Convocation Message: Students Come First

Who are the most important people on campus? Acting President Geraldine M. Jones and the University’s six vice presidents have no doubt: It’s all about our Cal U students.

Speaking to about 250 students at the Fall 2012 Student Convocation, President Jones and her Cabinet made it plain that students are important to the entire leadership team.

“When I look at this audience I am reminded what a great University we have, and that’s due in large part to all of you,” said President Jones.

“Each of you brings your own experiences, thoughts and ideas to this University community. So I ask you to continue to stay involved.”

As she did at the Faculty-Staff Convocation held earlier in the semester, President Jones underlined her three primary objectives: to focus on the core mission of educating students, to stabilize enrollment and to institute financial solvency principles.

“All of the administrators, faculty and staff are very much aware of our main purpose here at Cal U, which is to serve our students and make sure that you receive an exceptional academic experience,” she said.

She spoke briefly about the reduction in student fees that helped to offset this year’s tuition increase, adding that “we are looking into further cost-cutting measures for you.”

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Mission Day Goes Back to Basics

Cal U will ponder its core mission and envision a new strategic plan on Mission Day XIV, which will be held Oct. 24.

Daytime classes will be canceled that day so all members of the campus community can focus on this year’s topic, “Maintaining Our Mission During a Time of Transition.” Registration begins at 8 a.m. in the lobby of Steele Hall. Acting President Geraldine M. Jones will welcome participants and deliver the call to action in Steele Hall Mainstage Theatre.

Breakout sessions in Keystone Hall will allow the Cal U community to rediscover our collective roles and responsibilities as we focus on enrollment initiatives and a new strategic plan for the University. After lunch in the Natal Student Center’s Gold Rush room, the final plenary session will begin at 1:30 p.m. in Steele Hall.

Mission Day allows all members of the University community to engage in dialogue, share ideas and voice recommendations as equals in order to advance the institution’s mission and goals.

President Jones urges all Cal U community to participate in Mission Day and help move the University forward during this time of unique opportunities and challenges.

To register online for Mission Day XIV, visit www.calu.edu/events/mission-day.

Modernization Act Focus of Forum

Faculty, staff and students are encouraged to learn more about the Higher Education Modernization Act at a PASSHE Entrepreneurial Forum set for 11 a.m. tomorrow in the Convocation Center’s North Conference Wing.

Earlier this year, the General Assembly approved HEMA, a series of measures that will create enhanced entrepreneurial opportunities for the State System and enable its universities to offer new advanced-degree programs that directly address workforce needs. Signed into law by Gov. Tom Corbett, the legislation was designed specifically to assist PASSHE in these areas.

HEMA will make it easier for PASSHE faculty and staff to bring to market products and services developed through their research efforts. Some employees could, in fact, create their own companies, providing students with new internship and career opportunities.

The change in the law also could create new revenue sources for the universities. Also under the act, all 14 PASSHE universities now are permitted to offer applied doctoral degrees — advanced degrees designed to prepare graduates for careers in fields such as health care, pharmaceutical product development and other high-demand areas.

The forum will be broadcast live from Bloomsburg University. Speakers will include Chancellor John C. Cavanagh; Dr. Ronald J. Hass, associate vice president for research and technology transfer and director of the Office of Technology Management at Penn State University; and Jim Rooney, president of Advanced Manufacturing Technology Ventures of Wexford.
'Bots Builders Hear Welcome News on Jobs

The business and education communities must work together to address a growing labor shortage in the 11-county Greater Pittsburgh Metro region. That was the message from Bill Flanagan, keynote speaker at the BotsIQ Kickoff held Oct. 4 in the Convocation Center.

“We have a real labor supply challenge in this region,” said Flanagan, executive vice president for the Allegheny Region’s Business. “The biggest question mark has to do with the workforce. We have all the tools and infrastructure in the region. … What we don’t have is enough collaboration to get the job done.”

More than 100 students, educators and industry representatives listened to Flanagan and received detailed information about the 2013 BotsIQ competitions. Known as the “smart sport,” BotsIQ asks students across the nation to use science, technology, engineering and math to build robots that compete in gladiator-style tournaments. The program introduces teens to high-tech careers and gives them hands-on experience with skills used in manufacturing and other industries.

Teams from 50 southwestern Pennsylvania high schools and career and technology centers used the kickoff event at Cal U to learn organizing tactics, safety measures and best practices for building competitive ‘bots. But before the audience got down to the science of building a perfect robot, they heard Flanagan unveil some surprising jobs data for the region.

“We rank No. 3 in the U.S. in business expansions and attractions,” he said. “We are seeing manufacturing companies invest here in Pennsylvania, and we have become a national leader in seven different industries.”

Flanagan also noted that plenty of good jobs are likely to be available for mechanical engineers and other workers with STEM skills. Students in attendance were particularly happy to hear that their interest in robotics could make them employable in southwestern Pennsylvania. “It was really exciting to hear about the projected number of jobs that will be available for us in the future,” said Jared Cappelli, a junior at Albert Gallatin Area School District in Uniontown, Pa.

“This entire day gives you a good outlook, not only for the BotsIQ competitions, but the robotics, engineering and manufacturing industries in general.”

Students and teachers spent the afternoon networking with manufacturing representatives, discussing bracketing and seeding for preliminary and final BotsIQ competitions, and conducting electrical wiring reviews.

More than 60 teams and their robots are slated to return to the Convocation Center April 19-20 for the final rounds of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Bots IQ Competition.

The program has grown since six teams clashed in the 2005 competition. With increasing workforce needs in mechanical engineering- and robotics-related fields, more teams can be expected in the future.

“Industries and businesses have got to get involved in internships, job shadowing and training for students,” said Flanagan.

“Those three student programs work toward involving students,” he said.

“I think that’s a great future for us in the future,” said Jared Cappelli, a junior at Albert Gallatin Area School District in Uniontown, Pa. This entire day gives you a good outlook, not only for the BotsIQ competitions, but the robotics, engineering and manufacturing industries in general.”

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First-Year Seminar Aids Vets

Medically retired after being injured in Iraq three years ago, Staff Sgt. Joseph Bryan has begun a new chapter at Cal U, where he is majoring in business administration. Joining him on campus is his wife, Danielle, a biology major.

The Bryans, who have three children, are enjoying a smooth transition from military life to the University environment — in part, they say, because of a First-Year Seminar course designed specifically for veterans.

The new course, which includes all the information available to all First-Year Seminar students, was offered for the first time this semester. Bryan took part in the course as part of an online class at Central Texas College before returning to southwestern Pennsylvania.

A native of Smithton, Pa., he started classes at Cal U earlier this year. His wife, a Chartiers native, enrolled this fall.

The new course and its military focus have been most beneficial, said Bryan, who became president of the Veterans Club this semester.

“There are a lot of things that pertain to us, as nontraditional students, that do not pertain to the ‘regular students,’ ” he said. “This class has helped us in a number of ways.”

Bryan said the course helped to familiarize the couple with campus facilities, and he appreciates the wide array of guest speakers, ranging from Veterans Affairs staff to marriage counselors and medical personnel.

“Danielle is always asking questions, and the speakers they are bringing in have shown us many opportunities and benefits that we would not have known about if not for this course,” he added.

Planning for the course began two years ago, said Capt. Robert Prah, director of Cal U’s Office of Veterans Affairs. He collaborated on the project with Dr. Michael Hummel, of the Department of Justice, Law and Society, and Dr. Harry Langley, the former associate provost for student retention.

Only a few universities offer such a course, Prah said. What sets it apart is the team-building it fosters and the interpersonal relationships that derive from it, he added.

Glitz magazine recently named Cal U one of the nation's top Military Friendly® Schools for the fourth year in a row. Publications such as Military Edge also have recognized the University for its commitment to military veterans and their families.

“The first semester is critical, not only on the academic side, but also for the veterans’ success in general,” Prah said. “Most of our student veterans have been deployed at least once, and it’s a whole new ballgame when they come back and go to school. This class is important. It helps them get on the right track.”

Dr. Mary Kreis, an associate professor in the Department of Exercise Science and Sport Studies, is teaching the new course. Commissioned as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army’s Medical Service Corps, Kreis accepted a medical discharge in 2006 with the rank of major in the U.S. Army Reserve.

“Whether I answer a question, lead them in the right direction or just listen to their story, this is a great opportunity to help these students incorporate their military lives into civilian life,” she said.

“No better way I can give back to my country and help the military.”

The instructor’s military background enhances the course, Bryan said.

“I can explain to her what I’ve been through, and she understands perhaps more than a regular professor would,” he said. “I think it’s wonderful she’s here and doing this for us.”

Prah and Kreis both emphasized that the First-Year Seminar for veterans demonstrates Cal U’s dedication to the success of its students.

“By having a course that focuses on the veterans in their first year, we can hit their needs directly and also find out what other questions they might have,” Kreis said.

Pema Director Headlines Security Conference

G lenn M. Cannon, director of the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency, will be the keynote speaker at Cal U’s sixth annual Conference on Homeland and International Security, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Oct. 23 in the Performance Center.

The theme for this year’s conference is “Managing the Disaster.”

Cannon, who was appointed PEMA director in January 2011, will discuss state-level emergency management plans and resources from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m.

PEMA coordinates state agency response to support county and local governments in the areas of civil defense, disaster preparedness, planning, and response to and recovery from man-made or natural disasters.

Cannon previously served as senior vice president in the Pittsburgh office of Hillard Heintze LLC, Strategic Security Advisors, where he consulted on homeland security and emergency and disaster management and communications.

As an assistant administrator in the Department of Homeland Security’s Federal Emergency Management Agency, he was in charge of disaster operations. He also served as county manager and chief operating officer for Allegheny County, where he was responsible for nearly 8,000 employees, a $1 billion budget and service for 1.4 million residents.

Acting President Geraldine M. Jones will offer opening remarks, and four presentations are planned:

• At 9:30 a.m., Dr. Raymond Haieh, associate professor in Cal U’s Department of Justice, Law and Society, will discuss “Managing the Cyber Disaster.” He is a certified computer forensic examiner and an editorial reviewer for seven journals in his field.

• At 10:30 a.m., Dr. Rick Periandi, director of Security at the Reading (Pa.) Hospital and Medical Center, will present the role of the trauma center in mitigating the effects of a disaster.

• At 1:45 p.m., Dr. Karl Williams, chief medical examiner for Allegheny County, will discuss managing mass fatalities.

• At 2:45 p.m., Kevin Angellini, a retired police chief, author and public safety diving expert, will discuss maritime disasters and search-and-rescue operations.

Past conferences have attracted a mix of law enforcement and security professionals, educators and students.

“This is a private and public partnership coming together to defend our homeland and provide better security for our citizens,” said Dr. Michael Hummel, associate professor of Leadership and Security Studies.

“This conference is also an excellent networking opportunity for our students, and we are honored to have two distinguished alumna among our guest speakers.”

The conference is sponsored by the Department of Justice, Law and Society at Cal U. It is open to professionals in the security and disaster management fields, as well as the general public. Cost is $35; fee includes lunch and a certificate of completion.

To register as an individual, send a check for $35 payable to “Foundation for California University” (include “JLS” in the memo line). Mail check to Dr. Emily Swetzer, Security Conference Co-Chair, California University of Pennsylvania, Department of Justice, Law and Society, P.O. Box 30, California, PA 15419.

Registration information for groups and corporations is online at www.calu.edu; look for the event in the “News” or “Events” carousel on the homepage.

For more information, contact Dr. Emily Swetzer at 724-938-4438 or swetzer@calu.edu, or Dr. Michael Hummel at 724-938-6043 or hummel@calu.edu.
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The public may attend “An Evening of One-Acts,” a series of creative short plays directed by students and presented by the Department of Theatre and Dance. Curtain time is 8 p.m. Thursday and Friday, and 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. Saturday. All performances are in the Gerald and Carolyn Blaney Theatre in Steele Hall.

The department’s first performance of the Fall 2012 semester features plays that may be irreverent or enlightening, but always entertaining. Subject matter may not be suitable for young children.

The student directors are Kara Burkhart, Breanna Otto and Sam Silva. Bridget Rogan is the stage manager.

For ticket information, or to order tickets (with a credit card) by phone, call the Steele Box Office at 724-938-5943.

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