

## NEWSROOM

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## 'THIS MOMENT FEELS REALLY GOOD'

## PRESIDENT TRIBLE DELIVERS ANNUAL STATE OF THE UNIVERSITY SPEECH.

by [Jim Hanchett](#) | August 26, 2021*Read time: about 23 min*

President Paul Tribble delivered the annual state of the university speech at the Freeman Center on August 18. It was his first major public event since returning from sabbatical. [Video of the speech](#) is available on the Christopher Newport YouTube channel. The full text of his remarks, as prepared for delivery, appears below.

My friends, finally we are all back and all together on campus! You look great and this moment feels really good.

And, Rosemary and I are back to start our 26th academic year. We could not be more grateful and excited about what lies ahead.

First, a word about Rosemary. Six months ago, physicians at VCU and the Mayo Clinic determined that Rosemary was being attacked by a very rare autoimmune disease – immune mediated necrotizing myopathy.

This disease was weakening and destroying her muscles, making it more and more difficult for her to walk, move and even breathe.

You know I deeply love this place, but I love Rosemary even more. I needed to be with her over the past six months and we will always cherish that time together and be grateful for it.

Rosemary's amazing health care providers have created big shots of antibodies drawn from over 1,000 donors that

she receives each month. Each infusion lasts about five hours. A port was placed in her chest because the veins in her arms could not take the stress of repeated needle sticks.

Happily, this course of treatment has worked and the autoimmune disorder is now quiescent. So, Rosemary is working to rebuild her muscles and is gaining strength and speed and working on endurance.

Now Rosemary has made great progress but she's not yet at full speed and lives with a great deal of pain. She never complains and possesses a joyful spirit and loving heart. But I will need your help in reining her in a bit so she can recover and we can find a way to ease her pain.

I want you to know how much this Christopher Newport family has meant to Rosemary and to me. We have received hundreds and hundreds of personal messages and expressions of good wishes and prayers – cards, letters, emails, text messages, flowers – you have touched our hearts and inspired us during some very difficult times.

Now, as most of you know, Rosemary and I always host the freshman class at the president's house in the first weeks of the academic year and this is a wonderful way for students, faculty and staff to get acquainted and start building community. This fall the receptions for our freshman class will be postponed until October so hopefully we can get this delta variant behind us, and we will host receptions for last year's freshman class in the spring. That will also give Rosemary some more time to regain her strength.

When the students arrive each year, I greet them on the front steps. They then enter the president's house and meet Rosemary, whose mighty spirit overflows with enthusiasm and affection, and for 26 years near Rosemary's side has stood the third member of our welcoming family, our dog. At first it was a Sheltie named Governor, then for years it was a series of beautiful golden retrievers: Molly 1, Molly 2 and Bella. Now the first dog is an inky black lab with loving, soulful eyes. Her name is Zoey.

As we begin this new academic year there is good news about successes and accolades of all kinds, even in these difficult times. Over the past year when so many schools told their students to stay away and many others said we are going to teach all of our classes online, we returned to campus.

That required all of us to work very hard to bring our students back, to keep people safe and instruct our students in person. In person instruction and the on-campus experience is who we are. At Christopher Newport, we have gifted professors who instruct and inspire our students, face to face, in small classes.

I am grateful for our faculty. Over 70% of our classes this past year were taught in person. No other public college or university in Virginia approached that number.

You know, lessons about leadership, honor, and service and respect and tolerance for others, inform and inspire lives of significance, and these lessons are best learned in community. So my profound thanks to all of you for your remarkable efforts over the past year.

We have done so much. We brought our students to campus. We staggered the residence hall move-ins. We required daily symptom screening. We increased cleaning and sanitizing of all areas. We canceled athletic events. We closed our campus to the public. We isolated and quarantined our students and we assisted the Virginia Health Department in tracing contacts to prevent the spread of the virus. We launched a dashboard on our website to report the number of students and employees who tested positive for the virus. We organized a clinic to provide vaccines to thousands – all that and so much more.

We made it through the academic year in community, and in good health, engaging our students face to face and holding festive graduation ceremonies for the classes of 2020 and 2021. In fact, you reinvented commencement, and created very personal, emotional experiences for our graduates and their families, much of which we plan to carry forward in the future. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

I will speak in more detail about the year past in a moment, but let me say this, I could not have been away with Rosemary if it had not been for you and for my faith and trust in all of you and in the leadership team that we have built at this university. You all care passionately about this remarkable place – our vision, values, mission and future and the people who bring it all to life.

Let me express my profound thanks to Adelia Thompson. Adelia is passionate about people and pursues excellence in all things. She works from early morning to late at night to make good things happen. She has led Christopher Newport with joy, kindness and remarkable success in very difficult and challenging times.

My special thanks also to our distinguished provost, Dave Doughty; Jennifer Latour, vice president for finance and planning and chief financial officer; Lisa Duncan Raines, vice president for enrollment and student success; Kevin Hughes, vice president for student affairs; Keith Roots, vice president for university advancement; Christine Ledford, vice president for administration and auxiliary services; our able vice provosts Drs. Robert Colvin and Geoffrey Klein; and our wonderful deans, Drs. Nicole Guajardo, Quentin Kidd, Lori Underwood and George Ebbs.

To the teams of front-line workers who came to our campus and cared for us during the darkest days of COVID – housekeepers, our grounds staff, dining services and plant operations. We are profoundly grateful.

You could not stay home. You navigated childcare challenges, you took transportation risks, and your jobs were critical to our efforts to protect each other. You are heroes. And to our campus police – our law enforcement and communications officers – you have been here every day and night keeping us safe.

To the amazing colleagues who left their regular positions to become one of the 30+ members of the tracing and case management team – helping us monitor, support and counsel every one of our students and colleagues who contracted the virus or were exposed to it – and then had to figure out what came next in a very scary time. Under the leadership of Tammy Sommer, Lisa Powell, Jackie Roquemore and Katie Wellbrock, you all became a lifeline. Thank you. And I know you were supported by the marvelous team in HR and so many others.

Across this campus, directors, managers, coordinators, assistants – staff and faculty – found amazingly new and creative ways for us to keep doing our work. You came up with new processes to help our students receive the counseling and tutoring they needed, you found ways to re-invent dining and student activities, you helped find new sources of financial assistance for students. Student Affairs has stepped up in incredible ways to care for our students and their needs outside of the classroom at a time when their need for support and assurance has never been greater. You created community when the world around us was trying to pull us apart.

You had to figure out the world of remote operation ... how do I work from the kitchen table with a six-year-old in the next room, mother needing help, and my staff needing vision and direction and all at once – and you did it!

And what can we say about our remarkable IT team? They facilitated virtual instruction so that every professor could address the needs of students in quarantine or isolation, and you supported hundreds of our colleagues in working from home when they could not be on campus. Thank you.

Videos kept us connected, and to Kyle Cummings, our incredible university videographer, and to his small brave band of student interns, thank you for the endless hours of filming and editing that allowed us to communicate with each other, to our students, to their families and to our alumni and supporters.

And also, special thanks to Jim Hanchett and the whole team in the Office of Communications and Public Relations for the extraordinary work in keeping websites updated, pushing out messages, keeping up with the required changes to campus plans and working to be sure we communicated well with the outside world, when the world could not come to us.

And thanks again to our faculty. You triumphed over all obstacles and managed to connect with students in ways that no other faculty in the commonwealth can claim.

And, as we all know, the vaccine clinic held on our campus was an extraordinary success. More than 25,000 people received the COVID vaccine including more than 90% of our faculty and staff and almost 2,000 of our students.

Many members of our staff participated in making all this happen and I thank you. But we must all be profoundly grateful to Tammy Sommer, director of emergency management, and Amie Dale, executive director of university events for their tireless efforts and leadership. Tammy and Amie, supported by Sarah Isenhour and Kilie Rosson created, facilitated and implemented this clinic with remarkable precision just as they handle every event, large and small for this university. In fact, Newport News engaged Tammy and Amie to plan the two new clinics that were established after ours closed.

Finally, my special thanks to the members of our COVID Strike Force for their incredible dedication and time commitment, especially Dr. Jana Adamitis who as the faculty representative spent countless hours in addition to her teaching. The COVID Strike Force members are Jana, Jennifer Latour, Lisa Duncan Raines, Christine Ledford, Amie Dale, Dave Doughty, Kevin Hughes, Jim Hanchett, Adelia Thompson and Tammy Sommer.

There were many other “implementers” of the plan and the Strike Force was guided by the good advice of our university counsel, Maureen Matsen.

Today as we say thank you to all the members of our remarkable academic community, we want to recognize two extraordinary colleagues who together committed over 70 years of their lives to making Christopher Newport a precious place – Cindi Perry and Bill Brauer.

Cindi, please join me on stage.

The Board of Visitors and I felt it was very important to etch Cindi and Bill's names in the life of Christopher Newport forever. So, the beautiful rotunda on the fourth floor of Christopher Newport Hall is named the Cynthia R. Perry Rotunda in recognition of Cindi's distinguished and celebrated career serving Christopher Newport for 42 years as director of planning and budget, chief of staff and counselor to the president. Cindi's wisdom, splendid judgment, knowledge of colleagues and programs across the campus, budgetary expertise, and her love of this place empowered everything that was accomplished at Christopher Newport University.

And so, today, surrounded by treasured friends and colleagues, on behalf of the Board of Visitors, we award you, Cindi Perry, an honorary doctor of laws degree from your beloved Christopher Newport University.

Bill, please join me on stage.

The lovely courtyard in the heart of Christopher Newport Hall is named the William L. Brauer Courtyard in recognition of Bill's extraordinary career serving Christopher Newport for nearly 30 years as executive vice president, chief financial officer and counselor to the president. Bill's expert management of the finances of the university in both good and challenging times and his leadership in envisioning and constructing over \$1 billion of university facilities has transformed this university and created one of America's most beautiful campuses.

So today, on behalf of the Board of Visitors, we award Bill Brauer an honorary doctor of laws degree from his beloved alma mater.

Cindi and Bill, you both have sacrificially served and led this institution and inspired all that we have accomplished together. So, my friends, let's give them one more rousing expression of our appreciation for all that they have meant to us.

It is our people, the Cindi Perrys and Bill Brauers and each of you – and all of us together – that make Christopher Newport an irresistible force. So, even in these difficult times, we have much to celebrate.

Our freshman class has 1,025 students and the academic quality of our students remains impressive with an average high school GPA of 3.8 and a SAT average of 1213.

26% of our freshmen are students of color – the highest percentage in well over a decade.

Our freshmen come from 19 states and three foreign countries.

118 of our freshmen are legacies including 65 siblings.

Nearly 400 of our freshmen will participate in the [President's Leadership Program](#) and they have earned a 4.0 average GPA and an average SAT score of 1301.

106 freshmen will participate in our [Honors Program](#) and 87 of those will participate in both Honors and PLP. And those students on average earned a high school GPA of 4.32 and an SAT of 1394.

My thanks to Dean Rob Lange and our amazing admission team; Dr. Lisa Duncan Raines; Julianna Wait, assistant vice president for enrollment services and university registrar; and our director of financial aid, Keely Haynes, their able colleagues and all the members of our faculty and staff who so generously contributed their time and talent supporting a mostly remote recruitment effort this past year, which included 350 college fairs and high school visits, and 49 virtual events.

Our students – once they arrive – continue to be successful. Our freshman-to-sophomore retention rate is 86%. Our four-year graduation rate is 66% – three percentage points below last year as some students withdrew and others took lighter loads because of the unknowns surrounding COVID-19 and online instruction. Happily, our projected five-year graduation rate is 75%.

Also, every year Lisa Duncan Raines and her staff conduct a postgraduate survey. 93% of the Class of 2020 reported full-time enrollment in graduate school or employment. That number is substantially higher than our peer schools, which reflects well on everyone on this campus and underscores the quality of our graduates.



Throughout fiscal year 2021, we remained financially strong thanks to consistent enrollments, holding tight on hiring and expenses, the successful mitigation of the virus on campus and to federal and state emergency financial assistance.

Unlike so many schools, we were not forced to take the painful steps of cutting programs or personnel.

We were able to freeze tuition and all fees – mindful that families are struggling. Our tuition has remained the same for four years in a row.

We did well once again in Richmond.

The General Assembly authorized up to a five percent salary increase for faculty and staff and we were able to provide a full five percent raise to every employee on this campus.

Moreover, Christopher Newport was granted \$11 million to undertake a number of important repair and replacement projects. These are not flashy projects but they are important to our well being.

It is also important to underscore the strong financial position of our university. Our combined operating and capital budgets now exceed \$250 million. Our operating budget alone is \$178 million and these monies are equally divided between our academic programs and auxiliary enterprises.

Our endowment funds have increased to over \$60 million in total investments and the value of our Christopher Newport Real Estate Foundation exceeds \$200 million and the Real Estate Foundation provides over \$1 million in scholarships for our students each year. I want to express my gratitude for the leadership and good work of Doug Hornsby, Spencer McDonald, Lamont Williams and their colleagues who oversee the important work of our foundations.

Now let's talk about Academic Affairs. This summer Dean George Ebbs announced his retirement and recommended the appointment of Alan Witt as his successor. I am grateful to George for his leadership over the last six years. Let me point to just three major accomplishments.

George artfully oversaw our preparation for AACSB re-accreditation and we passed with flying colors.

Our students continue to perform at the very highest levels in the Business Major Field Test. This year 532 schools participated, with 139,825 students taking this test. We require all of our graduating seniors to take the test. Once more, we scored in the upper 90th national percentile. This year's result was the 96th percentile – the top 4% of the nation. This is a wonderful reflection on the quality of our students and the effectiveness of our business school.

Finally, and importantly, George led our efforts to successfully establish the [master in financial analysis program](#) and a successful start with 18 full-time students who all graduated in May.

George will serve as Luter's executive in residence this fall semester and he will help prepare us for the changes in the CPA exam and our next AACSB visit.

Our new Luter dean, Alan Witt, is one of us. Alan and his wife Debbie are Christopher Newport alumni. Alan has served on our Board of Visitors and led the board as rector. Alan and Debbie led the fundraising for the Marcus Cooper Trading Room and his son Alan and daughter-in-law Happy, are Christopher Newport alumni.

Moreover – and importantly – Alan is a known and respected business and community leader throughout Virginia. He built from scratch one of the top 100 accounting firms in the country – PBMares. He served on the Newport News City Council, led the board of Riverside Health System for over a decade and now serves as chair of the Virginia Chamber of Commerce. Alan Witt, we welcome you as our new dean of the Luter School.

In the College of Social Sciences, the Wason Center has received additional funding and a new name – the [Wason Center for Civic Leadership](#). In addition to its well-known expertise in public policy and polling, the Wason Center will now emphasize leadership education on our campus and around the commonwealth. As part of its new mission, the Wason Center for Civic Leadership will welcome to campus our first cohort of Distinguished Virginians – Virginia Supreme Court Justice Bill Mims, State Senator Jennifer McClellan, former mayor and now treasurer of Hampton Molly Ward and former U.S. Representative Barbara Comstock.

This fall we also welcome our first Wason Leadership Scholars – nine high-ability, first-year PLP students who are committed to the study of leadership as a second major. These students will also work in the survey lab and fully

participate in the new and enhanced programming of the Wason Center.

In the College of Natural and Behavioral Sciences, I applaud our success in meeting the requirements of the Tech Talent Investment Program.

Christopher Newport committed to producing 400 more graduates in [computer science, computer engineering and cybersecurity](#) over the next 20 years and in turn, received from the state a commitment of \$15 million to enhance our faculty and enrich our programs. Every year we must meet exacting performance goals and this past year we blew by those goals and the number of freshmen interested in these three majors continues to increase as well.

Another CNBS success deserves to be mentioned. This year we have 36 – let me repeat that number – 36 Christopher Newport alumni matriculating in medical schools around the country including Yale, UVA, VCU, the University of Illinois, VCOM and EVMS. It wasn't too long ago that we were sending only one or two graduates each year to medical school. My congratulations to our faculty and to our pre-med and pre-health advisers Dr. Gwynne Browne, Dr. Kathryn Cole and Tiffany Carney.

In the college of Arts and Humanities, the big news is that the [Department of Fine Art and Art History](#) has moved into the extraordinary [Mary M. Torggler Fine Arts Center](#). I want to publicly thank Dr. Michelle Erhardt, for her leadership in creating the vision and the programming for this center, and to Rosemary Tribble for working with our architects and inspiring a thing of beauty.

Speaking of the arts, I want to also make special mention of the great work done by our music and theater faculty. All of our faculty worked heroically during this pandemic. But our music and theater faculty labored under incredibly tight constraints, and yet were still able to coach and mentor our students as they prepared and delivered the same number and quality of musical and theatrical performances. Well done!

I am pleased that research has continued to flourish at Christopher Newport. 60 students participated in our Summer Scholars program and our faculty landed \$2.6 million in grants this past year, our second highest in over a decade, at the height of a global pandemic!

Moreover, we are anticipating a robust rebound in study abroad. Before the pandemic shut things down, the percentage of our undergraduates studying abroad had risen to 36%. I understand that we have 19 study abroad trips on the books for next year, and I applaud and thank our faculty for leading these valuable learning experiences for our students.

Finally, let me say a word about service. In this last year, the year of COVID-19, our students contributed over 58,000 hours of service. While that is down from our usual number of 100,000 hours or more, it is amazing to think that with all of the restrictions imposed on our students that they were still able to contribute so much to so many. I want to thank Vanessa Buehlmann and Jessica Deal for their able direction of the Center for Community Engagement.

Yesterday I met with our new faculty and I underscored that Christopher Newport is different from so many other schools because we care about minds and hearts. We want to enrich minds and stir hearts. We want our students to choose to live lives of meaning, consequence and purpose and we have a name for that – a life of significance.

A life of significance has influenced every decision that we have made over the last two decades. It is the reason that our academic life rests in the liberal arts and sciences and the reason that we have a rigorous core of classes taken by all of our students and the reason why we emphasize the study and practice of leadership.

Because we care about lives of significance, we expect our students to perform hundreds of hours of community service. We built a chapel and we cherish our speaking tradition and our honor code.

Our community is grounded in leadership, honor and service. There is no greater example of this than the marriage of our leadership minor and our recently established second major in leadership studies and the President's Leadership Program. The leadership program attracts high-ability students who lead and serve and who contribute immensely to creating and sustaining a culture of kindness on this campus.

This year over half of all PLP students will earn Service Distinction honors by graduation and this past year two teams of students represented Christopher Newport in the finals of the prestigious International Leadership Association's Student case study competition. For the second time in the last three years, our PLP students took home top honors, winning the competition and besting student teams from across the country.

Every year the President's Leadership Program also brings to campus an amazing array of speakers. Women and men who share their life's experiences and important lessons learned.

This year we will welcome former U.S. Senator Bill Nelson who now serves as administrator of NASA, Virginia Senator Mamie Lock; *New York Times* columnist and NPR commentator David Brooks, and Senators Tim Kaine and Mark Warner.

Let's talk some more about the arts at Christopher Newport. In March of 2020 – like every other performance venue around the globe – the [Ferguson Center](#) went dark. This year Bruce Bronstein, our able executive director of the Ferg, and his team have assembled a season of artists that will rival any venue in America.

Let me share some of the names. We will debut performances by rocker Melissa Etheridge, jazz guitar virtuoso Pat Metheny and illusionist Criss Angel.

A wonderful Broadway series including *Waitress*, the 25th anniversary tour of *RENT* and *Beautiful*, and Broadway classics *Fiddler on the Roof* and *South Pacific*.

And at Christmas, Mannheim Steamroller, Dave Koz and Friends, Cirque Holidaze and Chris Tomlin.

And to kick off our new season, a performance by one of the most popular recording artists in the world. On September 29 we will welcome multi-platinum recording artist Josh Groban for a very special performance at the Ferguson Center in advance of his three-night engagement at New York's famed Radio City Music Hall. I am told there are still a few seats remaining.

And to welcome us all back to the Ferguson Center and to recognize and thank each of you for all that's been accomplished and in celebration of our 60th anniversary, all staff and faculty will receive a \$100 credit to purchase tickets to any Ferguson Center presentation during the 2021-22 school year. In the coming days you will receive an email with the details on how to access your credit and purchase tickets.

The Mary M. Torggler Fine Arts Center celebrated a soft opening in April for our campus community and special friends. The very first art to be hung in this magnificent building was the work of our students – the Senior Art Show in April and May. Moreover, this summer close to 400 children raced through the doors of the Torggler Center for six weeks of summer camp.

This fall we will host a glorious grand opening celebration. We had hoped to swing wide the doors in September but to sidestep the delta variant, we have chosen Homecoming weekend and the afternoon of Sunday, October 31.

Holly Koons – the executive director of the Torggler – joined us in October and Holly has curated a spectacular collection for the opening unlike anything ever seen in Virginia.

And now let's talk about athletics. At Christopher Newport we have 24 intercollegiate athletic programs and over 600 student-athletes. Our student-athletes excel in the classroom as well as in athletic competition.

Last fall all of our intercollegiate competitions were canceled. The spring semester saw a return to practices, games, meets and tournaments where our students were able to succeed gloriously! In fact, this past spring Captains competed in every sport we offer, as fall sports were moved to the spring so they could play abbreviated seasons.

Men's lacrosse established a new standard of excellence and advanced to a first NCAA final four.

Men's golf competed at the NCAA championships and ended the season with a top-10 finish led by an outstanding effort from Robb Kinder, a sophomore from New Kent, who was the national runner-up.

Women's tennis also celebrated our first-ever All-American, Reagan Delp.

I applaud our athletic director, Kyle McMullin; associate director, Carrie Gardner; our coaches; our head athletic trainer, Rob Kearn; Dr. Vince Joseph and all of our physicians and athletic trainers for all that's been accomplished.

The year ahead looks much different than the past year. We are in the final stages of renovating Ratcliffe Hall, home to most of our student-athletes and coaches. The track at TowneBank Stadium is undergoing a comprehensive renewal so we can provide a championship caliber experience for hundreds of intercollegiate and high school athletes that visit our campus each year.

Our fall sports begin on September 1 and I hope you will join us on September 4 – outdoors, of course – when we host my alma mater Washington and Lee for the first football game of the year and see and experience once again the music and moves of the incredible Marching Captains, and the energy and enthusiasm of our fearless cheerleaders and our dynamic dance team the Storm.

Our alumni and friends remained generous throughout the past year.

The advancement team led by Vice President Keith Roots raised \$5.2 million – far surpassing our goal of \$4 million. 15% of our alumni made gifts.

Scholarships remain our greatest need. We raised nearly \$2.8 million in scholarship support. 10 new annual scholarships were created, along with four new endowed scholarships.

We celebrated our seventh CNU Day in April and had our second consecutive \$1 million day. A record 3,100 alumni made donations from all 50 states, Puerto Rico and Australia.

Once again, over 90% of our colleagues participated in our annual Faculty/Staff Campaign.

Community Captains received over \$600,000 in new support.

We raised over \$300,000 last year for athletics, with a goal to raise \$1.2 million by next June 30th.

Fundraising for the new Torggler had a strong year, raising almost \$500,000.

And importantly, Dr. Angela Spranger, our chief diversity, equity and inclusion officer, has been busy in her first year working with colleagues across the campus to ensure that inclusive excellence is the goal embraced by all of us – making sure we all know what that means, and what it means for us in the work we do together.

Angela has been a part of our academic community for 8 years but she took a leap of faith last summer, and stepped into this new role. I am grateful for her willingness to serve in a new and important way, and because of her leadership and hard work much has been accomplished.

We have new programs to recruit, retain and engage students, staff and faculty and new partnerships with area corporations that led to amazing new internships, scholarships and job opportunities for our students. A series of four “ramp up” video messages, to help prepare our community for a new education program beginning in the fall through LinkedIn Learning. Numerous book groups, conversation sessions, “DEI Dialogues,” and focus groups have taken place and we have made real progress in the implementation of our DEI Strategic Plan, thanks to the good work of Angela and the President’s Council on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion – a marvelous group of leaders from our BOV, students, faculty, staff and community.

I also want to celebrate the good work of Curtis Davidson, Bob Colvin, Angela Spranger and Brandon Jones in ensuring the early success of our Community Captains program.

Community Captains is a powerful new opportunity for high school students in NNPS – offers a guided pathway through the college prep and application process, and guaranteed admission to Christopher Newport if they remain actively engaged in the program, maintain a strong GPA, and are either first generation college students or facing substantial financial need.

We hoped to accomplish three goals: 1) offer personal assistance to promising students in Newport News who dream of college but who need some extra, encouragement and help; 2) bring more students from our community to Christopher Newport; and 3) keep more of these remarkable young people in this community so their intelligence, honor, determination, light and vision will fuel Hampton Roads in the years ahead.

A new cohort of students will be recruited each year. Throughout their junior and senior years, they come to the campus for an array of enrichment events and programs, meet regularly with Christopher Newport students specially selected as their personal mentors and receive help at every turn navigating the college preparatory and admission process.

I am pleased to tell you that the first cohort of Community Captains graduated from high school in June – and 19 of these remarkable young women and men are here with us this week as members of our freshman class!

And now let’s look to the future and talk about our goals for this next academic year.



- Our honor code and our speaking tradition and our shared commitment to instruct and inspire our students to lead meaningful, consequential lives is what makes this place distinctive and precious – a light in an increasingly dark world.

The pandemic has challenged us and made us more disconnected. We must make a conscious and concerted effort to connect with each other and our students. We are going to have to work harder to pass on our values. We will have to work harder to speak through our masks, to project our voices louder and greet people with our eyes and a head nod because they cannot see our smiles, offering a wave or elbow bump hello or opening the door in conveying the friendliness and community of this place.

Shared values and traditions that are not practiced become history and we must not let that happen.

- With great fanfare and celebration, we will formally open the Mary M. Torggler Fine Arts Center to our community and the commonwealth, and to the enrichment of our students and faculty
- We will rebuild the staff, fill open positions and better compensate our staff, especially our classified and hourly colleagues. We have too many vacant positions on this campus. That means too many people are carrying too heavy a load to keep our programs and services robust.

We will advance our thinking and early planning of two capital projects this year.

- This first is a successor building to old CNU-SunTrust at the corner of Warwick and Hiden Boulevards. This building needs to be replaced and we need to get our colleagues in more congenial surroundings. We will also seriously consider building that structure in the heart of our campus rather than on our perimeter.
- We must also plan a new science facility – Luter 2 – to house expanded facilities for the College of Natural and Behavioral Sciences including the departments of Physics, Computer Science and Engineering and Mathematics and our programs in kinesiology, neuroscience and environmental studies.
- We will reclaim our position on the admission landscape as we once again bring prospective students and their families to our campus where they will encounter your warm welcome, fully experience the beauty of this place and fall in love with CNU. We will bring our freshman class back to 1,200 or more students every year, and maintain the academic profile for which Christopher Newport is so well respected.
- We will use the powerful draw of the Ferguson and Torggler Centers to reach more of the commonwealth's gifted young artists, attracting that talent here to bring our stages, performance halls, and gallery spaces to life in new ways.
- We will celebrate our 60th anniversary, engaging alumni and the entire Christopher Newport community in a year of extraordinary events and programs ... telling our story more broadly in new and compelling ways, and leveraging the momentum of this anniversary year to increase fundraising and expand public awareness of this incredible place.
- We will raise at least \$6 million – higher than in any year since we completed our comprehensive campaign – to empower the efforts of our faculty, staff and students.
- Our study abroad program will regain its momentum and scope of opportunities to ensure that our Captains have the chance to engage the world first hand.
- We will continue implementing the university's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion plan, leading with the new LinkedIn Learning video training, and will celebrate new ways to ensure that ours is a community that lives into the promise of inclusive excellence.
- We will rekindle the servant heart of this place to ensure it will be more on fire than ever before. Beginning tomorrow, with Day One of Service, all of our freshmen and many staff and faculty will go out into the communities of Hampton Roads to experience life beyond this campus and discover ways to make a difference.
- We will ensure our participation in the commonwealth's Tech Talent Investment Program remains strong and successful as we honor our commitment to increase the number of graduates in computer science, computer engineering and cybersecurity.
- As our student athletes once again take to the fields and courts, we will support their march to victory with renovated facilities and resources to help them take full advantage of the competitive experience afforded by our new Coast to Coast conference.
- And finally, we will continue to lift up the life of significance as the hallmark of the Christopher Newport experience – reminding our students and our world of what true leadership, honor and service mean and what true leadership, honor and service look like.

Through our rigorous and rewarding liberal arts and sciences and business programs, the core curriculum we require of all students, the President's Leadership and leadership and American studies programs, the expanded reach of the Wason Center for Civic Leadership, through an impressive array of speakers that visit our campus, through thousands of hours of community service and through each of us – the lessons that we teach and the lives that we lead, we will model the life of significance – on this campus and as a university every day. We will be the place that reminds our world that true leadership takes minds and hearts, vision and values, service and courage and strength and honor.

Go Captains!

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