On Mission Day, Cal U Ponders Its Future

California University's 10th annual Mission Day showcased the University's determination to prosper even in the most difficult economic times.

“Declining Public Support for Public Higher Education in Pennsylvania” was the theme for the daylong series of talks and workshops, as well as the topic of the keynote address by Cal U President Angelo Armenti, Jr.

Dr. Armenti has presented the talk both at a national conference at Baruch College in New York and to the presidents of the 13 other universities in the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education.

In his presentation, Dr. Armenti asserts that Cal U and other state-owned universities are being “privatized without a plan” as Commonwealth support for higher education declines.

At Mission Day, Cal U’s faculty, staff and students were given evidence for this assertion, then challenged to propose a response and develop a stable operating paradigm for the future.

“Events such as Mission Day harness the collaboration of brain power assembled here and never fail to come up with ideas that we would otherwise never thought of,” Dr. Armenti said.

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Health Educator Biddington Honored

Dr. Carol Biddington, an associate professor who has taught in California University’s Department of Health Science and Sport Studies for 17 years, has been named the Pennsylvania Association of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (PSAHPERD) University Health Teacher of the Year.

The award will be presented Nov. 21 at a luncheon during the 87th annual PSAHPERD convention in Pittsburgh.

As coordinator for health education for Cal U in the High School, Biddington works with high school teachers on health curriculum and assessment.

She also serves as a health textbook reviewer for several publishers and is a basic life support instructor for the American Heart Association.

Biddington has been a faculty sponsor for student grants, obtained a public service grant for Hoops 4 Hope and has been involved with several other grant projects. Her research interests include health promotion, fitness, and pedagogy strategies. She has published research and presented papers and research posters at national, regional and state conventions, and has been a graduate faculty adviser to thesis students for the past 17 years.

Biddington holds a doctorate in physical education, bachelor’s degree in physical education, and health and safety from West Virginia University.

PSAHPERD’s health division awards the University Teacher of the Year to someone who is doing outstanding work in health education,” said Dr. James W. Brenner, selection committee member and assistant professor of health at West Chester University of Pennsylvania.

“Clearly, Carol’s work as coordinator for health education with the Cal U in the High School program is an excellent example of that outstanding work. She’s most deserving of the honor.”

SAI to Purchase 6-acre Phillipsburg School Property

The Student Association Inc. (SAI) board of directors has approved the purchase of the Phillipsburg School property for California University. The purchase of the 6-acre parcel is $460,000.

The former Phillipsburg School property, which is being purchased from the California Area School District, is located near the Theta Xi fraternity house. To the rear of the school is the former Brooster Field, which had been home to the California Area High School Trojans football team. The field also was used by the California University football team before Adamson Stadium was built in 1979.

Purchase of the property, a hundred yards from campus, was prompted by the University’s continued enrollment growth and need for additional space, said President Angelo Armenti, Jr.

It has not yet been conclusively decided how the property will be used. Potential uses include additional remote parking for the University, which will lose more than 400 parking spaces when construction begins on a new convocation center early 2009.

The convocation center will eliminate parking in the Hamer Lot at the corner of Third Street and Hamer Way. Other uses of the Phillipsburg property include a new residence hall or use of the school building as a maintenance facility. A decision regarding specific use of the property will be made at a later date, President Armenti said.

The chance to purchase such a large parcel near the University's main campus presents a wonderful opportunity for the University, he added.
On Mission Day, Cal U Ponders Its Future

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He backed his assertion with data from a 25-year period that clearly depicted the state’s disinvestment in public higher education, including both the “state-owned” PASSHE schools and the “state-related” institutions like Penn State.

If current trends continue, he said, Penn State would receive zero state funding by 2033 and Cal U and its state sister schools by 2041.

“As is well known, it is not possible to prove a negative,” President Armenti said. “If people think there is a plan, I say ‘Show it to me,’ because it’s not even being talked about anywhere. I cannot answer how this will end, but we’re going to be smart about it because we want this university to not only survive but to thrive in the years ahead.”

As a response to the decline in public funding, the President said he has begun to think and act more like the leader of a private university. His paradigm calls for creating an attractive campus and residence halls that will appeal to potential students; seeking and maintaining national accreditation for every eligible academic program; and continuing a strong commitment to the Web-based Global Online program, a major opportunity for growth.

Private fundraising is essential to support both capital projects and student scholarships, he said. As state funding declines, tuition has increased steadily and the average debt for graduating student from Cal U has soared from $11,000 to $22,000. The university also has been required to pick up a greater portion of costs for construction projects on campus.

“Where I look at all of these facts and data, the only sense I can make of it is that these trends are going to continue,” said President Armenti. “I want you to think about those things because this is your university. We’re actually talking about the very survival of the university, and we need an operating paradigm to keep this institution viable.”

Before the breakout sessions, Interim Provost Geraldine Jones reminded participants these are significant issues.

“We have arrived at a point in history of higher education in Pennsylvania that has no parallel and cannot afford any longer to prolong this debate on the academic level,” she said. “Our only recourse is to confront the issue not only today but in the years to come. We need to look for alternatives that will allow us on our mission as a provider of quality education to our students and continue our service to the people of southwestern Pennsylvania.”

The small-group sessions yielded a variety of suggestions, now available in the public folders section of the Cal U website.

Participant emphasized the growing importance of grants as a source of funding for academic projects, suggested stronger partnerships with business and industry, and recommended changes in everything from computer services to student recruiting. Comments also touched on issues such as class size, technology use and training for faculty and staff. Dr. Pratul Pathak, Mission Day coordinator, said he believes the day was successful.

“Pathak expressed thanks and appreciation to all of the 10 different group’s facilitators and recorders.

Dr. Leslie Prost, a group facilitator, begins the discussion to highlight present structures, processes and activities that are aligned and misaligned with the Mission Day goal of coping with the decline of public support for higher education.

Charles Crowley and Ayanna Lyles share a laugh during a breakout session at Mission Day X.

Faculty Wins PASSHE Diversity Grants

A number of Cal U faculty members have received PASSHE Diversity and Equity Grant awards for 2008-2009, reports Cheryl Vogring, director of the Office for Grants and Contracts. Dr. Marta McClintock-Comeaux, Women’s Studies, received a grant award of $5,000 for her project, “Leadership: Women and the Change.”

Three faculty members were awarded Annual University Grants For Programs in Support of Diversity and Equity. Dr. James Burton, Special Education, received $6,666 to conduct “Project Multi-Focus: Diversity Recruitment and Support in Special Education.” Dr. Ketron Edmonds, History & Political Science, has been awarded $4,500 to conduct his project, “From the 15th Amendment to the Presidency: African-Americans as Forerunners for all Americans in the U.S. Political Process.” And Dr. Lisa Kovalchick, Math and Computer Science, has been granted $7,000 to conduct her project, “Recruiting Students in Underrepresented Groups in Selected Pa. State System of Higher Education Schools.” Bumpers is the first Cal U faculty member to receive an award in this category.

“These are truly impressive accomplishments, and I offer my congratulations to all five of these faculty members and those who assisted them,” said Cal U President Angelo Armenti, Jr. “All of them went through the process against very keen competition and were successful.”
The 14th Annual Banquet Honors Former Cal U Administrator

Working tirelessly and passionately behind the scenes, Dr. Paul E. Burd played an instrumental role in Cal U Athletics rise as one of the premier programs in NCAA Division II. Burd served Cal U for 35 years. He became Interim Vice President for Student Development and Services in January 1992 to August 1993 and was appointed Vice President for Student Development and Services in August 1993. He held that position until retiring in January 2004.

The recipient of the Cal U Alumni Association’s John R. Gregg Award for Loyalty and Service in 1993, Burd began his tenure at California in May 1969 as fulltime faculty member. Throughout the years before becoming vice president, he served as Assistant Director for Financial Aid, Assistant Dean of Men, Dean of Students, and attained the faculty rank of professor. Burd worked under Cal U Presidents George Roadman, John Watkins and Angelo Armenti, Jr. as well as more than 30 years alongside his mentor and retired Vice President for Student Development and Services, Elmo Natali.

Understandably Burd praised Natali, who was part of the initial 1995 Hall of Fame Class. “I would not have been going to this banquet and up on the stage if not for Elmo Natali,” Burd said. “I was indeed fortunate to work with him and he gave me the opportunity administratively to work and be involved with athletics. I cannot emphasize all that he has done for me, and what he has done for this campus. He’s the man.”

Active on campus, Burd was a member of the President’s Cabinet, Administrative Council, part of the Cal U Forum’s Executive Committee, Executive Director of SAI and the faculty representative of the athletic council for 30 years. He also served as interim athletic director in the late 1970s on three separate occasions.

In terms of athletic administration, Burd was a vice-president representative member of the PSAC Board of Directors for two years and chaired the NCAA self-evaluation of the athletic program. He worked directly with other administrators to establish the first athletic gender equity and athletic fundraising/marketing/promotions committees well as receive two NCAA grants to participate in their drug and alcohol awareness programs. His overall support and lead role in Cal’s aggressive athletic fundraising helped produce NCAA championships in softball (1997-98) and the women’s basketball team in 2004. This past athletic year Cal U won five NCAA - continued on page 4

Dr. Paul Burd’s 35 years of service and commitment to the university’s athletic program culminated with his Hall of Fame induction earlier this month.

Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra Entertains at Cal U

Left: Lawrence Loh, Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra conductor, offers remarks prior to the PSO performance. Below: An annual tradition continued on Oct. 14 when the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra entertained the campus community in Steele Hall.
Women’s Golf Wins
PSAC Championship

Dianne Luke, a member of the Cal U women’s golf team, chips her ball out of a sand trap. The team won the PSAC Championship on the weekend of Oct. 18-19 at Hershey Links in Hummelstown, Pa., by a dominant 35 strokes over runner-up Kutztown University. Winning the individual title was Cal’s Simone DeSouza, who won by three strokes over teammate Jenna Rothermel. Luke placed third and Cal’s Natali placed fourth. The team won the PSAC Championship on the weekend of Oct. 18-19 at Hershey Links in Hummelstown, Pa., by a dominant 35 strokes over runner-up Kutztown University.

‘Great Race’ Blends Music, Politics

Musicans from the California University Singers and University Bands are gearing up for “The Great Race,” a Broadway-style revue and final convention rally before the Nov. 4 presidential election. Performances are scheduled for Nov. 3 in the Performance Center inside the Natali Student Center. Show time will be 8 p.m. on Nov. 3 and Nov. 4; a 3 p.m. show is set for Nov. 2.

Ticket price is $5; all Cal U students will be admitted free with a valid CalCard. The musical revue of issues will deal with politics - its promises, prejudices, pleasures, tears, scandals and more. Cal Singers will sing, dance and parody songs from current and traditional Broadway shows. Members of the Cal U instrumental ensemble, led by music faculty member Katalin Secso, will add bass, trumpet, sax, flute and percussion to the mix.

For more information, call the Cal U Department of Music at 724-938-4242 or e-mail Michael@cup.edu or bus2809@cup.edu.

The California Journal

is published weekly by California University of Pennsylvania, a member of The Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education.

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