Good morning and welcome. Welcome to the start of our 19th academic year. Welcome to the second half, of the second decade, of the second century that we as educators have had the privilege to experience and to influence. Welcome, to the continuation of the period of time during which American higher education has, and will continue to face its greatest challenges since the potential to receive a college education became a reality for all citizens of this nation. Welcome to the significant tasks and challenges that lie ahead. Welcome to the opportunities that will come to us and that we will exploit for the benefit of our students. Welcome to the start of our future, a future that will bear witness to the amazing achievements that this unique institution will be bring forth as part of our collective dream for higher education in SWFL.

In thinking about the year immediately past, with its many notable achievements, exciting changes, and occasional high drama, there would be few observers who would suggest that this was anything other than a truly remarkable year. I will come back to this idea in a few minutes.

Before I continue with my annual effort to provide to you my perspectives of the State of the Division of Academic Affairs, I ask you to join me in a brief reflection, looking back on our history in a manner that very few other universities can do. I would like to ask all of our faculty and staff who were part of FGCU prior to the fall of 1997, before our first students came to us, to please stand and be recognized. Thank you. You are our founders. You are the people who were here before ‘here’ was here. We thank you for dreaming big, working hard, taking risks, and refusing to allow average to be acceptable. Now, I ask those of you who joined FGCU in the years from fall 1997 to 2003, to stand and be recognized. Thank you. You came to a campus that was, at the time, barely more than a collection of buildings dropped onto clearings in the SWFL wilderness. You joined a preexisting dream, but did so much more. You added your own hopes and aspirations, and in doing so continued to shape that dream, moving us closer to where we are today and where we will be in our collective tomorrows.

Each year at this event, we welcome a new group of staff and faculty that immediately experiences and benefits from all that exists today. A vibrant university community of 15,000 students, over 500 full-time faculty and 800 full-time staff, over 90 major buildings (and yeah, I know what you are thinking – and a couple hundred of unnecessary administrators). I ask that all of our new faculty and staff stand and be welcomed by your senior colleagues. Thank you. To our newest eagles, I want you each to know that you join an energetic, living-learning community at an amazing moment in our history. We welcome you. We need you and all your talents, creativity, dedication, trust, aspirations and loyalty. Those are
the traits that built this spectacular campus community from the outset. I assure you that we are not yet done building and strengthening all that we do.

I want to express a special welcome to a few people whose leadership contributions are of essential value as we begin the 2015-2016 academic year. I am extremely pleased to introduce Dr. Ivan Banks, who has joined our Eagle Community as Interim Dean of the College of Education. As you know, we were disappointed when last year our search for a permanent dean of Education was unsuccessful. However, in a few weeks we will eagerly begin that search anew and have enormous faith that Dr. Banks, with prior experience as a Dean of Education and a provost (please don’t hold that against him), will provide continued solid leadership, picking up the baton held so deftly and handed off by Dean Jane McHaney, without missing a single stride. Welcome, Ivan. We look forward to working and growing with you.

I am pleased to report that our Office of Internships and Co-op Opportunities officially came into existence a few weeks ago with the hire of Dr. Stacy Ballinger as its founding Director. Stacy came to us from Lee University with extensive experience in career services and student development. This office will provide valuable assistance to our faculty internship coordinators by handling a significant amount of the requisite administrative paperwork and to the overall university by creating an institutional database that will archive our ever growing number of internship experiences, facilitating analysis for various internal and external reporting needs. Further, the office will assist our students by establishing additional, new, and robust internship relationships with agencies, organizations, and companies across and beyond our SWFL region. In addition, Stacy will lead the launch of our exciting new Co-op 6 Program which will pair our best students from across the broad array of disciplines we offer at FGCU, with companies that will employ them for 6 months prior to graduation, pay them well, and hopefully, hire them immediately upon their graduation to join their full-time workforce, thereby furthering our reputation, improving our performance based funding metrics and bringing additional friends and funds into FGCU.

I also want to welcome Dr. Vivek Bhargava who joins the Lutgert College of Business as an Associate Dean. Dr. Bhargava came to us from Alcorn State where he served as Dean of the School of Business and Professor of Finance. As the Lutgert College reaches toward reaffirmation of their AACSB accreditation and expanding its influence toward growing the vitality of regional economic development here in SWFL, Dr. Bhargava will be an enormous asset.

Next, I would like for us to welcome Dr. Clay Motley, who has joined us as Director of Honors, a position previously held by Dr. Sean Kelly. Dr. Motley comes to us from Western Kentucky University where he served as Associate Director for Academics of the Honors College and Department Head of the WKU Honors Academy. Our Honors Program didn’t miss a beat last year under the sturdy, interim leadership of Dr. Nicola Foote. The strength of our current program provides a strong platform for further growth, greater success and broader recognition.
Earlier this calendar year, Dr. Christopher Westley joined FGCU from Jacksonville State University where he held the rank of Professor of Economics. He is an associated scholar at the Ludwig von Mises Institute and he succeeds the Founding Director of the Regional Economics Research Institute, within the Lutgert College of Business, Dr. Gary Jackson, who retired last spring after a phenomenal career with us. His are big shoes to fill, but Dr. Westley has already shown himself to be up to the task.

As most of you know, Mr. Dan Regelski recently retired from his lengthy, inspired, and highly successful leadership as Founding Director of our Small Business Development Center, housed within the Lutgert College of Business. That position is now in excellent hands with the recent hire of Ms. Lois Knox, who most recently held the position of the Assistant Director for Business and Finance for the Florida SBDC Network State Office. In that role, she assisted in the financial management and operational oversight of the Network’s more than 40 centers across the state. Welcome to you Lois. I know that you are already hard at work.

A common theme of my introductions of new members of our leadership team in Academic Affairs is clear. This university is attracting people into key leadership positions who have superb senior leadership experience at other fine institutions and organizations and now want to expand their careers by becoming part of what President Bradshaw has rightfully called, “this phenomenon called FGCU”. That understanding should make us all feel immensely proud.

There are also some internal changes of which you have already been apprised, but I would like to mention briefly in this one annual meeting that brings us altogether as a group. Dr. Sean Kelly will serve for this year as interim Dean of Undergraduate Studies as we engage the search for permanent Dean to fill the void created by the departure of one of our founding faculty, the founding Dean of UGS, Dr. Jim Wohlpart, who left us at the end of last academic year to take the position of Provost at the University of Northern Iowa. While Jim’s many talents will be sorely missed, the strong unit he helped to form and lead will continue to thrive into the future.

In the Provost’s Office, Ms. Tiffany Jackson, formerly my Executive Assistant, will now expand her service to include assisting in the management of important external relationships in a new role, Director of Strategic Initiatives, a position that draws from her breadth of organizational, communication, and analytical skills. Ms. Whitney Longenecker, now also known as Mrs. Whitney Cardenas, has moved into the position previously held by Tiffany. I used to tell groups that I worked for Tiffany in the Provost’s Office. Now I work for both of these ladies. I will point out that Whitney is an alumna of this institution, with a degree in English. Will the English faculty and staff please stand. You done good!! And her promotion is further proof that English majors are exceptionally well trained and do get good jobs!!
Some of you will remember that a couple of years ago, I adopted the practice of using a central theme to serve as scaffolding for my formal annual remarks. (Incidentally, Whitney, the perpetual English major, told me that employing this technique could help me improve my grade). In all honesty, in my first several years here, the use of an explicit theme seemed unwise. “This was a sucky budgetary year” somehow just didn’t sound right. And “the coming year could be even suckier than last year” didn’t seem to embrace our collective hope that the Great Recession would ultimately end, and better days would one day be revealed.

The themes of the past two years were decidedly more upbeat as multiple events began to turn to our favor. This year, my retrospective and prospective analysis led me immediately to my theme for this morning’s presentation, “This was a remarkable year.” Let me explain.

After, quite literally, years of preparation involving many of our faculty, staff, and administration, this past spring, we hosted the SACS-COC visiting team for the purpose of our 10-year reaffirmation of our regional accreditation. Part of the work leading up to that long anticipated visit was the submission, thankfully in electronic form, of over 7000 pages of documentation supporting our compliance narrative. While the final results of that review will not become known to us until January of 2016, I have every reason to believe that we are not only in the clear, but, in simple language, did ourselves proud! I would like to ask Dr. Paul Snyder, my Senior Associate Provost and all the staff of his Office of Planning and Institutional Performance to stand and be recognized for extraordinary service to this institution. Thank you all. I also want to send my sincere thanks to all the many people with us this morning who contributed to our collective effort.

A significant part of our SACS reaffirmation process was the development and implementation of our new QEP, the Quality Enhancement Plan. In short, our QEP blew the visiting team out of the water, and one of them, in an informal comment to me, said that it could serve as a national model. How cool is that?!? I want to provide a special shout-out to Dr. billY Gunnels who held a pivotal role and continues to provide strong, as well as highly energetic leadership for our QEP that I firmly believe will draw substantial attention and respect. Thank you billY. Also, I would like the entire QEP Development Committee to stand and be recognized. Thank you all for an exemplary effort.

As we turned the corner in the last 18 months of preparation for SACS and the QEP, my assessment of the stature of our university indicated to me that we were capable of hitting it out of the park. As a result, I must admit that I added some additional pressure to my senior staff and others of you when I indicated that I did not want this amazing institution, built on so many positive attributes, including environmental stewardship and service learning, to merely clear the bar. I asked that we do all in our power to set the bar and to do it at a level that would herald to all that FGCU had come of age and was one of the finest institutions of higher learning in the entire SACS region. Stay tuned. In January the puff of smoke will
formally exit the chimney. It will be neither black nor white. It will be both cobalt blue and emerald green and I personally believe that the message being declared will be amazing.

In addition the regional accreditation, we currently have specialized accreditations from a total of 15 professional accrediting bodies. While the acquisition of new accreditation gets the limelight, we must never fail to recognize that keeping these specialized accreditations can, in some ways, be more complicated than achieving them initially. Therefore, I want to extend special thanks and acknowledgments to several groups of faculty and staff for their efforts in securing continued accreditation for their programs. First, Professional Golf Management (PGM) was reaccredited by the PGA. Will all those associated with our PGM please stand. Next, our Master’s in Public Administration (MPA) program received a successful outcome from NASPA, its accreditor. Will the members of the MPA program please rise? And finally, will our staff and faculty of Nursing please stand and accept our congratulations on their successful mid-term review by CCNE? Great job by all!

In regard to degree programs, this past year, the new BMT (Bachelor of Music Therapy) and DNP (Doctor of Nursing Practice) programs received approval from our FGCU BOT and the BOG, respectively. Approval of both of these programs was somewhat of a heavy lift, for different reasons. Clearly, we are no longer assured of automatic approval of new academic programs that we choose to bring forward. These efforts have taught us to plan carefully, focus on outcomes that collectively are held in high regard by all constituent groups, and make our case in clear and concise terms, supported by the best data available. I am so pleased that these two newly approved programs will produce graduates who will strengthen FGCU’s contributions to the physical and mental wellbeing of SW Floridians.

In line with many other remarkable events of the past year, certainly our deep involvement with program review along with our local Board of Trustees deserves special note. While I believe that the local media may have over-hyped the process, adding further to the drama, there can be no doubt that the ways in which we measure program performance, student outcomes, institutional efficiency and the rigor of the program review processes now in place were debated energetically. That discourse played out in the public and many of you were there to witness and participate. First, my sincere thanks for all of your efforts. So many staff and faculty worked hard, effectively, and passionately as we developed a lengthy series of outcome metrics comparisons. I would like to recognize one person in particular who epitomized the collective effort, Dr. Glenn Whitehouse, then the Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. I thank your many students who expressed their views with such great passion and elocution. In them, it was certainly not hard to see the signs of the excellent education that you provided to them. What came out of those discussions was a renewed appreciation by all present that we have strong program review processes in place that reflect integrity and authenticity, that value of disciplinary programs of study should appropriately be measured in multiple ways, and that this university is successful, appropriately proud, and
uncompromisingly committed to providing the very best for our students. Perhaps the term remarkable doesn’t do justice as a descriptor of what we witnessed and in which we participated. Perhaps the term truly extraordinary is more apt.

It was a rare day in my life over the past year that I did not have at least a passing thought about performance based funding. And you all heard me talk about it, perhaps incessantly, at virtually every gathering where I had an opportunity to speak with you in small groupings and large. This new paradigm is now the basis of virtually all, new funding directed to all member institutions of the State University System of Florida. As you may remember, a year ago we scored 30 points out of a possible total of 50, earning us a ranking of 6th out of the 11 institutions reporting data. Early in this calendar year, as tidbits of data began to be released to the System from the Board of Governors staff, I worked the numbers to provide some insight as to how we would fare after two prior good years. My calculations, combined with those of Dr. Paul Snyder, suggested we would have a good shot of moving up 20% to 36 total points. But we were wrong. This year, as a result of monumental efforts by all in Academic Affairs, and in other divisions of the university, we raised that score by over 25% to 38 points. Our 6-year graduation rates improved by 6 percentage points to 49%. And our freshman to sophomore retention metric improved by 2 percentage points.

Some of you may remember, four years ago, as part of this annual address, I challenged us as an institution to retain our freshman to become sophomores at a rate of 80%. That rate would place us firmly in the upper echelon of our aspirant list of peer schools. At the time I set 80% as an informal goal, our retention rate was just below 75%. Each and every year since that time we have incrementally improved upon that mark. This fall, it appears that we may achieve a freshman to sophomore retention rate of 79.5%. We are so close. I ask that this coming year we redouble our efforts and break through that important numerical threshold to take our rightful place as a top performing school among our national peer group. While I don’t think that the University of Florida is particularly nervous, I want all in this State to know that we are here, we are working hard and well, and we have the outcomes to prove it. And when a gator turns around anywhere in this state, I want them to see an eagle near the head of the pack, making loud sounds behind them.

With the total score of 38 points, FGCU moved to 5th position in the SUS, surpassing the scores of 6 of our sister institutions, including one the two preeminent universities in the SUS, whose name I choose not to speak (FSU). (Whitney defined that as an acronym and not technically their name, so I am okay.) And while I am willing to accept that their football team could beat the football team that we do not have, they failed to beat us in the single most important competition that defines all institutions of higher learning, the outcomes of our students!! Please give yourselves a rousing round of applause for your amazing achievements on behalf of our students!! This was a remarkable year.
Part of our success in performance based funding was continued significant investment in our professional faculty advisors. Over the past two years we have significantly reduced the ratio of students to advisors from nearly 700:1 all the way down to just above 300:1. We have used the additional funding resulting from performance based funding to further enhance our outcomes and the results cannot possibly suffer from misinterpretation. We are becoming increasingly stronger and better at delivering on our promise of high quality education and our state is taking notice.

Connected to higher retention rates, overall annual degree production set another record, up 7% from the prior year to 2451 for AY 14-15. Along with this positive news, I am also pleased to report that diversification of our student body and faculty/staff continues. Minority hires constituted 24% of new hires in the FY 2015 up substantially from the prior year. Minority faculty and staff constituted 20% of our full-time employees in fall 2014. While this percentage remains essentially unchanged over the prior year, it demonstrates FGCU’s continuing competitive position in attracting and retaining underrepresented faculty and staff. Minority students now account for 30% of the total student population. This is more than double the percentage of 12.6% when the university opened in 1997.

During President Bradshaw’s administration, the number of students belonging to historically underrepresented groups (African American and Hispanic) has seen degree production grow by 129%, among the highest rates of growth within the SUS. Not surprisingly, their proportion of the total degrees awarded annually continues to rise, from 16% of the total baccalaureates awarded in 2008-09 to 25% in 2013-14.

While we have every right to celebrate our amazing successes, we must remain vigilant. There are concerns that I have going forward and we must face them forthrightly with intentionality and skill. After years of growth of our student population at levels that earned us recognition as the fastest growing public university in the United States, we reevaluated several fundamental facts related to the size, complexity, capacity, goals, and challenges as well as stark realities associated with the new SUS funding paradigm. As a result and as you know, last year we reset our student enrollment growth parameters, for at least the next three years, at the rate of between 2 and 3% per annum, with nearly all of that growth coming from increased retention, rather than successively larger entering first-year classes.

Ironically, especially for those of you who have been here for more than three years, and who are in a position to bear witness to the very tight budgets associated with the period of the Great Recession, we are in another tight financial time, caught between slow growth and inability to increase tuition. The marginal additional revenue that we realize from 2 to 3 % growth does not go far when we consider our basic costs of operation. For example, the technology that we all rely on to communicate, teach, conduct research, bring in e-based resources, and perform
routine business operations needs to be refreshed on a regular basis. Additionally, overhead costs including such fundamental necessities as electricity, water, renewal of software licenses and e-library subscriptions, custodial contracts and the like continue to cost incrementally more each year.

So what does this mean for us? We are past the heady days of adding 25 new faculty positions each year, year after year. We are past the luxurious times of using less precise estimates of where these new and replacement faculty need to be deployed in order to meet capacity demands. We are also past the days of assuming that growth in student population will be evenly distributed across all academic disciplinary units. But, we are also past the days of just growing. We now are more intentional with regard to our recruitment of students. We are more intentional about bringing to our institution increasingly better prepared cohorts of students. The good news is that at the same time, we have become increasingly more attractive to the best and brightest of entering freshman as affirmed by the SAT and ACT scores of the two newest cohorts of first-time-in-college (FTIC) students. And FGCU is also more attractive to those students who began their college careers at other institutions and now seek to transfer. Further, and of enormous importance, as I previously mentioned, we retain an ever-increasing proportion of our students, culminating in their walking across our stage to join the ranks of proud eagle alumni.

This year, FGCU and the United Faculty of Florida – FGCU Chapter (UFF-FGCU) renegotiated the entire 2010-2014 Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA). We spent a long, but highly collegial and highly productive period of time at the negotiating table. The results were a series of what we collectively agreed were positive changes for all concerned. These include the streamlining of the faculty offer of employment letter and contract; a timeline for annual evaluation that is in line with the FPED; the addition of an evaluation of progress towards promotion in the employee performance evaluation; and a pre-promotion review as part of the promotion procedure. Also, the FGCU Board of Trustees will no longer be part of the process of granting of promotion. Further, and of great importance, included in that draft CBA language is an increase to base of 3.5 %, or $1,400, whichever is larger, for all eligible faculty, a value equal to the largest raise since 2006-2007. In addition, President Bradshaw recently presented to the Staff Advisory Council (SAC) leadership his intention of providing all eligible university staff with the identical raise. If ratified by the faculty later this month, and the FGCU Board of Trustees on September 8th, the 3-year compounded rate of salary increase would be above 10.3%. This raise, now awaiting ratification as part of the entire CBA, is a direct effort to reward your consistent hard work and its positive outcomes, and reflects the acquisition of additional state funds.

I would like to ask two of our finest staff and faculty members to stand and be recognized. Dr. Beth Elliot and Ms. Jennifer Baker worked tirelessly to lead their respective bargaining teams to a collegial and successful conclusion to a process that has earned for us the statewide reputation for the most collaborative
faculty/administration environment in the SUS. Now I ask that all members of both bargaining teams stand and receive our appreciation for showing us how the heat generated by honest, rigorous discussion can be used to forge important alliances that address shared interests. It was a remarkable year.

As you all know too well, we are desperately in need of a new academic building housing labs, classrooms, and offices for faculty and staff. How and why did we get so tight? This is an important question and it is equally important that we, the faculty and staff of the Division of Academic Affairs, understand the answer. It has been made explicitly clear to us, from the level of the Board of Governors and our own BOT, that approval for new academic buildings, which are built with PECO (Public Education Capital Outlay) funds, will only be granted when there is incontrovertible need, as demonstrated in part by the highly efficient use of all current space. We are there. Our campus master planning consultants have compiled and reviewed all relevant data and, without doubt, we are the most efficient institution in the State University System with regard to this metric. We have expanded to use Fridays at near to the same levels of the other weekdays, a condition that did not exist in the past and an issue that was very publicly pointed out to us by the BOG. We now use Saturdays for some of our classes. And following welcome input I requested and received last year from the faculty senate with regard to the structure of the daily class times, we will work with our staff colleagues, the University Police Department, and the SGA to develop a 30 min earlier start to our day beginning a year from this fall that will allow for an additional meeting time each day.

So why do we not currently have approval for that new building and the funding for initial planning and site work? Certainly it was not for lack of a concerted lobbying effort during this past legislative session. Now in my 8th year as Provost, I have come to realize that most significant projects take more than one year’s effort to obtain approval. We will redouble our efforts leading up to and during the next legislative session. It is also my firm belief that only continued demonstration of seeking maximization of high utilization rates will prove to all observers from all oversight bodies that we not only want a new building, we absolutely need a new building in order to continue to provide the high quality, superlative educational outcomes for which our statewide reputation continues to grow. Did I mention that we outperformed another well-known and highly regarded institution in a straight up, apples to apples, data-driven comparison? You bet we did. No longer are we that little curiosity university, that start-up, or perhaps that up-start. We are FGCU and people are taking notice. All of this positive energy will help our cause to get the building that we need and deserve.

Our Lucas Center for Faculty Development continues to draw more positive national attention. Later this year, its Founding Director, Dr. Linda Serro, and I will present papers at two highly selective national meetings that focus on best practices in higher education, after having already presented at the most recent annual meeting of the AAC&U. The acceptance of these papers at all three of these top professional
meetings speaks volumes about our national leadership related to supporting faculty as teachers. It is with sadness that I acknowledge publicly that Dr. Serro will retire at the completion of this academic year. We will soon engage in the national search for her successor, recognizing that there is only one Linda Serro. How fortunate are we to have had her here, with us, to do all that she has done? Linda, please stand and let us thank you for your tireless efforts to take a concept and bring it to such vital and robust fruition.

Soon after our men's basketball made NCAA history two years ago in an ESPY award winning run to the sweet sixteen, many of you sought me out to express two prominent views. First, we do not want to be known as a sports school, exclusively, and second, that we should make every effort to leverage the positive notoriety that we had received, notoriety that was recently reinforced by our ladies basketball team which made FGCU history by winning in the first round of their NCAA tournament. The intellectual and physical prowess of our scholar-athletes have served this institution well and, without doubt, acted as a springboard to elevate the broader recognition of our academic programs.

In my continued efforts to bring decision making closer to the individual college units, a component of responsibility centered management (RCM), during a summer mini-retreat I asked the Council of Deans to work as a group, in my absence, to review a wealth of data related to all five colleges and the library, and come up with a collective prioritization across the division of Academic Affairs, of all faculty positions to be filled for the fall of 2016. They worked with real-life parameters, not the least of which was the anticipated total FY 2016-17 budgetary allocation to support new faculty hires. I was pleased that the process, which was inherently difficult, was also enormously collegial. I asked them to engage in this planning exercise this for several reasons, not the least of which was to have them, working together as the strategic visioning group within our Division, to come up with decisions based on their granular knowledge of their areas, tempered by an understanding of the comparative needs of all of our college units, and informed by working with their respective leadership teams to come up with the maximum benefit from finite resources. Never before has this important decision making process been performed with this level of direct input from the college units. We should be proud of our Council of Deans and their leadership teams for their efforts that significantly informed my final request for new positions for next fall and that I will soon present to President Bradshaw.

As you may know, target dates for the development, final approval, and implementation of our new 2015-2020 Strategic Plan were delayed as our board of trustees chose to engage in a series of lengthy conversations regarding our vision and mission statements. Here, too, the conversations, held entirely in the sunshine and with benefit of public input from members of the broader FGCU community, were important, expansive, and comprehensive. The PBC, with its complement of faculty, staff, students, and administrative representatives was fully engaged in that process. The results of those conversations will come to fruition on September 8th
when our BOT considers, and I believe, will approve the current draft form of that language. Are there substantial changes? Has the vision and mission of our University undergone appreciable change during this process? I do not believe so. As always, I encourage as many of you who are interested and are free at that time to attend that meeting.

As you also probably know, the New 2015-2020 Campus Master Plan is also being developed at this time and there will be well-advertised opportunities for public comment. I encourage you to be present for those opportunities and to provide your thoughts and your expertise.

Within the next month, we will be fully engaged in searches for two deans positions for the College of Education and for Undergraduate Studies. The process of these searches will follow that used for all recent dean hires, with the final decision substantially informed by those within the respective units.

The full implementation of the QEP will begin this fall and our ability to set that national model that I mentioned earlier will rest on the shoulders of just about everyone in this room. This year we will also implement the new general education curriculum, in part organized around four core competencies: Written Communication; Quantitative Reasoning; Critical Thinking; and Intercultural Knowledge. I am proud of all of our faculty who worked to develop and implement this plan. In particular, I want to ask two of our faculty leaders to rise and be recognized. First, Dr. Kris DeWelde, Associate Dean of UGS and former chair of the General Education Council, and along with her, Dr. Eric Otto, who assumed Kris’s former role as chair of the Gen Ed Council. These two individuals have consistently been at the forefront of the evolution of our general education program.

This coming year we will advance plans for our master’s programs in PA (Physician’s Assistant) and engineering. Also, we are planning to fast-track programs to expand our current minor in supply chain management in the Lutgert College of Business, as well as to add a construction management program that will be shared between the Lutgert College and the Whitaker College of Engineering. Equally exciting will be our efforts to develop a business analytics and informatics program that I hope will serve as a springboard to broader involvement by other colleges in the areas of health and biological informatics.

To help with the launch of some of these programs, we will be partnering with private industry and asking for legislative support from the State. This will mark our first effort to ask for this type of state support. Other universities have used this opportunity with great success. While I am unable to predict whether we will be successful in securing state funds for this purpose, it is of paramount importance to recognize that we have now achieved the critical mass, reputation, and respect of citizens and legislators across the entirety of the state of Florida. We have come of age as a major university and we will now optimize in ways commensurate with our stature.
The past remarkable year was dynamic, complex, strenuous, and sometimes just plain exhausting. What we learned by persevering through heightened levels of scrutiny and accountability, from within and without, taught us and others about who we are as a learning community. There can be no mistake. We have strong processes that provide for accountability. We have substantial data sets that explicitly demonstrate our worth as educators in terms of providing for student success. We know that we need to look for creative solutions to funding that emphasize legitimate partnerships with those organizations that share our goals for our students. We must monitor carefully national trends and local concerns. We will work within new paradigms, knowing that while they challenge us, they should not threaten us. Such was the case with Performance Based Funding.

The past year was remarkable in its many positives for this university. I wholeheartedly appreciate your hard work that had much to do with our successes. I have no doubt that our future will be remarkable in similar and new ways for exactly the same reasons. Welcome to the new academic year and welcome to the wonderful institutional future that we will craft together.

Thank you.