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STATE OF THE UNIVERSITY ADDRESS

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President
West Virginia State University

October 9, 2014

INSTITUTE, W.Va.—West Virginia State University (WVSU) President Brian O. Hemphill delivered the 2014 State of the University Address today at Ferrell Hall auditorium. WVSU students, faculty, alumni, staff and friends of the University attended the annual address. President Hemphill's remarks follow.

2014 State of the University Address:

“Good morning, and welcome to the State of the University!

What a tremendous honor to join you today as we not only reflect upon the progress we have made over the course of the past year, but also look with anticipation and enthusiasm into the future!

Before we get started, I would like to take a moment to extend a special thanks to a number of individuals who have ensured the success and forward momentum of our University.

My deepest appreciation to the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission. Thank you for your continuing dedication, not only to our students, but to students across the State of West Virginia. Please join me in applauding these outstanding champions of higher education.

Members of the West Virginia State University Board of Governors, please accept my sincerest thanks for your steadfast leadership and evident love of our Great University. Members of the Board of Governors, please stand! Let's give them a round of applause, folks! Thank you, and please be seated.

Members of the shared governance team, please stand to be recognized when I call your name and remain standing:

- Faculty Senate Chair Ruhnke;
- Student Body President Simms-Davis;
- Classified Staff Chair Hunt;
- Members of the President's Cabinet; and



- Our Academic Deans.

For your dedication and service, I thank you! The individuals now standing before you work to increase access and opportunity for our students each and every day. Please know that I am humbled by and appreciative of your teamwork; through shared governance, your committed efforts form a solid foundation for which the continued success of our University will be built from the ground up! Please join me in appreciation of these great leaders. Thank you, and please be seated.

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge an individual who is absolutely imperative to me personally, someone who unwaveringly offers faithful support and dedicated guidance, my loving and beautiful wife, Dr. Marisela Rosas Hemphill. Please join me in giving my very patient and loving wife a round of applause.

As I begin my third State of the University Address, I am pleased – so pleased – to report that the state of our Great University is strong! Our collective work is well underway through the University's strategic plan. The result of more than a year of university-wide discussion and analysis, Vision 2020 provides comprehensive goals and strategies that will chart a clear course as we make our way into the year 2020 and beyond!

Completed in February 2014, and subsequently approved by the Board of Governors, Vision 2020 is a document that expresses a bold vision and ambitious strategies, which address academic programs, research, faculty rewards, student enrollment, student experience, marketing, branding, facilities, technology, philanthropy, and alumni engagement.

Each of you should have received a copy of Vision 2020. It is also available online so you may keep its contents fresh in your mind as we continue to put into action our shared vision for our University. These goals are truly ambitious, and the plan envisions a future in which West Virginia State University will become the most student-centered, research and teaching, land-grant University in the State of West Virginia and beyond.

Over the course of the past year, much progress has been made as we have worked diligently on the goals and strategies included in the plan. For that, I must pause to thank Vice President Kitty McCarthy and Dr. R. Charles Byers for their leadership and all of our students, faculty, and staff for their committed efforts and sustained dedication that goes into making our shared vision a reality.

All of this activity comes at a pivotal time in the life of our University, indeed, in the life of every University. By now, you know that West Virginia State University is in the midst of an extensive self-study process that will ultimately lead to the reaffirmation of our accreditation through the Higher Learning Commission. In other words, we will demonstrate that West Virginia State University is an institution that personifies excellence, accountability, and student-centeredness. We demand these qualities of ourselves, and now, through our reaffirmation of accreditation, we



will show the world the many ways in which State truly exemplifies a world-class institution of higher education where students find their passion!

The expansive preparation efforts will prepare us for the mock site visit later this month. A visiting team of peer reviewers from the Higher Learning Commission will visit campus to read our self-study report and conduct a comprehensive site visit, which will include a combination of formal meetings, forums, and informal conversations with students, faculty, staff, and others! The mock site visit will mirror the April 2015 site visit by the Higher Learning Commission and will provide critical feedback that will allow us to make adjustments as needed.

This past July, the University launched a comprehensive reaffirmation of accreditation component to our website. Please visit the site and review the detailed information related to accreditation and what it means to our University. We also recently launched a weekly e-mail newsletter focused on accreditation. Through the website and the newsletter, I encourage each of you to familiarize yourselves with the accreditation process and truly get involved as we move along the road to State's Reaffirmation 2015. Within the reaffirmation of accreditation process, no one, and I mean no one is a bystander. Each and every one of us is an active participant in this process to ensure the viability and sustainability of our campus community. Let me be clear: our reaffirmation of accreditation success is dependent upon each and every one of us. I would like to ask that all members of the State family clearly articulate the responsibility and excitement that comes with being a Yellow Jacket. We are an amazing University and now is our time to shine!

I would like to take a moment for all of us to recognize the Self-Study Team. Led by Vice President Orlando F. McMeans with vital support from Mr. Tom Bennett and Dr. Thomas Kiddie, these individuals have worked tirelessly over the course of the past two years to ensure the viability of our University through the reaffirmation of our accreditation. For the long hours and tireless commitment these individuals have demonstrated, let's give these three individuals and the Self-Study Team a hearty round of applause! Please stand to be recognized!

I am confident that this University will impress the Higher Learning Commission and all who step foot on our campus by displaying the strength of the State family. Members of the State family like:

Dr. Micheal Fultz who was awarded a grant from the United States Department of Defense in the amount of \$324,893 for the acquisition of essential scientific equipment.

Dr. Scott Woodard who organized and participated in the International Academy of Advanced Conducting, through a program hosted twice a year, once in Institute, West Virginia and once in St. Petersburg, Russia;

Dr. Jonathan Eya who gave a presentation during the Aquaculture America 2014 International Conference and Exposition on interactive effects of dietary protein sources, dietary lipid levels, and water temperatures on growth, feed utilization, enzyme activities, and gene expressions in rainbow trout;



Professor Susan Marrash-Minnerly who is spearheading a year-long celebration of theatre, film, and television through “Essential Stages: The Donna Skeen Visiting Theatre Artist Series,” an exciting series featuring artists from across the nation performing and leading discussions, workshops, and master classes free to students and the public alike;

Dr. Ginta Palubinskas who served as Chair for the panel, “Shifting Economic Roles and Their Social and Cultural Consequences,” at The Yale University Conference on Baltic and Scandinavian Studies;

The women’s tennis team who was named as a National NCAA Division II All-Academic Team by the Intercollegiate Tennis Association, which honors programs with players who have high cumulative grade point averages;

Scotty White and Eric Rogers who are national finalists in College Broadcasters, Inc. Third Annual National Student Electronic Media Convention for their television public service announcement, titled “Enough is Enough,” which was produced as part of a communications class project;

Dr. John Fuller who was recently awarded Emeritus Status having been named Registrar Emeritus;

Dr. Charlotte Giles who was also awarded Emeritus Status having been named Professor Emeritus of Music;

Cal Bailey who served as Head Coach of the men’s baseball team since 1978 with 1,063 wins including the final win of his career with the team claiming the inaugural championship in the Mountain East Conference tournament;

And last, but not least, the hundreds of individuals who proudly participated in the 2nd Annual West Virginia State University Cares Day, contributing over 1,300 hours of service to the Kanawha and Putnam County communities.

These are the types of individuals and organizations the Higher Learning Commission will meet when they visit our campus in 2015. The great work of these shining stars of students, faculty, and staff is the reason we must continue to serve as responsible stewards of the valuable resources provided to and utilized by West Virginia State University. In order to provide opportunities for our students, faculty, and staff, we must make difficult decisions at time. Although very difficult, such decisions are necessary! Necessary for today and critical for tomorrow.

It is no secret that, here in West Virginia and across our nation, tough fiscal times have taken root in every facet of our lives and throughout our economy. And, higher education is no exception. We are all being asked to do more with less.

But, with the future of our University clearly outlined in Vision 2020, our progress cannot wait. We cannot wait for the economy to improve in order to grow and diversify our University. Instead, we must identify and implement innovative ways to secure our success despite the downturn in the economy.



In order to secure our future, we must be partners in action – action that embodies accountability. We must remain accountable to those who have entrusted us with the future of West Virginia State University. That is why, during my last State of the University Address, I announced the Budget Efficiency Summit, which was held last November. During the Summit, students, faculty, and staff, both classified and non-classified, joined together to engage in important conversations about the budget and its impact on our University and our future.

From those discussions, a true example of the shared governance process came to life, 15 recommendations were released and a thorough examination of their feasibility and impact on our University ensued and remains on-going. These recommendations embody our collective and tremendous commitment to West Virginia State University. That level of commitment can be found in all of the recommendations. Thus far, we have moved forward with several of the recommendations in order to ensure the future of our University, which will allow countless generations of Yellow Jackets to find their passion!

For example, Budget Efficiency Summit Recommendation number seven is to establish a university-wide model for external partnerships through a Space Utilization Committee, charged with establishing a university-wide rental agreement, usage guidelines, and rates, with administrative oversight regarding rental requests that may arise. This recommendation is quite exciting, because it serves as a foundation for marketing campus spaces to external organizations. In addition to providing an additional revenue stream, the added visibility resulting from this initiative will serve the University well. New facilities, combined with the proactive utilization of existing space, make the University attractive to individuals or organizations seeking space for events – both large and small.

As we move forward, input is welcome from members of the University community who may be aware of organizations or businesses that would be interested in utilizing campus facilities for meetings, conferences, and camps, as well as social or family gatherings. To the members of the Space Utilization Committee, thank you for your continued efforts!

Additionally, Budget Efficiency Summit Recommendation number eight is to improve student retention by aligning University functions with a strong customer-based marketing model. This model may include establishing new processes such as centralized advising and enhanced orientation, thereby strengthening student relationships with faculty and staff, while simultaneously assisting students in connecting with the University early in their academic careers and setting the stage for a deepening relationship throughout their academic pursuits.

In response to this recommendation, a University Retention and Student Success Council was formed in February 2014. Council members from throughout the campus community quickly engaged in robust conversation concerning a draft retention plan and potential components of a plan that closely aligns with State's needs. I am excited to report that it is working! Through the dedicated efforts of Enrollment Management and Student Affairs, Academic Affairs, and all members of the State family, the rate of retention among first-time, full-time students who began their education at West Virginia State University has risen substantially. The retention rate stood



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at 50.5 percent for fall 2012, and that number has grown to 59.1 percent for fall 2014. Members of the Retention and Student Success Council, thank you for your on-going efforts, which are so critical to our University! Please stand to be recognized!

I pledge that we will continue to review the Budget Efficiency Summit recommendations – recommendations that were set forth by the students, faculty, and staff who have a vested interest in the rich history and exciting future of West Virginia State University!

Despite the budget challenges facing higher education and the state of West Virginia, it is indeed an exciting time to be on campus and serve as a member of the State family!

The West Virginia State University Research and Development Corporation continues to support the advancement of the University's research, education, and public service missions and endeavors through the administrative management of grants and contracts. Last year, the Research and Development Corporation received \$13.5 million in grants and contracts from federal, state, county, city, industry/corporate, and foundation sources. This year, the Corporation has received approximately \$15.6 million in funding, representing an increase of \$2.1 million or 13.5 percent, in grants and contracts from the previous year.

We will not stop there. We cannot stop there. Next year's goal, as outlined in Vision 2020, is \$17 million. And, by 2020, our goal is \$25 million. Funding generated from grants and contracts advances our standing as a research university, thereby creating unending possibilities. Such possibilities are evident in profound ways.

On March 26, 2014, Governor Earl Ray Tomblin signed House Bill 4496 making West Virginia State University a participating institution in the West Virginia Research Trust Fund, better known as Bucks for Brains. West Virginia State University joins Marshall University and West Virginia University as a Bucks for Brains participant, firmly solidifying State's role as a leading research University in the landscape of higher education. Truly, we could not have achieved this momentous accomplishment without the hard work and dedicated endeavors of State's established research faculty, as well as our committed Assistant Vice President for University and Legislative Relations Tom Bennett. Let's take a moment to thank them for their efforts!

The Bucks for Brains program holds great promise for State. Institutions who have received funding, previously through this initiative, have greatly developed and expanded their research footprint in the community, across the state, and the nation. I am confident our University will achieve similar success.

And, West Virginia State University is taking bold steps toward expanding our research enterprise. Last year, I announced the PEER Program, Promoting Excellence in Education Through Research, which supports faculty research and leads to the enrichment of academia and student learning at West Virginia State University.

This year, I am pleased to report on the West Virginia State University Energy and Environmental Science Institute. Established based on stakeholder input and industry needs, the Institute



embraces the land-grant mission of program and project development based client needs, while at the same time embracing the 21st Century higher education model of a comprehensive educational portfolio that includes developing cutting-edge research programs; providing quality academic degree programs; and delivering educational outreach.

As we work collaboratively to expand State's research footprint, the Institute will serve as the coordinating structure for all of the University's energy and environmental research, education, and outreach, while Research and Public Service serves as a centralized network of expertise and infrastructure across campus, including faculty from such disciplines as:

- Soil Science;
- Plant Genomics;
- Environmental Policy;
- Organic Chemistry; and
- Energy Security;
- ...just to name a few!

The Institute was developed to assist in addressing major energy and environmental issues of interest and concern to West Virginians and society in general, such as:

- Biofuels;
- Bioproducts;
- Feedstock Improvement;
- Bioremediation;
- Environmental Sustainability;
- Anaerobic Digestion; and
- Microbial Genomics.

Through faculty work and strong leadership in these areas, West Virginia State University will enhance the quality of life for our citizens, thereby fulfilling our commitment to teaching, research, and service. And today, I am pleased to announce that the Institute will be led by Dr. Sanjaya, an accomplished researcher who serves as a research scientist in Bioenergy and Environmental Biotechnology at the University. Dr. Sanjaya received his Ph.D. on tree improvement and biotechnology from the University of Mysore in India.

Shortly after graduation, he joined the Agricultural Biotechnology Research Center in Taiwan as a postdoctoral fellow working on genetic engineering of orchids and tomatoes. He has been at the Great Lakes Bioenergy Research Center at Michigan State University, as senior research associate, on a project focused on increasing energy density in vegetative tissues.

His credentials include 20 papers in peer-reviewed journals, 8 published reviews; 6 published book chapters, and 3 patent applications. Additionally, Dr. Sanjaya is very active with grant submissions and professional societies, and recently completed the design and renovation of the University's new bioenergy and environmental biotechnology lab at the West Virginia Regional Technology Park.



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Please join me in acknowledging Dr. Sanjaya for his research agenda and scholarly work, and his new role leading the University's Energy and Environmental Science Institute.

Our targeted growth funding areas do not stop at research funding and related activity. During Fiscal Year 2014, the University experienced another record breaking year of philanthropic support, receiving \$4,118,803 in gifts and pledges, from 1,015 donors.

Philanthropic giving creates new opportunities both in and out of the classroom. Without this type of funding, we would not be able to provide the resources needed for student support and programming such as scholarships and Research Rookies or important infrastructure projects such as the construction of the Gregory V. Monroe Athletic Complex, an end zone facility at Dickerson Stadium, which will be completed in the coming months.

This year's success compares to \$847,181 from 413 donors in Fiscal Year 2012 and \$2,352,095 from 796 donors in Fiscal Year 2013. In two years, we have experienced an increase of nearly 500 percent in funding and nearly 150 percent in donors. That certainly deserves a round of applause!

And, I am going to let you in on a little secret. We are poised to complete another record year of fundraising. I encourage each and every one of you to attend a special announcement on the Student Plaza immediately following the Homecoming Parade this Saturday. It will be one to remember!

With significant expansion in research activity and associated funding, as well as increased donor support, we have opened doors. Doors that will create limitless opportunities for our students. Doors that lead to the new Judge Damon J. Keith Scholars Hall, a state-of-the-art learning and living environment, which is now home to approximately 275 Yellow Jackets! Dedicated and officially opened on August 13, 2014, this residence hall is a point of pride on our campus and in the community, and one that rivals the design and quality of student housing at the nation's premier universities!

Named for West Virginia State alum and Senior Judge for the United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit Damon J. Keith, Scholars Hall is home to the Saffore Family Lobby, the Pickard Café, and the Ann Brothers Smith Conference Room, as well as a game room and a study lounge. Residents of Scholars Hall are certainly enjoying suite-style living that provides the comforts of home in the Gore and Prillerman Wings, in tribute to the historic past of Gore and Prillerman Halls, which countless generations of Yellow Jackets proudly called home for many decades.

It is difficult to imagine our University without this magnificent building, which fits with ease into our campus community as though it was always meant to be there. Our new residence hall would not have been possible without the leadership and support of the West Virginia State University Foundation and the Kanawha County Commission.



WEST VIRGINIA STATE UNIVERSITY

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Another facility on campus made possible, through a partnership with the State of West Virginia and the Higher Education Policy Commission, is the new Walker Convocation Center. Yellow Jackets now have access to state of the art academic and athletic space under one roof!

Indeed, the dedication and opening of this magnificent facility was certainly one to remember! The first women's and men's basketball games to be played on the Lester Raines Court were in front of a near-capacity crowd of 1,350 members of the State family! And, we were so honored to be joined by State alumnus Earl Lloyd, the first African American to play in the NBA, as well as his family and friends, including NBA legends Oscar Robertson and Bill Russell. In the presence of a trailblazer for civil rights, a true legend in sports history, and West Virginia State graduate, we proudly opened a new academic and athletic home at West Virginia State University – a moment that we will remember forever and a facility that we will be proud of for years to come!

Indeed, West Virginia State University provides a living and learning environment that is second to none. In addition to opening state of the art facilities, we continue to review academic offerings based on student interest and growing industry needs. Currently, there are several high-demand programs in the process of acquiring internal and state approvals such as the Master of Public Administration; Master of Social Work in collaboration with West Virginia University; and a Bachelor of Science in Nursing.

Additional programs, such as a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Music and a Master of Education in Educational Leadership are in the planning stages.

All of this excitement and diversification of our academic programming options comes at a time when the State family is growing! The national student recruitment environment is, to say the least, challenging. Despite national and state enrollment trends, West Virginia State University posted a second consecutive year of enrollment growth! Preliminary enrollment numbers show that fall enrollment at West Virginia State University stands at 2,847 students, an increase of 170 students, or 6.4 percent, over the number of students who attended State in fall 2013. This is huge. Folks, let me say that again, this is huge!

More students are finding their passion at West Virginia State University in the Colleges of Arts and Humanities; Business and Social Sciences; Natural Sciences and Mathematics; and Professional Studies. More students are choosing State, and more students are choosing to remain at State – earning the degree needed to fulfill their career goals.

In addition to posting an increase in freshman enrollment, the number of students who have transferred to West Virginia State University is up nearly 20 percent from fall 2013 with 276 students choosing State to continue their education. Moreover, this fall, we welcomed a total of 422 first-time freshmen to the State family.

The University also continues to make progress in recruiting from areas outside West Virginia with 211 undergraduate students coming from other states or countries, an increase of nearly 13 percent over fall 2013 numbers.



Let's give Vice President Kitty McCarthy and the entire Enrollment Management and Student Affairs team, as well as the faculty and staff, a round of applause for their outstanding work in substantially increasing our recruitment efforts in addition to our retention rates!

As a University, we have made our students a priority. We have invested in our academic programs, student life, and infrastructure, and our hard work to rebrand and remarket West Virginia State University is truly, vividly, paying off. The growth we have experienced in two years is significant, but to experience dramatic growth as defined in our strategic plan, Vision 2020, there are two areas we must focus: online education and international student recruitment.

To that end, a distance education plan has been developed to offer three programs, specifically a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration with a management concentration, English Literature, and Criminal Justice, in a fully online format. The expansion of our online offerings, to include not only courses but degree programs, requires external approval. The Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. Kumara Jayasuriya, plans to host the Higher Learning Commission later this year to demonstrate the University's desire and ability to successfully deliver fully-online programs.

I truly believe that our University's ability to offer online programs will create new opportunities in providing a world-class education to those who are not able to participate in higher education through the traditional classroom setting. Folks, our ability to provide online programming in today's technological world is critical – so critical – to our future!

Furthermore, West Virginia State University's ability to recruit international students is vital to this shifting landscape, and international recruitment will be a central focus as we move forward. Such opportunities, like an English as a second language program, provide a diverse student experience and globalize both our campus and the local community.

In the coming months, you will hear more about our ESL Program called EXCELS or Excellence in Culture and English Language Study. This program will provide opportunities for international students who are recent high school graduates, undergraduate students, and graduate students. It will also provide opportunities for our University! Indeed, international student recruitment is important in today's global society, and we look forward to welcoming our first international class of EXCELS students in fall 2015 as they obtain the skills and training needed to master the English language and achieve academic success!

So, as alumni return to “a place we love so dear” for Homecoming in order to collectively celebrate past accomplishments and anticipate future successes, we join together as a State family! A family that has a rich history and a bright future!

Indeed, our story is one that has been built upon a strong foundation laid by past generations of students, faculty, staff, alumni, and friends of this Great University who are proud to count themselves as Yellow Jackets! Because of each and every one of you, West Virginia State



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University will become the most student-centered, research and teaching, land-grant University in the State of West Virginia and beyond.

Our collective commitment and dedication speaks volumes about what it means to be a part of the State family. A family that is enriched by its past and poised for its future. A promising future that is filled with resilient hope, lasting change, and powerful results.

Why? Because the State family demands it, and our students deserve it. Because the State of the University is strong! Strong and ready for the opportunities, as well as the challenges, that lie ahead!

Indeed, exciting opportunities lie before us. They present themselves in a world that operates within a technologically-driven global economy. An economy that requires us to focus on critical growing areas such as online education and international student recruitment.

Each and every one of us here today possesses the strength of will and sheer tenacity required to achieve the goals and vision we have for ourselves. We are prepared to define and redefine West Virginia State University. A University that is driven by excellence, accountability, and student-centeredness.

A University that will meet the higher education and economic development needs of the state and region through innovative teaching and applied research. It is our mission, and it is our promise!

As I began, the State of the University is strong, poised, and ready! God Bless each of you and GO STATE!"

President Brian O. Hemphill, Ph.D.
West Virginia State University