

You know, it is a great time to be downtown. I'm delighted to be here and represent Fresno State and our Downtown Center.

And before I begin, let me extend a warm welcome to our higher education colleagues from the State Center Community College District who will soon be our neighbors down the street at the former Guarantee Savings building. Together with the State Center Community College District, Fresno State believes that a strong Central Valley begins right here: with a strong downtown Fresno, and we are committed to the continued growth and revitalization of downtown Fresno.

Since 2015, Fresno State has offered several dozen workshops and professional development courses at our Downtown Center located in Bitwise South Stadium, providing access to those who might not otherwise be served by Fresno State's main campus. We know that learning occurs not just in a traditional classroom setting, rather educational opportunity exists in many forms, for many different audiences. Our veterans, our working parents, our single parents and our developing workforce matter deeply to Fresno State, and while we still have gaps in our offerings, we are making great strides to fill those gaps.

For example, last year, we developed a Career Readiness Academy designed for individuals who had previously faced economic or personal setbacks and were looking for resources to help them secure new skills and employment. This program offered hundreds of free seats in classes focusing on 21st Century workplace skills including problem solving, creativity, business communication, and public speaking, all designed to elevate career skills. We partnered with several dozen community-based organizations, including the United Way and the Fresno Rescue Mission, to match our educational resources with deserving populations. And thanks to a generous grant from Wells Fargo, we offered this entire suite of programs for free.

But tonight is about looking forward; so I'd like to highlight just a few of the upcoming programs we'll be offering this summer at our Downtown Center:

- First, Local author Janice Stevens and artist Pat Hunter will share their knowledge in an ongoing series about Fresno's architectural history. Their next class, focusing on Fresno's public buildings and historic homes begins June 5.
- Next: Introduction to 3-D Modeling and Animation will provide training on the use of the powerful, free software program Blender, used by countless professionals.
- Then, we will turn our attention to Chinatown: We'll be offering a series on the many cultures who contributed to Fresno's historic Chinatown, culminating with an underground tour of old Chinatown. This class begins early August.
- And finally, by popular demand, we're continuing the success of our Brew U program, reviving Craft Beer 101 scheduled to begin May 16, and tonight, I am pleased to announce two new Brew U classes: Craft Beer 201: *The Home Brew Challenge* which begins September 6. And Craft Beer 301: *Sensory and Styles*, that will be offered this July. We're delighted to partner with Full Circle Brewing Company and Tioga-Sequoia Brewing Company as we continued to expand this popular series.

Details of these programs, and other engaging workshops can be found on our website FresnoStateDowntown.com. We're looking forward to developing more engaging, innovative, and exciting classes at the Downtown Center in the months ahead, and I hope that each one of you will take advantage of the opportunities available through Fresno State.

In conclusion, know how much Fresno State, and its Cabinet, support your efforts to strengthen the Central Valley by strengthening our Downtown. We are proud to be your partner shaping tomorrow's Fresno.

Next week, Fresno State will be releasing its latest Fresno State magazine, highlighting the efforts of our alumni in downtown Fresno revitalization. I'll leave you with a video preview of our magazine, and the reminder that it truly is a great time to be downtown. Thank you.