

# We Have Done Much and We Will Do Much More

State of the University Address  
by  
Luis M. Proenza, President  
The University of Akron  
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Thank you, Chairman Pogue, for that kind introduction.

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen, and thank you for joining us for the 2012 State of the University Address.

Before I begin, let us please recognize a number of special guests who are with us today, many of who work with us every day and who made time in their busy schedules to attend this event. Will you please stand when I call your name and will our audience please hold their applause until all have been recognized

From The University of Akron's Board of Trustees:

- x Chairman Richard W. Pogue;
- x Vice Chair Ralph J. Palmisano
- x Vice Chair Jonathan T. Pavloff;
- x Trustees Roland H. Bauer,
- x Olivia P. Demas,
- x Chander Mohan, M.D.
- x Warren L. Woolford, and
- x Nicholas C. York
- x Student Trustees Alan M. Bowdler, and
- x Ryan J. Thompson
- x Chair Emeritus Patricia Graves
- x And Board Secretary Ted A. Mallo

We are deeply grateful for your commitment to this university, and for the leadership you provide.

Also:

- x Ms. Ilene Shapiro, representing Summit County Council
- x Mayor Don Robart from the City of Cuyahoga Falls
- x Summit Country Executive Russ Pry
- x From the Greater Akron Chamber, Mr. Gregg Cramer and Ms. Rebecca Guzy Woodford

Would the leadership of our student organizations please rise, along with our leadership team of vice presidents, deans, and department heads?

I also want to extend a special welcome to all of our faculty, staff, students and other friends of the University. I am deeply grateful for your attendance, especially on the heels of one of the most exhausting elections in the history of this battleground state.

By the way, it has been reported that the presidential campaigns spent nearly \$200 million in Ohio to capture our votes. Imagine if they had instead tried to persuade us by using those resources to create scholarships and offset state cuts. Indeed, if that had been the case, I expect all of us would be in favor of elections every year!

While political candidates often are criticized for not putting forth a clear vision for the future, we have begun this academic year with Vision 2020: A New Gold Standard of University Performance, our own carefully crafted strategic plan.

Today, I will first highlight some of our progress and accomplishments, then outline the opportunities and significant challenges facing us, and conclude by celebrating the energy and resolve of our shared vision for the future.

Just as triumphant candidates from Tuesday's election now face the burden of delivering on their promises, so, too, do we in higher education have the obligation of delivering on the promise of our Noble Charter in a manner suitable to the 21st Century. In this global, knowledge-based economy, universities like ours continue to offer the greatest promise for individual success, and for innovation and prosperity for communities and regions. Increasingly, however, critical eyes turn to see if we are fulfilling that promise to see if we are delivering on that Vision for the future.

I believe this university has, and now we will continue to do so.

In January I will begin my 15th year as president of The University of Akron. There is 0.27 .002(l)-2(i)-



In September we announced the selection of the two inaugural winning proposals

The Biomimicry Research and Innovation Center seeks to create new products inspired by nature Think, for example of the exciting opportunities if we can synthetically





much longer it will be too late. Indeed, w

This integrator/assessor approach can move universities from the traditional model of an all-inclusive provider of knowledge resources to a new role: the university as integrator and assessor of knowledge and resources. The associated costs for the services will be significantly lower for both the learner and the university, thus providing access to higher education to a broader population and, in turn, benefitting the larger society.

Let me be clear on one particular point. However these new university models take shape, I am convinced that the student-faculty relationship will remain at the core of learning. Even the founder of Udacity has said "There is a magic that goes on inside a university campus." I believe that magic is in the bond between professor and student, between researchers and teachers and learners. The stronger we can grow that bond, the more certain we can be of success, both for our students and for our institution. It will be a different relationship but a stronger one, as we take advantage of technology that students know well and are adept at using. To paraphrase one of the founders of Coursera, herself a Stanford faculty, . . . by flipping the classroom, we enhance the opportunity for service to our students.

And is that not what higher education is supposed to be all about?!

Enhancing opportunities and creating a kind of magic can only be found at a place like The University of Akron. And that is why we have focused a great deal of our collective efforts this year on creating a distinctive Akron Experience for our students.

As part of Vision 2020, we have defined The Akron Experience as a Journey to Success that puts each and every student on a pathway to a lifetime of achievement. The Akron Experience is about connectivity, connecting classroom insights with real-world problem solving, connecting students with community and with industry through service projects and co-ops that ensure personal and professional success. And The Akron Experience is distinctively Akron because each student's experience is connected to some aspect of the region's historical, economic, social and cultural assets.

But don't just take my word for it. Listen to the students whose futures are being shaped because they are here, now, at the University of Akron:

[Video plays]

Usually, I would ask the students who are profiled to stand up and be recognized. But I won't, because they're not here – they are all in class or at work! I find that rather encouraging, don't you? Let's give them a round of applause anyway.

As we develop the Akron Experience to its fullest potential, it will strengthen our linkage to the community—and to our alumni – as never before. And the additional connections and links we form in the community to build the Akron Experience will lead to more opportunities for research and collaborative projects, gifts and grants, and the kind of public support that matters to policymakers in Columbus and Washington.



