

# Youngstown

STATE UNIVERSITY

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT TO THE CAMPUS

*President David C. Sweet • December 2005*

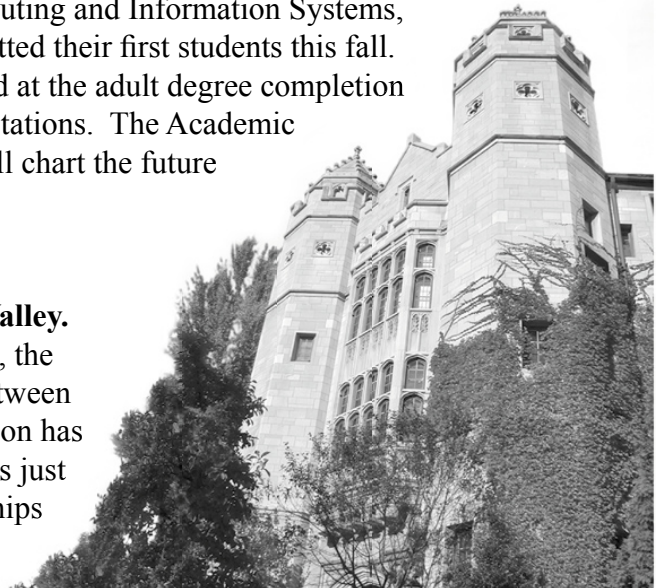
As fall semester draws to a close, I would like to take this opportunity to update the University community on our recent progress and some of the challenges that lie ahead.

Time has a way of putting events into a perspective that is not possible in their immediate aftermath. Part of my reflection on the recent stress in labor/management relations has included placing them in the context of my five years at YSU. Those five years have either taught or reaffirmed the following lessons:

- **YSU is a center of excellence.** During the past year our students and faculty continued to demonstrate that they rank with the best anywhere in the United States. Here are just a few examples:
  - YSU was the first university in the nation to win five student awards at the national Mathfest competition.
  - The Symphonic Wind Ensemble was recognized by Downbeat Magazine for its excellence and was invited to perform at Carnegie Hall.
  - YSU undergraduates were awarded prestigious Goldwater and Phi Kappa Phi scholarships in national competitions.
  - The women's track and field team won its fourth consecutive Horizon League championship.
  - YSU faculty has published twenty-three books since 2003.
  - Sponsored research has reached the plateau of over \$6 million in grants and contracts annually.

We continue to develop new academic programs to meet the changing needs and interests of our students. New graduate programs in Computing and Information Systems, Financial Economics, and American Studies admitted their first students this fall. The new Bachelor of General Studies major aimed at the adult degree completion population has received interest beyond our expectations. The Academic Strategic Plan which will be finalized this year will chart the future academic direction of the University.

- **YSU is the key to the future of the Mahoning Valley.** The Youngstown 2010 plan was recently unveiled, the culmination of an unprecedented collaboration between YSU and the city of Youngstown. The collaboration has drawn national and international recognition and is just the latest reminder of how important our partnerships are to the Mahoning Valley. A continuing priority



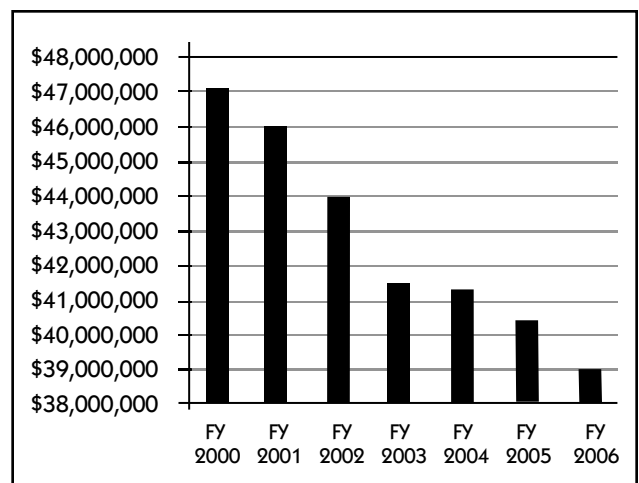
is to nurture partnerships that contribute to growth in the percentage of the population in the Valley that earned a college degree, a key indicator in which the Valley lags behind both Ohio and the United States. Our numerous pre-college programs partner with area school districts to promote completion of the high school core, the enhancement of our scholarship program, and the continued support of the Youngstown Early College High School. The continued emphasis on retention and graduation rates all contribute to these objectives.

- Fiscal challenges need not impede progress.** An all-too-persistent theme in previous communications to the University is the dramatic and persistent decline in state support for higher education in Ohio and its impact on YSU. State financial support for higher education will continue to erode in the foreseeable future. We project an additional 2% cut in the next fiscal year, meaning that state share of instruction to YSU will have decreased from \$44 million in FY02 to \$38 million in FY07. Nonetheless, through sound fiscal and budgetary management, we have been able to replace departing faculty; create new faculty lines in areas of identified need; strategically invest in the athletic gender equity plan; bolster the fundraising staff in the Development office; implement the \$12 million technology master plan; invest in

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an energy conservation plan that will yield long-term savings and efficiencies; increase the number and amount of need-based student scholarships; renovate and upgrade dozens of classrooms and complete several major improvements to the physical campus. Even though students and their families are bearing an ever greater share of the cost of their education, we have maintained YSU's tuition as the lowest among those Ohio public universities without special line-item subsidy. Financial challenges remain and we will continually need to search for ways to maximize efficiencies, reduce costs, and so that we can allocate any savings to new initiatives.

**State Share of Instruction, FY2000–2006**



- YSU is a great place to work.** We are committed to competitive compensation for each employee group in relation to the labor market from which they are drawn. The recently completed negotiations maintained the competitiveness of both the classified and faculty groups when measured against appropriate benchmarks. Obvious indicators of how YSU is perceived as a workplace is the extremely low turnover of our own employees and large numbers of applicants for vacant positions regardless of whether they are faculty, staff, or administration. In short, people want to work at YSU, and once they obtain a job here they don't want to leave. The Labor/Management Panel, chaired by Provost Robert Herbert, has been engaged in its work for nearly a month now and will help us move forward from the recent negotiations. Let us remember that the assignment given to the panel is to determine:

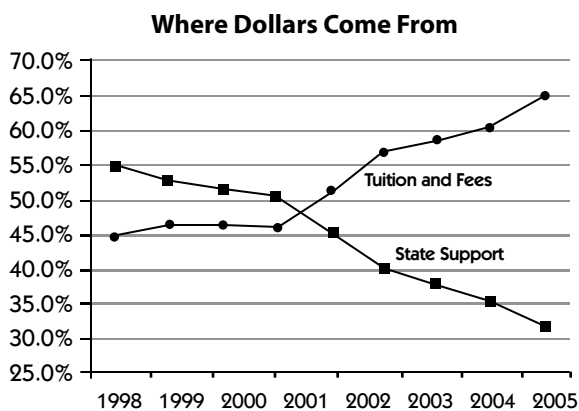
- What caused the process in the recent set of negotiations to break down and result in the two strikes?
- In what ways were the strikes the culmination of a trend or the result of circumstances peculiar to this round?
- What can be done between now and the next round to create an environment less likely to lead to another set of strikes?
- How can the negotiations process be changed to minimize the possibility of another set of strikes?

## A Look Ahead

Throughout my presidency, there has been an emphasis on the commitment to developing long-term plans and marshalling the resources to implement the plans. Two recent successes reinforce the value of this approach—the opening of the Andrews Student Recreation and Wellness Center, with the associated West Campus Gateway improvements and the activation of the first modules of the SCT Banner administrative system, the cornerstone of the Technology Master Plan. In both cases, plans were developed with the broad participation of the campus community; resources were obtained and allocated; and the objective was achieved.

We face new challenges and opportunities in each of my three primary objectives—enrollment, diversity, and partnerships. It is essential that we recover from the dip in enrollment experienced this past fall and get back on track toward our enrollment goal of 14,000 students by fall 2008. This goal is still within reach, but achieving it requires the efforts of everyone. We have made marked progress in the recruitment of minority students, who represent over 15% of the student population compared to less than 11% in 2000. However, we need to do better in increasing the diversity of our faculty and staff. We need to continue to build on the successful partnerships established during the past five years, especially those related to educational attainment and campus neighborhood development.

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On December 2<sup>nd</sup>, The Finance and Facilities Committee of the Board of Trustees deferred consideration of the proposed 6% tuition increase for the 2006-07 academic year. Concerns expressed by student groups and the public were partly responsible for the postponement. We regret having to pass on an increasing share of educational cost to students, which in this case amounts to \$380 per academic year or just over \$40 per month. To do otherwise, however, would severely compromise the quality of YSU and significantly change the type of University that YSU is. The simple fact is that the tuition increases experienced by our students are a direct

result of decreased state support. Even with a 6% tuition increase, we project only a 2.1% increase in the University budget next year. The difficult choice to increase tuition each year boils down to the simple question “What type of University does the Mahoning Valley deserve?” You have recently been provided information to use when the opportunity arises to discuss the connection between tuition and quality.

This year is important in setting the stage for a number of events that will converge in 2008—the YSU centennial. In addition Centennial celebration planning is well underway; the Centennial Capital Campaign is gearing up. One of its primary objectives is a much needed new building for the Williamson College of Business Administration. In addition virtually the entire YSU community will be involved in the NCA/Higher Learning Commission Accreditation and the site visit scheduled for February 2008. Work has already begun on this important activity. We will also be adjusting our marketing initiatives to reflect the results of an image survey conducted last summer. One finding of the survey indicated the need to call more attention to the high quality of students who choose to attend YSU every year.

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As we move forward to our Centennial, my optimism is grounded in awareness that the senior executive staff currently in place is the best that I have had the opportunity to work with since coming to YSU. The executive staff contains individuals recruited from both inside and outside academia; individuals who were born and raised in the Mahoning Valley and professionals from around the country. What they share with each other and with all of our dedicated faculty and staff are a deep commitment to Youngstown State University and its future and an abiding appreciation of how important our work here is to the students and communities we serve.

Since joining YSU over five years ago, I have constantly heard about the need to improve communication. We have responded to that need in numerous ways including the CUE-Mail system; an electronic version of the YSU Update and distribution of Board of Trustees actions; greater use of the [www.ysu.edu](http://www.ysu.edu) web page to disseminate information; Campus Conversations; participation in forums sponsored by the Student Government Association and other campus groups; and posting of important planning documents on the YSU web page to invite campus comment and discussion. The Luminis Portal, *MyYSU*, currently under development, has tremendous potential as a vehicle for further enhancements in our communications.

Nonetheless, communications systems are never as good as we would like them to be and can always be improved. Your suggestions in this regard will be welcomed. Both the 2004-2005 Annual Report and 2005-06 Institutional Goals are posted on the Strategic Plan section of the YSU web page at [http://www.ysu.edu/president/FY05\\_progress.pdf](http://www.ysu.edu/president/FY05_progress.pdf) for your review and comment. Please take the time to read them over as they provide a comprehensive look at how much we have accomplished and how much we can do together.

Thank you for your continued dedication to Youngstown State University and its students. Pat and I join in wishing you a safe and peaceful holiday.



David C. Sweet