Welcome to the 2010-2011 academic year.

Together we will start writing the next chapter in the story of Winona State University as a fresh academic year opens up for each of us. One of the delights of being in higher education is that every year we have a fresh chance to reflect on the path we have taken, the progress we have made and the possibilities that lie before us. During our Orientation Week, we will have many opportunities to catch up with each other, welcome new colleagues and students, think about what we have learned and imagine how we will apply our growing insights to the year ahead. We are a community of learners improving our world.

In these opening remarks, I wish to report to you on what I have learned during the past year and how I see the year ahead. I have entitled my report this year, “Working Together in the New Normal.” Before I explore the idea of the New Normal, let’s pause and reflect on some of our many accomplishments of the year just ended.

What have we accomplished this past year?

Advancement: The public phase of our Light the Way campaign was launched in August 2008, unfortunately, just before a precipitous downturn in the economy. Despite the timing of our launch, we have raised $8,623,240.27, or 86 percent of our $10 million goal, and are now in the final push to complete our campaign by year’s end. So far, we have received the following support: Integrated Wellness Complex ($3.3 million), scholarships ($4.8 million) and our National Child Protection Training Center ($563,000). In addition, our efforts to obtain federal support for the National Child Protection Center (NCPTC) continue to bear fruit. The goal of the NCPTC is to eliminate child abuse in three generations. To create the capacity to achieve this ambitious agenda, we are expanding our NCPTC
network to include additional affiliates, currently in Arkansas and New Jersey, and we are working on a governance structure that will support a multi-generational effort.

Our focus this year has been on retaining donors and adding new ones. As of mid-June this year (the latest data I have), we have experienced a 26 percent increase in the number of people who have given support for the first time to WSU. While we have also seen a drop off in donor retention, we have done better than the national average (a 10 percent decline in overall giving at WSU vs. an 18 percent decline nationally), and we are introducing new strategies to stay in touch with donors and to “brand” the alumni experience in ways that will promote closer ties to our graduates and welcome donors back into the fold when their financial condition again permits them to work with us.

**Academic Excellence:** The quality of the academic programs and the WSU community is reflected at many levels of our institution, from the recognition of individual faculty and student achievement to acknowledgement of the institution as a whole. Perhaps our greatest achievement this year is that we have protected the quality of our programs, enhanced the student experience and continued to promote access and opportunity while cutting our budget significantly. We accomplished this through judicious use of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds as retirement incentives, curricular reform, the calling back of a significant amount of release time, and redirection of valuable faculty time toward instructional activities.

A major achievement this year was our success in obtaining a significant award from the Bush Foundation to redesign how we recruit, prepare, place and then support teachers. This work is getting underway in collaboration with seven other sites, each approaching this common set of goals in distinctive ways.

Our engagement agenda continues to expand. A member of our faculty, Dr. Joan Francioni, was a finalist for the national Thomas Ehrlich Award for leadership in
engagement that is sponsored by Campus Compact. WSU was again on the 2010 President’s Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll.

We continue to invest in innovation in the curriculum, from small projects such as integrating engagement opportunities into classes to more comprehensive programs such as the Common Book, the American Democracy Project and new curricular components associated with WSU Goes Green. Innovation investments have led to new certificates in Sustainability and Educational Lean and have revitalized and updated courses, *practica*, and professional development opportunities in critical areas such as STEM, Special Education, Social Work, Global Studies, our Language School, and the Health Sciences.

**Supporting Academic Excellence:** We have continued to reinvest in restructuring and increasing the capacity of our academic support areas – most specifically peer tutoring, teaching and learning with technology, and assessment and institutional research. Our institutional research office has been reconfigured into Institutional Planning, Assessment and Research (IPAR). Now that our faculty development center is fully operational, IPAR is becoming a source of material for the scholarship of learning and teaching as well as a vehicle for conducting the research that will contribute to our Self Study, which will be submitted to the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) this coming year in anticipation of our 10 year reaccreditation visit. By introducing Educational Lean into many of our processes and academic areas we are beginning to see the results of our investments in “innovative change” such as integrated models of support and curricular reform.

We are proceeding with several phases and levels of accountability reporting and preparation for accreditation visits: the institution is slated for a North Central Association of Colleges and Schools/HLC accreditation review team visit in spring 2012; we are preparing for accreditation reports and visits in Education, Engineering and Nursing; the Clinical Lab Science degree program has applied for accreditation from the National Accrediting Agency for Clinical Lab Sciences (NAACLS); and finally, the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business
(AACSB) accreditation board has announced that we are ready for our accreditation visit, a year ahead of schedule.

**HealthForce Minnesota:** We are in the fifth year of development of our Center of Excellence. We supported eight additional innovative projects in FY10 and added additional partnerships across the state. Our model is based on collaboration “without walls” that takes place through a core of industry and education partners who provide leadership for the Center and through competitively awarded projects that address the goals of the Center. We continue to prove the value of the Center of Excellence model as a means for advancing all five of the current MnSCU Strategic Goals. In addition, the Executive Director of HealthForce Minnesota, Jane Foote, has been assisting the Office of the Chancellor in ensuring that the associate degree nursing programs offered by MnSCU institutions are fully accredited. In FY10 the Center provided grant support to twelve of our MnSCU campuses. Ten campuses received a $5,000 grant to help defer the cost of candidacy. Sixteen colleges received either travel support, grant support or consultant support last year. HealthForce supported the national director coming to Minnesota to speak to the MnSCU schools, and sponsored 19 faculty members to attend the national self study forum to begin the process of candidacy for nursing program accreditation. Nursing program accreditation is an expectation of our healthcare employers, and this initiative will require long-term support. This next year Jane is working with the State Universities to deliver a primarily online Master’s program in Nursing for nurse educators in our system.

We continue to staff a Minneapolis Office of HealthForce Minnesota in association with the City of Minneapolis to address the pressing healthcare workforce needs in the metropolitan area. At this point, MnSCU now has access to most of the main healthcare provider systems in the state though HealthForce MN. These main provider systems play a major role in driving the Minnesota economy. Through HealthForce, MnSCU has an opportunity to be directly linked to our major providers in order to provide a healthcare workforce for the state.
This year HealthForce assisted in the replication of three Adult Scrubs Camps across the state and the addition of the Urban Scrubs camp in partnership with Augsburg. These are key initiatives to reach diverse youth and underemployed adults seeking an exciting career in healthcare. They add to our growing statewide coverage and continue to demonstrate the value of the Center of Excellence concept as we expand our portfolio and continue to add to our Executive Alliance.

We also have completed the merger with Healthcare Education-Industry Partnership to coordinate and enhance the value of these investments and to take advantage of the differences between the two approaches to working with the healthcare industry. A major initiative that continues to gain momentum is clinical coordination. We are working with Senator Sharon Ropes in southern Minnesota to discuss the potential for a statewide model for clinical coordination. Healthcare employers are very interested in this use of technology to coordinate the placement of nursing and other healthcare students in clinical learning sites. With the emphasis on healthcare in the ARRA package, our efforts to address workforce development needs with partners such as Pine Technical College, the Metropolitan Area Workforce Investments Boards and Workforce Development, Inc. have intensified. HealthForce is being called upon to help deliver successful grants in both the urban and greater Minnesota regions.

Regional workforce and economic development

Outreach & Continuing Education (OCED) has continued to introduce a more focused and strategic effort to contribute to the economic vitality of our region through workforce development and partnerships. We received a $70,000 award from MN Online to develop a new online adult degree completion program for allied health professionals in collaboration with Bemidji State University and HealthForce MN. Our Summer Session has become more productive, and participation has expanded. In addition support has been provided to assist faculty members who wish to develop innovative approaches to course design and delivery.
During the past two years, OCED has been engaged in several key partnerships. Through MnSCU Innovation Funding, OCED was awarded $30,000 to design and develop a blended curriculum for an Energy Resource Advisor (ERA) certificate in partnership with Eagle Bluff Environmental Center, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, Winona County Environmental Services, and Clean Energy Resource Teams (CERTs). The first pilot program was extremely successful, and we are now preparing to work with five other institutions within the MnSCU system for a statewide roll-out. Through the 7 Rivers Alliance, we are collaborating with other key partners on economic development initiatives in our tri-state region, including the development of a bio-composites cluster and the first bio-composites conference in our region, which took place in October. Just north of Rochester, we are nurturing a relationship with the Pine Island Economic Development Authority (EDA) and the Elk River BioBusiness Park, working in collaboration with Gail O’Kane, the Department of Employment and Economic Development, Rochester Community and Technical College, and several other partners to meet the emerging needs of this enterprise with the potential of creating 15,000 to 24,000 new jobs.

**WSU Goes Green:**

With the encouragement of our faculty leadership, Winona State became one of the early signatories to the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment. During FY2010 WSU continued advancing our “WSU Goes Green” strategy designed to achieve climate neutrality and promote the university as a regional model of environmental stewardship. For example, we took actions to strengthen our Sustain Winona alliance, an organization of seven community-based partner institutions focused on a wide range of sustainability goals. A year ago, an independent audit group sponsored by Purdue University certified Sustain Winona’s Environmental Management System (EMS) to be in compliance with international standards to support environmental protection. WSU also progressed with our energy performance contracting initiative, which leverages future energy savings to pay for present day energy-saving upgrades to our physical plant. In a major step, WSU contracted ICS Consulting, Inc., to develop a
request for proposals that will allow the university to hire a private energy service company (ESCO) to complete our performance contract process. We hope to complete this work soon, with the concurrence of the Chancellor’s Office. In August, WSU will open an $18 million Integrated Wellness Complex, which will be the first LEED Silver certified structure in Winona County. In addition to advancing these major initiatives, the University completed roll out of our “WSU Goes Green” website, established 72 new recycling stations across campus, and initiated car sharing and bike sharing programs aimed at encouraging students not to bring cars to campus. Due to budget constraints, we have not been able to hire a full-time sustainability coordinator but Vice President Kurt Lohide continues to serve admirably as our informal coordinator in addition to his many other duties.

Building a budget in tough times: In the middle of the current biennium, Winona State finds itself in a strong position, despite the fiscal challenges we face. We have managed our current budget challenge of $8 million per annum in this biennium through a combination of (1) personnel savings created through a package of early retirement incentives, (2) restructuring of core functions and (3) increased revenue generation. We are now working on our best estimate of further reductions in the next biennium and have passed our first milestone by identifying approximately $1.5 million (60 percent of our expected best case goal of identifying a solution for a $2.5 million per annum reduction in our state general fund support for FY12).

We used our one-time stimulus funding to underwrite additional early incentive packages. We had originally expected to have some funding left over for one-time innovation projects and some additional repurposing of classroom and laboratory spaces, but the response to our early retirement incentives exceeded our expectations.

We have been able to manage the 11.9 percent reduction in our state appropriation ($3,650,686) by following a set of budget guidelines and a process of budget review developed in consultation with our constituency groups and by utilizing a four-point strategy for assessing all potential actions. We have been
gratified by the results that we have obtained as a campus community. For additional information, please see the materials and documents that we have posted on the president’s office page as well as our Budget 101 materials.

This year we continued to hold open forums attended by all members of the Cabinet and the Council of Deans as well as individual sessions with members of each of our colleges and special sessions in Rochester. We built a budget suggestion box on our home page for campus users. We used our All-University Finance and Facilities Committee to hold hearings and to review proposed administrative actions. While none of these steps were unique to us, in combination they helped to maintain open and consistent communication and an opportunity for campus participation in the identification and evaluation of budget options.

- **Shared Principles:** Put students first. Protect academic integrity. Generate revenue. Consider layoffs only as a last resort.
- **Clear Goals:** (1) Support academic innovation, distinctiveness and excellence. (2) Enrich the student experience and support student success. (3) Expand our climate commitment and sustainability efforts.
- **Mindset:** We are investing in our future and the budget is an investment portfolio.
- **Discipline:** Revisit all assumptions and look for buried assumptions that are worth exploring. Examine each significant expenditure carefully—Is it an essential investment? If so, is this the best way to accomplish our goals? If not, how can we redesign this function or program to ensure that it works well and can function with the staff levels available? (Note: We have begun to expand the capacity of our campus community to employ Lean strategies and tools to redesign and restructure many of our core functions.)

**Construction Projects:** Throughout FY10 Winona State launched construction projects involving both renovation of existing buildings and construction of new facilities. Our two major capital construction projects will be ready for occupancy.
as the fall semester begins: an $18 million Integrated Wellness Complex, which expands the university’s commitment to comprehensive health and wellness education, and a $29 million 408-bed residence hall complex. Last June the MnSCU Trustees approved a $4 million project for the construction of two pedestrian tunnels under the existing Canadian Pacific Railway, which bisects the WSU campus. We have experienced delays in bringing together the several jurisdictions that must be aligned in order for this project to begin, but we hope we now see “the light at the end of the tunnel,” so to speak. Work has also proceeded on a $1.9 million HEAPR project to upgrade heating and air conditioning (HVAC) in Phelps Hall. Along with the HVAC project, we completed a new Radio/TV studio in Phelps Hall to replace the antiquated facility that was eliminated as part of the Howell Hall demolition project.

Additionally, this year the university began to operate our much anticipated faculty commons project in Maxwell Hall, housing our faculty support functions in a central location. While these major projects progressed, the university also worked numerous smaller, but still important, projects such as plumbing upgrades at Maria Hall on our west campus, a new entryway to our student union at Kryzsko Commons, replacement of the synthetic turf at Maxwell Field and an environmentally friendly permeable concrete parking lot. Each of these efforts moves our campus in Winona toward a more supportive environment for a 21st century education and reflects our overarching theme of supporting healthy people in healthy working relationships in a healthy environment.

Enrollments: Interest in WSU remains robust although we are beginning to experience the predictable softening of first-time freshmen numbers due to the demographic trends in our region. We continue to see improvements in both the level of preparation and the retention of our students. Our residence halls will once again open at full occupancy or beyond, in part due to an increasing number of upperclassmen who wish to live in university-related housing. This pattern will certainly be accentuated by the opening of a splendid new residential complex.

To respond to the demographic challenges we are now facing as well as to support enhanced collaboration with our colleagues in the two-year sector, we
have made a number of improvements in our transfer admission process, including additional articulation agreements with two-year institutions, the implementation of early advising and registration for transfer students as well as an enhanced transfer orientation program. These improvements are starting to make a difference, and we will continue to enhance our outreach and support for transfer students. We also have put ever-increasing emphasis on student success, with continued improvement in retention and graduation rates. We were pleased to receive a gold designation on the MnSCU Accountability Dash Board for this work this year.

**Diversity:** We have continued to intensify our efforts to diversify our campus community and to expand our international programming. Our minority population increased again this year. We grew from 4.2 percent during fall 2003 to 4.8 percent in fall 2008. We have increased to 5.5 percent in FY10 according to the data provided by the FY10 Institution Profile. Using the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) definition of diversity rather than the MnSCU definition, 7.1 percent of our students define themselves as persons of color. We continue to expand our Academic Progression Reporting Systems (APRS) and are pleased that 91.3 percent of the students of color and first generation students that we tracked using APRS remained at WSU during the 2009-10 academic year.

Given the lack of diversity in southeast Minnesota, we are proud of the modest increase in students of color. This increase resulted from a number of coordinated efforts that are outlined in the FY10 university work plan template, including the development of relationships with high schools and two-year colleges as well as offering presentations, programs and workshops to prospective and current students. We continue to intensify our efforts to attract students of color to WSU and to support their academic success. The Access and Opportunity Grant has been instrumental in our efforts to attract and retain underrepresented students; 45 high school students participated in our Boys to Men Leadership Academy, a program funded through this grant program. We have also enhanced our efforts to work with other organizations to prepare all young people to graduate from high school and succeed in college. We are very serious about increasing our
diversity – both international and domestic – and providing pathways to success for all of our traditional age students as well as returning adults.

Support for students: We continue to invest in support for student learning and success by enriching the student experience. At WSU, we are committed to providing a healthy environment for our students and promoting a culture of responsibility. In January 2009, the entire WSU campus became tobacco-free. Surveys of students taken in spring 2009 indicated a very high level of awareness of the policy change and a high level of knowledge relating to how to find information on smoking cessation. We have added a tobacco-free notices to campus signage and are working on the small number of places where smokers still congregate in order to resolve the remaining resistance to our tobacco-free policy.

In an effort to support our students, we have continued to increase student success in historically difficult classes through support with Supplemental Instruction (SI). We have had a successful launch of a three-tiered leadership development program called Warriors LEAD that supports students interested in leadership opportunities, as well as current student leaders and experienced student leaders who have played mentoring roles for the less seasoned students.

We also enriched the student experience by enhancing the student advising experience, especially for students who are as yet undeclared, an important component in the success of students. Over the past several years we have consistently increased student satisfaction with advising of undeclared students. In spring 2010, 93 percent of undeclared students responded yes to the question, “Are you satisfied with the advising you received?” This represents an increase from 90 percent in 2008 and 78 percent in 2007 who answered yes to the same question.

Another component of the student experience is the delivery of services for students. In an effort to enhance innovations in student services, we expanded the use of technologies in addition to enhancing service in the newly established Warrior Hub in Maxwell Hall. Of the 2,782 students polled on Assessment Day
2009, 79 percent had visited the Warrior Hub and of those, all but 1 percent of the respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the experience.

We are committed to making the University a working model of scholarship and creative solution-finding in action as well as a laboratory for the practice of contemporary democracy. We currently enjoy a positive and mutually respectful relationship with our student leaders, and we appreciate their willingness to help us rethink our programs and operations in the context of significant budget reductions.

**Laptop program to eWarrior Program and Restructuring of ITS**: The conversion of our Laptop program to a Digital Life and Learning (DLL) Program has proven to be very successful. This program is now about learning rather than about laptops, and it has been woven into the fabric of our University, from facilities planning to faculty development. Students and faculty have been given a voice in shaping the direction of the DLL Program through the development of a new and more effective governance process.

**Information Technology**: This year, Winona State University completed its Technology Master Plan 2010 – 2013. This document provides a framework for integrating and prioritizing technology related issues at Winona State University. It was developed to provide a guide for future technology implementation. In addition, this past year extensive work was done to evaluate and assess technology holistically through the development of the *e-Warrior: Digital Life and Learning* Assessment Plan. This plan will allow the University to better understand the impact of the program on faculty and students.

During FY10, Information Technology Services witnessed sustained growth of mobile computing with continued expansion and upgrade of the campus wireless network. In addition, new technology-enhanced classrooms were added, the number of technology-enhanced courses increased, a new project intake process was developed, Winona360 and Web2010 were produced and launched, as well as a number of significant server and system upgrades.
As a result of several Educational Lean projects, the structure and support services provided by our information Technology Services have been enhanced and focused.

During FY10, the Technical Support Center (TSC) in the User Services unit completed 15,702 support tickets. During Assessment Day, students reported that 81 percent who visited or called the TSC gave the Center a grade of “A” or “B.” That score has improved by 10 percentage points over the last two years. Also of note, in the last year students who gave a grade of “A” to the TSC increased from 44 percent to 50 percent.

Intercollegiate Sports: WSU once again had many firsts for our athletic programs. We continue to show progress both in the classroom and on the fields of competition, while also making some significant Title IX improvements with facility upgrades. Competitively we had another very good year. This year marked our second year in the now 14-member Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference. We ended up third in the conference in the overall team championship point totals. We also saw 12 of our 14 teams advance to conference, regional or national post-season competition in one of the best Division II Conferences in the NCAA. We opened up a new track as a joint project with Winona Area Public Schools, Cotter High School and the Morrie Miller Fund. This new venue offers new opportunities for our women athletes in track and field. We held an invitational meet in Winona for the first time in more than 40 years!

We continue to explore the meaning of the Division II “Life in the Balance” theme that we embrace. Our student-athletes provided more than 1,800 hours of community service. In their academic pursuits, our student-athletes again outperformed their classmates. Our 400 student-athletes continue to advance, achieving an all-time high in academics by attaining a cumulative 3.2 grade point average in 2010. That is up from 3.14 last year. More than 30 percent of our student-athletes received all-conference or all-regional academic honors and for the third year in a row at least one student-athlete has received an NCAA postgraduate scholarship, a very high honor indeed. On top of all of that, for the first time in our conference, one school (WSU!) captured the male and the female
All Conference Student-Athlete of the Year awards. In addition, our retention rates of student-athletes continue to climb, rising from 84.6 percent for freshmen in 2009 to 89.5 percent in 2010, and from 91.6 percent to 93.4 percent for our student-athletes overall.

**WSU-Rochester:** We have continued to strengthen our academic collaboration between WSU-Rochester and Rochester Community and Technical College, as evidenced by the design of a new upper-division Rochester-based Early Childhood Special Education transfer program (with RCTC’s Child Development Associate of Applied Science).

Improved student services in Rochester include walk-in transcript service and the installation of a direct phone link to the Instructional Technology Center on the Winona campus to better serve students when WSU-Rochester staff members are not available. A new jointly designed and operated Welcome Center will open this fall to provide reception, initial program information, initial advising, and select student services. The Welcome Center will be staffed by jointly appointed advisors who can provide accurate and customized advising for RCTC and WSU programs. Preliminary planning for “Path to Purple,” a collaboration between WSU and RCTC, has been completed. The Path to Purple will provide an option for students who did not gain admission to WSU to enroll at RCTC for a minimum of 24 credits with guaranteed admission to WSU if minimum academic entrance requirements are met at RCTC. From the time of initial denial from WSU, regional students will receive coordinated information from WSU and RCTC prior to and during enrollment at RCTC.

The Welcome Center will also serve as a pilot site for the new MnSCU GPS (Goals + Planning = Success) program developed at Century College. Staff will apply GPS resources and principles from the point of first contact with prospective students to encourage long-term planning for educational goals with both RCTC and WSU.

WSU-R ended the year on a positive note, winning the 2010 Alfred P. Sloan Award for Workplace Flexibility. As a recipient of the 2010 Sloan Awards, WSU-R ranks in the top 20 percent of employers nationally in terms of its programs, policies and culture for creating an effective and flexible workplace.
**Selected Points of Pride:** WSU has received national recognition this year from a number of sources.

- WSU has been named one of “America’s 100 Best Buy Colleges” for the 14th consecutive year.
- The Princeton Review has named WSU among the “Best in the Midwest” for seven consecutive years.
- WSU is the only MnSCU institution named in the Princeton Review’s Guide to Green Colleges, a list of exemplary sustainable institutions.
- WSU is ranked among the top 50 public and private universities in the Midwest in the 2010 listing of America’s Best Colleges published by U.S. News and World Report.
- WSU ranks 11th on a list of the top 25 safest campuses in the United States by The Daily Beast.
- WSU has been recognized on the President’s Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll with Distinction in 2008 and 2009.

**What is The New Normal?**

The term *new normal* is the label that is being applied to the transition we are undergoing in this nation as we shift from one economic and social order to another.

As Dianne Dumanoski puts it at the beginning of her recent book *The End of the Long Summer*:

“Whatever the coming century brings, it will not unfold smoothly as some improved but largely familiar version of life as we know it. That is the only thing that seems certain.”

She goes on to say that:

“...the world as we know it with agriculture, civilization, and dense human numbers emerged during a rare interlude of climatic grace---a ‘long summer’ of unusual stability over the past 11,700 years.”
That period of grace is ending because of humanity’s impact on the planet and it will be up to institutions like ours to learn how to adapt to a changing world, both by how we manage our own assets and how we prepare our students for a new period of volatility and change. We are well equipped to do this. As Simon Levin writes in a recent article on “The Evolution of Ecology,” solutions to the dilemmas of our times will require close cooperation amongst natural scientists, social scientists, creative artists, humanists and ethicists. Ahead of us lie “core problems of intergenerational and intragenerational equity, and the powerful role of social norms in shaping individual behaviors.” (Levin 2010. P. B11) That is why our sharpened focus on liberal education, health, sustainability and human welfare will be such crucial assets in the years to come. We are poised and we are prepared to do our part to reframe our relationships to each other and to the environment that sustains us.

Slowly, the implications of these changes are setting in, and the challenges that lie ahead are taking shape. Among the institutions I know well, we are one of the most serious about reexamining the deep assumptions that have formed the foundation of the way we work together, what we seek to accomplish and how we support our work. Our willingness to do this has made it possible to work through our losses in state support without deep disruption or damage to our essential nature or our ability to accomplish our shared goals. I am proud of what we have been willing to do. I can see clearly that we truly ARE a community of learners, guided by clear values and a sense of mission and purpose that transcends our individual needs and wants. I am encouraged by what I see and confident that, together, we shall emerge more vital than ever and more capable of improving our world.

**My main message today is that our budget situation and the withdrawal of state support are simply visible manifestations of something much deeper and more challenging that must occupy our attention and draw upon our best thinking in the years to come.**

There is no doubt in anyone’s mind that our current models of financing higher education, designing and delivering our programs, defining and meeting societal
expectations, and holding ourselves responsible and accountable for our stewardship of the resources entrusted to our care have run their course and must be replaced with different strategies.

A number of commentators on the higher education scene have focused on one aspect or another of what we face. For some, the issue is an unsustainable financial model (Jones and Wellman 2010). For others, it is our persistent inability to close the tragic gap in educational attainment and success that separates different segments of our complex society and the corresponding erosion in our standing among nations as other countries surpass us in degree production (Walters 2010). Our fears about what it may mean to have lost our status as the “best educated nation” have led to a national policy agenda focused on degree attainment, largely at the two-year college level.

Each of these complaints—the financial model, disparate participation rates and lagging educational attainment—are symptoms of the failure of our country to resolve a much deeper set of questions, the answers to which will surely reshape our role in society and the way we deliver on the promise of our mission. As society seeks fresh understanding and more sustainable solutions to the challenges of our times, we must adapt and, indeed, adapt quickly, if we are to thrive in a changing world.

What are those deeper issues? Underneath those more visible changes in our daily life are questions about the very nature of our impact on the world around us. The most vivid description of what lies ahead for us that I have encountered is the story told by Dianne Dumanoski in her recent book entitled The End of the Long Summer. The basic message is foreshadowed by the book jacket, a picture of a glowing red sky above a parched earth upon which rests an abandoned dory. Dumanoski argues forcefully that what we need now is not just a technological solution to our energy needs—as challenging as that will be—but a social and cultural revolution and a “new and viable macro-economical model for how to
provide reasonable livelihoods and maintain economic stability without perpetual growth that makes ever greater demands on natural systems².

Higher education institutions like our own are feeling the pressures of the emerging economic and social order and, in truth, our old ways of doing things are more and more out of alignment with the realities of the “New Normal.” As Dumanoski puts it, “We make our way through the world guided by shared ideas—ideas about ourselves, ideas about the nature of the world we inhabit and act upon, ideas about the Earth, and the planetary system that sustains its surging life. These make up our cultural map³.” It is becoming clear that our cultural map must change and that institutions like ours, whose commitment to a sense of place and to improving the world are genuine and deep, must play a role in crafting a new understanding of our relationship to each other and to the environment.

The concept of new normal is still evolving, but most of the recent articles on this phenomenon focus primarily on the changes in our economy and share several elements in common. There will be less household debt, higher personal savings, and lower rates of consumption as a share of the Gross National Product (Galston, 2010). The effects of these new patterns, all in response to the Great Recession of 2009, are expected to ripple through our economy and to reduce even further the proportion of the tax base invested in higher education as well as influence decisions about whether and where to go to college or to pursue advanced study. The Brookings Institute predicts that this growing personal thrift and caution will require a corresponding public restraint and clarity of purpose. We are a public university and we expect that the new normal will rewrite the rules of the game for us. In this new era, Peter Grier (2009) argues that value will be the new virtue. Institutions that are prepared to adapt their cultures and ways of doing things to accommodate the changing expectations of the new normal will have to attend to the growing emphasis on value from their own perspective and from the point of

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² from Dumanoski’s remarks on “Coming Home to Earth,” delivered at a conference on Environmental (Dis)Locations at Yale University, April 10, 2010, p. 7.
view of the many constituencies they serve. We want to be one of those smart institutions that can thrive in changing times.

This task is a familiar one for Winona State University. At regular intervals through our more than 150-year history, we have faced rapid social and economic change and have successfully responded to the needs of society. This time, however, we have a new set of tools to work with and must acquire new habits. I am pleased to report that we have made a great deal of progress this past year and our prospects look equally bright for the coming year. The next chapter in our story could well be entitled “Learning to Thrive.”

How do you go about responding to changing times?

As we enter this new academic year, we will steer by five simple principles as we work on the rest of our current budget solution and as we chart the path ahead.

• Will this help us protect and enhance our attractiveness to potential students?
• Will this contribute to the success of our current students?
• Will this generate additional resources that we can use to invest in our future?
• Will this help us focus our strengths, protect the quality of our academic programs and maintain our integrity as an academic institution?
• Will this contribute to our capacity to improve our world and develop WSU as a working model of a sustainable institution?

We need not only more college-educated people but also differently educated people, graduates who are prepared to thrive in the world of the “New Normal,” an environment that is more open, more interconnected and more global in scope than we have ever experienced, a world where the economy and community life are increasingly built on knowledge and how it is used.

Now we know that the “good old days” will never return. To achieve our mission, we are more and more being thrown onto our own devices. What do we need to do in order to thrive, not just survive? Like most recipes for success, the answer to this question is simple, but actually following the recipe is no simple matter.
Have clear expectations.

Winona State University has set some high expectations for itself. WSU will be a University whose concept of academic excellence incorporates the qualities of a community of learners improving our world. The primary value we offer is embodied in our curriculum and in the experiences of our students. We will demonstrate these qualities in three basic ways

1. **Provide an inspiring and supportive learning environment that is purposefully designed to facilitate creativity, innovation and scholarship.** We shall learn differently, work together differently and make a difference through the process of generating and applying knowledge to improve our world. Participation in discovery and application will offer meaningful, authentic and engaging experience for all members of our campus community, and for those who partner with us, and allow us to demonstrate the connection between learning and responsible action.

2. **Prepare students to lead productive, creative and responsible lives and apply their knowledge and skills to important real world problems.** Our graduates will be engaged, well-educated citizens and respond successfully to the challenges of their work, their lives and the communities in which they live.

3. **Develop the University as a working model of scholarship and creative solution-finding in action as well as a laboratory for the practice of contemporary democracy.** The members of the University community and our partners will work together to contribute to the quality of life and to economic vitality in Minnesota.

Practice what we teach.

To create the kind of environment that supports our aspirations and promotes the kind of learning that will enable us and our graduates to meet the demands of the age in which we now live, we have to practice on a daily basis what we would
teach. This means that we have to become an organization that learns differently and that involves all of the members of our community of learners.

Our students need to see us working together in ways that model the expectations we have set for them. What are those expectations? We want to foster an approach to learning that empowers individuals and prepares them to deal with complexity, diversity and change. We seek to provide students with broad knowledge of the wider world as well as in-depth study in a specific area of interest so that they can develop a sense of social and personal responsibility, as well as the ability to acquire and then apply strong knowledge and skills in real-world settings (adapted from a definition of liberal learning, AAC&U 2010).

To teach ourselves how to be a community of learners and how to create an environment that can support the kind of learning and informed actions that will be expected of us and our graduates, we have chosen to introduce Educational Lean as a means to transform some of the basic ways we create and support our educational environment. Our goal is to use this strategy (a) to learn how to read our environment more accurately; (b) to engage more members of our campus community in helping us adapt to changing political, social and economic pressures and expectations; (c) to provide opportunities to practice new habits that will serve us well in the years to come; and (d) to develop leadership throughout the organization so that we become more resilient and able to respond to the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead of us. In short, we want to interpret the idea of a learning organization by rethinking what it means to learn and to apply responsibly what we learn.

Be distinctive.

Beyond saying that we are a distinctive institution in our mission statement, we also need to be able to describe what WSU has to offer in ways that will be attractive to potential faculty and students, to potential donors, and to partner organizations that can provide resources that will enhance our academic programs and contribute to the educational experiences of our students. We also need to be able to make a convincing case for public support as well as support from external sponsors such as funding agencies or foundations.
We are a **community of learners** who work and study together in order to **improve our world**. This core identity has consequences for how we design our curricula, the questions we pursue through our scholarly agenda, how we work together, and how we develop and sustain our relationships with the broader community.

An integrative or signature theme brings together the strengths of a number of academic programs and faculty and student interests to shape a distinctive Winona State environment and experience. It does not refer to specific academic departments or degree programs.

There are several ways in which we are creating the capacity to improve our world. I will only highlight a few examples of the distinctive and essential assets that we have developed in recent years.

1. A distinctive student learning experience that integrates theory and practice and the application of knowledge to meaningful problems across all liberal arts disciplines and areas of professional study.
2. A campus-wide focus on climate commitment/sustainability/environmental stewardship instantiated in how we construct and remodel our buildings, design our curriculum and operate our campus.
3. Health sciences/wellness/child advocacy and rehabilitation.
4. The design of a new approach to professional education that prepares scholar practitioners who can read the changing environment of practice, work well with colleagues and apply what they learn to the enhancement of outcomes for the people they serve, as exemplified most recently by the new design of our Nursing curriculum and the plans for teacher education supported by our Bush Foundation award.

**Areas that will receive special attention this year**

1. Continue to increase student retention and develop stronger enrollment management strategies and tools.
2. Expand the use of Educational Lean to address core institutional resource questions such as space utilization, advisement and support for undeclared students, new staffing patterns for administrative offices, and academic departments that can work with fewer staff positions.

3. Support a faculty-led effort to update our University Studies Program (WSU version of General Education) to bring it into better alignment with the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum and to focus its purposes and reduce the cost of delivery of the program.

4. Continue to develop capacity for assessing student learning throughout the curriculum and to reflect changes in the nature of professional practice.

5. Continue to prepare for the HLC Self-Study by completing the redesign and integration of our support structure for planning and institutional assessment.

6. Utilizing the newly redesigned faculty/staff Learning Commons in Maxwell, design and provide integrated support for research and the enhancement of teaching and learning.

7. Begin the implementation of our Technology Master Plan and introduce the eWarrior Assessment Plan.

8. Utilize our new budget and planning tools and improved constituency consultation models to prepare for further reductions in state general fund support in the next biennium.

9. Complete the public phase of our capital campaign, Light the Way.

10. Continue to pursue our climate commitment goals and expand our “WSU Goes Green” efforts. Implement our first energy performance contract.

11. Obtain approval of WSU’s updated Comprehensive Master Plan and roll out the completed plan to the campus during the fall semester. Immediately begin work to implement the short-term priorities detailed in the plan.

12. Continue to develop collaborative programs with MnSCU partner institutions.

13. Add additional choices and different pathways for adult learners including an online baccalaureate degree completion program for healthcare professionals and advanced studies such as new graduate certificates (e.g. Educational Lean) and the interdisciplinary Professional Science Master’s.
We have much to do this year and both the will and the capacity to do it. WSU is an extraordinary institution. I am proud to be a member of this community of learners and am happy to welcome you to a new academic year. It is time to begin.

References


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