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State of the University Address, 2020

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State of the University

<https://www.odu.edu/stateoftheuniversity>

Monday, November 9, 2020



Traditionally Old Dominion's academic year begins with the President's State of the University Address. However, in August, our focus was to ensure our Monarch community was equipped to successfully navigate all the challenges of COVID-19. It also forced us to reimagine many traditions throughout the semester. Please take a moment to listen to President John R. Broderick's 2020-2021 State of the University address.

2020 State of the University

In the last few months, I've spoken to you primarily about Old Dominion's response to the coronavirus. I'm happy to report that will not be my major focus today.

This has been a fiercely challenging year, and it has even shaped how I am delivering my State of the University message. But I want to emphasize that we have refused to let the pandemic limit our ambitions. We are not just playing defense, we are growing.

Nobel Prize winner Desmond Tutu said, "Hope is being able to see that there is light, despite all of the darkness." Old Dominion is pursuing the light. Despite the constraints and hurdles facing us, we have moved forward with bold initiatives, partnerships and many successes.

Here are just a few:

We have benefited from well over \$1 billion in new resources in the past 12 years, including \$186 million from our ongoing fundraising initiative, and, most recently, \$17 million in additional general funding from the state.

Unlike most higher education institutions, we experienced enrollment increases in both the summer and fall, with 3 percent growth in the latter. Credit goes to our ODUOnline distance

learning program, ITS, Admissions, Financial Aid, the Graduate School and a host of individuals and departments.

This year, ODU has intensified collaborations in the maritime and health care fields which I will elaborate on later in my address.

And last month, Old Dominion launched a School of Cybersecurity, the only one of its kind in the country with a dual focus on undergraduates and graduate students. Our program, ably led by Michael Wu, has grown exponentially, from 11 to 800 students in five years, filling a crucial workforce need in the commonwealth.

The coronavirus also did not slow down our faculty, who once again distinguished themselves across the state and beyond:

Luisa Igloria was named Virginia's poet laureate. With the previous appointment of Tim Seibles, ODU is the only Virginia university to have two poets laureate in the past decade.

Ted Ellis, whose art exhibit this year at the Goode Theatre celebrated the Black experience in America, was named Scholar in Residence here.

Kent Carpenter in biological sciences became the University's 33rd recipient of the state's Outstanding Faculty Award.

Anil Nair won a \$400,000 grant from the Kauffman Foundation to expand the Strome College of Business' efforts to support entrepreneurship among veterans and women.

Ben Stuart, who has steered the Batten College of Engineering and Technology with a sure hand as interim dean, was appointed dean after a national search.

In human movement sciences, Justin Haegele has received a prestigious Spencer grant.

And our Center for Telehealth Innovation, Education and Research in Virginia Beach, co-directed by Carolyn Rutledge and Tina Gustin, has become a sought-after resource locally and globally.

One of our most innovative ventures was a summer program called REYES, or Remote Experience for Young Engineers and Scientists, taught by our faculty as well as researchers from institutions including NASA, the Jefferson Lab and the Mexican Space Agency.

REYES attracted 7,400 registrants from 115 countries, expanding ODU's global reputation. The program, led by Giovanna Genard and Raúl Briceño, adds to our substantial record in diversity and inclusion.

Last fall, students of color made up nearly half our enrollment. Our belief in the value of diversity meshes with our commitment to social mobility and affordability. We remain the doctoral institution in Virginia with the most affordable tuition. We held our third annual national social mobility seminar, this time virtually. And U.S. News & World Report recognized us among 2020's "Top Performers" in social mobility.

I'm proud that hundreds of people attended last summer's March for Justice, led by graduate student Mufu Taiwo. I appreciate the work of Narketta Sparkman-Key, Lesa Clark, Veleka Gatling and Annette Finley-Croswhite, who spearheaded a vibrant series of webinars and Zoom

discussions on issues of race. We also sponsored a comprehensive commemoration of the 400th anniversary of the first African landing in North America, thanks to Melvina Sumter and the Office of Community Engagement. But the continued killings of African Americans prove that it's premature to celebrate our achievements. We *must* do more, and I pledge to lead a robust effort to work toward full equality, from faculty hiring to student life.

If there's been a positive side to the pandemic, it's the flexible and creative response of Monarchs. Guided by campus coordinator Rhonda Harris and the hard work of countless committees, we nimbly transitioned to remote learning and telework midway through the spring semester, and we have experienced a successful fall - using a hybrid approach - and operating our own COVID testing center, under the direction of Health Sciences Dean Bonnie Van Lunen. I want to thank our students, faculty and staff for embracing our #ReignResponsibly campaign.

More than ever, the surrounding community needs our help, and Monarchs, not surprisingly, have risen to the occasion, whether it's to donate food, help teachers planning virtual lessons or produce masks and other PPE for local hospitals and other facilities.

I'm happy to announce that we stand poised to raise our health care profile in the region. Under the direction of Gov. Northam, the state established the Hampton Roads Biomedical Research Consortium, consisting of ODU, EVMS and Sentara Healthcare. The commonwealth has engaged a consulting firm to study the ideal structure for our collaboration. We don't know yet exactly where this will lead, but Morris Foster and I will work to maximize the opportunities for ODU and the benefits for Virginia.

We *do* know where we want to go in the maritime field, and we have laid significant groundwork recently to expand our already sizable reach and influence. Old Dominion plays a key role in the newly formed Hampton Roads Maritime Collaborative for Growth & Innovation. One of the group's objectives, in fact, is to position ODU for global prominence in maritime endeavors.

Nancy Grden and Mileta Tomovic lead a group, representing all colleges, to frame a strategy for ODU to become a maritime model for the world. We will build synergies from strongholds in such areas as resilience and supply chain management, and we will pursue opportunities to engage in pioneering research. A shining example is our role in launching the first two operating offshore wind turbines in the Southeast. When the project is completed in 2026, it promises to be the largest wind farm in the country, supplying power to 650,000 homes.

Maritime and health care are literally miles apart, but these developments both rely on the value of partnerships. We don't believe in going it alone. Other recent examples of collaboration include a joint project with NASA's Jet Propulsion Lab, led by grad student Brett Buzzanga, to pinpoint the worst spots for subsidence in Hampton Roads and two new efforts between ODU's Center for Global Health and Physicians for Peace.

We also are in our second year of participation in the state's Tech Talent Pipeline. Old Dominion has committed to producing an additional 765 bachelor's recipients in computer science and computer engineering over the next two decades, for a total exceeding 2,800. It is a win all around - for the state, the University and our students.

We continue to benefit from the generosity of our supporters. Major gifts in the past year include a \$1 million donation from alumnus Michael Le for the digital theater and modern planetarium in the new Chemistry Building and bequest commitments of more than \$1 million each from James Mills, William Edelstein and Chandra Brooks. Other significant gifts have come from the Hampton Roads Community Foundation for Recover Hampton Roads and from GENEDGE for our Engineering Makerspace and Invention Center.

The largest, which I'm happy to announce today, is a \$5 million commitment from the Batten Foundation to endow our sailing program.

That's not the only good news in athletics. Perhaps the most important achievement: In the spring, our student-athletes recorded the best composite GPA, 3.47, in our history. Last fall, we reopened a much-improved Kornblau Field at S.B. Ballard Stadium, and since then, we welcomed two dynamic coaches - Ricky Rahne for football and DeLisha Milton-Jones for women's basketball.

The decision to cancel fall athletics - a path taken by relatively few universities - was difficult, but health and safety came first for Wood Selig and me. We hope to see many sports compete in the spring, including, for the first time, our women's volleyball team, coached by Fred Chao and playing in a new facility in the Jim Jarrett Building.

We'll open two more impressive buildings next semester. The Hugo Owens House, named for the University's first African American rector and a significant force for civil rights, will be our second-largest residence hall, with 470 beds. The Chemistry Building will have state-of-the-art research facilities, including 37 labs. In addition, our new Health Sciences facility is on track to open in 2022.

We also have planning permission for a biology building, which means that total funding for STEM-H facilities planned or under construction has reached nearly a quarter of a billion dollars. This is great news for the region's future job generation and job retention efforts in both STEM-H and new business startups.

Before I conclude, I want to acknowledge the passing of several faculty and other members of the Monarch community. We remember their contributions, their spirit and their dedication to this university.

I am fortunate to lead an institution that values people, innovation and collaboration. I am also fortunate to work with a corps of faculty and staff who are both caring and committed, eager to face any challenge. Most important, I am fortunate to have First Lady Kate by my side for the last 40-plus years.

Kate is an integral part to Old Dominion's success, working quietly but relentlessly with students and supporters to create and expand so many initiatives.

Finally, I must particularly acknowledge my leadership team for contributions that too often go unnoticed - Austin Agho, Greg DuBois, Don Stansberry, September Sanderlin, Morris Foster, Alonzo Brandon, Wood Selig and Annie Morris.

Thank you all for your support, your generosity and, mostly, your steadfast commitment to our students.