Good Morning. It’s good to be with you. I’ve chosen this morning not to give the traditional “State of the University” address for one simple reason—I’m not qualified to deliver it! Yesterday marked my one month anniversary of being back at UNC Charlotte after eight years in Wyoming, and it has been a whirlwind month of meeting new people and learning new things.

Some of you may remember that when I served as provost here I would make a rather extended set of remarks, sometimes rivaling former President Bill Clinton in my attention to every detail of University administration and academic planning that I thought might capture your interest. After having served as a president for eight years, I hope that I have learned one thing—sometimes less is more.

When I was a young assistant professor at UC Davis some years ago, I learned this lesson the hard way. A colleague conducted a survey of her students and asked the question: If you had one hour to live, what would you choose to do and why? One of her students had said that if he had one hour to live, he would like to listen to one of Professor Dubois’ lectures. When asked why, he said: “Well, when Dubois talks for an hour, it seems like an eternity!”

I should say I love being here. I’m amazed at the changes we’ve seen not only in the physical landscape of the campus but also in the programmatic landscape. You should be very proud of what has happened here, recognizing that this institution is celebrating this year only its fortieth anniversary as a four-year institution. I hope also that you’ll be equally excited about what can happen here and, with your continued dedication, will happen here.

Lisa and I are thrilled to be back. We love the Charlotte community. We love the “big house.” That commute to get home at night is a bear, but I’ll make it work.
For the next six months or so, my primary concern is to listen and learn. There have been too many changes for me to presume that I understand the institution or its place in the community well enough to speak just yet about future initiatives.

When I left, there were fewer than 15,000 students; this fall we will have close to 20,350.

When I left, there were about 725 faculty members; this fall we have nearly 200 more. Indeed, many of the young whippersnappers who earned tenure during my time here are now the grizzled senior faculty.

And, likewise, the number of staff has increased by more than 300.

When I left, the campus had 1.9 million square feet of buildings and classrooms; today we have nearly 2.6 million square feet under roof.

When I left, the campus had completed a successful private fundraising campaign of $32 million; this fall we will celebrate the completion of a $115 million campaign. We’ve gone from raising under $4 million a year in private gifts to over $30 million this year.

In the years I have been gone, competitively-awarded research has grown from just under $10 million per year to more than $22 million; our total research funding this past year reached nearly $27 million.

In a time when higher education has had to deal with the stresses of enrollment pressure and squeezed state appropriations, this is an impressive record of growth and accomplishment.

So, there is much for me to learn and to re-learn. And I don’t plan to rush. There is time to do it right. I plan to visit broadly with the campus community and the Charlotte community over the next several months to identify the strategic issues that will need to be addressed in the years ahead. I anticipate formulating some ideas over the fall and vetting them with the Trustees near the time of our holiday break. By the time of my formal installation in February as Charlotte’s fourth chancellor, I should be in a position to speak with you again about the future of this campus as I see it.

This does not mean that no decisions will be made until February. Decisions have to be made every day. But I’m going to do my best to get a good sense of the big picture before significant new initiatives are announced.

And all of you are certainly part of that process. No institutional vision can be the product of just one person—it must be the vision of a community about what they value and what they wish to achieve.

And, in the end, I see it as highly unlikely that UNC Charlotte needs to craft a new vision. UNC Charlotte has a vision. For the past sixteen years, under Jim Woodward’s extraordinary leadership, UNC Charlotte has aspired to become a major research
university fully responsive to the needs of its undergraduate students and the larger community that it serves.

What might most be needed is to face down some strategic institutional choices that may be necessary to achieve that vision and to devise some specific strategies to overcome barriers to its achievement.

So my commitment to you over the next several months, and hopefully throughout the time I am here—is to listen.

And my commitment to you is for the administration here to do its business in a certain way—open, transparent, consultative, and receptive to constructive suggestions and even constructive criticism.

This does not mean that we will always agree—I’m used to making the difficult calls on major issues and don’t expect that this will change here. But as I make those decisions, on your behalf, I want to make sure that I’ve heard what members of the campus community have to say.

I have given my senior administrative team a list of what I’ve called “Internal Operating Principles and Values” that I expect of them and of myself as we conduct the University’s business. For your information, I’ve placed a copy of this document on the web in what I call the “Chancellor’s Outbox.” The “outbox” will be a place where I can post items of interest that relate to work I do or things I may say about the University. My remarks today, for instance, will be the second posting in the Outbox, joining the statement of “Internal Operating Principles and Values.”

My agenda for learning over the next several months is broad:

• I need to get to know our Board of Trustees. Seven of our thirteen Trustees are new to the Board. And with the opportunity presented by having new Board members and a new chairman, Mr. Mac Everett, we hope to stimulate a discussion with the Board about how they are structured to help this University succeed. It is an extremely impressive list of community leaders, with expertise in business and finance, politics, social services, health care, fundraising, and community-building. We must take advantage of that incredible talent.

• I need to fully understand our academic plans. Although I certainly remember the first academic plan (and I know all of you look back upon those days with fondness!), we are several generations beyond that today. Those plans must be focused, followed, and flexible as new opportunities arise.

• I’m learning more about our programs to support students, both in and outside of the classroom, to enhance recruitment, retention, and graduation. It is a student body that is much more “traditional” in its make-up than when I left, but we still have an impressive
enrollment of non-traditional adult students and a growing numbers of graduate students who require support to achieve their educational goals.

• UNC Charlotte is a much more racially and culturally diverse place than when I left, but I need to learn more about our efforts to increase the diversity of our faculty, staff, and student body and to create an inclusive campus community. And, of course, we need to assess whether new approaches or organizational arrangements might help us be more effective in this area.

• I’ll spend some time learning about our budget capacity and the competitiveness of our salary structure to ensure that we can recruit and retain a diverse and talented faculty and staff.

• I have begun the process of visiting all of the new buildings on campus that I have not been in before, and in understanding our long-term plans and priorities with respect to capital construction.

• With UNC Charlotte having just completed a major fundraising campaign, it is an opportune time to examine our infrastructure for development, including the role of the UNC Charlotte Foundation, and to determine how we will sustain success in private fundraising until the next major campaign is initiated.

• This university, young as it is, has produced over 75,000 alumni. I am very interested in the ongoing effort to engage this valuable group of supporters into the life of the campus and to secure their help in building this institution.

• UNC Charlotte has always had a robust set of relationships and interactions with the business and non-profit community in this region. I need to better understand how we have fully capitalized upon those opportunities and where we may have additional work to do. In particular, I want to look at how we present ourselves to the public through the various media, including our presence on the web.

• I’m interested in understanding better our economic development initiatives, including the roles played by the Charlotte Research Institute, the Ben Craig Center, and the University Research Park.

And in that regard, just a quick bit of editorializing—or, more accurately--Woodwardizing. I’m sure that most people in Charlotte are aware that this region has spent a lot of time and money analyzing its future for economic growth. Regardless of the study, all of them point to one inescapable fact—UNC Charlotte’s success as an institution is critical to the economic, social, and cultural vitality of the greater Charlotte region.

UNC Charlotte’s development as a research institution is not, as some might characterize it, part of the “academic arms race” or some selfish need for UNC Charlotte to feel like it
has to move up the academic pecking order. It is, rather, a recognition that the University is a critical component of any successful strategy of regional economic development.

OK, I feel better now.

• Back to my learning agenda, I’ll spend some time getting to know University City and our place in it, and the potential value that city transportation initiatives may play in the growth of UNC Charlotte and the services we provide. We ignore at our peril the condition and habitability of the community within which we live.

• I plan to learn more about our intercollegiate athletic programs and their potential, not only to enhance the college experience of our student-athletes and students generally, but to effectively market the University to our community. A major part of that effort depends upon success in competition, and a good part of that depends upon having an athletic program that is fully funded up to NCAA scholarship limits.

For those of you who remember me from my time here before, I have not learned to become less vocal with respect to the judgment of basketball referees.

Although a newspaper reporter called me on my first day in office, I do not know the answer to the “F” question. Now, don’t let your imaginations run wild—the “F” question relates to “Football.”

As I told my Wyoming colleagues on several occasions, the late Clark Kerr, former President of the University of California, may have had it right—that a university president or chancellor has to do only three things to be successful: to provide parking for the faculty and staff, sex and beer for the students, and a winning football team for the alumni.

And I realize that, at best, I am only “two for three” right now. So that issue will be looked at in time but, quite honestly, right now is not the right time. There are higher priorities for our time and attention in this first year, including the quality of our academic programs of teaching and research and the effectiveness of our service to this region.

• In addition to athletics, we’ll take a look at our administrative organization to see whether we are effectively structured. While I was sorry to lose our Vice Chancellor for Development and University Relations, Mr. Tom Martz, to the University of Alabama, his departure does give me an opportunity to look at how that Division is structured and to decide whether any changes are desirable.

• I’ll also be looking within my own office. I’m sure most of you are aware of the tragic circumstances that led to the departure of Chancellor Woodward’s Executive Assistant. For the moment, I do not plan to fill that position on a permanent basis but to consider where it may fit within my overall administration. Ms. Donna Brady, who has stepped up
very capably to assume many of those duties, has agreed to continue to do so until I decide what I wish to do.

• Over the next few weeks, I will also be considering changes in how I receive advice from the team of senior administrators that I work with most directly on the Executive Staff. As those changes occur, I’ll keep you apprised.

• And finally, Lisa and I will be reviewing the Chancellor’s social schedule and how the new residence is used to advance the purposes of the University. You will notice some changes this year in some of the events traditionally hosted by the Chancellor.

• Whenever we spend money on entertainment or celebration at the University, I want to make sure that we are advancing one or more of three goals: to strengthen the political and community relationships essential for UNC Charlotte to secure its future; to raise private funds to support our academic, student support, and athletic programs; and to celebrate the accomplishments of faculty, staff, and students.

• Some traditional events will be discontinued—but others will take their place. For instance, I look forward to welcoming the elected representatives of our faculty, staff, and student body to the residence this fall not only to recognize their service to the University, but also to talk about how each of these groups can help strengthen the University’s political and community relationships.

Let me close simply by saying it is wonderful to be back. Jim and Martha Woodward are on a well-deserved Alaskan cruise and could not be here, but Lisa and I are fully aware of the treasure they have left in our care. And I know that Jim and Martha would be the first to acknowledge that what they accomplished would not have been possible without the work of their predecessors--E.K. and Dorrie Fretwell, Dean and Martha Colvard, and our founder Ms. Bonnie Cone. This campus has a long tradition of chancellors who ended their careers here and left this a much better place than when they arrived. We’ll do our best to keep that tradition intact.