

State of the University Address
David C. Sweet, President
August 19, 2004

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Good morning, and welcome to the beginning of our new academic year. It is an honor and privilege to deliver my fifth State of the University Address.

This past academic year was one of building on the accomplishments of the previous three years, completing new initiatives, and setting the stage for our Centennial in 2008. I am gratified by the many expressions of generous support throughout the year and by the spirit of cooperation that is defining our ability to advance the University. It was a year of many firsts:

- Dr. Sherry Linkon was named Ohio Professor of the Year by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, first ever for a YSU faculty member and symbolic, I believe, of the excellence of teaching across our campus.
- Professor Jeff Carroll received the largest single grant in the University's history, bringing his grant total to nearly \$2.5 million in his eight years here and leading the way for an 11% increase in grants and sponsored programs for the University this past year.
- The University was awarded its first ever grants from the Kresge Foundation, the Getty Foundation, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.
- The University signed new international exchange agreements with the University of Salerno, and institutions in Taiwan, and Mainland China.
- Ground was broken for the \$12.1 million Andrews Student Recreation and Wellness Center, the first in Ohio funded entirely by private dollars.
- The Youngstown Early College High School opened its doors, the first in a public university in Ohio.
- The YSU baseball team won its first Horizon League championship and earned its first trip to the NCAA tournament. And our women's track and field team came in first in the Horizon League indoor and outdoor track.

These achievements and the many others during the past year are a tribute to you and your commitment to this University.

Today, I would like to discuss four topics:

- To highlight the progress we have made during the past year in fulfilling our vision and commitment to the University's Centennial Strategic Plan.

- To review briefly the impact on the University of the changing environment for higher education in Ohio.
- To define, in my terms, the meaning of the phrase I frequently use in remarks that “Youngstown State University is the best public University in Northeast Ohio and beyond for an undergraduate education and for selected graduate programs.”
- To outline the importance of this University to the future of Youngstown and the Mahoning Valley and conversely the importance of Youngstown and the Mahoning Valley to this University.

LOOKING BACK ON 2003-2004

The 2003-2004 academic year was also a year of ... **plans made ... plans implemented.**

Our direction continues to be defined by the Centennial Strategic Plan. Shortly you will see posters of the elements of our Strategic Plan displayed throughout the campus reinforcing the framework we have established for our future.

We have just completed the Report of Progress on the University’s FY04 Annual Plan, which details our progress in addressing the Strategic Plan’s ten critical issues. The report is available on the YSU Web site, and I urge you take a look at the many initiatives we completed this past year.

More often than not, we are focused on our own component of this complex enterprise, and it is gratifying...on occasion...to step back and reflect on the many things we, collectively, accomplished. Let’s review a few highlights in the context of the four core values of our Plan:

The first core value is the “Centrality of Students.”

In the Spring, we broke ground for the Andrews Student Recreation and Wellness Center. Student participation in the planning process has been a cornerstone of the success of this project. Thank you to all who contributed financially and through your participation in the planning process. A special thank you to the members of the YSU Alumni Society for putting the fund-raising campaign “over the top” with their gift. And to Paul McFadden, our chief development officer, for his effective work on this campaign and all our development efforts.

We have invested in new faculty and new classrooms. Four NEW faculty slots were established in Technology, Fine and Performing Arts, Education, and Criminal Justice using strategic initiative funds; and tomorrow we formally welcome twenty-three additional new members to our faculty, bringing the number of new full-time faculty who have arrived on campus during the past three years to 77 or nearly 20% of the faculty.

Eight new or refurbished classrooms were created in Fedor Hall and Maag Library this summer, bringing the total to 22 classrooms improved to our new standards during the past two years as a result of our \$1 million commitment to classroom improvements.

We continue to upgrade student services, such as the Center for Student Progress, that annually serves over 6,000 students, enhancing the chance of their success at YSU. This year the Office of Career Services was aligned with the Center for Student Progress to provide an integrated set of services designed to ensure success not only at YSU but in finding a job after graduation.

And this past January we raised student wages for the first time since 1997, thanks to the work of former student trustee, Matt Pastier, who took the lead on this initiative and who, by the way, graduated this past Saturday. Thanks to Vice President Anderson and her staff for guiding these efforts.

The second core value is excellence and innovation.

Last year we saw continued progress in our on-going quest to provide the highest quality education possible and to respond to the educational needs of our students and the community. Along with the recognition of our faculty excellence, the University continued our commitment to successful program accreditation as another measure of our quality.

During the year, we submitted and received approval for new associate degree options in technology, began the new bachelors in Forensic Science, and submitted for final approval a new Bachelor of General Studies degree targeted at the adult degree-completion population, and we submitted for final approval four new master's programs.

We also signed nine articulation agreements with universities and two-year institutions throughout the region and in Pennsylvania that enable students to easily enroll at YSU after completing preliminary work elsewhere.

The third core value is Integrity and Human Dignity.

As the University pursues its vital educational mission in the Valley, we of the faculty and staff must commit ourselves to the highest professional standards in the workplace. During the past year, the recently created Professional Conduct Committee addressed its first case thoughtfully and thoroughly. I thank Academic Senate President, Tom Shipka; the Professional Conduct Committee; and its Case Investigation Subcommittee for recognizing the seriousness of their work and carrying out their charge responsibly.

Our student body is becoming more diverse. Our minority student enrollment is now approaching 13% of the student population, compared to 10.9% in Fall 2000. Each year has seen gains in these numbers, and we will work to ensure that these trends continue. This year we welcomed Jimmy Myers as the new director of Equal Opportunity and Diversity from the University of Michigan. The newly created Office of Student Diversity Services will provide programs designed to increase the retention and graduation rates of these students.

The “Faces of YSU” diversity campaign led by Jaymin Patel, president of the our Student Diversity Council, will be launched with a series of banners that will be displayed around campus to illustrate the importance of diversity in the educational experience we provide our students and reinforcing our commitment of respect for human dignity...and celebration of our differences. I call your attention to our recent issue of *Diversity News* which captures the wide range of activities we sponsor focused on exposing students, faculty, staff, and the community to diversity issues.

Also, we will continue to build on the solid working relationships that have been developed with our four campus bargaining units and look forward to the successful negotiation of successor agreements with the faculty and classified employee unions during the coming year.

The fourth core value is Collegiality and Public Engagement.

The Youngstown Early College High School, which will be dedicated tomorrow at 10 a.m., and to which you are all invited, is an innovative, ambitious undertaking that speaks directly to our responsibility, as an urban university to the city...in which we are located...and of which we must be a part. The Early College will provide access to higher education to a population otherwise less likely to take advantage of these opportunities. I congratulate Provost Atwater, Deans Bolla and Ginnetti, Dr. Richard Bretz and all those involved in the development of the Youngstown Early College from concept to reality, including our Facilities Department for preparing the third floor of Fedor Hall for the program. I commend the Board of Trustees for its thoughtful and responsible consideration of the proposal and welcome the new Dean, Larry Johnson, a YSU alum; the faculty; and the 75 students who comprise the first class of the Youngstown Early College High School.

The Penguin Parade this past summer, a partnership with the Mahoning Valley Community Foundation, was a success beyond our most optimistic projections, taking our mascot to new levels of creativity through the outstanding contributions of our local arts community. I have witnessed few University activities that have received such uniform support and positive response. The current location of the Penguins throughout the Valley is truly symbolic of how YSU is woven into the entire fabric of Mahoning Valley life. Plans are underway to take a delegation of Penguins to Columbus for display in the State House rotunda and maybe some lobbying for a little more state support. Congratulations to Catherine Cala and all involved in this great success.

Planning is the key to success, especially in these financially challenging times. But of equal importance is our demonstrated ability to mobilize the needed talent and resources to implement our plans. The saying “If we don’t plan our future, someone will plan it for us” could not be more relevant.

During the year, we have made significant progress on four major planning initiatives:

- Our Enrollment Management Plan

- The Information Technology Master Plan
- Our Campus Master Plan
- The Centennial Capital Campaign

The progress resulted from participation across the campus, whether through committees or by providing input and feedback. Thank you to the hundreds of faculty, staff, and students for your involvement in shaping these plans.

The Enrollment Management Plan established the following enrollment goals for Fall 2008:

- Headcount enrollment of 14,000
- An FTE/headcount ratio of above 80%
- Over 10% of YSU students residing in campus housing

Since Fall Semester 2000, headcount has increased 9.1% from 11,787 to 12,858 in Fall 2003. I believe this year we will take another step toward our goal because we anticipate that if we keep working hard over the next several days, enrollment will top 13,000 for the first time since 1995. Everyone deserves thanks for their role in sustaining this trend from the recruitment, admissions, and financial aid staffs to the advisors, faculty, and staff responsible for our improving retention rates; and it looks like the Bitonte College of Health and Human Services will continue their record of double-digit enrollment growth.

The Information Technology Master Plan was also completed during the past year. This project will transform the way we work and conduct business at YSU. Over \$5 million has been committed for this year to implement the initial stages of the plan. The first step is already underway with the signing of an agreement with SCT Banner to replace our administrative computing systems with a comprehensive, fully integrated suite of software packages. Smooth implementation will require effective communication, cooperation, flexibility, and an open mind to the possibilities of doing things differently.

The IT Master Plan provides various recommendations to enhance the teaching and learning environment and will improve our ability to provide service to students. Thanks to Donna Esterly and Bill Wood for successfully co-chairing this planning effort, and all those who were involved.

The University has long been known for its beautiful campus core, which is a source of pride and enjoyment for all of us. I hope you will all convey your thanks to our Grounds staff for their work in maintaining the campus.

The goals of the **Campus Master Plan** are to address campus space needs, improve the campus's functionality, and integrate the campus with the immediate neighborhoods that

surround us and the downtown area. Rather than an island oasis amid central city decline, the campus will become the focal point for urban renewal beyond its immediate borders. Our partnerships with the Wick Neighbors, the North Side Citizens' Coalition, and the City of Youngstown are keys to our success. Building on the completed space utilization study, we will be addressing many immediate and longer-term objectives including:

- The development of Spring Street from Fifth Avenue to the Courtyard Apartments as the Campus Main Street.
- A comprehensive parking plan that lays out 1,000 new spaces to ultimately replace the outmoded Lincoln Deck.
- Academic space, including planning for a long-needed new building for the Williamson College of Business.
- A plan for the reopening of the Wick Pollock Inn.
- The development and integration of the Wick Avenue and Fifth Avenue corridors with the downtown. This corridor annually attracts over 700,000 visitors to public events such as concerts, football and basketball games, museum exhibits, lectures, and theater productions.

Building on the successfully completed Recreation and Wellness Center fund-raising campaign, which met the challenge and triggered the \$600,000 Kresge Grant, YSU will embark on a **Centennial Capital Campaign**.

The Campaign will have four fund-raising targets:

- Student Scholarships
- Endowed Faculty Positions
- Campus Development
- Technology

To date, we have engaged in preliminary planning, including prospect research and needs assessment. We have bolstered the highly productive but understaffed Office of Development with two new staff positions.

In addition, we will be working on two additional efforts during the coming year—initial preparation for the North Central Association accreditation visit in 2007 and for the University's Centennial Celebration in 2008.

Laying the groundwork for the Centennial Celebration is the development for the first time of a comprehensive University Archives on the fifth floor of Maag Library that will

provide, at one location, important primary sources that document the distinguished history of Youngstown State University.

Paul Kobulnicky is leading this effort and reports that our new archives will be open this fall.

THE HIGHER EDUCATION ENVIRONMENT IN OHIO

The progress and plans just described are occurring under Ohio's increasingly challenging financial and political environment.

We must continue to wrestle with managing the decline in state support for higher education. Do you know that since FY2000, state support for YSU has decreased from \$47 million to \$40.5 million in this current year, creating a \$6.5 million erosion in state support?

Already projections for the next state budget are so pessimistic that the BEST-case scenario is for stable funding. The temporary 1% sales tax will expire, as will the one-time dollars used to plug the gap in this year's budget, leaving a \$3 billion hole for the Governor and legislature to deal with next year. Because of sound management and the diligent efforts of all of our faculty and staff that make us among the most efficient state universities in Ohio, we have avoided layoffs and cuts to our already lean staff.

Unfortunately, we have also been forced to increase tuition in order to maintain academic quality and to offset the loss of state funds. In Fall 2000, annual full-time tuition was \$4,084; for the coming academic year, it is \$5,884. In partnership with the YSU Foundation, we have taken a number of steps to help offset tuition increases with scholarship initiatives.

Last year, because of federal, state, YSU Foundation, and YSU scholarships and grants, the average student paid approximately \$1,100 less for a semester than the actual tuition.

Despite the burden that tuition increases place on students and their families, everyone needs to be aware that:

- Our tuition remains the lowest among the comprehensive public universities in Ohio. In fact, attending YSU compared to Kent State or Ohio State is like receiving a scholarship exceeding \$1,600 per year, and I contend that the quality of our undergraduate experience is superior.
- They also need to be aware that higher education is an investment that pays off in the future. An individual with a college degree can expect to earn more than \$1 million more over the course of a career than someone with just a high school diploma.

We also spent considerable time and effort during the past year responding to the Governor's Commission on Higher Education and the Economy.

Perhaps the most significant recommendation to come from the Commission is its goal to increase by the year 2015 the enrollment in Ohio's public and private post-secondary institutions by 30%.

Why? Because the Commission recognized that Ohio's future depends on developing a better educated and trained workforce that meets the needs of 21st century employers. It further recognized that this enrollment growth must be created by increasing participation among groups currently underrepresented in higher education—those with low income, minorities, and adult learners—and further, that the two-year sector will absorb most of this growth.

There are two reasons why increased higher education participation is particularly relevant to this University and the Mahoning Valley. First, while Ohio lags behind the nation in higher education participation, the Mahoning Valley lags behind Ohio. Achieving the Valley's share of the Commission's higher education participation growth goal would require 8,600+ new students during the next decade in Mahoning, Trumbull, and Columbiana Counties.

Second, Mahoning County is the only metropolitan county in Ohio without a community college; meaning that YSU will continue to serve the role of providing associate degrees and workforce training and as the affordable access university in the region.

To accomplish these goals, we must be engaged on several fronts. We must increase access to YSU by:

Implementing programs such as the General Studies degree completion program.

Delivering programs at times and places convenient to working adults seeking to complete degrees.

Directing more financial aid to needy students.

Developing a pilot partnership with Jefferson Community College in Columbiana County.

Our Metro College will be key in these efforts, and this past year we recruited Dr. William Beisel, formerly with The University of Akron, to lead the unit. We must also work with local school districts to increase the preparation of their graduates to succeed in college. Currently, 43% of our incoming students under 20 have completed the college preparatory core curriculum in high school. Increasing this percentage will not only help students succeed in college but also reduce our need to provide remedial instruction which costs us over \$1 million a year.

THE BEST PUBLIC UNIVERSITY...

Despite the economic and political challenges just outlined, I remain optimistic about the future of our University and its ability to serve the higher education needs of the Mahoning Valley and beyond. My optimism is confirmed at each commencement. This past year over

2,000 new YSU graduates, the largest total in the past eight years, embarked from YSU to begin their careers. I am confident that you, the faculty and staff, have prepared them well.

My optimism is reflected in the claim I make to many audiences—that “*Youngstown State University is the best public university in Northeast Ohio and beyond for an undergraduate education and for selected graduate programs.*” I firmly believe that this statement is a true and defensible expression of what we are as a public university. Moreover, it is a point of pride that guides me through my work as president and in my conversations throughout the community.

What does it mean to make this claim?

First, undergraduate education is our core focus. Currently, the ratio of undergraduate to graduate enrollment is 90:10; and our goal is to work toward an 85:15 ratio by 2008. Achieving this ambitious goal will not significantly alter our primary mission in the Mahoning Valley, which is to provide the highest quality undergraduate education possible for our students.

Second, we will strive to provide the “total undergraduate experience” in which education extends beyond the classroom through opportunities for research, community service, and leadership training. Last Saturday the student commencement speaker, *Danielle Rae Jack*, spoke eloquently of the value of her participation in undergraduate research in chemistry and biology in dealing with environmental and Mahoning River clean-up issues.

The new Civic Engagement initiative will enable students to connect their learning to public service and address community needs. The work of geography students mapping neighborhood conditions in support of Youngstown 2010 is an excellent example of service-based learning.

This year the Freshman Readers Dialogue will focus on the timely issue of voter participation and involve students in voter registration activities.

Leadership experience and training is also available for our students through numerous programs.

Finally, graduate programs are important and must complement our undergraduate focus and meet specific workforce needs in the region. This past year we laid the groundwork for the new Master’s of Social Work program which welcomes its first class of students this Fall, an excellent example of graduate programming that builds upon an established undergraduate program and creates the next step in the career ladder for area professionals. Also, the new Northeast Ohio Research Alliance will enable participation in collaborative doctoral programs and enhance the research opportunities available to our graduate faculty and students, contributing ultimately to the economic development of the Valley and Northeast Ohio.

The quality of YSU’s entering students will be recognized at the Freshman Scholars Tribute this Sunday, an event to which you are all invited.

The quality of YSU's students is also evident in their accomplishments time and again as they compete successfully against students from any university in the country.

Here are few examples:

- This past year twelve YSU engineering students finished eleventh in the national student steel bridge competition, defeating teams from Ohio State, Columbia, the University of Pittsburgh, and the University of Wisconsin-Madison, among others.
- The Dana Symphonic Wind Ensemble was accorded the distinct honor of an invitation to perform at Carnegie Hall in New York City this coming spring.
- The graduation rates of YSU student-athletes continue to place them in the upper echelon of their peers in Division 1-AA athletic programs.
- Amanda Beagle was named Miss Ohio this summer and will compete in the Miss America pageant this Fall.
- 100% pass rates on board exams for graduates from the Paramedic, Dental Hygiene, and Master of Science in Nursing programs...and I could go on.

YSU AND THE MAHONING VALLEY

In closing, as we go about our work in the coming year, we must never lose sight of how important this University is to the future of the Mahoning Valley...and conversely how important the Mahoning Valley is to Youngstown State University.

This University is by far the most important higher education destination for Valley residents. For example, last year over 3,700 first-time undergraduates from Mahoning County enrolled at YSU. This is over six times the number attending the second most important destination.

As our newly designed Web site and marketing messages proclaim: **Youngstown State University has a century-long tradition of preparing regional, state, and national leaders.** YSU alumni are the core leadership of the Valley, including the new superintendent of the Youngstown City Schools and the President of the UAW at Lordstown where the new Cobalt will be built.

Youngstown State University is responsible for attracting new talent to the Valley and acting against the so-called "brain drain." Each year, over 500 new students enter the University from outside the area. Our faculty and staff are recruited from throughout the United States and around the world. These newcomers infuse the Valley with their new ideas, enthusiasm, and talent.

We have a great responsibility to this community. Part of that responsibility includes giving back to the community that supports us through their tuition and tax dollars, contributions, and as volunteer advisors.

I encourage and applaud your support of any service or charity that you choose, including the United Way campaign, which kicks off this week. The United Way is one of the best ways that I know to assist our neighbors and the community. The YSU United Way campaign has set a goal of \$40,000 and 220 donors. Please take a moment to fill out the annual pledge form available at today's reception. You'll receive two free tickets to the September 2 Penguin football opener and an invitation to a special United Way tailgate tent party, drawings for other free prizes, and a chance to win a new Chevy Cobalt. I look forward to us establishing a new level of support and participation.

We are privileged to work in higher education in the Mahoning Valley because we have such an opportunity to make a difference not only in the lives of individual students but in setting the course for the future of this region. An educator once stated, "America's future walks through the doors of our schools every day." We can rightly say, "The future of the Mahoning Valley walks through the doors of Youngstown State University...every day."

Thank you.