



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, "T 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 NCU 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 gratifying it was to see his work make a difference.

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 country.

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

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 is a great time

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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

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