Welcome Back Breakfast  
Dr. Rodolfo Arevalo  
September 20, 2010

Faculty Breakfast Speech  

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Introduction:

Welcome to another exciting academic year, I hope all of you had the opportunity to relax and take time off to recharge yourself for the year to come. This summer was the first opportunity for Nadine and me to take a few days off. We drove all the way to Yellowstone National Park and had the opportunity to spend time with our family. We truly do live in a great country, and our region is truly set apart when it comes to the many recreational opportunities. I enjoyed myself; but, of course, the staff was not pleased with the supervision I provided via “Blackberry.” I was able to take time to gain a greater perspective of the budget situation and how we might continue to address the Universities declining resource.

When I think about the budget, one of the first questions that I need to answer is how might we continue to address the University’s declining resource base. I realize that the downsizing and administrative changes that we have made over the past two years have resulted in a stronger leadership team, a team focused on student success, and institutional improvement.

I would like to take a moment to introduce the administrative changes we have made since last year. Dr. Rex Fuller in his new role as Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs;

- Ms. Stacey Morgan Foster, Vice President for Student Affairs
- Dr. Vickie Shields, Dean of the new College of Social and Behavioral Science and Social Work;
- Dr. Lynn Briggs, Dean of the new College of Arts, Letters and Education;
- Dr. Neil Zimmerman, Interim Dean of the College of Business and Public Administration;
- Dr. Richard Wilson, Dean of Libraries; and
- Dr. Colin Ormsby, Director of Institutional Research.

I want to personally thank each of you for all you do for EWU.

I would also like to ask all new faculty members to please stand and be recognized. (APPLAUSE) Now that you have identified our new faculty members, I want to encourage our returning staff to introduce themselves and welcome our new faculty. Reach out to them; make a lunch appointment. Make them feel welcome—this is their new home.
I would also like to introduce the EWU Board of Trustees who have joined us today. Will you please stand and be recognized:

- Jo Ann Kauffman, Chairperson of the BOT
- Dr. Mark Mays, member

Our board members work tirelessly on your behalf. They have regular jobs in addition to being involved with Eastern during a particularly challenging period of our history, yet they never complain and they are always seeking to better the institution. Thank you, trustees, for taking time to be with us this morning.

As I thought about the focus of my remarks this year, I found it difficult to identify key issues to bring to you that did not relate to funding or the lack of it, or the continuing poor revenue projections from the State. The fact of the matter is that, clearly, the state and national economies are driving how we deliver education. While I thought it important to brief you on the state’s financial situation, I did not want to begin another year with “doomsday scenarios.” But, as your president, I owe you an honest interpretation of the future budgetary issues that lie ahead.

In mid August the Governor informed all state agencies of the need to plan for future budget reductions due to potential poor revenue collections. At that time, the state had predicted a four to seven percent across-the-board reduction. Last week, the state announced those cuts would be 6.3 percent and that they would be effective October 1, 2010. To EWU, this means a reduction of little over $2.3 million dollars.

We have also been asked to plan for a 10 percent reduction in our 2011-13 budget, which equates to a reduction of $8 to $10 million dollars.

Additionally, it seems that we may also have to make up the $5.5 million dollars of Federal stimulus money that is in our current budget. To date, we have not received a clear picture on how this is going to be addressed.

This means that we could see an additional reduction of $2.3 million in this year’s budget bringing our biannual total reduction to $32.5 million and a potential $14.5 million base reduction in the next biennium.

The magnitude of these cuts will require us to stay on course with limiting operating costs, limiting purchasing, and freezing hiring for the duration of this year and the next biennium.

I know this is not the news you wanted to hear as we start the year. What I can tell you is that I have great confidence in the budget process on our campus. I know that we will have many good suggestions to consider as we go forward with on campus discussions. And I know we will pull through this together.

I also know your first question will be – “Will this mean more job cuts?” I honestly can’t tell you for sure whether more jobs will or won’t be lost, I CAN tell you the university is doing everything it can to save money in hopes of avoiding that scenario.
This is the very reason why I have discussed this issue with my senior leadership group and informed them that we will be sweeping all carry forward dollars remaining from last year’s saving. This means we will utilize these dollars to address the cuts expected this year and hopefully provide some cushion for the reductions expected next biennium. The approach I am taking is for us to develop a reserve that will allow us to make more informed and humane decision in the months and years to come. While it appears that we will have reductions in our base funding next biennium, I want to manage such that any cuts in staffing are generated by natural attrition, rather than by forced cuts. We will also look at reducing the number of degree programs offered and the downsizing of administrative units on campus.

What it means is that we will utilize these dollars to address the 6.3 percent cuts the governor announced last week. Since these cuts are to be implemented October 1st, most agencies will be dealing with this blow and are scrambling to manage the magnitude of this reduction; while for us, by sweeping those dollars, it will help us this year and hopefully provide some cushion for the reductions expected next biennium.

We will also refocus our strategic plan and look at ways that we can improve quality and continue to support our core mission of instruction and student services.

With your help and support, there is no doubt in my mind we will come up with some productive and innovative solutions.

What’s ahead for us?

It is imperative that we consider these budgetary challenges as opportunities to transform the campus and emerge a stronger and better institution. Consequently, we are already planning to implement a number of activities to create greater synergy in our efforts to support student success.

- Soon we will be announcing the initiation of a new set of scholarship/financial aid programs for students coming to Eastern next year. Our scholarship initiative will provide a greater level of support for middle income students and hopefully a lesser dependence on loans to fund their education. The principle reason for initiating these new scholarships is to recruit and attract more highly qualified new students interested in EWU and improving our retention and graduation rates by extending our support for them over four years rather than only the first year.

- We also will be reviewing our international programs with the intent to develop stronger articulation and programmatic connections with our academic programs. It is important that we continue to encourage a global perspective in academic programs and that we provide opportunities for our students to study aboard.

- We are committed to developing a greater presence at Riverpoint with programs that are designed to specifically meet the needs of the greater Spokane community. We are continuing to work with WSU in the development of academic master plan and a campus master plan for further physical plant enhancement.
We will explore what it will take to develop a global campus and or a virtual college—one that can serve the needs of our current students and expand our reach into new markets. This will also enhance programming opportunities with partners such as Bellevue College and other community colleges.

Finally, we will be exploring ways to upgrade our residential facilities to match the needs of our campus and to enhance the experience of student life.

Our Accomplishments

I also want to take a moment to highlight the many fine examples of all the great things happening despite the difficult economic climate:

- We set a new record with the recently completed food drive, raising more than five tons of food for the Cheney Food Bank. Your participation demonstrated the compassion, commitment, and spirit you all have for this community. Even during difficult times of uncertainty, many of you stepped forward to help those in need. Nadine and I are very grateful for your support and want to sincerely thank you for your participation. I especially would like to thank Nadine for the leadership and commitment she has provided to this effort.

- Here on campus, we launched a new website that is student friendly and is geared toward both current and future students. Its design was based on broadening Eastern’s appeal to all those who visit the site, while ensuring that the resources and academic offerings are easily accessible to visitors.

- Another bright spot this summer – actually, it’s really bright! – The new Red Turf at Roos Field. (And what a turnout we had on Saturday!!) It has not only attracted national and local attention, but it has energized our campus.

The new turf has instilled a greater level of pride in our students, alumni, and of course, the student athletes. The turf has elevated our level of visibility; and according to Google Earth, has put us on the map in a very tangible way. It was critical for dozens and dozens of Eastern donors to step forward to fund 100 percent of this project.

I know many of you contributed to the project, or worked hard to make it happen. Thank you. This was truly a team effort and tells a story of passion, commitment, forward momentum in the face of staunch resistance, and Eagle pride. We must also apply this same momentum as we tackle other essential priorities on campus.

- One of those priorities, I am proud to say, has become a reality for EWU this fall. (HOLD UP NEW DISCOVER E MAGAZINE). I am holding in my hand the first-ever edition of the new DISCOVER E MAGAZINE. This magazine will be produced at least once a year, and it will highlight the research and creative activities of our faculty. Producing this magazine fulfills an important goal for the university, as it depicts our role to educate supporters and the surrounding community about the engaging work our faculty and students conduct on our campus. I plan to share this with state lawmakers and
community leaders as we continue to educate them about Eastern’s critical role in developing new ideas that will help drive the economy. I would like to express my appreciation for all the hard work that Dr. Tony Flinn put into this first issue, along with our talented Graphic Design staff.

This first issue focuses on a number of faculty areas of interest. Prominently depicted on the cover is a story about Dr. Jaime Manson from the Department of Chemistry and his work with lab created crystalline compounds that can lead to superconductivity at high temperatures. I should also mention that Dr. Manson was also recently awarded a National Science Foundation Grant that significantly involved students in his research. Thank you, Dr. Manson.

- I am also very proud to announce that we have received two other important grants from the National Science Foundation:
  1. One is an ADVANCE grant to investigate and assess the campus climate for women in the sciences. This grant will be led by Dr. Kayleen Islam-Zwart and Dr. Andrea Castillo.
  2. The second grant is a five-year grant to support a partnership between EWU and the Spokane Public Schools to increase the number and quality of mathematics teachers. The project directors are Dr. Keith Adolphson, Dr. Barbara Alvin, Dr. Kevin Pyatt, Professor Heather McKean, and Dr. Margret O’Connell.

- EWU is also involved with numerous K-12 initiatives in the region—all aimed at keeping kids in school, helping them excel in subjects such as math and science, and, in turn, setting the stage for them to attend college. I have been involved with Priority Spokane, a group of Spokane leaders seeking to make improvements in key economic indicators in the area.

Last year Priority Spokane identified “academic achievement” as a key factor in improving the public schools. As a result, an effort to decrease the dropout rate in the Spokane School District has been identified and programs will soon be implemented. It is my intention to have EWU assist this educational improvement effort in Spokane.

Our efforts to assist public education is not limited to the Spokane Public Schools, we are part of a Rural Alliance of 30 school districts working together to improve college going rate and making students college ready. Our tradition of producing excellent public school teachers and assisting school improvements is the key reason I agreed to be engaged in these two projects.

- Similarly, Eastern faculty and administration in the College of Business and Public Administration are engaged in partnering with Washington businesses to improve the quality of learning in their programs. The College has initiated a lecture series to bring nationally-recognized CEO’s to meet with our students. This past year, Mr. Jim Senegal, CEO of Costco, spoke to a standing room only group of students and faculty, sharing his insights on best practices for business development.
I have also approved the search for ten additional tenure track positions during this academic year in order to ensure the quality of faculty continues and that we appropriately staff critical areas that continue to show growth and promise.

Finally, we have continued our efforts toward sustainability. Key campus projects, like the renovation of Patterson Hall and our engagement with McKinstry Associates, has led to developing a master plan for sustainability that should result in energy savings in the future.

We continue to honor our traditions. The new Reid Lab School Meditation Garden, located next to the Old One-Room School House, is just one such example. It will be officially dedicated this week and serves as a daily reminder of the special projects on our campus that we have supported over the years.

I know it is a cliché to say “We are doing more with less” – but looking around, I can truly say we are doing a lot of great things with the resources we have. We will continue to review opportunities to address the needs of our students and the region, and we will continue to redirect our resources to functions and programs that enhance or maintain quality and that assures Eastern’s continued success.

This year, we will see the initiation of a new degree in mechanical engineering and a certification program on Health Information Technology Management. We will also begin our first undergraduate degree offered fully online in Children Studies.

Despite the hand we’ve been dealt, despite the severe economy, we are still solid players in the game. Enrollment remains strong, and the quality of this historic institution has not diminished. In fact, I would argue that our quality and competency continues to reach new heights.

We are not only surviving, but we are actually thriving. Be encouraged. Be grateful for what you have. Take the time to thank someone – stop to take in the rich resources and enjoy the great community in which we live and work.

Thank you for remaining steadfast. Thank you for remaining positive and optimistic about our future. When the dust settles, a stronger Eastern will emerge. Although you might not see it at first glance, internally, Eastern is a new university that is more focused, more efficient, and better able to serve its students.

Thank you for your help and support toward that end. Welcome back to a new academic year. Welcome back to a year of opportunity.

And most of all remember, it truly is a great day to be an Eagle!

As a reminder, at 11 a.m., please join me at our annual Pass Through the Pillars tradition in front of Showalter Hall today.

It’s a great way to welcome our new freshman class and demonstrate our support for them.