



**State of the University Address**  
**“Breaking New Ground”**  
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**October 9, 2018**

Students, Friends, Guests, Distinguished Faculty, Alumni and Staff:

Fifty two years ago, as Watts and South Los Angeles rebuilt from the ashes of revolt, a groundbreaking idea—a university, rooted in this community that would train health and medical professionals to serve this community and others like it—came to fruition.

In the just over half a century since our founding, Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science has seen soaring highs and nearly-crushing lows. I have discussed our ups and downs at length in previous versions of this address, and we need not go through them again.

Our emergence from those days set us on solid footing. On stable ground. We became stronger and, for the first time in a long time, were able to plan for a future that seemed certain. We are now in year three of a five-year strategic plan that was ambitious, that set stretch goals for this institution and that ensured our continued stability, and that emphasized the word “excellence.”

As an institution of higher learning, we do not serve our students—or our community—well if we let the stable ground beneath our feet prevent our students, faculty or community from growing higher or stronger, if our roots don’t continue to spread, if our fertile fields lie fallow.

Unless we continue to till the fields, unless we continue to break new ground, our only options are stagnation or regression, and neither is acceptable.

This may seem an odd venue for an agricultural metaphor, so I’ll bring it to the point. Academically, financially and physically, this university must once again push the boundaries of what others—and what we ourselves—believe to be possible.

How many of you, eight years ago, would have believed that in 2018, we would be a university with over 700 enrolled students, a dozen degree programs, \$5.1 million in philanthropic gifts and an endowment of \$95 million?

These are certainly major accomplishments for a school that had come to see its "normal" as turbulence, troubles and tempest. But that's not who we are any more.

We set new standards. And we meet them.

I will not stand at this podium and minimize the hard work and dedication that went into getting us where we are today.

But we have not reached the mountain top yet.

People are often surprised to hear that the "Everest Base Camp," where mountain climbers acclimate to the altitude and cold before an ascent to the summit of Mt. Everest is, itself, an eight-day trek from the main nearby city, Lukla. The Base Camp sits at an altitude of 17,600 feet, almost twice as high as Lukla (or Lake Tahoe for that matter). It's an arduous climb, even for experienced mountaineers.

Everyone talks about going to the summit of Mr. Everest. But nobody talks about how they only made it to Everest Base Camp.

Let me put this in another context.

Earlier this year, we celebrated a 10-year accreditation period from WASC. Ten years is the longest accreditation period that they give, and we rightfully take pride in being on the 10-year cycle for the first time in our history.

But for a Stanford or a UCLA, a 10-year accreditation from WASC is normal; it's expected. It's "Base Camp." In fact, anything less than ten years would be cause for alarm.

Our climb was arduous. We made it to the Base Camp. We have acclimated to our new surroundings. But we cannot be content to sit at the Base Camp. It's time to begin the next part of our ascent and, to make it to the summit, we have to acknowledge that we're operating in a different environment today than we were for many years.

Let's start with what we owe our students.

For most of our first 50 years, our budget came largely from federal grants and state funding sources. Enrollment didn't drive our finances. That has changed today.

We are now a *student*-centered university. Students are paying out of pocket—and taking out loans— for their CDU education. I am proud of the extent to which we are increasingly able to provide scholarship support, but a four-year undergrad degree from Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science, if you figure in room, board and books, now costs upwards of \$120,000. Students and their families are taking on significant debt to be here, and that obligates us to excellence.

Not to Base Camp, but to excellence.

There is one thing I see when I look at institutions that are universally accepted as excellent—Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, or CalTech or Harvard. Their work *starts* with the standards we have now achieved. And then they *transcend* them.

They break new ground because they are only focused on what's next. They take for granted that they are accredited institutions. They don't question whether they *might someday achieve excellence*, because it is expected of them every day.

That's what we want for Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science.

That's what we owe our students.

Institutions known for excellence convey the imprimatur of excellence on all who are associated with them.

That's what we owe our students.

Our Mission, who we are, has remained constant for more than 50 years and will continue to remain so for the future: We will continue to train diverse health and medical leaders from under-represented populations to compassionately practice in under-resourced communities – the very communities that they come from. We will continue to perform outstanding research that benefits the communities we serve and helps eliminate the disparities that plague them.

Our Mission will be even more strongly carried forward when we are known for our steadfast commitment to the community where we sit, our commitment to underserved communities everywhere, and for the overall *excellence* of our students, our faculty and—yes—our University.

So, what would that look like?

What would it look like to see our licensure exam passage rates consistently approach 100%?

To see our pre-med students' MCAT scores approach the 60<sup>th</sup>—or even the 75<sup>th</sup>—percentile?

To make sure that all of our graduates are fully employed in professions that improve the health and lives of people in communities that need them?

What would it feel like to work for an institution as committed to employee satisfaction as it is to cutting-edge research and student success?

What would it feel like to break new ground—on all these fronts and more—each day when, as members of the University team, you arrive on campus?

I want to suggest that, although we have a bit of a road ahead of us, we are already well on our way. I come to this from a place of overwhelming optimism and a belief that we have the right people and plans in place to get us where we need to go. In the past year, we have passed several mileposts along the way.

The University conferred a record 303 degrees at our 34<sup>th</sup> Commencement Exercise, held at the Stub Hub Center in Carson this past spring. We graduated 36 students from the College of Medicine, 60 from the College of Science and Health and 207 from the Mervyn M. Dymally School of Nursing.

Our FY 2017 philanthropy and fundraising efforts topped \$5 million, smashing our target of \$3.33 million, and our Mission Maker Annual Fund campaign exceeded its goal by 28%, bringing in more than \$142,000. This was our first-ever \$5-million year and, perhaps more importantly, our upcoming campaign will be the first time we have ever set a three-year goal of \$15 million.

On match day last year, 65 percent of our College of Medicine graduates matched into primary care. Sixty-five percent will also complete their residency programs in California. These results underscore the success of one of our core principals—the need to increase the number of primary care physicians serving the people of California—and I am extremely proud of our College of Medicine graduates for staying true to our Mission.

This is a point of personal pride: the *Almanac of Higher Education*, published annually by the *Chronicle of Higher Education* named CDU the second most diverse private, non-profit, 4-year college or university in the nation. With a diversity index score of 80.3 out of 100, we were one of only three universities to break a score of 80.

And here's a "hot off the press" citation for us: According to a college salary survey by the website [payscale.com](http://payscale.com), CDU was ranked 48<sup>th</sup> out of 1655 colleges and universities across the country for highest-paid graduates. That puts us in the top three percent

nationally—and ahead of USC (52<sup>nd</sup>), UC-Irvine (54<sup>th</sup>), UC-Santa Barbara (56<sup>th</sup>), NYU (61<sup>st</sup>) and UCLA (73<sup>rd</sup>).

In 2017, we added three new programs: A Bachelor of Science in Nursing, a Bachelor of Science in Urban Community Health Sciences and a Bachelor of Science in Radiologic Science. At the start of this academic year, we welcomed our first students into two additional new programs: a Master of Science in Nursing, Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner and a Bachelor of Science in Nutrition Science and Food Systems.

Graduate Medical Education also returned to CDU this year.

Last September, the L.A. County Board of Supervisors approved \$800,000 to establish new residencies at CDU in Psychiatry and Family Medicine, and the programs began in July.

The Family Medicine residency began with eight residents and will grow to up to 24 by 2020. Residents will perform their inpatient work at Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center in Downey, and their outpatient rotations at Martin Luther King, Jr. Outpatient Center in Willowbrook.

The Psychiatry residency began with six residents, and will grow to 24 by 2021. They will perform their inpatient work at Kedren Community Health Center and their outpatient work at various ambulatory service clinics in communities throughout Service Planning Area 6.

I want to note that these programs both represent significant vision on the part of the Board of Supervisors—particularly, our good friend, 2<sup>nd</sup> District Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas. Again, these residencies are being funded by *Los Angeles County*, not the Federal Government, unlike most residency programs. The Supervisors recognized that they were operating a health system and that CDU grads were not only more likely to want to work in that system, *but had received an excellent education that prepared them to do so*. The supervisors made an investment to keep our students in this community, and we are excited about this partnership for the future.

In the next two years, we will add two more residency programs.

These are the ways in which we are already excellent. These are the ways in which we are already breaking new ground.

And there's more groundbreaking to be done.

In a few minutes, I'll be joined by CDU leadership, and some of our board members and elected officials as we physically and symbolically break ground on a campus

improvement project that will include a new grand entrance to campus right behind us on 120<sup>th</sup> St. and our first-ever comprehensive student center.

This is only the beginning of the groundbreaking we will continue to do.

In the area of student support, if you look at the 28 first year medical students here at CDU, 13 have *full ride* scholarships. That's a higher level of funding that includes tuition, board and books, living expenses and everything, and it is critical to our core mission here at CDU.

Four of these scholarships are funded by LA Care. It should be noted that a CDU alum serves as their Chief Medical Officer, and a former LA Care president sits on our board of directors. The rest of the funding comes from the David Geffen Family Foundation, and we are eternally grateful for their commitment to CDU.

We are breaking new ground in creating new pathways to the University education.

We have been exploring these kinds of agreements with other educational institutions in the area for several years.

I hold up as an example our Memorandum of Understanding with the West Angeles Church of God in Christ. At 24,000 members, West Angeles is one of the largest and most influential churches in America today and they will work with us to help grow this University in the future.

All of these relationships—with West Angeles Church, with LA Care, with the David Geffen Family Foundation—show that organizations known for excellence are increasingly looking to affiliate and bring their members into contact with CDU. That, in and of itself, is new ground for us.

I want to close with a story.

Some of you know that the King-Drew Magnet High School, just a few feet next door to CDU campus, won the Los Angeles City Division II High School Basketball Championship last year. It was a pretty exciting time for the community.

But their reward for winning the Division II championship was a promotion to Division I. They don't get to defend their title against the same competition they vanquished last year. Quite the contrary. They have to show that their success wasn't a fluke by competing against schools twice their size. Bigger, better-funded schools with long traditions and better practice facilities. They are literally in a different league. Yet, they still have to compete. They still have to win. They have to show, each and every day that they belong with the elite teams in their new division.

It is a nearly perfect reflection of our own situation here.

We made it to Base Camp. We achieved our 10-year accreditation. We brought our residency programs back, secured more and more funding for our students and continue to pursue outstanding research.

So now is the time for us all to step up and shine more. To stand and deliver. To provide the education our students deserve and to afford them the prestige of having attended an institution recognized for excellence and compassion.

Now is the time to prepare our students to meet any academic or professional challenge that they may encounter once they leave this campus.

Now is the time to raise our expectations. To push new limits in our research. To refuse to settle.

If we do that, if we *truly* commit to it, we will break new ground each and every day. We will do it while emphasizing what makes us special: our mission and our commitment to this community and communities like it.

And the world will be a better place for this.