



DR. SUE HENDERSON
Twelfth President of the University
Inauguration Speech

What an honor and privilege to stand before you today as the 12th president of New Jersey City University – an institution on the move in a city that is being transformed. The future, indeed, looks bright.

I am indebted to so many for this opportunity to be at the helm of NJCU and to have had a truly exciting first year.

Were I to thank everyone who has made this possible, we would be here all day. So I limit myself to a select few.

Our Board of Trustees is an engaged and thoughtful group; I am grateful for their support and sage advice, particularly the work of Ray Perez, the Chair.

NJCU is a vibrant and caring community. That is so in large part to the good work done by President Hernandez who did so much to set the stage for our future.

His work is enhanced and strengthened by our Foundation Board, headed up by Luke Visconti. Given his drive and passion for NJCU, we will certainly be in a different place in a few years.

In my own backyard, and in Trenton, I am thankful for the strong support of Senator Cunningham who heads up the Senate Higher Education Committee.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the support and leadership of individuals like Governor Christie, Senator Menendez, Senator Stack, Senator Weinberg, Councilman Rovello, and Assemblyperson Riley J.C. Councilwoman Waterman among others whose work has positioned NJCU and New Jersey for a bright future.

Last spring we elected a new mayor, Steve Fulop, and I am delighted to be working with him and our new superintendent of schools, Marcia Lyles to improve and grow Jersey City.

This event would not be possible without the hard work and detailed attention of a cadre of committed individuals – those on the Inauguration Committee and those who helped to make it happen.

Finally, one builds on a lifetime of support, love, education, mentoring, and friendship. I'd like to thank my family and mentors who have come to support and celebrate with me on this day.

My work is the collective influence of their values and their engagement in my life. I'd like to ask my family to stand now and be recognized.

I like to think of NJCU as a dream machine, a place where students' lives are transformed. During my year at NJCU I have seen this.

I met Jenny David several weeks ago at dinner before she left for Scotland to pursue a masters in Education. As a young immigrant from the Philippines, she decided to stay close to home for her education.

Under the encouragement of a Fulbright faculty member, an immigrant herself, Jenny spent last year as a Fulbright in Korea teaching English. As she said, "This gave me the confidence and motivation to go further in my studies and Scotland was the right choice".

Chirag Patel, class of 1989, found his way to NJCU and completed a degree in Accounting. The education he received has allowed him to become one of the giants in the pharmaceutical world.

Most likely medications that you take are thanks to his good work. I met Chirag at a lunch recently on campus where he expressed to me how grateful he is for the start that NJCU provided.

Then there is Dr. Jim Minutus and his wife Angela. They completed their undergraduate degrees in Chemistry and Math in 1977 and saw an opportunity to engage with the pharmacy industry, creating a company designed to help these companies complete their drug trials effectively and efficiently.

NJCU set their trajectory for their livelihood and in this instance a life.

As these examples show, NJCU is fulfilling the American higher education mission: it is guiding students to reach their full potential and to make a real difference in the lives of their families and their communities.

This is the traditional task of higher education in America -- making upward mobility possible.

We embody the spirit of America as movingly stated on the base of the Statue of Liberty in our harbor: It beckons to our shores "the tired, the poor, the tempest tossed,...the homeless."

And it offers these newcomers the opportunity to realize their dreams and start their lives anew.

Much has been written in recent years about the failure of higher education to contribute to upward mobility. Far too many institutions have admissions policies that reject all but the children of the affluent.

The institutions serving the rich have massive endowments and prestige that will allow them to weather the current economic challenges.

With diminishing public support and revenue streams for the institutions serving students of modest means, some analysts of higher education foresee a dual system of higher education.

In this system the affluent will continue to receive world class educations while all the others will receive a minimalist, watered down, primarily online education that will at best prepare them for low paying and humdrum jobs.

What stands as a bulwark against this bleak forecast are institutions like NJCU.

We stand ready to keep the American promise alive and well.

As we have over our 86 years of existence, we will continue to serve **all** students who can benefit from our educational programs.

In addition, we will ask ourselves every day how we can continually improve and adjust to the rapidly changing workforce demands.

We know that in today's highly technical world in which intellectual capital is most highly valued, a world class college education is a must.

We welcome the challenge to be at the forefront of institutions that provide the means for upward mobility and insure that the words on the Statue of Liberty in our harbor ring as true today as they did a century ago.

NJCU is ideally positioned to meet these challenges and to provide the ladder to success. We have championed education for students from families of modest means.

We have in our classrooms students who reflect the demographics of America's future: We have over 35% Hispanics, over 20% African American. We have Asian, Egyptians, Irish, Italian, Philippines, Polish, Indian, Pakistani – and on it goes!

It is a delight and honor to be working with America's future!

Make no mistake about it, in today's world this diversity is our greatest strength.

In our campus diversity we are ahead of much of the country including its workforce. The workforce today is uneven in its makeup.

Across industry sectors and within industry sectors including upper level leadership, we do not look diverse. And yet, the minority has become the majority in this country in so many places.

NJCU reflects this and we are the future. We must join those institutions across the country like CUNY, the Cal State System, Texas, and Florida who are educating the future leaders of our county.

What we cannot settle for is the two-tiered model of higher education that would diminish the dreams and opportunities of our students. Our graduates are not fated to be mere followers. They can and will be leaders.

At NJCU they will learn to think critically, work in teams, write, speak, and communicate effectively. Our graduates will have expertise in a chosen field of study and also gain a rich and broad understanding of what makes humans human and societies free and nurturing.

They will be prepared not only for a livelihood but a life. In order to achieve these goals, we will encourage our students to study abroad and serve as interns to better understand the workforce.

Our curriculum and student life will allow them to gain a deep understanding of diverse cultures. We will guide our students as they acquire the skills to get their first job and the habits of mind and heart to excel later in life in their second and third jobs.

This vision of the future aims high and is inspiring. It is also achievable. We have a noble history, starting by serving our community and educating students from Hudson County and beyond to be teachers.

As the needs in New Jersey grew, so did our mission. We began to educate students in a number of professional fields, providing a solid liberal arts education in the mix.

Recently, we have incorporated doctoral programs, building on our strengths and meeting new market demands.

Today, the opportunities are all around us – a renaissance in the city and region, increased diversity of people and thought, increased need for educated citizens who can think critically, work in teams, be collaborative, create new innovations, be part of work that is current and cutting edge.

We will want to take a leading role in the creation of the tomorrows in Jersey City, New Jersey, our region and beyond. To meet this challenge, we must channel our energy and talents to reach three major objectives:

First, we need to continue to **strengthen our faculty**.

One powerful asset that we can build upon is the strength of our faculty. We have nationally and internationally known scholars who are sharing their passion for their disciplines and for learning with our students.

Our faculty has developed expertise in educating students from multiple backgrounds and varying talents to arouse their curiosity to learn more.

They know how to motivate students to hone their critical thinking, quantitative reasoning, as well as their verbal and writing skills.

This fall 16 new faculties joined our ranks. They are an impressive group.

They hold degrees from and have taught at some of the world's top institutions, including Duke, the University of Virginia, Hampshire College, Harvard, and the Albert Einstein College of Medicine.

They are experts in stem cell research, international financial markets, and neuroscience; they have studied midwifery in Nigeria and Afro-Germany Identity in Germany.

One has even worked with IBM on single carbon nanotube transistors to use as a DNA sensor, while another uses nature to create and define designs for graphic arts.

We must ensure that these new faculty and the excellent faculty they have joined can continue to thrive and grow at NJCU. We must provide them with the resources they need to do their research and scholarship.

This is a time when faculty can especially benefit from engagement across disciplines. Cutting edge research often blurs the artificial boundaries between disciplines and requires understanding of the inter-relationships between one scientific field and another or between science and art or between the humanities and public policy.

We are especially eager to take advantage of the many opportunities that lie before us to connect research and learning to our region.

An example of how our students take their conceptual classroom learning and apply it is our Student Investment Management group. They took a gift of \$100,000 from Frank Guarani and invested it over the past several years – beating the S&P 500 each year.

This year, this very diverse team competed against the best in the country in a portfolio competition and came in first – defeating teams from places like Harvard and Stanford.

An area where the work of our faculty already has had a compelling impact on our community is our Music Dance and Theatre program. You have been treated to a small portion of their talents today.

And this gives me the opportunity to do a little advertising.

Come back on October 25-27 to enjoy performances like Death Takes a Holiday. Next April 28-30 to be treated to Les Mis.

You can also hear some remarkable opera and classical music as our students perform on campus and beyond. Tonight, in fact, our Jazz alumni will join John Faddis for a concert at Exchange Place overlooking Manhattan. – It will be a treat!

Secondly, in addition to providing support for our faculty, we need to **improve and expand our infrastructure**.

The spaces in which we learn and the technology that we use must be state of the art, and they must continue to be updated.

For example, we will complete a new media studio thanks to funding from the state, along with an addition to our science building.

Thankfully, my predecessor, President Hernandez brought together several tracks of land and prepared them for future development. This work, with funding provided by the State has allowed us to begin the process of designing and building a much needed academic building for our campus and the Music, Dance and Theatre program.

Through the P3 legislation, we will look to building new residence halls for students.

These university projects will work hand in glove with our Mayor's initiatives to dramatically increase the economic and cultural vibrancy of our city.

We all know the expression: **timing is everything**. That certainly applies to our situation today at NJCU and in Jersey City. Both the university and the city are on the ascendency.

There could not be a better time for a fruitful partnership.

Hence, the third objective I want to discuss today is our need to **maintain and strengthen our ties with community leaders, our K-12 schools and businesses**.

These close ties will allow us to assist in solving the pressing problems we face as a community, work collaboratively to improve the quality of life of our citizens, and guide the university in developing programs and majors that will prepare our students for our region's emerging jobs.

Let me begin with a word about our **collaborations with our primary and secondary schools**. Far too many students in our K-12 schools are not succeeding and graduate without being ready for college.

The reasons for this are many and it will take the full commitment of us all to turn this around.

But turnaround we must. The Federal Government and society are frustrated at paying twice to have student's college ready with the reading, reasoning, and mathematical skills necessary to thrive in a collegiate setting.

Already we are making progress with a number of schools through federal grants and programs designed to help teachers better prepare students for college.

Our Proyecto Science program brings eager high school students to campus each summer to do lab science, introducing them to scientific inquiry as a mode of learning.

We will do more to increase the statistic of unprepared students through collaborations and our College of Education so that Jersey City and the surrounding schools graduate college ready students, some of whom will have completed college credits.

Indeed, if you have a chance, read *Improbable Scholars* – a book about the students of the Union City School System, many of whom are new immigrants.

In spite of their inability to speak and write English, they are beating the odds at rates far higher than similar schools across the nation. They send their graduates to wonderful colleges and universities prepared to be leaders where they land.

Many of their teachers are graduates of NJCU and we are delighted that many of their students are now among our student body- majoring in the sciences, computer science and other disciplines.

We stand poised to forge more community partnerships designed to meet the **employment needs** of our region.

We know, to cite just a few examples, that we need well-educated nurses, people in finance, in criminal justice and security studies.

Currently, we graduate remarkable nurses with the bachelor's degree necessary to meet the region's needs.

Our business graduates are working on our own waterfront in Jersey City and we are prepared to create programs and certifications needed to ensure that we do not again find ourselves in another financial crisis.

If you look at our legal industry today, you will find any number of NJCU graduates who may have gotten excellent writing, communications and reasoning skills thanks to the good work of our humanities departments.

NJCU stands ready to strengthen our partnerships with government, business, educational institutions, and non-profit organizations to work toward improving the quality of life and the richness of opportunities in our region.

Our graduates and faculty in psychology and counseling have much to offer as we work with our social agencies to create new ways to prevent or manage family crises, whether financial, health-related or inter-personal.

Our graduates and faculty in environmental sciences can assist in remediating our industrial waste sites.

Our graduates and faculty can be a resource for one of our largest businesses, shipping of goods requiring sophisticated logistics.

A key ingredient to a vibrant community is a safe place to live and a solid criminal justice system. Our faculty are positioned to help solve these problems.

Many of our citizens are recent arrivals coming here with limited facility in speaking and writing English. We are gearing up to be a resource for these new neighbors.

The Hudson River border of New Jersey is replete with financial institutions. Many are moving more than their back offices west to take advantage of the quality of life and attractive real estate of Jersey City.

NJCU stands ready to be a player in this arena. With the new School of Business, and a faculty well versed in marketing, management, financial securities, and the markets we are well positioned to partner with these institutions to move them and their employees forward.

As Jersey City gains its new status as **the place to live and work**, the arts take on increasing significance. We will work with the Mayor and local business leaders to develop the right mix of visual and performing arts in conjunction with places like Mana, the Loews, and other neighborhood centers for the arts.

I think you can see why I am bullish on NJCU and on Jersey City. Our best days lie ahead. NJCU is transforming lives and is poised to take a major step forward in serving the needs of the community.

Jersey City's renaissance offers new opportunities that would not have been imagined a few years ago.

We are at the right place at the right time to be a player in innovations and change that will move our city and our state forward.

Our job is to be there, be relevant, and be part of this renaissance. There are exciting times ahead and I am delighted to be part of such change and opportunity.

