

‘PSU is special,’ President tells faculty

President Tom Bryant told several hundred members of the faculty and staff at the opening faculty meeting today that he hoped they shared his pride in being part of higher education at Pittsburg State University. PSU begins its 103rd academic year with classes on Monday, Aug. 22.

“I say this with deep conviction,” Bryant said. “This is a special place and this is a special time. Those of you who have been members of the Pittsburg State family for some time already know this. I hope those of you who are joining us for the first time today have already sensed it. And I hope that you feel, as I do, that we are richly blessed to be part of the great enterprise that is higher education. The love of learning; the genuine caring for students; the respect we have for each other; are all part of the fabric and life of Pittsburg State University. It is our heritage and I believe it is our future.”

Bryant told the faculty and staff that he expects the academic year about to begin to be another very good year.

“This past year was great,” the president said. “Faculty excelled in research, teaching and service. A number of our students earned regional and national attention in their fields of study. Graduates got jobs in an improving economy and enrollment continued to be healthy. Although there will be challenges, we expect to sustain that positive momentum this year.”

The president singled out the \$120 million Campaign for Pittsburg State, several building projects and the 21st Century Task Force Report as areas that will receive attention. The capital campaign, the president said will increase support for student scholarships, faculty development, and academic programs. Building projects include student recreation center/armory, a new student health center, the new Kansas Polymer Research Center and west side stadium improvements.

Bryant noted that he had not seen the first draft of the 21st Century Task Force, but would receive it at the same time as the faculty and staff in September. When he created the task force, the president asked it to answer three questions: “What currently distinguishes Pittsburg State University from other four-year institutions?” “What should Pittsburg State University strive to become in the future?” and “How do we reach this vision?”

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“While this important report may not contain the definitive answers to all of the questions we are asking of ourselves,” Bryant said, “it should help focus the discussion in a way that will help us chart a clear course for the future of Pittsburg State University.”

Other issues of importance that the president noted included: “The continuing tension between rising costs and a limited state budget,” “The move to link performance and funding,” “Discussions with classified employees about their future in the state’s classified system,” and the possibility of offering tuition waivers for the spouses and children of university employees.”

The president said his advice to faculty would be the same as that of cowboy philosopher Will Rogers: “If you want to be successful, know what you are doing, love what you are doing, and believe in what you are doing.”

Taking note of an earlier announcement by Vice President for Academic Affairs Robert Ratzlaff that he intended to retire at the end of the academic year, Bryant said he could think of no one whose career would better prove the truth of Rogers’ advice.

“There was never a question that Bob Ratzlaff knew what he was doing, whether it was in the classroom teaching American History, or as an administrator working with the faculty,” Bryant said. “There was never a question that Bob Ratzlaff loved what he was doing. And there was never a question that Bob Ratzlaff believed in Pittsburg State, its students, and its faculty. If the same can be said of each of us, then we, our students and our university will surely be successful.”

The president’s tribute elicited a standing ovation for Ratzlaff, who is beginning his 40th year with PSU.

Following the president’s remarks, faculty and staff moved into departmental meetings and continued to prepare for the first day of classes on Monday.

—Pitt State—