



# Office of the President

Monday, May 15, 2023

Dear University Community,

I came to Central State University in July of 2020 to an empty campus in the midst of the Global Coronavirus Pandemic. Despite the difficulties stemming from the pandemic, our University rose to the occasion and remains resilient.

Working with my staff, faculty and others, we implemented much-needed changes to enhance the University's academic profile, improve our infrastructure, expand our academic offerings, grow our enrollment, boost our fundraising efforts, rebrand the University, and increase corporate, community, and government outreach. We laid out a positive and progressive vision for the future with the new Strategic Plan, "Reach Higher, Go Further, Thrive!"

We delivered excellence in leadership by providing vision, strategy, direction, and focused action for the University. Working together, we have developed – and delivered on – a vision to enhance the profile of Central State through:

- Growing corporate partnerships from 18 in 2020 to over 60 today, resulting in major gifts and pathways to internships and employment for our students
- Creating a new strategic plan entitled *Reach Higher, Go Farther, Thrive!*
- Implementing Project Innovation, a \$75 million dollar expansion of the campus which includes seven new buildings through public-private partnerships - one of which has been completed, one is 80% completed, and two are currently underway
- Launching the silent phase of a multi-million-dollar capital campaign of which nearly \$14 million dollars has been raised
- Establishing Central State Global, boosting overall enrollment from 1800 students to over 4800 students in two years
- Launching the Honors College to attract highly motivated and high-achieving students across Ohio, the nation, and the world, resulting in the institution's first Barry Goldwater, Boren, and Gilman Scholars
- Supporting Athletics through the renovation of McPherson Stadium, installing the new artificial turf, building a new NCAA-compliant track, and constructing Jumbotron scoreboard
- Enhancing our national and international profile through community engagement, hosting government officials on campus, and accelerating scholarly activity
- Planning to further develop cutting-edge undergraduate, masters and doctoral degree programs
- Diversifying our business model to adapt to an increasingly competitive higher education landscape and meeting the distance learning expectations and needs of modern students



Every decision was always made with the best interests of our students' future and with the overall University's sustainability at heart. We introduced a bold strategy to enhance productivity, progress rapidly, and ensure accountability at the University. Through it all, we continue to transform students' lives, participate in outstanding research, achieve a tremendous level of student, faculty, and staff success, and positively impact the communities in which we live, serve and learn.

Having accomplished what I set out to do as President, I have informed the Board of Trustees that I will not seek renewal of my contract. After taking an educational sabbatical, I plan to continue serving the students of Central State University as a tenured professor.

It has been a privilege serving as President during this historic period as we made monumental strides in moving the University forward. During my final days as President, I will continue to work to ensure that everything is in place for the new leadership to begin the next chapter in Central State University's history.

The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, "We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be, and you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be...This is the interrelated structure of reality."

As I reflect upon my time as President, I wish to thank the Board of Trustees, faculty, staff, students, and alumni for their support throughout my leadership tenure here. It has been an honor advocating tirelessly for the University through my interactions with national and world leaders, governors, legislators, and leaders of multiple constituencies. I am grateful for the opportunity to interact with the students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community members who make up the Central State University family. It has been a privilege serving you as President.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jack Thomas".

Jack Thomas, PhD  
President