

Keynote Address

Speaker: Joseph Steinmetz, OSU Executive Vice President and Provost
Delivered at the OSURA's 17th Annual Fall Conference
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Fawcett Center

Rai Goerler, OSURA's outgoing president introduced Provost Steinmetz.

Thanks, Rai. Good morning, everyone. Please join me in thanking Rai Goerler for serving as OSURA's president and in welcoming Hal Noltimier as your new president. I have known both Rai and Hal since I came to Ohio State as executive dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. And, I know that both Rai and Hal are excellent leaders.

Before I go further, our new university president, Michael Drake, asked me to convey his greetings to you. He's unable to attend today's conference, but I know he's looking forward to seeing you at a future OSURA event.

Last month, Joan Leitzel, Rai Goerler and I got together to talk about OSURA. I was impressed to learn that OSURA is the strongest retirees association in the Big Ten. I hope that means that your experiences as Ohio State faculty and staff members were so important to you that you are taking a "tenure for life" approach to the university through OSURA.

Joan Leitzel is an example of someone we continually draw back to campus. She recently agreed to serve on Academic Affairs' selection committee for the Alumni Award for Distinguished Teaching. In addition, Joan is actively engaged in the launching of the Emeritus Academy, which I'll tell you about in few moments. She is just one example of an OSURA member who continues to make a positive impact on our community.

Of course, there are all kinds of ways for Buckeyes to stay connected. For instance during the past month, the Staff Arts Show has been showcased in Bricker Hall — right outside my office. OSURA members Nancy Beja, Richard Dobec, Frank Himes, and Andy Hudson displayed their artworks in the show.

This morning, I'd like to tell you about a few of this year's priorities in the Office of Academic Affairs. It's a bit of a kitchen sink approach, because there is a LOT going on at the university, and I want to touch on several areas where we're focusing our energy.

Our first priority — always — is our students. For this year's incoming class, we received more than 42,000 applications. Last month more than 7,000 new freshman started classes. They come from all 88 Ohio counties, nearly every state in the nation, and 33 countries. Nearly 20 percent are from central Ohio; 21 percent are first-generation college students; 18 percent are from minority and other underrepresented groups; and the gender breakdown is 50/50.

For each of the past few years, we have claimed "the brightest freshman class ever." And it is true that A-C-T and S-A-T scores continue to increase. But it's not just us saying that. For instance, *Bridge Magazine for the Center of Michigan* ran an article last month saying: "No Big Ten school has seen the test scores of incoming freshmen climb as fast as Ohio State."

The autumn 2004 class's average ACT was 25.6. This year's average is a projected 28.7 to 28.8. Those increasing test scores bring us to the question: "What difference do test scores make, anyhow?" The answer is that the test scores are one predictor — of many — that show our incoming students arrive better prepared, have higher expectations about their college experiences, and are more likely to complete their degrees. A generation or two ago, we had a revolving door of students matriculating but not graduating. Many did not return for their second year — or, even for their second quarter. In contrast, our projected retention rate for this incoming class is about 94 percent.

Having grown up in the digital age, our current students learn differently than most of us in this room. They have shorter attention spans, for one thing. And, they want to get information fast — very fast. They access more information on

their cell phones in less than a minute, than many public libraries had available in their entire collections when I was a college student.

As faculty, we continually develop new approaches to refine our teaching methods. We want our students' interest and attention focused during class. Frankly, that can be challenging.

So, we often use the digital tools that our students use. We use innovative techniques, such as the "flipped classroom" and online classes, to engage the learning styles of our students. For those of you who aren't familiar with the term, here's an example of the flipped classroom method. Instead of lecturing to students with no interactions, one teaching award winner from the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry videos his lectures. He makes them available online for his students prior to class time. Students can watch the video lecture in their dorm rooms on their computers at 2 o'clock in the morning if they feel like it. Importantly, they can rewind the video and watch it again and again to get comfortable with new material, bit by bit. Then, class time is spent on interactive discussions and working on problems, often in teams.

Many departments are starting to offer some flipped classroom courses, as well as trying out other new approaches for their courses. Rest assured, we will continue to offer the traditional teaching settings. An advantage of our size and commitment to teaching excellence is that we can offer a large range of learning opportunities. And our 145 majors include new majors in data analytics, neuroscience and urban studies.

Academic Affairs see the development of e-Learning as another priority. We are defining the strategy for distance education in the undergraduate curriculum. In addition, we are continuing efforts in graduate-level distance education through the creation of targeted master's degrees and professional certificates created by academic units. As you can imagine, this developing area is growing exponentially.

A well-rounded university education involves more than academic courses. We're interested in the development of the whole person and the education gleaned outside the classroom, laboratory or studio. We have nearly 11 hundred student organizations; 147 of them self-identify as community service/learning organizations. Predictive data suggest that students who are involved in co-curricular activities are more engaged, have higher graduation rates, and are more involved with the university as alumni. To enhance that connection of the students to campus, we continue to develop the Second-Year Transformational Experience Program, called STEP. You have likely noticed the large building enterprise underway at the corner of North High Street and West Lane Avenue. That area will house the STEP dorms and activities.

Later today, you'll hear from a few of our students about their opportunities with research and interdisciplinary work and how these enhanced educational experiences are preparing them for their careers and next stages of their lives.

In addition to providing students' with excellent academic and co-curricular experiences, one of my greatest concerns is access to and affordability for a college education. In fact, access and affordability are a national crisis. To strategically plan for a large, educated citizenry in our current economic environment, we must increase scholarships and find other approaches for financial aid.

These concerns are not only a focus at our own institution. Just yesterday I was in Washington, DC, to represent Ohio State in a relatively new national group called the University Innovation Alliance. This Alliance is sponsored by the likes of The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Ford Foundation and others. The Alliance is made up of eleven universities across the country. We have created a consortium to work with government and the private sector on options for affordability.

In addition, we expect to learn best practices for access and affordability from each other. We are particularly focused on opportunities for first-generation and other underrepresented populations of students. Two examples of successful

program at Ohio State are the Young Scholars Program and the Todd Bell National Resource Center on the African American Male. Through the Alliance, we will share what we have learned over time to make these programs relevant and effective. The expectation is that all of the universities will have programs that could be replicated at other institutions.

Access and affordability are more than an economic necessity for our university and our nation. I believe that addressing these issues is a moral mandate.

Next, I want to mention two priorities for our faculty. One area of focus is developing new models of evaluation and rewards in an interdisciplinary climate. Although an extremely important issue in recruiting and retaining excellent faculty, I believe that faculty rewards are an OAA priority that might not be of greatest interest to OSURA right now. Instead, I want to take time to talk about the status of the Discovery Themes initiative.

The Discovery Themes are about the world's grand challenges and transformative solutions to address them. In university-wide dialogues, we landed upon areas of great need where we could build on our intellectual capital and heft. We are focusing on three areas to make global impact: energy and environment, food production and security, and health and wellness. In addition to world-class faculty research, the Discovery Themes will involve student research and additional learning opportunities.

The first Discovery Themes proposal funded is in data analytics, which is the process of sifting, organizing, and examining vast amounts of information and then drawing conclusions based on that analysis. Data analytics is prevalent everywhere in our daily lives. It's how your grocery store knows which coupons to send you, based on data gleaned from your affinity cards. And we use predictive data to help us plan for our students' needs and emerging trends.

Data analytics will touch every part of the Discovery Themes. And, we formed the Data Analytics Collaborative, an interdisciplinary faculty group across the university to address these critical issues. Just last week we announced the inaugural director, Professor Philip Payne, who is also the chair of the Department of Biomedical Informatics.

In addition, we recognize the importance of this field for future careers, so we developed an undergraduate major in data analytics and the inaugural class began this semester. You will also be interested in knowing that IBM located its only global data analytics entity in Dublin to be near Ohio State because of our reputation in this area. You likely heard in the news last week that Amazon is also considering locating its data analytics component in Dublin, too.

In other news, we hope to name a new dean for the Fisher College of Business sometime in the next few weeks. And, we are just launching a national search for a new dean in the College of Veterinary Medicine.

I've barely skimmed the surface of what's going on yet want to shift to areas where you OSURA members might want to engage. You have already have identified dozens of activities — from legislative activity to freshman orientation programs to Program 60 — that are open for retired staff and faculty.

In addition, I want to tell you that this semester the Office of Academic Affairs launched the Emeritus Academy. The Academy's purpose is to provide an avenue for faculty to continue their scholarly work to benefit students, fellow faculty, and the community and beyond.

We currently have more than 2,100 emeritus faculty members. Almost 600 faculty have been granted emeritus status in just the past five years — 61 of them in 2014. Eligibility for Academy membership is open to those who have been granted emeritus status by the Board of Trustees and who are also involved in productive research, scholarship and creative activity.

The Emeritus Academy website is up, and I hope you will check it out. I mentioned Joan Leitzel earlier, and she joins other Academy Founding Council members: L.S. Fan; Bob Holub, Brian Joseph and Terry Miller. I thank all of them for their leadership. Since the launch of the Academy on September 1, we have already received 15 applications. Our Founding Council members will begin reviewing applications on November 1.

The Academy signals one of many concrete ways that OSURA members will continue to have an impact on our academic mission. I know many of you continue to partner with the university through teaching, tutoring and other support. And I know that many OSURA members partner with our service mission by volunteering in the medical center, the Libraries, Archives, and with programs and events. Above all, the Emeritus Academy should provide an additional means for faculty to remain connected strongly to Ohio State University. We are looking for other ways for retired faculty and staff to remain active. Please feel free to forward to me your ideas.

Finally, my own deep and long-standing passion for the arts leads me to mention the grand opening of the renovated Sullivant Hall this coming Saturday. Sullivant will be a pivotal part of arts district, where we expect to generate a lot of energy. The university and the city will collaborate to expand our vibrant arts community.

I know you have a business meeting and a full day of workshop sessions ahead. Let me close by saying how deeply I appreciate your continued involvement with the university. Your engagement and partnership are essential for the richness and growth of our university community. You benefit all of us, and I thank you for that. I look forward to our continuing collaborations!