

Having just completed my first academic cycle at The University of Arizona – I started the semester with Freshman Convocation and ended it with winter commencement – I am feeling right at home as a UA Wildcat.

What a semester it has been. In August we welcomed the largest and most diverse freshman onto campus in university history, and throughout the fall we have celebrated the successes of many students across campus.

For instance, Matthew Stone, an economics major in the Eller College of Management, was awarded the prestigious Marshall Scholarship, one of just 40 awarded by the United Kingdom each year. After he graduates from the UA, Matt will spend a year at the University of Dundee, in Scotland, and a year at King's College London studying the economics of energy markets and their relation to international security and terrorism.

Francisca Hernández is a graduate student in the Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health. She was one of six Latina students in her college given top scholarships for committing to improving health among Latino populations. Hernández plans to work with minorities, especially Hispanic and Native American youth. Hernández, who is of Yaqui and Mexican descent, also plans to work with the Pascua Yaqui Tribe.

These are just two examples of outstanding student accomplishment at the UA. As I prepared for my formal inauguration in October, I reflected on the excellence I have encountered at all levels at the UA, and what we need to do in our next era of growth to build on 121 years of UA excellence in service to Arizona.

In my inaugural address, I laid out my vision for the next era of The University of Arizona. It's simple, really: I want the UA to become one of America's 10 best public research universities.

If we are to fulfill this vision, we will need to avoid the mistakes that other modern research universities seem to be making, and we need to exude excellence in five key areas.

The first pitfall we will avoid is to think globally without acting locally. Arizona – Tucson in particular – must feel the benefits of having a world-class public research university in its midst. The fruits of our research efforts must be felt first and best in Arizona, especially in Tucson. And so they will be.

To Tucsonans, that means living where there is better healthcare, a richer quality of life, a more educated work force, and more options for our children than other communities have to offer.

The other mistake to avoid is to forget students in our quest for research excellence. Even at a top-flight research university, the student experience must remain central to our definition of quality. With a great deal of pride, we refer to ourselves as a student-centered research university. That means some very special things at the UA.

It means 60 percent of undergraduate students in the College of Science are directly involved in research as a part of their academic experience. It means that of the hundreds of people occupying the spectacular new Thomas W. Keating Biosciences Research Building, and its twin Medical Research Building, students actually outnumber UA employees as they support cutting-edge research in the life sciences.

Keeping those commitments to our students and to the state of Arizona alike will prove to be key to the UA becoming one of America's 10 best public research universities. But among top research institutions, the UA must hit five markers of excellence if we are to provide an educational experience that is both unique to Arizona and as good as any in America:

**We will find solutions to many of humanity's most complex problems.** These include everything from unlocking the secrets of Mars so that we may better understand the future of life on Earth, to probing such diverse mysteries as the root causes of Alzheimers Disease.

**We will drive economic development and work force training.** Our colleges are training the best future entrants in the job market in No. 1 programs like the McGuire Entrepreneurship Program in the Eller College of Management or the Telemedicine Program in the UA College of Medicine.

**We will be a role model of student diversity.** Today's ethnic minorities will form tomorrow's collective majority in Arizona, and we must prepare future generations for successful leadership by recruiting a student body that is as ethnically diverse as the community we serve. We already are Arizona's most ethnically diverse public university, but we have more work to do in this area.

**We will be a showcase and proving ground for academic excellence.** The UA is gaining a national reputation for reinventing how we teach such crucial 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills as foreign language acquisition, science and math.

**We will always be Arizona's best source of inspiration and pride for the work we do.** Just pick your favorite source of inspiration: pictures from Mars taken by UA cameras, life-saving medical procedures developed by UA researchers, a steady diet of revelations about climate change from UA geologists, tree-ring researchers and others, or a moving essay written by a student from our acclaimed creative writing program. The UA has a unique ability to "wow" Arizona, and make us all proud to call ourselves Wildcats.

Today we are working hard on all levels to exemplify excellence in these areas. The end goal is to give you the opportunity to look at your diploma and know that you earned a degree from one of America's 10 best public research universities.

Stay in touch. This adventure is just beginning.