Thank you faculty ... staff ... students ... honored guests ... friends from the community ... thank you all for being here today.

In August, before the semester began, I visited our residence halls during Move-In Day. I welcomed our first-year students in the New Student Opening Ceremony, and was on hand during our special events for students in the Honors Program and the Women in Science and Engineering Program. I talked with lots of students and parents before, during and after these events. I asked them why they chose the University of Nevada, Reno. The most common responses were: a) this is a beautiful, traditional campus, b) the people here have been very helpful and friendly, and c) this is an affordable, high quality university. That special, friendly, positive "feeling" sets this campus apart.

The University is a city of 21,000 people, with about 18,000 students and about 3,000 people doing the jobs of this city, from police services, to people who care for our facilities, to those who recruit and care for the daily needs of our students, to those in primary positions for teaching and research. Taken together, the people at this University represent the most important capital we have. Each person at this University contributes to this positive impression held by our parents and students. It's a clean floor in a building. It's a question answered with a friendly voice and a smile. It's a classroom buzzing with hands-on activities. We are a University made up of people who care, of people who constantly strive for improvement.

One of my favorite times of the year on our campus is Commencement, and one of my favorite sights is seeing the good men and women of buildings and grounds bring perfection to our Quad. Last year I met one of our Facilities staff taking a break on the quad after nearly completing the Commencement set up. He told me, this was his proudest time with the University, getting to participate in the graduation of our students.

Everyone at the University contributes to student graduation and research performance. We have a strong sense of community, collegiality, and purpose at our University. I wish to thank all of you for the hard work, and the sacrifices that you've made during a very trying time. Throughout it all, your innovative input, suggestions and solutions, your creative flexibility and personal resiliency to re-invent what we do and how we do it, have mirrored our institution's core values in the best possible way. Your actions over the past few months truly have honored the memory of our good friend, and late University President, Milt Glick.
Today, I will address three topics. First, I will acknowledge the fiscal realities facing us, and how these realities have re-defined how our University goes about its work. Second, I will assess our University's strengths. Third, I will share with you a vision of how we can, through our already existing values of community, collaboration and collegiality, foster continuing momentum and growth for the future. This is a future that must focus on fulfilling our unique mission, which is to provide the knowledge, expertise and human capital that our state needs.

We must find ways to move on, to grow, to keep moving forward, during a time over the next four years when greatly enhanced state funding cannot be expected. I know we can do this. Let me tell you why.

The economic downturn over the past three years has been felt throughout every aspect of life in Nevada. Our University is no exception. Since 2009, our annual general fund revenue has been cut by $75 million. We've lost more than 600 budgeted positions. We have lost or downsized departments, centers of excellence, administrative services, degree programs, and colleagues, making us a narrower university. Registration fees have increased 56 percent since 2008, including 13 percent this year. State-mandated furloughs and salary reductions have reduced paychecks. It's been a time of great challenge for our campus.

Yet, as we've faced these challenges, we've worked within a strategic framework and philosophy that was established early on in the budget reduction process. It was a framework implemented through the guidelines set forth by the Nevada System of Higher Education. It was shared with the campus, reflecting feedback from our faculty, staff and student leaders. We chose to maintain the University's core strengths. This includes quality degree programs, strong research programs, and maintenance of the cores of our public service functions. We continued to attract more of Nevada's top students. We preserved access for our first generation, low-income, and underrepresented students and support for their success. We preserved most of our grant-based research capacity. This was not an easy process. We cut worthwhile programs and degrees. We lost colleagues and friends. It was difficult and painful.

Nevertheless, this process, along with anticipated flat state budgeting in the future, has re-defined our University. We've responded in very meaningful ways. We've developed new approaches and efficiencies in how we work. Though we are a narrower university, we have been able to sustain our momentum. The work ethic of this university has been outstanding. How outstanding? Consider these:

- Our tenured faculty is teaching 19 percent more fulltime equivalent students than in 2009.
- We've found new ways to deliver education.
  - The College of Business has developed an on-line, executive MBA program that has provided us growth without further state support.
  - The College of Education has rolled four elementary education degrees into one for greater efficiency.
  - The College of Agriculture, Biotechnology and Natural Resources has reached out to other states to partner with its new Range Science Program.
o The college also has consolidated several degrees into its new Agricultural Sciences degree.

- Our student leaders have endorsed and supported the aforementioned increases in registration fees and other fees.
  o They have found innovative ways to save student support services such as the writing, math and tutoring programs.
  o They have started their own work-study and need-based scholarship support programs, to help fellow students.
  o Our students continue to show a sense of selflessness that makes them among the best student body in the country.

- Our support staff has increased its efficiency.
  o Just this fall, with fewer people, our financial aid staff processed $48 million in financial aid packages, compared with the $28 million processed last fall, an increase of 68 percent. The percentage of Pell-eligible students on our campus has more than doubled in the past five years. And to their credit, our staff continues to meet the needs of these students.
  o Recruiting efforts of Student Services and the Colleges have successfully attracted more students statewide with special emphasis on Nevada's brightest students, and maintaining access for first generation and under-represented students. Of course, recruitment and retention is an institution-wide effort, and each of us plays an important role in ensuring our future success in attracting students to this university.
  o All of our colleges have continued to offer, and in some cases expand, summer camps, and athletic coaches have continued with their summer sports camps. These camps provide a natural bridge between our campus and community, one that literally touches thousands of youngsters, and creates ever-increasing opportunities for future potential students to gain experience on this campus.

Thanks to all of you, through this time of re-definition, we have maintained the better part of our momentum.

Now, I would like to identify some of this University's strengths.

- For the second year in a row, U.S. News & World Report has named us a Tier I Institution.
- We now rank among the top 100 public universities in the country.
- We are producing what Nevada needs more than ever before, an educated workforce. Last year, we graduated 3,561 people with degrees, a record.
- Our two largest freshmen classes have come in the last 12 months, with more than 2,700 last fall, and more than 2,900 freshmen this fall.
- With our freshman to sophomore retention rate above the national average, this means we will be producing even more graduates in the future.
- This fall, more than 18,000 students are enrolled, the most in our 137-year history.
- Among them are 46 National Merit and 165 Presidential Scholars, both records.
- In terms of access, more than 26 percent of our student body represents persons of color, the most diverse ever. The roadmap for their success runs right through our campus,
from high school encouragement, to recruitment, to student services, to academic support.

- We have jumped from a 47 percent graduation rate to nearly 53 percent in the past five years. That's a six point increase. We are closing in on the national average of 56 percent among public universities. This milestone speaks directly to the "culture of success" and "culture of completion" that we all have embraced. It also portends an even higher US News and World Report ranking next year.
- We have watched as our students have done amazing things on the national stage, winning regional or national team titles over the past few years, in competitions such as... the American Society of Civil Engineers National Concrete Canoe competition, the Integrated Marketing Competition, the International Genetic Engineering competition, the Amazing Micro Mouse electrical engineering competition, and Parliamentary Debate.

Our faculty continues to excel and continues to enhance our national reputation.

- Our research awards were up 18 percent last year to more than $81 million and total awards for research, service, and financial aid were up 43 percent to nearly $158 million.
- The past year has seen 10 patents created through our Office of Technology Transfer and several patents have been licensed to technology companies to put these discoveries to work.

Infrastructural support is essential to make all of our academic and athletic ventures successful.

- This University has been blessed with prior visions, timing, and philanthropic support to bring new facilities on line in medical research, health sciences education, and math and science education. We see this in faculty and student support facilities like the Mathewson-IGT Knowledge Center, the Joe Crowley Student Union, the Davidson Mathematics and Science Center, and the Donald W. Reynolds School of Journalism expansion.
- We also have two major capital improvement projects ongoing. One is an addition to the Earthquake Engineering Laboratory through which our lab will become the nation's largest and most flexible laboratory to test large-scale structures. The other is the new Living Learning Residence Hall which will further engage our students with our vibrant campus community.
- Next July, we will have the opportunity to move from the Western Athletic Conference to the Mountain West Conference, an association of fine universities with strong academic and athletic programs. Moving to the Mountain West represents an important challenge for us. Yet commitment to Division IA athletics is worth it. Last year's 13 and 1 football season showed us all how a community and campus can celebrate success together through athletics.

This is a substantial list of accomplishments we should applaud.

Against this backdrop, I'd like to talk for a moment about our future. The coming months will be a time to test ourselves, to be creative, to form innovative partnerships and ways of thinking that will continue this move forward. I am hearing from Regents, legislative leaders, and
economists that the financial condition of Nevada is such that we likely are at the bottom of our state revenue concerns, but that we are not likely to recover soon.

As the clouds of uncertainty dissipate, we can individually worry less about future budget cuts and the loss of positions. Now, it is time to move forward, to focus again on building individual, departmental and university reputations for service to our students, our professions, and our communities. As you do your important work, as you are in your classrooms or labs and studios, in your offices, or traveling across the country for a conference, all we ask is that you take the "Big N" with you. This University stands in support of you and your career, just as your work supports this University and its mission to the state, nation and world.

To that end, this administration will communicate regularly about opportunities for success. We will work with Faculty Senate, Staff Employees Council, ASUN, Student Senate leadership, GSA leadership and others to chart the path for moving forward.

Many of the gains I recounted to you earlier were byproducts of a de-centralized approach that has maximized the utilization of the many talents we have on campus. We have become a much more nimble campus, able to react quickly to threats as well as opportunities. Through constant communication, trust and transparency, we will be able to continue the coordination needed to amplify the impact of our work.

This approach mirrors the University's mission that was articulated in our Institutional Strategic Plan that was approved by the Board of Regents in 2009. These are the areas that are at the heart of our mission:

- Preparing the best possible graduates to compete in a global environment through high-quality degree programs.
- Creating new knowledge through basic and applied research, scholarship and artistry in strategically selected fields relevant to Nevada and the wider world.
- Improving economic and social development by engaging Nevada's citizens, communities and governments.
- Seeking ways to reflect and serve the gender, ethnic, cultural, and ability/disability diversity of the citizens of Nevada in our academic and support programs.

To enhance fulfillment of this latter part of our mission, I recently created the Office of Diversity Initiatives to help us more comprehensively realize our diversity goals. I have selected Reginald Stewart to be its first Director. Reg will continue to direct the Center for Student Cultural Diversity, as well, until we can afford a full-time Director.

In the coming months, we will need vision and innovation, accomplishment and achievement, in all of these areas. Becoming more entrepreneurial, finding partnerships, leveraging our expertise in teaching and research for the betterment of the state, reaching out to the community in meaningful ways, will be central to this effort. We will have the opportunity in the next four years to determine how to grow our programs on our own initiative, not expecting significant, additional state funds.
Emphasizing and deepening our significant, cross-college strengths, will allow the University to grow in student numbers, research funding, and reputation, and serve the State of Nevada admirably. Because of this, the University of Nevada, Reno, is a productive community of the highest order, one that can change the lives of Nevadans and steer our state in a more prosperous direction.

What is the University of Nevada, Reno as a productive community?

- We are a doctoral-granting, arts and sciences, research university.
- We are a university devoted to getting Nevada students to a college degree.
- We are a health sciences university.
- We are landscape-scale environmental science university.
- We are a university that is a key partner with public schools.
- We are an economic development university.

Each one of you who participates in these endeavors is contributing to the focus, depth and reputation of our University. These six areas will serve as a foundation for growth in the next four years. Let me explain our opportunities in each of these areas.

First, we are a doctoral-granting, arts and sciences, research university, meaning that we maintain strength and balance across the arts, humanities, and social and natural sciences. This is goal number 1 in our institutional strategic plan. Our teaching, research and community engagement, as I've outlined previously, are all at all-time levels. These gains highlight the quality and depth of our faculty, staff and students, and are reflective of our growth as an institution. By providing educational, research, economic, social and cultural value to our state, you've enhanced our reputation. Your successes in these areas are helping us attract more external funding for research, to ensure more success for our students, to maintain and even expand the excellence of our faculty and staff.

Second, we are a university devoted to getting Nevada students to a college degree. With record enrollments, record levels of accomplished students, and record retention and graduation numbers, the pipeline that is connecting our campus to the future success of our state is full. We have a responsibility to serve our Nevada population by providing access to college for first-generation, low income and ethnically underrepresented students.

These groups have historically lower chances for retention and graduation than students from our majority families with college education in their histories. To include all of our future students in our "culture of completion" requires a great amount of student service and academic support. To maintain access for these students and to continue our goal for increasing rates of graduation, we must do more.

The Center for Student Cultural Diversity and our TRIO and McNair Scholars programs have established impressive retention rates that are worth noting. At the Center for Student Cultural Diversity, 95 percent of the students who use the Center's services are retained by our University. This is a great success story. Each of us has, and most of us have already practiced, the responsibility to see that we do our part in graduating each student who comes to our university.
One of our students, Jarell Green, a first-generation nursing major, was named one of only 20 National Pearson Prize for Higher Education Fellows earlier this year. Jarell has had to overcome great personal adversity to even get to our University. He grew up in a low-income household in Reno. He lost his mother. He has had to work extra jobs to make ends meet. During his time at our University, Jarell has been an exemplary student. Jarell said it best: "The only things that have placed me here today are a dream, hope and a strong work ethic." We cannot waver in our commitment to Jarell and the rest of our students. These young people deserve our best effort. Please join me in acknowledging Jarell. (Jarell Green was present at the address.)

Third, we are a health sciences university. Nevada has among the lowest ratios of health care professional workforce per capita in the nation, including physicians, nurses, public health workers, social workers, speech pathologists, addiction counselors, and dieticians. We now have the facilities in place, but not quite enough faculty, to raise the starting class sizes in medicine and nursing. We must produce more doctors and nurses, and we are positioning ourselves to fulfill this statewide policy initiative. To develop a balanced School of Medicine, it is imperative that we bolster the clinical and translational research capacity of the School. This will require development of a support capacity and dedication of portions of time of academic physicians for clinical research and instruction. Complementarities exist for the other health sciences to participate in clinical medical research, as well.

With an increased infrastructure, thanks to the opening of the Center for Molecular Medicine, the William N. Pennington Health Sciences Building and our continued efforts to develop a medical campus in Las Vegas, we are in a strong position to contribute to a vast improvement in how health care is delivered in this state.

Fourth, we are a landscape-scale environmental science university. The University of Nevada, Reno plays a key role in environmental and earth sciences for Nevada. We have cooperative faculty groups across the University, ranging from Art, to Geography, to Environmental Sciences, working to protect and enhance the clarity and beauty of Lake Tahoe, and to protect, utilize, and enhance the vast public range and forest lands of the Great Basin. The University serves as a Great Basin regional leader of the Cooperative Eco-System Studies Unit, a group of universities and federal agencies working together to sustain the sensitive, vast, arid environment of the Great Basin.

Expansion of the Mining Engineering program, with mining industry support, and development of an online, executive MBA program, represent clear examples of meeting the mining industry's professional needs. Consolidation of programs in the earth sciences within the Mackay School of Earth Sciences and Engineering also has the potential to build the reputation of the University for its full, cohesive set of earth sciences capabilities.

Fifth, we are a university that is a key partner with our school districts. Our work with public schools and community colleges to create alignment to smooth the pathway from primary through college graduation is becoming increasingly important. The Nevada System of Higher Education is beginning efforts statewide to align public school preparation of the college-ready
graduating senior to better prepare students for college entry and reduce the necessity for remedial preparation after high school.

Our University is taking a leadership role, along with our partners in the Washoe County School District and Truckee Meadows Community College. Washoe County is implementing Accuplacer Exams in October for all seniors, and TMCC and we are designing contributing remedial courses in the high schools and summer work at the Redfield Campus to encourage preparation before fall, 2012 enrollment. NSHE is working with all 17 school districts to implement mandatory ACT testing in the junior year of high school so schools can use the senior year of high school for college preparation for those likely to be college bound. All of this effort will help Nevada reverse the trend of not producing enough high school graduates or graduates who are not prepared for college.

We are connecting with K-12 in other meaningful ways as well. Over the past decade, the Dean's Future Scholars Program in the College of Education has helped its low-income, at-risk participants graduate from local high schools at a higher rate than the district's average, up to 80 percent. More than 100 of its participants have gone on to college, including Leslie Anne Serra. Leslie Anne joined Dean's Future Scholars as a sixth grader. In 2009, Leslie Anne became the program's first University graduate. Today, she is pursuing her master's degree and training our University students to become mentors for Dean's Future Scholars. I would like to acknowledge Leslie Anne's inspirational story and her work at our University. (Leslie Anne Serra was present at the address.)

And finally, we are an economic development university. Our governor has indicated that economic development and jobs are at the top of his agenda. With expenditures of about $500 million, we provide the ultimate "value added" through workforce development, as we continue to churn out record numbers of college-educated graduates into the Nevada workforce. A recent Chronicle of Higher Education article indicated that less than 22 percent of Nevadans have bachelor's degrees. Another recent study projects that by 2018, 63 percent of U.S. jobs will require some kind of advanced training or degree.

The state needs us, not only to provide the graduates who will power the new Nevada economy in alternative energy and sustainability, but to provide the continuing foundation of the business, engineering, mining and knowledge industries that are crucial to diversifying our economy. We're doing our part in this regard. Last year we produced more than 3,500 graduates, an all-time record. Every year, our graduates become Nevada's leaders in business and medicine, in health and government, in mining and gaming, in the arts and in athletics, in communications and environmental sustainability, in science and engineering.

There is also a "quality of life" aspect to what we do. We provide northern Nevada with a key catalyst for economic development through the arts and culture that we produce on our campus. This culture of creativity influences more than the landscape of our campus through performances and presentations, through recitals, festivals and exhibits. It reaches out to our community, and makes the Reno area a more desirable place to live and to do business.
The editors of Kiplinger's magazine recently ranked the top 10 most livable cities in the U.S. The top five were cities featuring major universities.

Three attributes characterized these most livable cities: smart people, great ideas and collaboration.

Let me say this again:
Smart people.
Great ideas.
Collaboration.

We stand ready with local government and civic leaders to make our region a university-centered community.

I'd like to conclude today's visit with a simple message. Clark Kerr, one of the towering figures of American higher education, conducted a study in the 1990s that found funding for higher education in this country has always increased. This explains why, when coupled with the Morrill Act of 1862 and the G.I. Bill following World War II, the United States became the greatest industrialized nation in the world. And this gives great context to what we have just experienced at this University. This has been an historic time, one of soaring institutional milestones, and sad days where we've lost degree programs, friends, and colleagues.

Through your daily actions and our timeless sense of teamwork that runs so strongly through this beautiful campus, you've set us on a path that will define our future. You've demonstrated a commitment to improve as evidenced by our impressive gains in research and student success. We realize that at this university, though some may argue otherwise, we are not a cost at all to our state. We are an investment. This University is the wisest investment any of us shall ever make in our lifetime.

To all of the good people who bring this University to life each and every day for the citizens of Nevada, I wish to thank you. To paraphrase James Russell Lowell: It's not what we've given on this campus, though what we've given has been substantial; it's what we've shared that has gotten us to this point.

The story of this University has been about our people, all of our people, who have proudly shown our community and our state the power of the possible, the power of what can be. Thanks to all of you, this proud, distinguished 137-year-old institution continues to find the right momentum. Thanks to the good people of our University, we are, and always will be, moving forward.

Thank you.