

State of the University Address

Great Cities Need Great Universities AND Great Universities Need Great Cities

[http://www.uc.edu/president/2007\\_State\\_of\\_the\\_University\\_Address.html](http://www.uc.edu/president/2007_State_of_the_University_Address.html)

President Nancy L. Zimpher

October 24, 2007

Great Hall, Tangeman University Center

Good afternoon and thank you to those present and to those watching on our Webcast for taking the time to listen to the University of Cincinnati's 2007 State of the University Address. Thank you, Faculty Senate Vice Chair Daniel Langmeyer for your introduction. And thank you, Ann Welsh, for your leadership as chair of the Faculty Senate.

I also want to acknowledge our inspiring musical prelude by our students in the College-Conservatory of Music's Brass Choir, directed by Tim Northcut! And of course, you recognize former Dean Doug Lowry's Christen the Voyage! How about another round of applause!

Welcome as well to members of the University of Cincinnati Board of Trustees, Vice Chairman Buck Niehoff, Fran Barrett and Gary Heiman, as well as our UC Foundation Board members in attendance today, undergraduate student government President Jay Radley, representatives of our Graduate Student Governance Association, other student leaders, faculty and staff.

This now marks my fifth annual state of the university address. How time flies! We began our tenure together by developing an academic vision for our future, filled with the dreams and aspirations of over 250 planning committee members, and 2500 participants in focus groups, and over 25,000 visits to our planning Web site.

While UC|21 is alive and well, the shelf life of any strategic plan is likely not more than 6 to 8 years. Already, we are working on an "integrated master planning process" that will help us reconcile future capital plans with our academic ambitions and plans for substantial revenue recovery and growth through performance based budgeting.

Just recently, we presented our annual UC|21 report card to the Board of Trustees. We have also shared it with our new Chancellor, Eric Fingerhut, who is currently leading a strategic planning process for the now established University System of Ohio.

Our evolving annual scorecard includes over 100 metrics, documenting our progress since the inception of UC|21, in an effort to be more accountable for the actions that matter most in our plan. Toward this end, I am visiting all of our colleges and academic divisions over the next four weeks, four completed already, seeking input from as many constituents as possible on how to continue to refine this accountability system. Not only will this reporting mechanism be more robust next year, it will be more obvious and transparent to much larger audiences that UC's plans and aspirations are actually unfolding successfully.

Sharing these metrics is directly in line with the proposed "voluntary system of accountability" being created under the leadership of several national higher education membership

organizations, and a model worthy of consideration by our new chancellor and the University System of Ohio.

It would follow that I give you a glimpse of these accomplishments before moving on to the topic of the day.

### **Placing Students at the Center**

Our retention rates continue to improve and our graduate rates change more gradually. But if we continue to retain over 82% of our freshmen to their sophomore year, our graduation rates are sure to follow.

For the first time since 1977 we agreed to a zero percent tuition increase as a part of a statewide compact to generate increased state funding in return for university cost-cutting, for which our governor, our chancellor and our legislators are all to be commended.

### **Grow Our Research Excellence**

While we will not announce our 2007 numbers on research until our November Board meeting, we already know we're in better shape than many universities might expect in an age of federal flat-lining and cutbacks.

We are still celebrating the news that UC swept the state of Ohio on new Eminent Scholar positions this year – winning the state's only two new positions, one for nanobiodevices and the other in advanced propulsion and power systems.

### **Achieve Academic Excellence**

For the first time ever, the Princeton Review lists UC among the nation's best colleges, a point best validated by the need to create an all-university wait list for new freshmen seeking admission to UC this past fall.

We also inducted the inaugural group of 22 of our esteemed faculty into the new Academy of Fellows for Teaching and Learning.

And we still haven't settled down from last week's announcement of our membership in the global PACE network, and the extraordinary contributions occasioned by this opportunity. Nor could we have imagined the excitement accompanying our very successful involvement in the international Solar Decathlon. What a week; and WHAT a university!

Forge New Relationships and Partnerships

In a multi-college initiative, we have launched the exciting new Live Well Collaborative, joining hands with P&G, General Mills, CitiGroup, Hillenbrand/Hill-Rom, and LPK to focus on consumers age 50 and more mature.

In recognition of our commitment to outreach, UC has gained the Carnegie Foundation's new classification as a "community engaged" institution – a designation given to an elite group of 76 colleges and universities around the country.

Establish a Sense of Place

The occupancy rate of our on-campus housing is holding steady and our near-campus affiliated housing is swelling. We now estimate that over 15,000 students, graduate and undergraduate, now live within a one-mile radius of our campus. While we love the historical reference to UC as a “street-car campus,” we are becoming by any definition a significant “residential campus.”

Through the Uptown Consortium we have broken ground on a major revitalization project aimed at taking Burnet Avenue from “crime spot” to “prime spot,” continuing our drive to make Uptown a great place to live, and learn, work and play...and stay! But more on that later.

### **Create Opportunity**

This goal carries with it a fiscal aspect and we know that last year was a very tough year indeed. We cut costs by \$27 million and approved a budget for fiscal year 2008 that is smaller than the previous year's. Thanks to the disciplined dedication of Senior Vice President Monica Rimai, her team, and all of you, for the second year in a row, we are operating under a balanced budget; and proudly, every unit on this campus carrying any debt has submitted a plan for debt retirement. In addition, the Board of Trustees has received and affirmed our plans not only to return this institution to fiscal stability, but has also approved our plans for future revenue growth. These steps have taken sacrifice from every corner of this campus, and much courage, but I want to thank each and every one of you for your endurance and dedication to these efforts.

This goal also carries a “people” orientation and we've got great news about that. Our total enrollment is up – at its highest point in 16 or more years. Our largest and brightest freshman class ever (present company excluded) has just joined us this fall. A new Diversity Council, chaired by Cindy Berryman-Fink, and our new Chief Diversity Officer, Mitchel Livingston, will lead the effort to create a strategic plan for diversity.

Moving the dial in positive directions, as I have reported, is truly a collective effort and again, I thank everyone for all you do every day, in every way, to continue to move the University of Cincinnati from “great” to “premier!”

### **Today's Thesis: Great Cities Need Great Universities AND Great Universities Need Great Cities**

Here at the University of Cincinnati we have the great good fortune of co-location in a highly urbanized area, both in our local community of Uptown Cincinnati, and in our direct link to Downtown, the Central Business District, and Over-the-Rhine. It should be obvious that our relationship to such a great city, the Queen City, is in large part “reciprocal.” In short, great cities need great universities AND great universities need great cities, and thus the thesis of my remarks today.

### **Define “great city:”**

Well...a lot of important people have tried: Michael Porter, Doug Hinton, and other preeminent “city-watchers.” But the work of Richard Florida still rings true. His point: A city is best described by those who like to live in them; in short, the creative class. Through a set of clever measuring tools, he puts forward indices of an open, diverse and highly tolerant city that attracts

innovators of all kinds and ages – talent at the bleeding edge who will chart the future of our nation.

These young professionals who live and work in our city and many more we hope to recruit compose over 30% of the workforce.

They're highly creative people. They value diversity in all its manifestations. They want to hear different kinds of music and try different kinds of food. They want to meet and socialize with people unlike themselves, trade views and spar over issues. They like a vibrant night life, and they want to live in a city that gets it.

Lucky for us, we have a great city, now defined as a way cool place to “live, and work, and play,” and we are blessed with the abundance of a great university to ensure the reciprocal benefits of not only “live, work, and play,” but also “learn and stay.”

Adding to this popularized definition of a way cool city, we must now define “great university.” In short, I mean a comprehensive, research extensive, public university like the University of Cincinnati, a Top 50 university nationally ranked in research funding.

Since World War II, great American research universities, like UC, have evolved into vital drivers of the local and national economies. They have become dominating sources of scientific talent and basic research. These days, both the government and private industry greatly depend on us.

In concert with a recent national conference on “anchor universities,” a University of Maryland colleague summed it up this way: “Our nation’s more than 4,000 public and private colleges and universities are increasingly referred to as ‘anchor institutions’. With rare exceptions, once established they almost never move location. ...[These] universities employ two million workers (one-third of who are faculty), enroll more than 15 million students, possess endowments of over \$300 billion, hold more than \$100 billion in real estate, and purchase hundreds of billions of dollars in goods and services annually. In short, [we] are economic engines of considerable power in our nation.” (Linking Colleges to Communities, The Democracy Collaborative at the University of Maryland, page v).

Such is the case, of course, with the University of Cincinnati, our region’s largest employer, with a local economic impact of over \$4 billion and responsible for the generation of over 51,000 jobs.

Recall that during the debates that ultimately led to the tag-line: defining the new urban research university, many felt we should distance ourselves from the word “urban,” the connotation of which, some felt, suggested only an image of racial strife, poverty, decay, and flight. In the end, the voice of urban vibrancy, excitement, diversity, rich potential and opportunity prevailed; perhaps in the face of one obvious truth – we are the University of Cincinnati.

The good news is we're not in this urban debate alone. I begin by citing Bruce Katz, vice president of the Brookings Institution:

“Thirty years ago some futurists predicted that the restructuring of the American economy and our technological advances would free and un-anchor us from place, precipitating a mass de-urbanization throughout the nation.

“Well they were wrong. Far from being dead, cities are experiencing a second life, fueled, in part, by their distinctive physical assets: mixed-use downtowns, pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods, adjoining rivers and lakes, historic buildings and distinctive architecture.

“An astonishing 83 percent of the American population lives in metropolitan areas which, together, drive and dominate the economy and house our wealth-generating industries, our centers of research and innovation, our ports of commerce and gateways of immigration.”

And what, you might ask, is the irrefutable attraction to these cities? The presence of anchor institutions, universities among them. So says CEOS for Cities:

“Universities, community colleges, museums, libraries, municipal enterprises, hospitals, parks, performing arts centers and sports arenas are all included in the array of institutions that can contribute to the culture, economy and vitality of cities.”

These institutions are hardly foot-loose. Rather they represent what CEOS for Cities calls “sticky capital.” “They cannot easily pick up and leave the community. So they have special importance to the re-making of a city and its future, and they have special reason to want to be instrumental in shaping their cities’ future [although all will not choose to do so.]”

Thus, my thesis: Great Cities Need Great Universities AND Great Universities Need Great Cities, and a focus on the University of Cincinnati’s involvement in shaping our nation’s future, reaching beyond our campus boundaries to our neighborhoods, our city, our region, our state and our nation.

### **Vision Is the Ignition**

It is my very strong belief, and one I believe you share, that our institutional future depends, nay demands, that we be explicit about who we are and where we’re going. Thus “vision is the ignition.” Such a vision defines our plan of action, or as some would say, our “theory” of action. For us this has meant articulating a vision of a 21st century university, plotting a series of goals and actions, holding ourselves accountable for achieving those goals and acquiring the resources to realize our ambitions. I like a lot the idea that UC, and other institutions of like mind are in fact long-term residents of their communities, having organized our actions around the responsibilities of a so-called “anchor institution.” So follow me as we account for the ripple effect of our anchor status, from our neighborhoods to our nation.

### **Our Neighborhoods**

As an anchor institution, if there’s one place we need to get it right, it’s here in Uptown Cincinnati – in the neighborhoods surrounding our campus – including Avondale, Clifton, Clifton Heights, Corryville, Fairview, Mt. Auburn and University Heights.

That's why we helped to found the Uptown Consortium, a partnership of five of the area's largest employers, taking a 360-degree approach to the seven communities surrounding our Uptown anchor institutions. Our university investment in these neighborhoods, backed by our endowment, is substantial, and I would say, necessary. These are a set of neighborhoods that face some very daunting challenges – high poverty, high unemployment, low literacy, low home ownership, and safety and transportation issues. And that's why the Uptown Consortium is committed to a five-pronged strategy focused on housing, retail, safety, transportation and neighborhood amenities.

We know that UC is not the only university involved in its adjacent communities. From Penn to Johns Hopkins, and UIC to UCLA, universities located in the urban core are stepping up to the plate. Three UC faculty members from DAAP, in fact, took an in-depth look at 21 universities across the country who are significantly engaged in community development, assessing a subset of 11 of them, including UC, against 16 metrics critical to successful community engagement. We know that we haven't gotten everything right, and the DAAP analysis has helped us reflect on what's working and what's not. While our focus has been largely on real estate, we have much work to do in making Uptown clean and safe, in meeting the contemporary demands of public transportation (and the very real possibility that the street car will come to Uptown in future phases of the plan), and in responding to the educational and service needs of our neighbors.

That's why UC's Niehoff Urban Design Studio and the assist from our colleagues in Criminal Justice are both central to our growth in Uptown. And as importantly, some very promising discussions are now underway with our colleagues at Hughes High School, focusing particularly on the STEM disciplines as a shared responsibility of UC and Cincinnati Public Schools. Toward this end, we are asking our newly formed UC|21 Center for the City and our Civic Engagement Council to take an even closer look at the manifold ways that UC can engage more deeply in the quality of life issues so central to achieving stability and growth within our adjacent neighborhoods.

While our investment in Uptown may see a slower return from Wall Street's perspective, it may be fair to say that no other venture is as vitally entwined with our own destiny. Our success in Uptown means not only a higher quality of life for our neighbors, but also enhances our ability at UC to attract and retain highly-qualified students and world-class faculty and staff, who can comfortably call Uptown home.

### **Our City and Our Region**

Beyond our neighborhoods lies the city and our region.

Cincinnati Mayor Mark Mallory has launched an economic development initiative called GO Cincinnati, the G-O standing for growth and opportunity. This work focuses on creating a more competitive, livable community by increasing the city's tax base. Two industry-leading consultants – KMK Consulting and the Brookings Institution have been engaged in driving the effort.

And the University of Cincinnati is at the table as well as the Uptown Consortium. At its core is the concept of walkable urbanity and place-based economic and revenue growth. It's Brookings' Chris Leinberger's way of saying we have become victims of "car-dependent sprawl" when what we really want, but have a hard time finding is, "... a complex mix of uses, including retail boutiques, hotels, grocery stores, housing, offices, and artists' studios, all brought close to the sidewalk, with different styles of well-crafted architecture to experience along the way," otherwise known as "walkable urbanity."

The city has actually embraced this kind of thinking and is designating three priority sites as model environments for walkability and economic growth, singling out Uptown and its extraordinary "eds and meds" as important assets for strategic revenue growth and livability. While the GO Cincinnati plan calls for the addition of three more priority sites, there's no question that greater focus from and with the City on Uptown is key to our city's growth and UC's future.

Excitement is building at the regional level, too. UC is the largest employer in a region that boasts the headquarters of 10 Fortune 500 companies as well as hundreds of municipalities and crossing multiple state lines. As such we are serving as a dedicated force in the development of two major initiatives focused on our Cincinnati USA region.

One is Agenda 360. Modeled after an approach used in Boston and in Northern Kentucky's Vision 2015, this regional planning effort, led by our Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber of Commerce, encompasses four counties on this side of the river (Hamilton, Butler, Warren and Clermont). There are five main action teams focused on:

- \* A Competitive Economy
- \* Educational Excellence
- \* Livable Communities
- \* The Urban Renaissance
- \* And Effective Governance

I serve on the Agenda 360 steering committee and the executive director of our UC Center for the City, Mary Stagaman, serves as co-chair of one of the action teams. A myriad of UC faculty experts are being called upon to serve in helping make sure this process is smart, effective and successful.

The second major regional initiative is Strive, a partnership focused on our educational pipeline. Today, for every 100 ninth graders that enter high school, only 17 will actually make it to the finish line of a college degree, within six years, if ever. So, using the convening power of our region's higher education institutions, we have recruited partners from the business, nonprofit, civic and social sectors to develop a regional strategy that will get kids graduated from high school, earning a college degree or certificate, and successfully entering the local workforce.

The map of our initiative reflects a partnership like no other in our community. It spans what we often refer to as "it's just a river," and unites four urban school districts, and seven of the region's postsecondary institutions in a birth to career educational pipeline to get every student graduated. Every student; no exceptions. Ambitious to the core, this is what anchor institutions

can do when they join together, especially through the commitment of many of our faculty, staff and students here at UC to make this dream a reality for our community.

Our State

While our cities are enjoying a renaissance of interest and investment, not all cities are making this comeback as successfully as others. The Brookings' report, "Restoring Prosperity," finds that 65 of our nation's 302 cities are lagging behind their peers suffering from slow or no employment growth, lower incomes, higher unemployment, diminishing tax bases, concentrated poverty and shifts in population away from the urban core.

There are eight Ohio cities on the list, including Cincinnati, and Canton, Cleveland, Dayton, Mansfield, Springfield, Warren and Youngstown as well.

What Restoring Prosperity is really about is what we can do at the state level to address this slowed recovery. This report could be catalytic for Ohio in its call to action:

"State leaders need a comprehensive urban agenda—one that both redresses state policies and practices that undermine urban prosperity, and advances proactive, innovative ideas for change."

The University of Cincinnati, by working with our state leaders, has the ability to help advance the future of Ohio and its cities by assessing what works, what doesn't and why. That's really what we've always been about. Together with our state, we can help craft solutions that have a lasting impact, fixing the basics and creating policies that help cities rather than hinder them, including major contributions to neighborhood viability, but also economic growth.

I note particularly two opportunities being provided under the leadership of Chancellor Fingerhut, to advance Ohio's economic welfare. Choose Ohio First will provide institutional awards from \$100,000 to \$10 million in support of undergraduate and/or graduate education by Ohio students in STEM education and medicine, dedicated primarily to student-tuition reimbursement scholarships, an opportunity we at UC are intent on pursuing, thanks to the persistence of Provost Tony Perzigian and his team.

Concurrently, early in Chancellor Fingerhut's tenure he advocated for a bold and imaginative proposal to better integrate and enhance Ohio's Third Frontier and a new Ohio Research Scholars program by the infusion of up to \$150 million dollars to recruit internationally recognized clusters of faculty for high-end STEM research initiatives, again an area where Vice President for Research Sandra Degen, working with Tony and Provost Jane Henney and their team are poised for competitive action.

### **Our Nation**

From neighborhood, to city, to region, to state, perhaps the most exciting activity is unfolding at the national level. Citing Katz again:

"For too long, national efforts to bolster metropolitan America ... have been piecemeal, created in isolation without regard to their impacts upon other goals....If metro areas are going to grow in sustainable ways, we need smart federal and state policies on transportation, housing, land



reclamation and energy efficiency – and a market-shaping commitment to environmental sanity that reduces our carbon contribution to climate change. “If metro areas are going to grow a strong middle class, we need a federal and state commitment to improve access to quality education at all levels and to increase the supply of housing that is affordable to our workforce so they can live near their jobs.”

From the soon-to-be launched “campaign,” which Brookings has dubbed its Blueprint for American Prosperity, Brookings is creating a roadmap, literally a campaign, with focus and political weight to create an urban and actually “metropolitan” agenda that will become central to the upcoming presidential campaign following the winners and their Transition Team right into the White House, and hopefully influencing future Congressional initiatives riveted on metropolitan America. To do so, Brookings is engaging the 35 major metropolitan areas of our country in this campaign, including Cincinnati, thanks to the leadership of Cincinnati Chamber CEO, Ellen VanderHorst.

And we are going with them, through UC’s leadership of the Coalition of Urban Serving Universities, located in many of the same metro areas as the Brookings map. UC is a founding member of this national network of “metro universities,” that has evolved from the original group known as the “Urban 13”, an historic group of American universities co-located in major league baseball cities, believe it or not!

Reinvented and expanded over the past five years, the Urban Serving Universities have set its sights on nothing short of an omnibus Congressional urban renaissance act or an urban land grant universities act that recognizes the role urban, anchor universities can play in America’s metropolitan renaissance. Over the course of two summers, we have teamed with the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges and its Commission on the Urban Agenda, as well as Brookings, USA TODAY and other foundations to craft a strategy focusing on three working strands, compatible with our leadership in these areas at UC. They are Strengthening Communities, Educating the Workforce and Improving Urban Health, creating evidence-based and innovation-driven demonstration sites that we hope will convince public policy makers that metro, urban universities are not only worth increased investment, but capable of delivering a profound return on that investment in our local communities.

Of course this would mean a major shift in our thinking about the concept of “land grant,” not unlike the shift in thinking Brookings is calling for in a recent article, which reads:

“With a little more than a year to go before the 2008 election, the presidential campaign has disappointedly conformed to convention: candidates down on the farm...or out at the fair eating deep fried anything and everything on a stick.

“[But] America does not live on the farm anymore and hasn’t for a long time. Far from it: The vast majority of Americans today live, work, play and shop in cities, suburbs, and exurbs, unconstrained by political boundaries.”

Just as our demography is shifting, so must our federal policy. While the land grant idea has reinvented itself many times over since 1862, in order to meet the challenges of a new 21st

century economy and social order, now more than ever, we need to repurpose our public postsecondary institutions in service to the education of a growing nation, both rural but increasingly metropolitan in nature. Introducing the 21st century version of this historic legislation, by what ever name, could fundamentally connect and energize America to meet the awesome challenges of a new century in a global environment.

So from campus, to neighborhood, to city, to region, to state and nation: great cities need great universities, and great universities need great cities, and...a great nation.

I have been known to end a speech or two by quoting Tom Friedman's "The World is Flat." But as Bruce Katz points out, "the world is not flat...it is spiky...and each spike represents a city and a metropolis where workers and firms and infrastructure are congregated."

In short, he says, "We are a full-fledged Metro-Nation! It is high time to start acting like one." At UC, we agree!

Thank you.