



**2019 State of the University Address
"Staying the Course"
David M. Carlisle, MD, PhD
August 28, 2019**

Good morning. And thank you to all of you, our gathered friends, guests, board of trustees, distinguished faculty, alumni and students, who are joining us today, as we not only discuss the state of our University, but cut the ribbon officially opening our new Grand Entrance to campus.

In my last State of the University Address, I stood before you to declare that the state of Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science was solid; we were on good footing. I said we were "breaking new ground" in our 52-year journey. An idea born out of a community rebellion, CDU became a beacon of hope for South Los Angeles and for underserved communities around the world—training and educating more than 7,000 physicians, nurses, physician assistants and other health professionals, the majority of whom went on to practice in under-resourced communities after graduation.

No other university can say that.

I spoke of our last several years in terms of climbing Mount Everest. We had not reached the summit, to be sure, but we had finally completed the arduous climb to basecamp.

We have achieved much over these past five decades in addition to sending those 7,000 health professionals into the world. We have established an international presence to provide technical assistance with health education, policy development and health care delivery around the world.

We have become a leading institution in terms of research on health disparities, and we have put that research into practice. We have hosted dignitaries from Rosa Parks to Coretta Scott King to Winnie Mandela. Powerful names, to be sure.

But we aspire to reach an enrollment of 2,000 student health professionals with our own medical school, so we still have work to do.

President Obama once said, "We need to go forward, but progress isn't always a straight line or a smooth path." We experienced that this year here at CDU, and so I want to be fully transparent with you.

We encountered an unexpected, and frankly disappointing, financial challenge: CDU ended the last fiscal year with a \$1.8 million deficit. This year, if we don't successfully implement action, we will be on track for similar results: about a \$2 million deficit.

It is, indeed, frustrating that we have been blown off course—if I may mix my metaphors a bit. But we are taking action to make certain we don't carry this debt into the future and that it does not happen again.

But the sky is not falling with this setback, as it would have just a decade ago. And we have already implemented an action plan on campus to rein in costs.

I want you to hear this from me directly. I am committed to having us back on budget by the end of THIS fiscal year. We know what we have to do in order to balance our budget while continuing the growth we have worked meticulously to foster over the past several years, and we will *stay the course*.

And I want to thank everyone, all the members of the community who have worked together with us on this.

This challenge comes as we enter the final year of our existing strategic plan, and we will begin work on a new, five-year plan in the coming months. It will be focused on a deliberate, prudent

path forward. An appropriate path that ensures our financial health and does not repeat the mistakes of the past.

We want to *stay the course*.

When we convene next year, I have no doubt that I will be able to report that the state of Charles R Drew University of Medicine and Science will be stronger than ever going forward.

While it is my duty to relate to you all in this address any deficiencies and vulnerabilities of CDU, it is also my duty—and my pleasure—to note that we have many more high points and accomplishments over the past year than setbacks that I'd like to tell you about.

I have to begin with the ample evidence that CDU is viewed as a good investment.

Our Advancement team, led by Vice President of Strategic Advancement Angela Minniefield, had an incredible year. We set an aggressive fundraising goal of just over \$4 million this fiscal year. Through the end June, however, we had received over \$6.5 million in gifts and pledges. Our Mission Maker Annual fund campaign, one of the special funds that students, staff and faculty contribute to, has raised more than \$150,000, exceeding our goal by 24%. This is our strongest fundraising year ever.

This June, we received a \$7.5-million-dollar appropriation from the California State Legislature and Gov. Newsom, thanks in no small part to the work of “CDU Champions” Senator Holly Mitchell, Senator Steven Bradford, Senator Richard Roth, Assemblymember Mike Gipson and LA County Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas. Of that appropriation, \$5 million is earmarked for enrollment growth and student support services. The remaining \$2.5 million is for academic facilities upgrades. This appropriation is recognition from the legislature and the governor that CDU, indeed, is a good investment for California, especially with our state facing a shortage of physicians and other health care professionals, especially those who want to serve with excellence and compassion in under-resourced communities.

We would now like to acknowledge those “CDU Champions” with a token of our appreciation for their support.

I invite Chair Ochoa to join me as we call them up here individually so that we may thank them and honor them with “CDU Champion Medals.”

Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome State Senator Holly Mitchell (30th SD).

Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome State Senator Steven Bradford (35th SD).

Ladies and gentlemen, representing the office of State Assemblyman Mike Gipson (64th AD), please welcome Chris Wilson.

Ladies and gentlemen, representing the office of LA County Supervisor, 2nd District, Mark Ridley-Thomas, please welcome Claudia Gutierrez.

Unable to be with us this morning is State Senator Richard Roth (31st SD).

To all of our CDU Champions: We are truly grateful for your support and your help in securing this appropriation for us.

Thank you.

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I'd now like to continue with a few more examples of CDU being a good investment.

L.A. Care has been a steadfast partner of this University. As part their Elevating the Safety Net Initiative, L.A. Care has granted CDU eight full-ride—not just full-tuition—medical scholarships over the past two years totaling roughly \$2.6 million. That's about \$300,000/medical student. Their CEO, John Baackes, is here with us this morning, and we certainly want to thank him and

L.A. Care for their generosity and commitment to health workforce diversity and to addressing health disparities.

Last month, we announced that Cedars-Sinai will provide CDU with grants totaling \$1.3 million to help address physician and health professional shortages, as well as health disparities in chronically underserved communities. The grants will allow us to develop a four-year medical education program, with an initial class of 60 students to start in September 2023. We will also develop a curriculum for a new Community Health Worker Academy, which will train health professionals to fill a full range of clinical and community needs in medically underserved communities.

We are thrilled and exceedingly grateful to Cedars-Sinai for its support of our efforts.

I have other positive numbers to share with you, as well.

Our summer census enrollment, the most recent period for which we have hard numbers, was 700, which included 111 medical education students, 28 medical residents, 106 undergraduate students and 455 graduate students. We are confident our Fall census has topped 800, and that would be a new record.

Student credit hours are up 34 percent, the largest increase CDU has ever had.

And on Match Day, 76 percent of our College of Medicine students matched into primary care fields, including Family Medicine, Internal Medicine, OB/Gyn and Pediatrics. As you know, this is no accident and is very much in keeping with our founding mission to increase access to primary care. Of all students matched, 70 percent will complete their residencies in California, 60 percent will remain in Southern California and nearly half stay with us in Los Angeles County.

While we're on the topic of putting physicians into practice right here in our community.... In 2019, CDU welcomed our second class of residents, with eight in Family medicine and six in Psychiatry. Together with the 2018 class, that means there are now *28 physicians in training through CDU in South Los Angeles that were not here practicing in this medically underserved*

area just two years ago! That's highly significant. The mantra is: Wherever the physician trains, that's where he or she will practice.

Congratulations to College of Medicine Dean Dr. Deborah Prothrow-Stith for making this a reality.

We are staying the course, staying true to our mission to educate more physicians and health professionals to provide care in under-resourced communities.

CDU continues to add to our academic offerings. We have received approval from the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, our accrediting body, to start a baccalaureate program in Psychology, with an emphasis on Community Counseling, and are enrolling students for this fall. The Psychology major will be yet another foray for us into programs that address the critically important social determinants of health.

The Psychiatric and Mental Health Nurse Practitioner program that we announced last year is off to a very good start, as we had 57 students enrolled this past summer,

We remain committed to improving the lives of our students and continually improving the student experience, especially on campus. As evidence of that, after I conclude my remarks, we will head across the courtyard to cut the ribbon on our new Grand Entrance facing 120th Street, and in a few months, we will open our new Student Center. Kudos and thanks to Vice President for Finance and Chief Business Officer Carl McLaney for his leadership on these campus enhancements.

Our faculty, our students and the programs they comprise continue to receive national and international recognition.

Associate Professor Bitu Amani (Department of Urban Public Health) established a new course, Global Health Studies: The Cuban Health Model, based on her experience leading the first MPH cohort to travel to Cuba in 2018 and examine their health care system.

Drs. Shervin Assari and Mohsen Bazargan, both professors in the College of Medicine's Family Medicine program, published research in the online journal MDPI Healthcare, which asserted that healthcare coverage better protects African Americans against developing chronic diseases. This research is highly relevant to the current national debate on whether policy shifts such as the Affordable Care Act (ACA) have the potential to eliminate the sustained health disparities that plague our country.

And congratulations to three faculty members who were recognized at our sixth annual Faculty Awards program.

Dr. Jay Vagdama was named Outstanding Professor. Congratulations!

Dr. Magda Shaheen received the Outstanding Service award. Congratulations!

And Dr. Thomas Magee was given the Outstanding Teaching award. Congratulations!

Here's some breaking news from our Research enterprise: Just last week, we received notification that our Vice President of Research, Dr. Jay Vadgama and his co-researcher, Dr. Yong Wu, received a patent for a new breast cancer drug.

Dr. Vadgama's AXIS program, (Accelerating Excellence in Transitional Science) also received notification just last Friday that they had received a competitive renewal of their prestigious NIH/National Institute of Minority Health and Health Disparities grant for another five years.

Our Physician Assistant students competed in the National Medical Challenge Bowl during the American Association of Physician Assistants annual conference, held this past May. The CDU team placed third in the nation among 30 teams.

Our School of Nursing (189th out of 253 in the survey) and School of Public Health (102nd out of 177 in the survey) were both recognized by U.S. News and World Report in its annual rankings.

And the Department of Education College scorecard ranks CDU as the seventh highest university in terms of salary after graduation for the State of California.

We continue to be recognized as experts in our field and conveners of the conversations about equity and disparity in health, education and the modern healthcare workforce.

In January, we hosted L.A.'s 27th annual Empowerment Congress Summit, a civic event designed to "educate, engage and empower" citizens of L.A. County. This event was brought to us by L.A. County Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas.

A month later, in February, our annual President's Breakfast featured a keynote from President Obama's Housing Secretary, former San Antonio mayor and current presidential candidate Julián Castro, who spoke eloquently and passionately about a topic that we all strongly believe in: "Diversity in Higher Education: Race Matters."

So, let me expound a little further on the healthcare workforce issue. I've spoken at length about the critical role we play here at CDU in addressing a looming health provider crisis in California. With rising costs, an aging and increasingly diverse population and millions of Californians struggling to access the care they need, we simply do not have the number of healthcare professionals we will need to provide culturally appropriate care to every resident of our state. I've had a chance to proudly represent CDU as a member of the California Future Health Workforce Commission, chaired by UC President Janet Napolitano and Dignity Health CEO Lloyd Dean.

The data that the Commission released earlier this year in our report is no surprise to any of us here. Seven million Californians, most of them Latino, Black and Native American, live in federally designated Health Professional Shortage Areas. Additionally, our state faces a shortage of 4,100 primary care providers and 600,000 home care workers within the next ten years.

The commission issued a set of 27 recommendations designed to eliminate California's primary care provider shortage by 2030, to increase the diversity of the state's health workforce and

address health disparities. Ten of those recommendations were deemed priorities for immediate implementation.

But what's really striking about the report is the degree to which the recommendations reflect the mission of CDU and the work that we've been doing for over five decades! Here are a few examples:

Expand and scale pipeline programs to recruit and prepare students from underrepresented and low-income backgrounds for health careers

Sounds like what we do.

Recruit and support college students, including community college students, from underrepresented regions and backgrounds to pursue health careers

Sounds remarkably like what we do.

Expand the number of primary care physician and psychiatry residency positions

This is what we are doing.

Develop a psychiatric nurse practitioner program that recruits from and trains providers to serve in underserved rural and urban communities

These are all the very essence of what we do and *have always* done at CDU.

This is the course that we have followed for 53 years, and the course that we intend to stay.

We truly are the "poster institution" for the work of the California Future Health Workforce Commission, which is why one of the 27 recommendations specifically calls for the creation of an independent four-year MD program to be developed right here at CDU.

You can see why the state believes CDU is an important investment. As an institution founded to increase opportunities by educating a diverse corps of excellent health providers, we are *uniquely* positioned to be at the forefront of this state's—and the nation's—effort to increase healthcare access, reduce health disparities and recruit and educate a healthcare workforce that looks and sounds like the population it will treat.

Friends, this is the course that we will stay for the foreseeable future

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in his book *Where Do We Go From Here*, wrote that “the line of progress is never straight. For a period, a movement may follow a straight line and then it encounters obstacles and the path bends. It is like curving around a mountain when you're approaching a city.”

I took comfort in that quote this year, and in Dr. King's reminder that, “often it feels as though you're moving backwards, but in fact you are moving ahead.”

As we mark the transition from one school year to the next, we are, in fact, still moving ahead.

I was reminded of this a few weeks ago, as I was on my way to a meeting about this very speech, I encountered one of our undergraduate students, Corey Williams, in the parking lot and asked him what he was doing for the summer.

“Taking classes!” he replied.

And when I asked him how many classes he'd taken over the summer, he indicated that was taking three, . . . a full load. During the summer break.

That *would not have been possible just a few short years ago*.

That's an example of how far we've come.

But this year reminded us that we have to keep our eyes on that summit, even as we curve around the mountain.

We owe it to Corey, and to all our students.

And we owe it to each of you, who have seen us through the dark days, our recovery from them and now, to where we are today.

Now, if you will join me at the new Grand Entrance, we have a ribbon to cut!

Thank you!