“BELIEVE IN CDU”

Dear Friends,

Once a year, I report to you on the State of Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science. It is my opportunity to celebrate our accomplishments, to articulate our challenges, and to engage in a conversation with our community about the work being done within these four walls.

It is a conversation I take seriously, and one that I hope will continue once we leave here today.

A year ago, I reported to you on the progress we had made in overcoming significant adversity. I said that just as the University had literally been formed out of the ashes of a broken and battered city, we had risen once again.

I spoke of the steps we had taken to regain our accreditations and our financial footing...vital steps on the path to regaining our standing in the community.

I spoke of the unwavering commitment to our mission—a mission to which we remained true, even in our darkest days—a mission to ensure that every community, and especially this community, has access to quality, culturally competent health care. A mission to educate physicians, nurses and public health professionals dedicated to social justice, to community and to serving the people who might otherwise be left without access to care.

If anything, last year’s speech was largely retrospective and introspective. My goal one year ago was to plant a flag and tell this community—and the world —“We’re back!”

Today—and I’m very excited about this—I want to be prospective. I want to talk about our future.

Today, we are a premiere educational institution.

Today, there is a lot of reason to Believe in CDU.
And as unthinkable as this would have been to say 3 or 5 or 7 years ago, today, believing in CDU isn’t hard.

It’s easy to believe in an institution that can come through the trials and the challenges of our past without ever losing a sense of who we are or why we’re here. Not only did we survive, we came through stronger and we have redoubled our commitment to our mission.

It’s easy to believe in a private university with a very public mission—to educate our community today for a healthier tomorrow.

The commitment to our community is very personal for me. This is my community.

I grew up in Los Angeles. I attended 54th Street Elementary and use to visit my grandfather on 96th Street. I have members of my own family who have been treated at the Martin Luther King Hospital. My grandmother is buried at Evergreen Cemetery in Boyle Heights. I remember the pain and emotions I experienced as an 11-year old in 1965 watching the community I knew burn and the street corners I used to traverse occupied by the National Guard during the rebellion that same year.

That was a difficult time for this community and the world was watching. But, the community came together and what resulted was a push to create a university and a major medical center—which became the Charles R. Drew Postgraduate Medical School and the LA County Martin Luther King, Jr. Hospital.

CDU exists to address the health care needs of the South Los Angeles area. This is a region with compelling challenges and opportunities for improvements in health care given that some of the significant disparities in health care are recognized as emanating from South Los Angeles.

And that makes it easy to believe in Drew. It’s easy to believe in an institution that believes in the community that welcomes us, that sustains us, and that reminds us of why we’re here every single day.

Finally, it's easy to believe in an institution that is training students to meet a rapidly growing need.

A week ago, we ushered in a new era in the way this country deals with health care. In California alone, millions have already benefited as a result of the Affordable Care Act. By 2014 approximately 2.7 million more Californians will benefit from health coverage guaranteed through the ACA.

That’s more people with access to preventative care, and fewer people who have to use the emergency room as their primary care option.
And true to our mission, we are training the physicians, the nurses, the public health graduates, and other health professionals who will treat them.

Friends, the Affordable Care Act is—in and of itself—a reason to **believe in CDU**.

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (known proudly as Obamacare) is an endorsement of everything this University has believed in since our founding.

The Affordable Care Act brings us closer to the proposition that universal access to quality health care is a basic human right, and that a healthy nation is more productive and more prosperous. I need not remind you that this is the same belief that led to our University’s founding in 1966.

The Affordable Care Act stresses prevention. We all know that the key to reducing health care costs in this country is reducing the incidence of preventable diseases.

And the Affordable Care Act encourages community-based approaches to health care through an expanded health care safety net and a focus on primary care. That, of course, is what we have done here for 47 years.

For millions of Californians, and for millions of Americans, and hundreds of thousands of Angelenos right here in South Los Angeles, the Affordable Care Act will mean an ongoing relationship with a primary care provider for the first time. Many of the patients our graduates will treat may not even understand what it means to have a Primary Care Provider. For the uninsured, doctor visits were something best to be avoided. If you got hurt, you went to the emergency room—if it was bad enough. Well visits were out of the question. Annual check-ups were a luxury.

We have entered a new era. This is why our University’s mission—which has always been critical—became even more so on October 1. As of October 1st, it’s no longer true that you have to have a job to have affordable health insurance. It’s no longer true that you can exhaust your lifetime health benefits, and it’s no longer true that you can be excluded from health insurance coverage because of pre-existing conditions. Most importantly, because of the Affordable Care Act, millions of Americans will gain health insurance.

The Affordable Care Act creates opportunities for this University. Opportunities in Primary Care training and workforce training. CDU is uniquely positioned to serve as a model academic health center, while continuing our legacy to prepare a workforce that represents the community and provides care with excellence and compassion. Our time is now! And we need to seize the opportunity presented by the Affordable Care Act.

Indeed, our faculty researchers are already pioneering new approaches to care in the community.
Dr. Harawa, an Associate Professor at CDU, recognized the need for a culturally tailored HIV prevention program targeted at bisexual African American men. Today, African Americans make up 44% of new HIV infections. Recognizing the lack of interventions available to reduce those rates, Dr. Harawa developed MAALES — Men of African American Legacy Empowering Self.

Prior to 2004, only one prevention intervention tailored for African-American men who had sex with men had ever been developed — and had no interventions designed for behaviorally bisexual men of any race or ethnicity had been published, Dr. Harawa developed a holistic and—importantly—culturally relevant approach to minimizing the behaviors that put men at risk for HIV infection.

The results were impressive. Participants in the MAALES study showed a dramatic increase in condom use and a significant reduction in the number of partners.

Another Drew faculty member engaged in groundbreaking community work is Dr. Ted Friedman.

Dr. Theodore Friedman, Chairman of our Department of Internal Medicine, was recently featured in a Los Angeles Times story about group medical appointments. Group appointments are a relatively new approach to the practice of medicine, but they are showing promising results. These groups allow patients access to a broader range of services—including social workers, dieticians, and other specialists.

More importantly, patients who are seen in group appointments feel accountable to each other and responsible for one another. They recognize that they don’t have to go through treatment alone. They build their own micro-communities.

The work of Dr. Harawa and Dr. Friedman can be replicated all over the country, and as we face an influx of newly insured patients, innovation of this type furthers our mission and deepens our ties to the communities we serve.

Both of these are examples of cutting-edge, world-class research happening right here. Right now. That’s something to believe in.

But lest you think our faculty deserve all the glory, I want to tell you about some pretty amazing students as well.

This year, we awarded Adrienne Martinez-Hollingsworth; and Meredith Mead, students in our Mervyn M. Dymally School of Nursing, a Mission Maker Mini Grant to continue their work at the Greater Los Angeles Lactation Outreach Project.
This student-driven initiative that engages 300 pre-and post-partum, Spanish speaking women in Los Angeles by providing dietary education and support prior to delivery and nutritional and health monitoring for the first 6 months of their babies’ lives.

Through this project, our alumni and students are not only making a lasting impact on our community, but they are assuming the critical Nurse Educator role that we all know is such an important piece of our public education mission.

Thanks to another student-driven initiative, a new Farmers’ Market opened earlier this year in South Los Angeles. The project involves our MPH program and is in collaboration with the Crenshaw Christian Center and Heritage Education Group. The market is held at the Crenshaw Christian Center every Friday and the second Sunday of each month.

Not only do we work to ensure our students’ success through academic rigor, we also engage them to be thought leaders in discussions in the boardroom, the classroom and the community.

Student government leaders, Clement Aroh, President of the Charles Drew University Student Government in the College of Science and Health, Belinda Addo, President of the Mervyn M. Dymally School of Nursing Student Government and Dominque Woods — our student Trustee from the College of Medicine who you met earlier — are continuing the University’s legacy of producing health care professionals who are also leaders in the health professions.

Our recruitment efforts have resulted in increases in applications, in students accepted, and in Intents to Enroll. More importantly, enrollments rose 5% for the incoming class in 2013.

We have increased the availability of scholarships so that students who wish to pursue a higher education at CDU have the opportunity to do so.

I am especially proud to report that with contributions from Kaiser Permanente and UniHealth Foundation the University was able to award $360,500 in scholarships to 60 students for the 2012-2013 school year. This amount represents an increase of more than $300,000 over the previous year!

I am even prouder to announce that going forward we have more than $2 million in endowed scholarships that were gifted by contributions from Mr. and Mrs. Joe and Emma Adams, Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, and federal Title III funds.

And I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge and thank The California Endowment for their significant ongoing support to the University.
This aid is critical to the fulfillment of our mission. Training a diverse corps of healthcare professionals requires training students from a diverse set of backgrounds. Our financial assistance commitment to both undergraduate and graduate students helps us achieve this diversity. We have financial partners who believe the same. They **believe in CDU**.

I also want to note the contributions of our wonderful staff. Especially those with more than 20 years of experience working here, who have stuck with CDU despite salary reductions, cutbacks in retirement contributions, and the trauma of layoffs. They too, **believe in CDU**.

As some of you may know, we have just been engaged in a long-term strategic planning process. This is our third such planning process since 2009.

The first plan presented our response to profound fiscal challenges.

The second re-established a sustaining fiscal foundation.

I’m proud to say that our third, just-completed plan, establishes a forward trajectory that strives to achieve institutional excellence.

And through this strategic planning process, we have—for the first time—developed a vision statement for the University: “Excellent health and wellness for all persons, peoples and communities, in a world without health disparities.”

I believe this beautifully encapsulates our “why,” the reason we’re all here.

And we have come a very long way in a very short time.

We have come so far that, today, I can stand before you and say with more confidence that CDU will continue to grow and that we will be here for you for years to come!

Our house is not only in order, it is growing. All of our academic programs are fully accredited. In 2011 the Western Association of Schools and Colleges granted us accreditation through 2018. This year WASC recognized us specifically for the substantial financial progress we made. The **WASC believes in CDU!**

Friends, you are here today because when times were tough, you continued to **believe in CDU**. And because of your support the State of our University is as strong now as it has been at any time in recent memory.

This did not come easily, but through the tireless efforts of our faculty, our staff, our students, and our alumni; through the efforts of our elected officials, our foundation friends, our institutional supporters, and through the efforts of the community we partner with.
And I cannot thank you enough.

**You believe in CDU** because you share our commitment to diversity, to community-based health care, to striking the phrase “underserved communities” from our healthcare lexicon.

The Affordable Care Act takes us a long way toward that goal: toward addressing the barriers to access that have kept so many from seeking preventative care—or any care at all—for too long. With those barriers removed, we at CDU can focus on the parts of our mission that will truly lift up the communities we serve.

To build healthy communities through education.

To ensure excellent, compassionate and culturally competent care for everyone.

To improve access to care by training professionals who are diverse in background, in perspective, and in competencies.

To eliminate the disparities that persist in the provision of care.

To take up the challenge Dr. Martin Luther King issued when he proclaimed the same year CDU was founded, “Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhumane.”

To ensure that a patient from Watts gets the same treatment as a patient from Beverly Hills.

Through this commitment, we acknowledge and honor our founding principles. Through this commitment, we continue to grow.

We all **believe in the Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science.**

Thank you.