**State of the University**

**September 29, 2023**

**10:00-11:00 SOU**

**SURC Ballroom**

Good morning and thank you for gathering for our Annual State of the University Address. So much has been accomplished in the last two years, and this is a good time to pause, reflect on what we have achieved, where we are, and where we are headed.

I would like to acknowledge one of our Trustees who is in attendance: Erin Black, the new chair of the Board. I also want to thank my partner, Sasha Wohlpart, who provides me with a great deal of support but who also serves our local community on the Kittitas Environmental Education Network Board and our university community on the Wildcat Coalition.

Before we begin, I would like to acknowledge that the land we reside on is

the historic home of the Yakama people. The federally recognized Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation remain committed stewards of this land, cherishing it and protecting it, as instructed by elders through generations. We are honored and grateful to be here today on their traditional lands. We give thanks to the legacy of the original people, their lives, and their descendants.

I read this statement as a reminder that the land is not owned. It is, rather, a gift that is inherited. In taking responsibility for that gift, we must think of the seven generations—of how we will pass this gift forward and create a legacy worthy of our inheritance.

I also want to honor the survivors of the boarding schools and note that tomorrow, September 30, is National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.   
It is also known as Orange Shirt Day as inspired by Phyllis Jack Webstad’s experience of having the orange shirt her grandmother gave her taken away when she arrived at the residential school. You will notice several members of our community wearing orange shirts today in remembrance. Please join me in thanking them and others for their commitment to this collective call to action.

Spoiler Alert: If you are watching the second season of The Bear, I’m about to describe a scene from episode 7, “Forks.” Ritchie, the main character’s “cousin,” has been floundering, without purpose, direction, or meaning. Carmeny Berzatto, Carmy, the main character, sends Ritchie to a very high-end restaurant where he is assigned, for an entire week, to polishing forks. Initially, he is frustrated, polishing the forks and tossing them in a pile.

But as the week goes on, and as he gets to experience the service that is provided to the customers, where every small detail matters, where every customer is treated as special and unique, he takes a turn. He comes to understand that even polishing forks has meaning and purpose, that every small detail is part of some bigger experience that provides richness to the lives of the customers. He comes to understand that he plays an important part in a larger ecosystem of deep care.

The same is true for each and every one of you. It does not matter what your role is or what tasks you complete during the week. The point is that what all of you do, together, adds up to something profound: the transformation of the lives of our students, their families, and their communities.

As a result of your work, great things happen at Central Washington University. I want to start by sharing two stories. Last year, Central Washington University won the undergraduate award for the Intentional Endowments Network Challenge. The Challenge is a semester-long program that includes education, mentorship, and hands-on investment strategy development for undergraduate and graduate students. The shareholder engagement strategy that students produce during this competition is focused on addressing inequality and the climate crisis — systemic risks that threaten a healthy society, and in turn, healthy portfolio returns. Other schools who competed include Northeastern, UCLA, Berkeley, Columbia, Lehigh, and the University of Chicago. And our students won!

Anderson Parks received the 2023 American Council for Education Reginald Wilson Diversity Leadership Award. Andy is the Milton Kuolt Professor of Business and a DEI Faculty Fellow who teaches in the Department of Management. This is a tremendous honor that recognizes Andy’s many contributions on and off campus, including his leadership with the Washington Employer’s for Racial Equity. Andy received the award last April at the annual ACE meeting in Washington, D.C. Please join me in honoring Andy for his leadership.

I have three main takeaways for this presentation today.

First, I want you to know that what you do matters. Like Ritchie polishing forks, every single person here makes a difference in the work that we do together. Thank you for your dedication and care. It makes a difference.

Second, after two years of collaborative and inclusive work, we are becoming a vision, mission and values aligned university. I will use our new vision, mission, values and strategic plan to frame today’s presentation. You will see that we are already well on our way to achieving great things.

Third, we have overcome some head winds, and have more to face, but we have a bright future ahead of us. I will share, candidly, some of the challenges facing Central Washington University, and what we are doing to overcome those challenges.

Simon Sinek reminds us that we should always start with understanding our purpose: why are we here? If we can remind ourselves of our purpose, in all that we do, we will find our work to be worthwhile. I believe that we have answered that question in our Vision, Mission and Unifying Value.

Our Vision Statement boldly proclaims that we will “be a model learning community of equity and belonging.” There are two critical phrases here that will frame our work. To be a model learning community means that we will need to question the status quo, to be curious and inquisitive, to focus not on showing how much we know based on what we have done in the past, but being open to what we can learn from each other and from others outside of Central.

All with a focus on equity and belonging—terms which we define with some clarity in our values and strategic plan goals. We must remember that our Vision Statement is aspirational: it captures a future state that we will live into as we realize the goals of our strategic plan.

Our Mission Statement flows out of the Vision and announces that we will “nurture culturally sustaining practices that expand access and success to all students.” These are powerful concepts. It will not be sufficient to be culturally responsive—to respond to and acknowledge different cultures. Our work will be to lift up, to elevate, and to sustain the diverse languages, literacies, histories, and cultures that our students, faculty, and staff bring to our community.

And we will focus our efforts on expanding access to a high-quality university education to more students, to students who have been historically excluded, and to ensure their success.

And finally, when we think about why we are here we can refer to our unifying value of student success: we are here to create pathways for students of all backgrounds to reach their academic and professional goals.

These statements of our purpose, of why we are here, feel very natural. We are already living into this aspirational vision. I could draw on many stories of the success of our students from the care that you have given them. Here are two. The National Science Foundation’s (NSF) Graduate Research Fellowship Program is a highly exclusive funding opportunity for students pursuing a graduate degree in the sciences, providing three years of financial support to attend graduate school, including a $37,000 annual stiped for living expenses.

Central Washington University physics senior and McNair Scholar Nicolas Puentes became one of only four Wildcats to ever receive the NSF research award. Puentes developed his research skills in part through his work with Associate Professor of Physics Benjamin White, who served as one of his faculty mentors. This fall, Puentes is attending the University of Oregon to begin his research fellowship. He says his experiences with Central’s faculty have set him up for long-term success in his field.

You may know Matthew Braganza as he has been very active at Central. He was a student ambassador giving tours to prospective students and he assisted in the food pantry. He was always around. As intelligent as he is and as motivated and determined as he is, it was the faculty at Central who inspired Matthew and provided him the foundation for his next step. When he came here, he knew he wanted to be a business major, but it wasn’t until he took a financial accounting class that he caught fire. As a result of his academic and co-curricular work, and the inspiration of his faculty, Matthew has been accepted into Cornell University to pursue a master’s degree in accounting with a scholarship that will cover half of his half-tuition. Matthew is a first-generation student from Yakima whose life has been changed by attending Central Washington University.

So we know why we are here: we are opening doors for students and allowing them to be successful in realizing their dreams. We are creating futures for students who may not have known that these futures were possible.

We do this through very specific practices. As our Mission Statement declares, we foster “high impact practices, sustainability, and authentic community partnerships that are grounded in meaningful relationships.”

And we do this work, as our unifying value declares, “through providing a supportive learning environment” where “faculty and staff inspire students to become engaged professionals, active citizens, and lifelong learners.”

Your inspirational work is evident in our current students and our alumni. Two students from our Douglas Honors College, Emma CrowE and David Torem, represented Central Washington University in Bangkok, Thailand, for the inaugural United Nations Green Summit. They were among the 157 delegates from 31 countries who attended the conference last December. David also attended the UNITE 2030 conference in September, a United Nations conference for young leaders focusing on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As a result of this experience, Emma was able to secure a job as donor coordinator with Wenatchee-based nonprofit Sister Connection, which helps widows in Burundi, Africa, find new opportunities for success.

Central Washington University alumnus David Puente Jr. was appointed as the new director of the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) after serving as the department’s deputy director for the previous three years.  Puente earned a Bachelor of Science in occupational safety and health from Central in 2000. He spent many years with the Washington Department of Labor and Industries before joining the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs as deputy director in February 2020.

We have our Why and our What. We must focus our attention now on how will we live into this Vision. We will do so through a set of four Values that flow out of the Vision and Mission, creating an alignment between our vision of where we want to go and how we will get there.

Out of the Vision, Mission, and Values flows our Strategic Plan, our Budget, our Performance Management System, our Recruitment, and our Comprehensive Campaign. I will provide an update on each of these things for the remainder of the presentation.

The foundation for our work will be our strategic plan, which will be a living document that will give direction to the decisions we make around resource allocation, evaluation of employees, recruitment of students, and fundraising. Please join me in thanking everyone in our community who participated in the development of our Vision, Mission, Values and Strategic Plan—we had such robust participation—and especially in thanking our Steering Committee who guided this work.

A word of caution before I go any further. We’ve all heard the famous saying from Peter Drucker: “Culture eats strategy for breakfast.” Culture is invisible to us. It is the water we swim in. It is how we do things. It is how we have always done things. It can create inertia. It can stifle creativity, innovation, and change. And now we have a Vision, Mission, Values, and Strategic Plan that are asking us to do things differently—to think differently and to act differently.

We have included in our strategic plan initiatives that will engage and shift our culture. But we must engage these initiatives if this work is going to come to life. We cannot let our past stifle the opportunities we have to create a future filled with promise. We must recognize that our work is counter cultural. It is too important to be ignored or slowed. There is too much at stake.

We have developed a budget model that will allow us to live into our Vision, Mission, and Values. It includes four basic principles, which begin with covering our instructional and non-instructional expenses, with an eye towards meeting the goals of the strategic plan. We also need to right size our goods and services budget and align our purchasing with the strategic plan. Finally, we received feedback that we should create a Values Based Fund to incentive living into our strategic plan. We will work towards developing efficiencies in order to make these funds available to the university community.

Please join me in thanking Joel Klucking, Vice President for Finance and Administration, and the members of the various budget committees, including our shared governance groups, for the work they have done to develop this model.

The PowerPoint provides a report of our final actual revenues and expenditures of the university over the last eight years. You will note that we occasionally have a deficit at the end of the year, and occasionally a surplus. When we have a surplus we place those funds in our reserves so that we can balance our budgets in years when we have a deficit. Which will be the case this year because of lower than expected enrollment. The $2.025M deficit will be covered by reserves or through some of the earmarks that we have had for particular programs that weren’t spent in the prior year. These earmarks carry forward into the next year to cover expenses.

In our Systems Funds, which cover our auxiliary areas such as housing and dining, we project to have a $1.371M deficit. The net in our system budget must come to $0 because we must have a debt service coverage ratio of 1.0. That is, we must show a surplus between revenues and expenditures equivalent to our bond payment, which is about $12M this year. So we will find ways to eliminate this deficit.

As part of our efforts to invest in our future, we are developing new funding streams. We submitted a proposal to create the Central Washington Regional Tech and Innovation Hub under the U.S. Chips and Science Act. We worked closely with 24 regional, state, and national organizations to support the proposed six-county Tech Hub. Our proposed hub focuses on (1) Robotics, Automation, and Advanced Manufacturing and on (2) Natural and Anthropogenic Disaster Mitigation and Response. A huge thanks to Rob Ogburn, Bill Provaznik, and Janie Zencak whose leadership and expertise substantially shaped the process and outcome, as well as to Andrew Morse for hosting the process as we convened folks on our campus and wrote the proposal.

We have also applied for two grants from the Gates Foundation. The Limitless grant will create a partnership between Central and Yakima Valley Tech high school. The focus is on layering several of our professional programs on top of the vocational programs that they offer, including business administration, cybersecurity, construction, and law enforcement. The Limitless grant is $25,000 a year for four years. Thank you to Dr. Yoshiko Takahashi, Dean of Undergraduate Studies, for her work on this grant, which we just found out has been funded.

The Horizons grant is a much larger endeavor, $5.4M over three years. We have partnered with four school districts: Toppenish, Wapato, Yakima, and Zillah to create a rich dual credit ecosystem, including expansion of College in the High School, so that students seamlessly walk through college while still in high school. Much of the funding would be used for faculty to develop programming so that high school teachers can be qualified to teach College in the High School courses and for high school teachers to cover their tuition.

Thank you to our deans and especially our associate dean and Director of the School of Education, Jenny Dechaine; to Kurt Kirstein, Associate Vice President in Academic Affairs; to members of our admissions team, including Manuel Rodriguez and Andres Moreno; to Kyle Carrigan, Director of Dual Enrollment; and to Christy Gilchrist and Kelley Quirk in Research and Sponsored Programs for their leadership on this grant.

Last week, when I was returning to Barge Hall after lunch, I noticed six young Hispanic men peering into Barge Hall. I asked if they were new students at Central, and they explained that they were College in the High School students from Highline. They had come over to Central because they didn’t really know anything about us until they enrolled in one of our College in the High School classes. I took them up in the cupola in Barge, and then to my office for a quick chat and photograph.

As you may know, previously, College in the High School classes were paid for by the students and their families, which meant that only some students had access to these classes. Now, the state is covering the cost of these classes, opening them up to a broader demographic of student. Your work in supporting College in the High School classes could be an enormous game changer for our enrollment. If we can have high school students from across the state take several Central classes and get to know us, we may create a pipeline into the university. We are now importing all of those students’ names into Slate, our communication tool for prospective students, and developing targeted messaging for them.

As you know, we are completing our renovation of the Health Education and Nicholson Pavilion complex. We should have ownership of the building in a couple of weeks and will resume play in the arena.

We received $103M for a new humanities and social science complex, which will allow us to take down the Language and Literature building and Farrell Hall. Fencing will begin to go up in mid-October, with abatement happening in Language and Literature for the first few months, before it is taken down. The new facility will be heated and cooled by a geothermal well, which will have the capacity to expand to three additional buildings.

I want to acknowledge the disruption that this type of construction causes to the lives of our faculty, especially. In this case, the faculty in Language and Literature have shifted to other offices around campus. We will save a brick from L&L for each of you when we demolish it. Join me also in thanking Delano Palmer and the capital team for their work on all of our construction projects.

We also received $6M for the academic portion of our new Multicultural Complex; we are working with the students on funding for the student portion. And we received funding to complete a predesign of the Arts Complex, which would allow us to replace Randall and Michaelsen Halls.

We have requested additional funding in our supplemental budget for student basic needs, including a Food Pantry Coordinator and interns, which we have funded out of one-time dollars; a gender-based violence prevention coordinator; and financial literacy coaches. We have also requested funding to support College in the High School.

As you may know, Brady Smith has taken over the Food Pantry Coordinator position from Jaeda Nelson. Brady is the former Vice President for ASCWU. Let’s also thank our Wellness Office and the CWU Safe workgroup from last year, including especially Marissa Howat and Cindy Coe, co-chairs, for elevating the work of gender-based violence prevention at Central.

On the Capital side, we have requested funding for a second geothermal well for the south part of campus, a carbon reduction package for our Science building, and an emergency back-up system for some of our buildings like the SURC. Special thanks to Steve DuPont and Alethia Miller, our government relations staff, for their advocacy for Central.

As we work to shift our culture and live into our Vision, Mission, and Values, we have the opportunity and even the obligation to think differently and to show up differently as we work together. And to assist us with that shift, we may begin a conversation that would help us define what it would look like to be a “whole-person” and “human-centered” learning organization.

How do we create a culture that allows every individual at Central to show up for the whole person that they are, able to share the various races, ethnicities, genders, sexualities, and abilities that employees represent in an environment of safety and belonging? How do we make the fullness of our humanity central to how we come together in community?

These are never easy questions to answer. We have several focused initiatives written into our strategic plan that we will launch immediately and that will help us discern a pathway forward. This conversation is one that we need to have intentionally and thoughtfully to make Central the best place to work and learn.

I greatly appreciate the leadership of Staci Sleigh-Layman and our Human Resources team as they have begun the process of helping us reimagine what we value and we reward our engagement on campus.

One of the initiatives of the strategic plan is an evaluation of our faculty promotion and tenure criteria. We have asked a consultant, Dr. Kris De Welde, to join us for the next month to help us imagine a better, more equitable approach to faculty evaluation. Dr. De Welde is Professor of Women’s and Gender Studies and Professor of Sociology at the College of Charleston. She specializes in the study of intersectional inequalities in higher education and in leading organizational change for academic and social justice.

Dr. De Welde will assist us as we think about new, more just and fair ways of evaluating faculty so that we can live into our Vision. The opening Town Hall is Tuesday, October 3 from 2:00-4:00 in the Ballroom. The focus is on faculty evaluation, but anyone who is curious can attend. There will be follow up convenings in the weeks after the Town Hall that will be essential to the inquiry, imagination, innovation, and implementation process.

The end result of this process will be a report delineating areas that we may reconsider and opportunities to expand equity in evaluation. After that, we will need to decide what steps we will take to revise our university, college, and departmental criteria.

In order to truly engage some of those broader issues of our culture we will continue to advance our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion training. We have adopted an online training module that will provide the foundation for our DEI professional development (Tier One) and that will be expanded through extended sessions that will allow us to engage each other and deepen our learning and our commitment to equity and belonging (Tier Two). In the coming weeks you will receive more information about this work.

Please join me in thanking Interim Vice President Lucinda Carnell and Sigrid Davison and the DEI faculty fellows for their leadership with this work.

So much of our work hinges on our enrollment, which is why it shows up so prominently in our strategic plan. There is work for all of us to do in recruiting and retaining students, and we must acknowledge that everything that we do around campus matters, from faculty implementing culturally sustaining pedagogy and streamlining the curriculum (including especially General Education), to staff creating culturally sustaining programs, to even simple things like greeting each other and saying “Hello,” to making sure the lawn is cut and the trash is emptied. Everyone plays an important role in the success of our students. Thank you for what you do. But we face headwinds, and I want to acknowledge those headwinds as I share information that many of you already know.

In order to have a clear, consistent, and focused message that will inspire future Wildcats to become a part of our family, we have developed a brand messaging platform that captures the essence of who we are and how we are different from other institutions: each of you working closely with our students is able to see a future for them that they may not have known existed. Our brand message: We See Futures, will be at the heart of our messaging.

As will our new marketing tagline: Create Your Future. We want to welcome our students into a partnership where we work with them as they create a future for themselves. The work you do with students is active and engaged and deeply personal: you help them find out who they are and forge a pathway out into the world as engaged professionals, active citizens, and life-long learners.

Much of what we have been working on over the last two years has been building a strong admissions team and strategic recruitment plan that is closely integrated with a marketing plan that tells our story. We do now have both in place and it will affect our future enrollments.

And part of that plan is our new website, which was launched earlier this month. I know we are still working through kinks; thank you for your patience.

Please join me in thanking Emilie Hobert and the creative team in University Relations and Peg Blake, our Interim Executive Director of Admissions, and our admissions team for joining together to develop an integrated recruitment and marketing plan, as well as Marty Romero and the web team.

As you can see from where we will end up this year, we cannot take our eyes off of recruitment. It looks like our freshman class will grow again for the second year, but not as fast as we would have liked and needed. Last year, we had four recruitment counselors for part of the year; this year, we are launching our recruitment season with a full office of twelve counselors.

We must remember why we do this work: to offer transformational experiences to our students. Litzy Cruz never considered attending college, until she moved to Puyallup and met her new teachers who are Central alumni. Two of them in particular inspired her to become a teacher and to attend Central because of the strength of our education programs. Litzy just graduated from Central with her teaching degree and will start working this fall as a dual-language third-grade teacher in Puyallup.

Last year, CWU Athletics won the 2022-23 GNAC Academic All-Sport Award. The GNAC Academic All-Sports Championship evaluates an institution's performance in the classroom using cumulative GPA data from each GNAC sponsored sport at an institution. All student-athletes on each sport's eligibility roster, including redshirts, are figured into the GPA. This was the third consecutive year we have won this award, a testament to our coaches, our athletics learning support team, and our student athletes, but also to all of you who support all students.

In order to provide more opportunities for students like Litzy, and to make certain that all of our students have equitable access to the kinds of support structures and high impact practices that help students succeed, we have launched our comprehensive campaign. Our campaign flows out of our Vision, Mission, and Values, and is closely entwined with our brand messaging and strategic plan.

Our campaign theme is Futures, and it includes three areas of focus: first, creating opportunities for students so that they have the foundation for paying for school or meeting basic needs; second, providing critical experiences for their academic and professional success, including high impact practices; and third, deepening our impact as we expand programs and initiatives. And we have seen some success as this data demonstrates. Over the last two years we have seen an increase in our fundraising from $8.1M to $9.3M last year supporting units across the university. We have also seen a growth in our endowment to $36M; having a strong endowment will be critical to the future of any institution of higher education.

A few weeks ago, we gathered with deans and department chairs to broaden the priorities of our campaign. During this retreat, led by Advancement Resources, we surfaced new and exciting ideas for fund raising. This work will continue as the chairs and faculty generate new and impactful ideas for our campaign. We are also working with other areas of the university including student engagement and success and athletics on campaign priorities.

Thank you to Paul Elstone, Shawn Lowney, and Emily Adams and the entire Advancement and Alumni teams, as well as the Deans and Department Chairs who will work with the faculty to take our campaign to the next level.

As an example of some of the ways that we are expanding our fundraising, we recently attended a wonderful event honoring the work of one of our alum: King County Sheriff’s detective Jeanne Walford. Jeanne successfully investigated a fatal hit-and-run car crash that led to the identification of the “phantom driver” who caused the accident.

The family of the individual who died in the crash and six of the crash survivors requested that the donation go to Jeanne for her work serving the community. Jeanne in turn presented the gift to Central in hopes that it will further the law and justice profession by providing scholarships to current and future law and justice students. The first two Walford scholarship recipients are incoming juniors Dakota Red Bow and Ralph Ramier.

At the end of Episode 7 of Season 2 of the show The Bear, Ritchie is seen once again polishing forks, but this time, as he polishes the forks, he no longer tosses them into a pile but rather stacks them neatly in rows. He understands that even polishing forks makes a difference. He finishes his task and wanders into an adjoining room where he sees the head chef peeling mushrooms. He asks her why she is spending her time on a task like this. She explains that someone will notice that they took time and care with their meal, paying attention to even the smallest detail.

We change lives here at Central Washington University. The work you do day in and day out provides opportunities for our students to learn and grow and realize their potential. And then they go out into the world and make it a better place to live, to work, and to learn.

Thank you for coming today. And thank you for what you do. Have a great afternoon!