Colleagues:

I am honored to welcome you to CBU’s third annual Community Convocation celebrating 140 years of teaching excellence.

This morning, we have recognized the outstanding years of service by members of our community from 5 years to 35 years, have recognized our distinguished Lasallian educator, have recognized the Dr. Marguerite Cooper Distinguished Professor, have recognized outstanding advisors, and have celebrated promotions, tenuring, and the conferring of emeritus status to three faculty colleagues. On the other end of the spectrum, I wish to warmly welcome our newest members to the CBU community. In a very short time, you will see what a very special place this university is, and how the mission of faith, service, and community infuses all that we do. At this time, let me also recognize in a very special way the CBU retirees who today return to campus to join our community for this event. (please stand). In addition, I would like to especially recognize the De Lasalle Christian Brothers who continue to serve as teachers and mentors for all of us. (please stand) Finally, I am accompanied by a most special guest, my father, who has flown from Syracuse to spend the week with me. What better way to get to know me better than by joining us at this celebration of this wonderful university.

Let me take you back to May 2011. Thanks to the hard work of this entire community, we orchestrated a most memorable on-campus
commencement that began a new tradition at CBU, a tradition that many thought was not possible. I appreciate the leadership of Mario Brown who succeeded in making it all happen in spite of many challenges, including a 50 degree May day….. During my commencement address, I posed the question to our graduates, “Do you believe?” Continuing with that theme, let me pose that same question to each and every one of you as we embark on a new academic year welcoming students back to campus tomorrow.

Before I return to that question let me highlight some key indicators from last year. Thanks to the fine work of Drs. Buscher, Hargett, and Geis (from whom you will be hearing shortly) and with assistance from Brother Louis, and with your embracing issues of assessment, our SACS Reaffirmation visit was an overwhelming success. We fully expect our official reaffirmation letter after the SACS annual meeting in December.

Thanks to the fine work of our admissions office under the direction of our new VP for Enrollment Management Jim Schlimmer as well as Dr. Anne Kenworthy, we have a robust freshmen class of over 300, strong transfer numbers, and a solid number of returning students. This is certainly a remarkable turnaround from last year. More impressive is that approximately 200 freshmen will be living on campus, an increase of over 40 students from last year. The new Living Learning Center has 87 out of 92 beds filled, the capstones are filled, the renovated Maurelian Hall will be over 75% occupied, and work continues to be done on Rozier Hall to make that an attractive housing option. The Living Learning concept is catching on particularly in the area of sustainability, and new food options are making living on campus an attractive option. In fact, with some additional capacity in Maurelian, about 20 students from Rhodes College will be living on the CBU
campus as they found our housing attractive. From a marketing point of view, if we do a good job with them, we may have 20 additional marketers for CBU when they go back to their friends in their respective cities. I encourage you to visit our housing options particularly the Living Learning Center...........you will be proud to see a structure that embodies our mission. A special thanks goes to Ray Karasek who last year filled in as Interim Director of Residence Life and set the stage for this year.

Thanks to the President’s Council led by Karen Barnett Conway and Ken Massa, CBU is now a tobacco free campus. That change has come through a strong educational program and is without some controversy. However, it shows our commitment to creating a safe and healthy environment for all members of our community, particularly our students. Thanks to our sustainability committee, recycling is part of the campus culture and is not being integrated into our curriculum thanks to Ben Jordan.

Moving to budgets, for the 2010-11 fiscal year, we were able to finish the year with a balanced budget, while providing most of you well deserved stipends, while at the same time investing in strategic campus improvements. This is a most remarkable accomplishment given the challenging start we had last year, but occurred due to hard work on the part of our finance office led by Dan Wortham, some tough budget decisions by members of the cabinet, as well as a robust annual fund for CBU thanks to the fine work of Andrew Prislovsky and his staff. It was certainly a pleasure for me to finally authorize issuance of the stipend checks....I am sure it was more of a pleasure for you to have received them.
Although we cannot hinge all of our barometers of success on recognition by US news and other publications, let me applaud your efforts as this week I am pleased to announce that Christian Brothers University has once again received regional and national recognition for its outstanding academic programs and student services from U.S. News & World Report’s "America’s Best Colleges," the Princeton Review’s Best Colleges: Region by Region and Forbes' "America’s Best Colleges." Particularly noteworthy is our distinction of offering an A+ rating in our ability to educate B students.

Given the significance of health care to the economy of Memphis, and given the fact that CBU recently completed the construction of the Cooper-Wilson Science Building, the focus for new programs this year was on the education of health care professionals. After careful consideration, an RN-BSN completion program and a Masters’ Program in Physician Assistant Studies were developed. Students have been recruited for the Nursing program in Fall 2011, and for the PA program in January 2012. When fully operational, we expect that together they will generate approximately $1.5 million annually.

With the shift of Dr. McDonald from VP of Student Life to VP of Mission and Identity, we began a process to be more overt in CBU’s commitment to the Lasallian mission of Faith, Service, and Community. Brother Dominic Ehrmantraut was also initially hired as Special Assistant to the President to assist in mission-related activities. During the course of the year, we have re-drafted a mission statement with more action verbs and hosted the visit to CBU of Brother Alvaro, the Superior General of the Christian Brothers. Several new programs have been developed, most noteworthy, a revised orientation program for new trustees with a focus on mission and an orientation program for
new faculty. In fact, Evelyn has just returned from the White House where CBU along with about 250 other colleges across the country were recognized for our efforts in interfaith service.

Thanks to the fine work of Elisa Marus, VP of Marketing and Communications, we have actively sought public relations opportunities for CBU resulting in 1,573 published articles/news briefs which is a 54% increase over the same period last year. Our communications and marketing division have received several regional and national awards over the past year.

Thanks to Dave Pierce and our IT staff, active directory is now in the fabric of our wireless campus, and virtualization will be implemented in the very near future. Over the upcoming year, I have established a task force to work with Dave Pierce as we examine the efficiency of all of our IT functions.

As we look at academics, central to all that we do, I can proudly tell you that in the School of Sciences, our success rate in CBU graduates being accepted into medical, pharmacy, or physical therapy schools hovers at about 80%, with nearly 25 students/year being accepted into health professions or graduate schools....well done school of science faculty!!

Students from the School of Arts can boast a 90% placement rate, with two new smart classrooms in Kenrick and also senior studio spaces our visual arts majors. The School of Business was blessed to be led by Kristin Prien and Sarah Pitts last year who have cultivated relationships with and is placing interns and full-time employees with Merrill Lynch, Methodist Healthcare, Riviana Rice, Shelby County Schools Education Foundation, Global Spectrum, Northwestern Mutual, and the Tennessee Valley Authority. The School has also established a strong
presence in social media outlets including LinkedIn and Facebook which is helping us re-establish and strengthen ties with local businesses and our SOB alumni. I am convinced that Dr. Jack Hargett will continue to build on the strong foundations created by Kristin and Sarah. Besides offering first class engineering degrees, our School of Engineering through the efforts of Juan Carlos Olabe has created a program in Scratch Programming Language Education program with a website that is the world’s number one academic resource for teaching Scratch in the classroom. Currently 3700 English-speaking schools around the world use these resources, with over 125,000 lectures delivered each month. Since 2010, the Spanish version of this site is serving 8 million students in Latin America. The CBU Packaging Lab, classified as a commercial testing lab, is one of the eight Tennessee packaging labs certified by ISTA. The Healthcare Packaging Consortium was founded on June 1, 2010, at Christian Brothers University by seven founding members: Evergreen Packaging, FedEx, Medtronic, Merck Consumer Care, Plastic Ingenuity, Smith & Nephew, and Wright Medical.

Thanks to the fine work of our AD Joe Nadicksbernd, Brother Walter, and our coaches, the graduation rate of our student-athletes exceeds that of the non-athlete.

So now I return to my original question; “Do you believe?” With so much positive news, let me lay out a plan based on a revision of our current strategic plan with an optimistic slant that conveys my belief in the future of CBU.
The Core Goals for this plan I term **Reclaiming the Vision** can be laid out as follows. I thank Frank Buscher and the Strategic Planning Committee for working hard over the past year to drive this plan.

- Advance the university’s Lasallian and Catholic identity
- Expand the concept of community
- Enhance student learning
- Augment fiscal strength
- Improve facilities and technology
- Improve faculty and staff compensation
- Expand the number of student-athletes

Over the next few months, you will be hearing much more about this plan, but for now let me highlight some key features as together we move CBU into the future.

We have begun to attack the issue of compensation, realizing full well that during these uncertain financial times, that we could not solve all of compensation issues. We did provide the one-time stipend and have built into this year’s budget an average 3% increase to base salaries. This is only a short term solution. We need to provide our community with salaries that allow each and every individual to feel valued by this institution. I am committed to making the compensation issue a priority. As I have been saying since my first convocation address two years ago, we need to find new sources of revenue to effectively and sustainably compensate our best employees. As a tuition driven institution with a small endowment, we need to rely on new ways to recruit students and increase our donations.
We are developing a new paradigm for recruiting students, both from a geographic and financial aid perspective, and I am confident that Jim Schlimmer will bring a depth and breadth of experience into this goal. We have an untapped resource in the transfer population that we need to exploit. We need to tap into the 80 plus country global Lasallian network, and recapture markets that we have lost over the years. I am optimistic that our Brother Alvaro scholarship will help us to bring CBU into the forefront of our global Lasallian network. In five years, my goal for CBU is to recruit 400 new students (freshmen and transfers) annually, while raising our first year retention rate 5%. As most of you are aware, it costs about 8 times as much to recruit a student as to retain one.....thanks to our advising efforts related to the QEP and because of the fine work of Dr. Kelli Hefner with our new book project and summer orientation, I see an opportunity to significantly enhance our retention rates. In addition, with the appointment of Brother Dominic as VP of Student Life, I see new opportunities to enhance programming for our students so that on campus activities will be enhanced.

In the next two years, we will continue to add new sustainable revenue producing programs consistent with our strengths. Those will include a Masters in Accountancy, programs in Education, a revitalized MSEM, and dual degree in International Business and MBA, with the possibility of adding additional programs in the health care area if deemed feasible. With nearly 3 in 4 Memphians without a college degree, we will find ways to capture that market working with HR directors from local companies under the leadership of Julie yancey.

With the strengthening of the Board of Trustees and our Advancement staff, I expect that in approximately 12 months, CBU will enter into a
significant capital and endowment campaign, with a centerpiece being endowed chairs and professorships in each of the schools and a doubling of the endowment that can be used to enhance scholarships, while continuing to improve our physical facilities particularly Kenrick and Barry, while finding ways to create facilities to make the CBU campus a home to our commuter students.

Over the next 5 years, we will employ a most aggressive marketing strategy to get the word out about CBU, focusing on social media, web development, and accompanying technology. I want for CBU to be known as a leader in technology in the higher education world, and I am confident that we can get there.

Let me return and conclude with the Core of our efforts----the wonderful 330 year Lasallian heritage that we have celebrated for 140 years at Christian Brothers University. Two quotes from Brother John Johnston shed light on where I see CBU moving forward in the next few years:

“reverence for each student is the most fundamental of the characteristics that constitute Lasallian education”

And Lasallian schools “were successful because a spirit of community reigned in them”

Over the next year, I have mandated each member of the cabinet to focus on issues that show reverence for our students and to find ways to remove silos so that a spirit of community can come alive on this campus. I will do the same to demonstrate to all, both within and outside of the CBU campus that I do believe in the mission of CBU and
for what this mission stands. Please join me in that belief, and
ultimately our students will benefit.

Thanks for all that you do and I look forward to a wonderful 2011-12
academic year.

Do you believe??