Good morning and thank you all for being here with me at the start of another academic year. Some of you are new to FGCU, but not new to higher education. Some of you are new to the entire context of working within an institution of higher learning as a member of the faculty or academic staff. But, the majority of you are our returning faculty and staff, and among that group, some of you have been with FGCU since the very beginning. You remember the heady prospect of building a new university from whence there was none. No campus. No buildings. No students. No roads. No infrastructure. No curriculum. No nothing. I like to think that we were the first truly virtual university and wireless campus. We, who have come after you, have followed the mighty path that you envisioned, planned for, and brought forth onto this special piece of land in Southwest Florida. Before we go any further this morning, I would like to ask all of you who came to FGCU prior to the start of classes in the fall of 1997 to please rise and be recognized by all of the rest of us who have come to this special place. Thank you all for your labors and the challenges that you overcame. Few people have done what you have done, and what the great, satirical humorist George Carlin told us was necessary in order to start a new path, you held the grass down for yourselves. Or, in this case, perhaps it was the Melaleuca. The path that you forged is now a major thoroughfare, one that over 16,000 students have traversed to an important and successful endpoint, their FGCU degree, with the most recent of these doing so at our first summer commencement just 8 days ago. Over 480 faculty and nearly 400 Academic Affairs staff members now cruise that thoroughfare each day to support and enrich the lives of our current 14,000 students. And our community neighbors and partners turn on to our thoroughfare in large numbers each day for purposes of academic enrichment, enjoyment of the arts, cheering on of our of enormously successful scholar-athletes and participating in forums and panel discussions on a wide array of topics from autism awareness to starting a new business, as we help them to improve the quality of their lives.

Let us take this opportunity to welcome our newest faculty and staff colleagues by asking all of you joining us this fall at FGCU to rise and be recognized. It was my pleasure to spend some time with our newest faculty colleagues during their orientation day last week. New staff members and faculty, you could find no better role models, mentors, and colleagues than the people seated around you, our returning faculty and staff. Accept their assistance to help guide you and facilitate your individual personal and professional paths down that same thoroughfare. Engage with them. Listen to them. Learn from them at the same time you bring to them in reciprocal fashion your knowledge, skills, dedication and experience related to the complex task of educating students at the university level. We walk this continually expanding path together,
better, stronger, and smarter, as a group, as compared to a collection of individuals. We are the living-learning community that is Florida Gulf Coast University. And yes, we are DUNK CITY, baby.

I have never titled a formal presentation that I have delivered to you, that is, prior to today. There are several reasons. First, as many of you know I prefer not to read speeches at all, but this one significant event each year, that brings all of us together as the Division of Academic Affairs, requires it. Second, in prior years, by necessity and in all honesty, an accurate title for my addresses may have been something akin to “I have more really bad financial news for you today” or perhaps even “You know, it’s a really tough time to be in American public higher education right now”.

As you know all too well, the past six years were difficult to the point of painful for all of us at FGCU. I want to thank all of you who endured this difficult time period for your resilient dedication to our students. We labored under the burden of 6 successive years of budget cuts that resulted in a loss of over $15 million dollars or approximately 27% of our state funding. Increases in tuition did not keep pace with the loss of that state support. At this time, we are now more dependent on tuition revenue than ever before. That is not to say that state funding is not important, but clearly a shift has taken place and we need to work within this new paradigm. It’s the only one we have. Due to several important considerations, we have chosen to slow our rate of student enrollment growth and we may need to slow it even further if for no other reason than to respond to the decreasing availability of space, which is rapidly becoming the rate limiting factor. But just as prior years of higher rates of growth allowed for the hiring of many more faculty with a wealth of disciplinary expertise, our slower growth rate may now allow for us to be a bit more selective with regard to student enrollment while still offering access to the many prospective students who will benefit from all that you do for them. Enrollment management has never been more important to us than it is right now and we will continue to depend on the good work of the Planning and Budget Council (PBC) and the triangle team of the Enrollment and Retention Management Committee (ERMC), the Budget Committee and the Safety and Facilities Committee (SFC). On top of all of this is the very real potential for what some of us have been calling the ‘Dunk City bounce,’ an anticipated increase in the number of applicants that we may see this fall and spring for the entering class of fall 2014.

As we began to prepare for the 2013 Florida legislative session this past spring, the President asked all of us to support the intensive lobbying effort that he was preparing to lead. The President spent more time in Tallahassee prior to and during the legislative session than in any prior years and so did I, along with our Board Chair, Robbie Roepstorff, and others. The result of the long, exhausting, and complex session was very good news for FGCU. We received $6.5 million to support student success. That is the largest per-capita special appropriation of any university within the SUS. I will
return to that in a moment with details. But I do want to mention that the news was not all good, as our request for the second phase of funding for the FGCU Research IHub building, future home for our planned Center for Renewable Energy, was vetoed by the Governor after being supported by the legislature.

But now let’s return to the abundance of good news. In addition to the $6.5 million special appropriation, the funding that had been taken back in 2012-2013 as part of the $300 million SUS give-back was restored. Our portion was approximately $3.4 million. On top of that we received an additional $2.25 million that was related to our mandated statutory reserve of 5%.

Prior to the session, President Bradshaw pledged to internal and external constituencies that, if we were able to make significant progress toward increasing our baseline funding, he would hold the line on any tuition increase. We did and he has. And I am pleased to be able to say there will be no net increase to tuition for this fall as compared to the previous year.

So, with all of that in mind, I now present to you my title for today’s address on the State of the Division of Academic Affairs, upon the start of the 2013-2014 academic year: “I have good news to share with you today!”

Last year, the Budget Committee of the PBC provided a Budget Priorities List to inform the process of allocation of any new funds that might become available from the State. That list was approved by the full PBC and submitted, by me, to the Cabinet and the President. The entire process was transparent, inclusive, well vetted, and an important demonstration of shared governance. A post hoc review of that list against the budgeting decisions that were made and that, in part, I share with you today shows a high degree of congruence. The PBC process continues to work well, and work better each year. And the direct outcome is seen in the numerous positive ways the special legislative appropriation for student success is being used. Here are a few of the highlights.

We are engaged now in the process of hiring nine (9) additional, new student advisors within the Division of Academic Affairs. These positions have been distributed across the colleges based on a review of existing student to advisor ratios. Overall, once these new colleagues are on board, we should see our student/advisor ratio improve from approximately 610:1 to approximately 475:1. This is a huge step forward, but we will still not be where we need to be. I want to bring that number down to approximately 375:1, which will place us at a level generally seen as reflective of best practice according to NACADA, the National Academic Advising Association. When will we be able to attain that goal? Well, I hope next year, but we know that each year’s legislative funding decisions begin anew and we will again go back to the starting line.
“I have good news to share with you today”. In addition to the nine (9) advisors, we have added nine (9) new instructional faculty positions beginning this fall. And now for some truly fantastic news: I have provided funds to the colleges and other units to hire approximately 38 additional new staff positions across the Division of Academic Affairs. This is the largest one-year increase in staffing levels in at least the last ten (10) years and will have dramatic, substantial and far-reaching effects on all that we do here within our Division. During the past several of years of rapid growth, faculty numbers kept pace with increases to student enrollment. Staff numbers simply did not. This placed additional burdens on the staff and by extension, placed impediments and limitations on faculty who depend on the support provided by adequate staffing levels. Full consideration of the addition of new staff positions was vetted at the Council of Deans, where all deans shared their needs in a completely open process that set expectations as well as priorities.

So where are these new staff lines going? As you know from my prior addresses and informal conversations, it has been my desire to do more in the way of block funding of the college-level and other units. This is to allow the colleges and units to have greater local input into the difficult decisions that are always part of the conversation when limited resources need to be allocated in a rational and data driven manner. With regard to a small number of the new positions, the deans will continue to work out the details. But there are many decisions that have already been made and here are a few examples. In the area of music, the Bower School will gain an Events Coordinator and their colleagues in the arts will add a full-time Gallery Director, a position held too long in interim status. In the College of Engineering and the College of Arts and Sciences there will be additional technical support to facilitate laboratory instruction, freeing faculty to place more of their energies toward instructional excellence including pedagogical innovation and less toward routine lab preparation and tear-down. The colleges will see a general increase in secretarial and budget support. Two new positions, an instructional designer and a web applications developer, in the office of Web, e-Learning, and Publications will support distance learning and the university's web presence. We are also adding a new support position in the Honors program and staff positions in Graduate Studies and the library. “I have good news to share with you today”.

As you know well, last year we needed to do something that was intellectually abhorrent to all of you and, as Chief Academic Officer, certainly to me as well. We reduced library hours as a direct result of the budget reductions that had gotten so draconian that there was no other reasonable way to shift funds around. The Student Government Association came through by providing some funds to cover the deficit and the library hours came back part way through the year. I am extraordinarily pleased to tell you that with the start of this new academic year, I have provided to the library the funds necessary to restore hours to where they were before the cuts. But even more, we will
now have the library open for the greatest number of hours each week in the history of FGCU.

Many of you have indicated to me that we were falling short in terms of library resources to support the educational needs of our students, and the research and service needs of our faculty and staff engaged in professional advancement and program implementation and support. You were correct. Therefore, I am thrilled to report that with our new funding, I have allotted over $340,000 in direct support of e-Journal subscriptions and print holdings. Please run to the library immediately following this presentation and check something out to show your support! We have a fantastic library staff and they want you to have what you need. Now they are in a better position to respond to those needs. “I have good news to share with you today.”

Still, further, with the additional funds available in our budget, I was able to replace a substantial portion of the professional development and unit operational funds that were part of the $3.4 million give-back last year. The obvious benefits of these restorations of funding go without saying.

As you know, our capital construction program has been severely and adversely affected due to the near total loss of all PECO (Public Education Capital Outlay) funding from the State. Using a variety of other funds, we were able to perform several smaller but important renovations and additions that support the functioning of our Division. First, the Merwin Hall renovation has resulted in the addition of twenty (20) faculty offices ready for occupancy this week. The studio arts now have a covered portico to protect outdoor metalworking and other related activities. There is a new canopy at the Family Resource Center to provide sun and rain protection for the drop-off and pick up of the children, some of whom are your sons and daughters, and work is now underway in the library to provide for expanded space for the Center for Academic Achievement (CAA). In the near future, we expect to do some renovation at the Vester Marine Research Field Station that will enclose an outdoor area to provide additional classroom and research space. Unfortunately, it will be several years until we will be able to open a new academic building. Nonetheless, we will continue to attempt to do additional smaller projects in support of our core academic mission and goals.

With regard to our academic mission, specifically the professional development of our faculty and the success of our students, on August 20th, we will begin an exciting component of the new faculty academy, the delivery of a course, not to students, but to some of our new faculty. That course is entitled, Reflective Pedagogy in Higher Education: Finding Joy and Success in Teaching. By design, this course was developed by our faculty and will be delivered by our faculty. This course will serve the professional development of a portion of our newest cohort of entering faculty, those with less than two (2) years of full-time collegiate-level teaching experience. To the
best of my knowledge, this is the first of its kind in the State University System (SUS) and may be exceptionally rare if not unique in its construction across all of American higher education. Some of you have asked me over the years, are we moving away from our mission of being a primarily teaching institution? How do we demonstrate our commitment to faculty professional development with regard to our central mission? What messages do we send externally and internally that excellence in teaching and learning is important to us and we are prepared to put our resources to bear, essentially putting our money, our energy, and our abundant expertise where our mouth is? This new initiative for faculty is a part of the answer. And to the many returning faculty who have asked why can’t you participate in the class because you understand its value in terms of your professional growth and development as teachers, I want to say that I am hopeful that in the coming year, we will be able to offer this same class, tweaked for people in ways that recognize their prior teaching and pedagogical experience. Further, it is my hope that this course and the overall context of what we are dedicated to achieving in terms of teaching and learning excellence becomes a national talking point. It may be difficult to rival the attention that Dunk City has brought to us, but we will have what I believe is a process of investing in faculty that could serve as a national model for the centrality of teaching and the recognition that excellence in teaching is difficult to achieve but can be enhanced by reflective practice that uses pedagogical experience and research to improve outcomes. I would like to ask Dr. Linda Serro, of the College of Education, to rise and be recognized for leading the Teaching, Learning, and Assessment Initiative and facilitating the development of this new course, which is a part of that important initiative.

For the coming year we will continue to engage in some of our newer traditions in order that they become firmly established and irrevocable components of the way we say thank you for faculty and staff achievement and professional development. These include the evening reception for all faculty who achieved promotion at the start of this academic year, begun 3 years ago, and the wine and cheese reception for all faculty, staff, and administrators who successfully competed for extramural grant support during the prior fiscal year, an event we began 5 years ago. Further, with the addition of some IT staff support we will engage in revamping of portions of the Academic Affairs website to include a revolving showcase of the previous year’s winners of the faculty and staff excellence awards. While the public thirst for exemplars of excellence in pedagogy may not be quite as great as their thirst to see soaring slam dunks, the institutional pride that we display by showcasing the achievements of faculty and staff should be of equal intensity.

Two years ago, the faculty developed several potential ideas to serve as our next Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). From among the final two projects as determined by an inclusive vetting process, I chose the QEP on writing, critical thing, and information literacy. This year we will be moving ahead with the full development of the QEP,
which will be a significant component of our SACS accreditation. That SACS site visit will take place in March 2015 and the outcome is essential for our successful reaffirmation of regional accreditation.

On another front, as we know, many of our faculty serve to coordinate, facilitate, supervise, and evaluate the hundreds of internship experiences that our students engage in each year. During the coming year, to better support the faculty and to reduce a portion of the bureaucratic burdens that go along with developing new internship agreements, providing legal review, and other aspects of their management, I am pleased to announce that we will develop a centralized Internship Office staffed with a full-time Internship Coordinator. This office is, by design, NOT meant in any way to replace the crucial role of faculty. Rather, its development and implementation will proceed informed by open collaboration with our current internship coordinators within the colleges. It is my intention that this new office will provide logistical support, develop a data base to allow us to accurately track the success of our internship programs and work directly with the community-at-large to fulfill the needs of local companies and agencies in pairing our students with internship opportunities, thereby freeing up faculty to devote their energies, skills, and experience to the core academic responsibilities of supervising internship experiences.

With the recent arrival of Mr. Chris Simoneau as Vice President for Advancement and Executive Director of the FGCU Foundation, this fall we will engage in a process that will lead to the development of a new marketing campaign for the university. A working group has been selected, which includes a faculty representative provided through the Faculty Senate and its Appointments Committee. This is an enormous opportunity for us to optimize on our newly found national visibility and the core strengths of our institution.

With the infusion of the additional resources I previously mentioned, we will continue to advance plans for the foundation of an honors degree to attract and retain the best and brightest students.

Based on prior conversations between administration and faculty, we will continue to support the development of a degree completion initiative and other credit bearing coursework directed toward adult learners that will be administered through our Office of Continuing Education but which will be guided and taught by our faculty who will guarantee the quality of these experiences in the same manner as with our college-housed curricula.

Within the Office of the Provost, I am pleased that Ms. Whitney Longenecker will return to us to fill the position recently vacated by Mr. Jordan Ketring, who left to continue his education at the graduate level, out of state. Also, I am extremely pleased
to announce that Dr. Tony Barringer, who previously served as interim Dean of the College of Professional Studies and most recently as Special Assistant to the Provost has joined my office fulltime as Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs. Tony has distinguished himself in all of his prior administrative roles and I look forward to working more closely with him in his new position.

Last year, with the support of the Faculty Senate and the UFF, we, as an academic community, began to plan for the transition of the current Student Assessment of Instruction (SAI) to a new system implemented in a new manner. Those discussions have continued as recently as last week with a highly productive meeting including representatives of the Faculty Senate, the UFF and academic administration. The result will be a transitioning from a largely paper-based SAI that, in general provided limited information both in terms of formative and summative assistance with regard to the evaluation of teaching to the Student Perception of Instruction, the SPoI. This new process will be delivered entirely on-line and will be entirely a formative process, more flexible in terms of meeting the needs of faculty with regard to continuously improving their instruction, and more rapid in terms of getting that feedback to faculty in a timely manner. This initiative is overdue and I am deeply appreciative to the Faculty Senate and the UFF for their support and desire to see this implemented for the fall of 2014. To get us there, there is important work that will need to be completed including, but not limited to, training of Chairs and Deans, ensuring proper evaluation criteria, changing of some College promotion documents and supporting faculty during the transition period. I am certain that the excellent collaborations established during the process will lead us to a timely and successful conclusion.

In the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP), the coming year will see us working to revise policies and procedures on indirect cost recovery and the opportunity for faculty to ‘buy-out’ courses to create additional time to engage in substantial research and service. The goal here is to provide addition incentive for faculty to seek extra-mural funding and to be able to use these funds to partially reduce their teaching loads during the period supported by the grant. Dr. TC Yih, Associate Vice President for Research and Dean of Graduate Studies, and I, will be engaged with the Faculty Senate to seek input. I expect that this process can proceed quickly and revised policies can be fully implemented within a year, perhaps as soon as the start of the spring semester.

On the IT side, we need to continue to embed the opportunities provided beginning last fall by the Virtual Computer Laboratory which is available 24/7/365 and provides real-time availability to students and faculty of course-based and creative software using Adobe products that would otherwise be cost prohibitive for the students to purchase on their own. This is yet another example of cooperation leading to both enhanced services and the reduced costs provided by efficient practices. You can actually, sometimes,
have more, and actually spend less, and the IT area is one where this kind of advancement can be seen. As we know, we have fantastic IT support teams located within the Division of Academic Affairs, under the direction of Pat O’Connor-Benson in Academic and Events Technology Services, Dave Jaeger in Web e-Learning and Mario Bernardo in Library Computing & Technology Systems. I would like to ask those three individuals and all of their staff to stand and receive a sign of our thanks and appreciation. You folks are great!

Also, this year CANVAS will be in full operation replacing Angel as our learning management system. While I know that there will be some mourning and grieving over the loss of Angel, I want to point out two important items. First, the process that led us to select Canvas was the quintessential model of shared governance and second, for many of you who have already engaged Canvas, you have come to recognize the enormous power of this new system to support your instructional activities in ways that reduce time consuming menial tasks while opening the doors on powerful analytical routines embedded in the software. While many people participated in this successful transition to Canvas, the two super-women leading the effort were Elspeth McCulloch on the staff side and Professor Angela Osterman-Meyer from the faculty side. Please stand and let us thank you again for your hard work and dedication.

Finally, in the area of IT, we will work on the development of a strategic plan for distance learning. This effort is derived from a recommendation last year from the Online Learning Support Task Force and is another example of shared governance involving Faculty Senate and Academic Affairs. As you well know, distance learning and new strategies for its delivery, have received broad media attention. At FGCU we offer approximately 20% of all of our courses by distance and 6 graduate programs are available entirely on-line. Also, there are a great number of additional courses taught in a hybrid manner, partly distance, partly face-to-face. With support from the Senate and the Information Resources Committee of the PBC, we will engage in substantial conversation about our ability to offer a broader array of distance courses and programs that are consistent with our mission, goals, and pursuit of excellence in learning outcomes. We talk about being the technology university. Here is the chance for us to define and refine just what that means.

With the full knowledge and support of the UFF-FGCU Chapter, during that past year and into the summer, your Council of Deans deliberated at length to develop a set of guidelines to reflect faculty work-loading for support of graduate students engaged in research-based dissertations. These guidelines are now in place in the College of Education where research-based dissertations are a requirement for graduation. Part of the conversation in developing Division-wide guiding principles was always the understanding that these practices need to be addressed in ways reflective of the
particular context of the different disciplines. Therefore, flexibility exists for the college-level units to have structures that reflect their unique characteristics.

The lines of communication and cooperation among the Faculty Senate, the Staff Advisory Council, the UFF and the administration have never been better than they are right now. I want to thank prior officers of all three faculty and staff organizations for their significant efforts to assist us in getting to this point in time and convey my deep appreciation to Dr. Beth Elliott, President of the UFF-FGCU Chapter, Dr. Shawn Felton, President of the Faculty Senate and Mr. Sal Catalfamo, President of the SAC for their collegiality, professionalism, and dedication to the overall well-being of our living-learning community. I have had the pleasure of working previously with all of these leaders and look forward to realizing significant accomplishments that can only be attained through professional cooperation, civil discourse, including the ability to agree to disagree, and a shared dedication to moving our University forward, always guided by our mission and goals. Through this type of collaborative work, we were able to implement a Domestic Partner Benefit package that went into effect at the start of this fiscal year. “I have good news to share with you today”.

The year just past, while difficult in ways I noted previously, was certainly not without significant success in our Division. In additional to numerous individual accomplishments, we saw programs achieve new or reaffirmations of existing accreditations by their specialized accrediting bodies. The College of Education, after years of planning and hard work, successfully received initial accreditation from the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education, NCATE, and the School of Hospitality and Resort Management, newly aligned within the Lutgert College of Business also received initial accreditation from their organization, the Accreditation Commission for Programs in Hospitality Administration (ACPHA).

Earning continuing professional accreditation were the Doctor of Physical Therapy Program, the Nurse Anesthesia Program, the Athletic Training Program, the Mental Health Counseling Program and the Lutgert College of Business. Congratulations to all involved.

The administration is also extremely pleased that our budget for this fiscal year includes funds for significant raises for employees in good standing. As noted by the President in a communication earlier this summer, staff will receive the greater of a $1,400 or 3.5% increase to their annual base salaries. And in what can clearly be called late-breaking news, just this past Friday, the Collective Bargaining Agreement joint negotiation team announced a tentative agreement for faculty that includes a $1,400 or 3.5% raise and the implementation of an agreed upon formula based upon the Balmoral Compression and Inversion study, which will yield a pool of $205,000 in additional base compensation to address cases statistically identified as compressed or inverted.
Faculty will be hearing directly from the UFF-FGCU leadership in the near future regarding the ratification process. Following ratification by the faculty, I will take the plan to the September meeting of the University Board of Trustees for their approval. “I have good news to share with you today.”

And finally, to continue on the course of an optimistic future here at FGCU, it is my sincere desire that this year we will see the second annual staff, faculty, and student car show. Because it’s always about cars!

I hope that you believe as I do, that I have indeed been able to share some good news with you today. Our challenges will remain substantial but our resolve, which was always unwavering, is now bolstered by real progress in our funding environment and these long awaited improvements will have immediate and highly demonstrative outcomes affecting each and every one of us here today. We must keep up our lobbying efforts which were successful in part because the performance outcomes data that we brought to Tallahassee were strong and getting stronger in numerous categories. But fiscally speaking, we are still not where we should, want, and need to be.

That incredible thoroughfare that we walk is becoming better known day-by-day. The quality of what we do continues to improve day-by-day. And the dynamic spirit of cooperation and collegiality with which we go about our professional FGCU lives is, day-by-day, becoming additionally self-perpetuating and positively synergistic. This will be a great year.

My sincere thanks to all of you for being here. Thank you for all that you do in your individual areas of responsibility and as members of our FGCU living-learning community, and as always, GO EAGLES.