



State of the University Address 2020

“We Are Outstanding!”

Dr. David M. Carlisle

August 26, 2020

Good morning! And ... to all our friends, our Board of Trustees, distinguished faculty, our dedicated staff, alumni, our students, and to all the other guests who are joining us today, including my wonderful wife, Dr. Sylvia Gates Carlisle, and our family members, ... thank you for being here at our first virtual Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science, State of the University Address.

Last year, I stood before you—in person—in front of a brand new Grand Entrance to CDU that was both a literal and symbolic gateway to an expanding campus and a bright future, though my message was one of caution. We were then—and are now—growing, however, I said last year that our growth had to be tempered by the financial reality we faced. We had to “stay the course.”

We did stay that course, and we overcame our financial challenge to finish the fiscal year over \$1-million in the positive!

This year, I appear before you —virtually— with a more upbeat message, despite the tumult in the world around us, to declare that in so many ways “Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science is outstanding!” Throughout my address, I’ll provide you with examples.

But I would be remiss if I didn’t speak first about the changed world we find ourselves in, and more important, how CDU fits into this world.

Consider: It has been a year in which we have seen:

- the direct impact of an unprecedented global pandemic that has claimed the lives of over 800,00 people worldwide and over 176,000 Americans — an overly large number of them from communities of color;
- the pandemic's indirect impact of economic dislocation, devastating job loss, closure of businesses, and increased homelessness—the basic inability to put food on the table—again, affecting an excessively high number of people of color and people who live in under-resourced communities; and
- political protests, ... a country and a people galvanized against systemic and structural racism—perhaps at long last—by a series of tragic and needless deaths, such as George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, that just may be the beginning of a longer march toward equality and social justice.

It has been a year in which the face of COVID-19 was undoubtedly a face of color, and a phrase that we at CDU know all too well, “disproportionate impact,” made its way into the common vernacular.

Indeed, for us at CDU and the community we serve, COVID-19 has been personal. All too many of us at CDU have friends, colleagues, and loved ones who have been afflicted by COVID-19 and yes, many of us have lost someone we know to this pandemic. COVID-19 has not spared our campus either as CDU students, faculty, and staff have been personally afflicted by the novel coronavirus.

This has been a year that much of the world discovered CDU in a way that they hadn't before. We were given a more prominent voice and a larger platform. It took a global health catastrophe and statistics that we had long cited coming to mainstream awareness to bring reporters' microphones and cameras to our campus, asking us questions about things we'd been talking about and fighting for since our founding 54 years ago.

It has been a year in which, in answering those questions, we could draw a straight, bold line between health disparities in under-resourced communities of color that the pandemic brought to the public's consciousness, and loud calls for equity and social justice for all Americans.

In short, it has been a year that has demonstrated that the need for CDU, our voice and work in this world—not just in Los Angeles or California, but the world—is greater than ever.

Yes, the world has recognized CDU, and it is now our time to be recognized as “outstanding.”

“Outstanding” is defined by Merriam-Webster as “standing out” in a particular endeavor, or,” marked by eminence and distinction.” Yes, in many ways CDU is marked by eminence and distinction.

Here are some of the ways CDU has been “marked by eminence and distinction” especially over the past 12 months.

I begin with the effort that brought us national acclaim, the COVID-19 testing site that CDU hosted on our campus this summer. At a time when the cases of coronavirus were thought to be “only” in more affluent areas of Los Angeles County, the CDU site and the report it generated demonstrated the truly disproportionate impact of the pandemic upon under-resourced communities of color. Thanks to our site partners, the LA County Department of Health Services, its MLK Outpatient Center, the LA County Fire Department, and especially 2nd District Los Angeles County Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas.

For CDU, special acclaim goes to site coordinator COM Dean Dr. Deborah Prothrow-Stith, day-to-day manager Dr. Sheila Young and long-time faculty member Dr. Jimmy Hara, both of whom were at the site nearly every day, as well as Dr. Roberto Vargas, chief author and data analyst of our site report, as well as to all of our CDU students and other volunteers who made the site such a success. The work of the testing site also brought us some “outstanding” media coverage: from KCRW, NBC4, ABC7, Spectrum News, the Los Angeles Times and CNN, among many others.

Funders and grant makers certainly acknowledged that CDU is an “outstanding” investment.

We received an extraordinary five-year, \$6-million dollar grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to fund two new Scholarships for Disadvantaged Students (SDS) programs. The first goes to the CDU College of Science and Health and will provide \$500,000 per year to students pursuing Master of Public Health degrees in our Urban Health Disparities program. The second goes to the Mervyn M. Dymally School of Nursing, and will provide \$650,000 per year to support students in the School of Nursing's two-year Entry Level Master of Science in Nursing program.

The new College of Science and Health Community Health Worker Academy within the Professor Cynthia Davis Lifelong Learning Institute for Community Transformation received funding from two sources. The first is a two-year \$649,996 grant from the California Governor’s Office of Business and Economic Development’s reinvestment grants program from a partnership with Providence Health Services, and the second is a two-year grant from Cedars-Sinai to fund additional training modules.

For the third year in a row, four of our medical students received full-ride scholarships worth up to \$357,889 each over four years from LA Care Health Plan’s “Elevating the Safety Net” program. These are “outstanding” individuals whose personal stories are truly inspiring: Ope Akerele, Kendra Arriaga Castellanos, Bryce Bentley and Jahmil Lacey. Jahmil’s remarks are typical of this group and really, of all CDU students: “I think for people from my community of South L.A., our health care system requires people like myself to be in places where we can help heal people and help transform systems.”

We are grateful to LA Care and its CEO John Baackes for their leadership and generosity.

Our Office of Strategic Advancement, led by SVP Angela Minniefield, had an “outstanding” year, raising over \$8 million—against a \$5.1-million goal—to advance new facility upgrades, CDU scholarships, student and career services, alumni engagement and other campus services. On this year’s College of Medicine Match Day, 67 percent of our 22 graduates matched into Primary Care specialties, and 71 percent will complete their residencies in California. Both these stats are emblematic of the “outstanding” mission of CDU and the type of students our mission attracts: They recognize the need to address the glaring lack of primary care access in California, and particularly in low-income communities of color.

CDU’s own residency programs filled 14 slots—six in Psychiatry and eight in Family Medicine. This is significant. Why? Because when you add this year’s physicians to the 28 others our GME programs have trained since 2018 (12 in Psychiatry and 16 in Family Medicine), that means CDU, in just three years, has added 42 new doctors into South Los Angeles—long a federally designated health professional shortage area. This is the epitome of CDU being outstanding in living its mission.

Finally, we are engaged in serious planning for an exciting, long-held dream of CDU: an Independent Medical Education Program—a “CDU MD.” We are reviewing preliminary building designs, reaching out to external stakeholders and developing our fundraising strategy.

The Mervyn M. Dymally School of Nursing got a head start on its 10-year anniversary celebration during Nursing Week in May. The actual opening date was August 2010, but here’s something else for our nurses to celebrate: The MMDSON jumped 30 places in the US News & World Report rankings for Best Graduate Nursing Schools, from #189 last year to #159 this year.

Our CDU researchers, led by VP Jay Vadgama, continue to conduct “outstanding” studies in ailments disproportionately affecting under-resourced communities. They received a five-year

renewal of CDU's U54 Center for Accelerating Excellence in Translational Science (AXIS) grant, totaling \$18.76 Million from NIMHD.

There is no more tangible proof of how “outstanding” CDU is becoming than the physical expansion of our campus. In 2021, we will have a new Student Health Center and a clinic partnership with AIDS Project LA coming to campus. And we just received word that our bid with our collaborators Thomas Safran Associates and Century Housing for the Lincoln Elementary School just to the north of the CDU campus was accepted by the Compton School District. When fully developed, that site will dramatically expand our campus footprint! Thank you VP Carl McLaney for spearheading these projects.

Our 2020 summer census enrollment was 848, which is truly “outstanding” —despite the uncertainty and turmoil the pandemic has thrust upon higher education, and we are confident our Fall census will approach or exceed 1000 students, which would be a new record for our University. This would not be possible without the outstanding work of Provost Dr. Steve Michael and our entire Academic Affairs team.

What other name could we have for our annual faculty honors other than the “CDU *Outstanding Faculty Awards*?” Recognizing these recipients is always a personal highlight for me. This year, Dr. David Martins, received the Outstanding Professor Award, Dr. Sheila Young the Outstanding Service Award and Dr. Mariles Rosario the Outstanding Teaching Award. Congratulations to them all!

This has truly been a landmark year for Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science — for the progress we've made as a University, with growth in enrollment and campus expansion, and for our COVID-19 testing site as well as the report it generated. Yet, we have much more work to do.

Our primary Mission as a higher education institution, birthed from the social injustice and inequity plaguing our community and not unlike what we see in our country today, remains the same as it was 54 years ago: to recruit and educate health professionals who look and sound like the people they will be called upon to treat. The health of our society and the needs of our community demand it.

In California the percentage of African-American and Latinx physicians, nurses, and other health professionals remains unacceptably low: Only three percent of California physicians are African-American and only five percent are Latinx. The Registered Nurse statistics aren't much better: five percent of California RNs are African-American and only seven percent are Latinx.

This is where we have to continue to be “outstanding”: in changing the face of the health workforce—literally. With 89 percent of CDU students and 73 percent of CDU faculty from communities of color, our credentials to provide leadership on workforce diversity are indisputable.

Our outstanding accomplishments in these areas have not escaped notice during the past five years. Just two weeks ago CDU was ranked #1 in the nation in terms of faculty diversity. Three years ago we were ranked #2 in the nation in terms of student diversity. Five years ago we were ranked #3 in the nation as a "value-added" university.

So for CDU and our Mission the time is right. The COVID-19 pandemic has put a spotlight on the long-standing problem of health disparities and presented our society with an opportunity—through institutions such as CDU—to bring new health resources into medically neglected communities and more workers of color into the health professions. CDU is truly a "Private University with a Public Mission" and that Mission is "outstanding"!

This is a time of both crisis and a time to step up, CDU is poised to take on a larger role in creating health equity. In doing so, we must always remember that this institution has had to overcome enormous challenges. It was just 10 years ago that CDU was on accreditation probation. It was just 10 years ago that CDU had less than \$1 million of cash on hand. It was just 10 years ago that CDU had over 40 audit findings. It was just 10 years ago that our University could have closed. It is only because of the continuing efforts of everyone at CDU and all of our supporters that we are here to be the "outstanding" institution that we are in so many ways today. We must and will continue to be organizationally vigilant so that we will continue to deliver on our commitment to the community we serve.

We will continue to raise our voice on the fundamental issue of greater health access in under-resourced communities in town halls and community forums.

We will continue to bring to light critical topics of social justice in our President’s Breakfast policy forums and provide our campus as a community resource, hosting events such as the Empowerment Congress Annual Summit.

We will continue to advocate at the local, state, and federal levels for additional funding for higher education institutions like ours, such as the bill introduced recently by Senator Tim Kaine of Virginia: “The Expanding Medical Education Act.” The bill was written to "tackle the lack of representation of rural students, underserved students, and students of color in the physician pipeline."

At CDU, we ... make ... a difference!

The great civil rights icon, Representative John Lewis, who made his journey home this past July, gave an interview to New York Magazine just a month before he died. In it, he said the following, which has great resonance for me personally, and I believe, for our University: *"We must never ever give up, or give in or throw in the towel. We must continue to press on! And be prepared to do what we can to help educate people, to motivate people, to inspire people to stay engaged, to stay involved and to not lose their sense of hope."*

We certainly will not give up, give in or lose hope. We are going to continue to press on. We will continue to grow, at the right pace for us, and in so doing, to recruit, educate and train the diverse health workforce of the future that our community needs and our population demands. We will continue to raise our voice and take a leadership role in the drive for health equity and social justice.

That's what we've done at CDU over the last 54 years and that's what we will continue to do.

Thank you all for being part of the extended family of Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science and for being supporters of our cause.

Thank you — stay safe and stay well!