loans and grants totaling approximately \$13 million.

All of these governmental dollars have been spent protecting and preserving our CBU community and, as a result, we have managed to successfully mitigate much of the pandemic's negative fiscal impact. We have not resorted to making layoffs, we have not elected to reduce employee benefits, and, instead of a hiring freeze, we have brought on board a record number of new faculty while also strategically investing in new staff who are focused on the success, health, well-being and development of our students. I want you to know that, going forward, it is both my hope and objective that we will be able to avoid the draconian measures that other universities felt compelled to take this past year.

That said, we must recognize that we still have much work to do in the fiscal area. This year will be a pivotal one for our University. We must continue to build a more solid financial foundation and, to do that, we must address the structural deficit that has confronted us for many years. This will require us to continue to grow our enrollments, to further improve upon our student retention and graduation rates, and to expand our available financial resources through new and expanded academic offerings, more grant funding, and substantially greater fundraising for scholarships, facilities and programs.

Over the course of the past year, we have accomplished a number of important things to help pave the way for our future progress.

Significant strides have been made on the IT front both in infrastructure and software deployments. Brett Doty and his team this past year implemented several network solutions that will capture for the university more than \$300,000 in savings over the next three years. This fiscal year, the largest IT project to be undertaken will be the replacement and expansion of our campus wireless network.

Dr. Haught in his remarks mentioned the recent implementation of the Starfish platform in support of our student success initiatives. We also recently implemented the Slate as our customer relationship management or CRM platform for student admissions and enrollment management. Together, these tools are expected to substantially improve our recruitment and retention of students.

On the Admissions front, Brian Dalton, Raquel Saulsberry, and Elizabeth Romagni, along with their respective team members, have worked tirelessly throughout the course of the past year to build an incoming cohort of just over 400 new students who will begin their studies here at CBU next week. In doing so, they have been focused on achieving the rather ambitious net tuition revenue and tuition discount rate goals that we set for ourselves last fall. I am pleased to report that we are on track toward meeting those goals with a resulting boost for our fiscal situation for this year.

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Thanks to the efforts of the Student Development & Campus Life team led by Beth Gerl, significant strides also have been made recently in making CBU a more engaging and vibrant campus for our students in the coming academic year. These efforts include a new design and coordination approach to “Welcome Weekend” with a significant focus on community-building both on campus and within the City of Memphis; the convening of weekly meetings with the Student Activities Council (SAC) leadership team to create a more robust array of new student welcoming activities during “Buc Week”; and the creation of a new “Buc-A-News” calendar which will highlight Office of Student Engagement events throughout the academic year.

During the upcoming Fall semester, colleagues from the Counseling Center and the Division of Student Development and Campus Life will be working to establish a CBU chapter of Active Minds, the leading nonprofit national organization dedicated to raising mental health awareness among college students via peer-to-peer dialogue and interaction.

On the facilities front, recent improvements include a new HVAC system for the Nolan Building and new roofs for Buckman Hall and Canale Arena. Perhaps more readily noticeable are the recent improvements to our softball facilities. This fall will see the completion of new classroom and lab spaces for our Nursing and Physician Assistant Studies programs. Overall, our campus has never looked better thanks to hard work and tireless efforts of Bill Haught and his team.

Our Lasallian values have spurred the recent creation of the President’s Commission for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusive Excellence, and I am grateful to Mary McConner and everyone who is serving as either a co-chair or a member of that important initiative. Under the leadership of Brother Pat Conway, those shared values also have prompted our planning for a future Lasallian Institute for Social Justice here at CBU, along with our publication of the “CBU Red Book” telling the twin stories of CBU and the founder of the Christian Brothers, St. John Baptist de La Salle. Copies of the Red Book will be distributed to all incoming students, and each of you will receive a copy of it as well after today’s program.

Mark Billingsley and his Advancement team have been busy working to expand and enhance our fundraising capabilities. This past year we have received substantial governmental grants to support our STEM education and community engagement efforts. In addition, we have used online and peer-to-peer campaigns to raise funding for a student emergency needs fund along with a number of academic programs and athletic projects. We also have launched a President’s Alumni Engagement Council and a Black Alumni Association, and we soon will be creating a Hispanic/Latino Alumni Association and a Young Alumni Initiative. At the same time, we have continued to solicit and secure financial support for our top-priority capital project, the construction of new and renovated facilities for the Gadomski School of Engineering.

The recently announced restructuring of the Athletics Department and the associated administrative appointments of Donna Crone, Jessie Carmack and Lee Parks is expected to produce even higher levels of performance by our student-athletes both academically and athletically.

Leslie Graff and the Marketing & Communications team have been working hard to elevate our university’s reputation and profile. Later this fall, with the assistance of an outside marketing agency, the team will begin rolling out new marketing, advertising and branding initiatives in support of our student recruitment efforts on the regional, national, and international levels. In the nearer term, the team will be unveiling a number of things to promote the 150 years that the Christian Brothers have served the educational needs of our Memphis community.

And, speaking of our Sesquicentennial anniversary, Susan Elliott has been working with Lasallians across and beyond the

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campus on an array of events, programs and activities to honor and support the life-transforming work that our institution has done since 1871.

As we celebrate our university's remarkable past during this coming year, we also must use this time to mindfully plan for our future as well. I recognize that this will not be easy as we continue to deal with the day-to-day challenges which COVID presents for each of our lives. However, if there is any blessing to the pandemic, it has not only uncovered certain areas for improvement but it also has revealed to us the many collective and individual strengths of our Lasallian community.

This coming year our community will begin working on the next iteration of our university's strategic plan. This institutional planning initiative will build upon plans to be developed for each of our schools and administrative units. In addition, it will align with a future campus planning initiative that will be focused on ensuring that our facilities and spaces are optimized to support the work we do for our students. Later this fall, under the leadership of Paul Haught and Ron Brandon, we also will be embarking upon a program prioritization initiative to identify opportunities for expanding existing academic programs or launching new ones as a means of driving future enrollment growth.

As we begin a new academic year here at CBU, I would ask that we please focus our energy on the following three "C's": Communication, Collaboration, and Community-Building. With the help of our Christian Brothers living here on campus along with those who serve on our Board of Trustees, I have learned that these three things – Communication, Collaboration and Community-Building – have strengthened and sustained our Lasallian community in meeting past challenges. Together and by association, I am confident that we will emerge even stronger from our current situation if we continue to talk with each other with love and collegiality, if we continue to work together to create win/win solutions to problems, and if we continue to raise up each other and our Lasallian community in service to our students.

I know that focusing on these important things will not be easy. On a personal note, I must admit to you that I have struggled these past eighteen months...as I know we all have. These have been especially challenging times. The pandemic has dramatically changed our lives and relationships...we've navigated loss, fear, uncertainty and isolation but our ability to rely upon one another is more important than ever.

Knowing that we all share a Lasallian commitment, I look forward to having an ongoing dialogue with each of you about the future of our great university. If there is a way for us to improve the work we are doing, I am interested in hearing it. If we are doing something right, please let me know so that it can be highlighted and celebrated. And, if you think I can do better, I need to hear that, too.

I am grateful to each of you for all that you do for our students and our Lasallian community and I look forward to spending some social time later today at the barbecue in Boshwit Quad beginning at 3:30 p.m. Together and by association, I know that we will make the coming academic year the very best it can be. Thank you and may St. John Baptist De La Salle continue to inspire, guide and protect us in our work here at CBU.

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