Good morning, and welcome again. This is my opportunity to talk with you about the general state of the University and to outline the most significant work ahead for the coming year by all of our University divisions in addition to what the Provost has outlined for Academic Affairs.

As you know, Lisa and I have decided that it is time to turn over the keys to the Chancellor’s Residence on June 30, 2020, and to pursue a new adventure or two in the years ahead. We do so with anticipation, knowing that we have our health, our twin grandsons born in March, our three fabulous grown children and their significant others, and a brand new puppy. Those of you who might be familiar with my golf game would not be surprised by his name: Bogey. To be perfectly honest, we should have named him Double Bogey.

There are uncertainties for sure. Lisa says she is not convinced that I will be happy when I’m not in charge of something. That may be true, but I’m pretty sure I can teach that puppy to heel, and I look forward to offering some of what I know about higher education to support the professional development of others who are considering taking on leadership roles in these large and complex institutions. And, Lisa, you have bigger things to be concerned about than me! What are you going to do when you can’t plan a reception for 200 people? Don’t you worry about the quality of the public art in Charlotte when you are no longer a member of the Charlotte Public Art Commission? And what will both of us do when we actually have to change the light bulbs in our own house?

Life will be good, but nothing will compare to leading this amazing institution, which I have said on many occasions is one of the great success stories in higher education in the post-War era. And this experience has been everything that Chancellor Jim Woodward said it was when he held the office—by far the best job in higher education. And, because of that, the upcoming search will attract an amazing pool of talented individuals who will want to become only the 5th chancellor and the sixth leader in our amazing 75 year institutional history which will be celebrated in 2021.

In the interest of time, I am not going to give the usual level of attention that I do to reviewing all of the accomplishments of the past year or our plans for this coming year. We need to leave ample time for questions and answers, including those related to the search for a new chancellor and our intended future actions with respect to campus safety and security.
There can be no question that our first obligation this fall is to ensure that all members of the campus community feel safe and secure to do their best work. I have outlined the steps we have taken in that regard in a statement available on the campus website, including an enhanced police presence on campus and at the light rail station, additional active assailant response training, increased security for large events, additional safety information to be posted in our classrooms, and continuing attention to counseling and other support services for faculty, staff, and students. We also hope to take the lessons of our own internal review of the campus response to the shooting on April 30 and the recommendations of an independent external review we have commissioned to strengthen our security posture as may be necessary.

I am confident that this campus community will pull together in ways that allow us to continue to deliver upon the component parts of our primary mission as North Carolina’s urban research university without being paralyzed by the fear created by one determined armed assailant. With that said, we do not want what happened here on April 30 to be forgotten. I have confidence that the Remembrance Commission that I established in May will give us thoughtful recommendations about how best to memorialize what happened here. That tragedy will always be part of our history, as will Riley Howell, Reed Parlier, the four students who suffered physical injuries, the 45 students who ran for their lives from Kennedy 236, countless others who were locked down on campus for hours, and a larger community of parents, family members, and friends who worried about their loved ones while the scope of the tragedy unfolded in real time. Nor do we want to forget the reaction of the larger community of people in the region, in North Carolina, and indeed from across the country which embraced us in their hearts. We learned from the Charlotte community—perhaps for the first time—that they now see us as “their” public university. Our declaration for this year—We Are All Niners—speaks to the shared pain of April 30, but also to our shared commitment to recover, remember, and advance UNC Charlotte to even higher levels of distinction.

Of course, the tragedy of April 30 came at the very end of our academic year and it could easily overshadow all that was accomplished by our talented administrators, faculty, staff, and students. What I can tell you is that our institution continues to perform at a high level in terms of the quality of our teaching, research, creative activities, and community engagement. Public recognitions of members of the campus community and our alumni for their significant contributions to their professions and their communities continue to pile up, while our undergraduate and graduate students continue to distinguish themselves in our classrooms, in studios and laboratories, in athletic competition, and in service to the community.

We continue to be blessed in the citizen governance of UNC Charlotte by a wise and experienced Board of Trustees led by our new chair, Mike Wilson, who joins us today and will be available to answer your questions during the session immediately following my remarks. Nine members of the Board with multiple years of experience will be joined by three excellent new trustees—Christine Katziff of Bank of America, David Mildenberg of Business North Carolina, and Carlos Sanchez of AT&T. And I know, based on his excellent service as SGA Vice President, that Chandler Crean will serve us strongly as a trustee based on his new position as the SGA President.
Provost Lorden has detailed for you the excellent work underway in and planned for the Division of Academic Affairs, a Division she has led with distinction since 2003. Let me make particular note of the critical role that the Provost plays in recruiting the academic leadership of this institution. This year alone, she was responsible for filling the positions of Vice Chancellor for Research and Economic Development, the Dean of the College of Arts and Architecture, and the Dean of the College of Health and Human Services—and the results speak for themselves with the appointments of Vice Chancellor Rick Tankersley, Dean Brook Muller, and Dean Catrine Tudor-Locke.

We will look to the leadership of these new deans and our outstanding cadre of sitting deans, department chairs, and program leaders to continue to identify and advance proposals for new academic programs that will meet the needs of this city and this region for higher education, including our new M.Ed. in Urban Education and Ph.D. in Civil Engineering, as well as proposals for a School of Data Science, new baccalaureate programs in Women and Gender Studies and Writing, Rhetoric, and Digital Studies, and a new master’s program in Computer Engineering, among others.

We will also look to our vice chancellors and deans to continue to hire and support excellent university administrators who make this one of the most effectively managed universities in the country. This year alone, we lost several important associate vice chancellors or equivalent administrative officers to retirement, many with ranges of 30-40+ years of service at UNC Charlotte. And we had a couple of vacancies created when talented UNC Charlotte administrators were given opportunities at other institutions. Personally, I worried a great deal about the loss of institutional memory with the departure of people like Jim Hoppa in Student Affairs (36 years), Sherrie High in the Budget Office (34 years), Keith Wassum in Business Affairs (40 years), and Kim Whitestone in Athletics (28½ years). With that said, we have been able to recruit nine extremely able individuals to fill vacant and new positions in the mid-management of this institution. When you hear the names of John Bogdan in Safety and Security, Sujit Chemburkar in Student Affairs, Beth Crigler in Advancement, Steven Dunham in Risk Management, Chris Fuller and Ragean Hill in Athletics, Ken Smith in the Budget Office, Rich Steele in Business Services, and Jon Varnell in Facilities Management, you can have confidence that we are in good hands in the years ahead.

Our physical infrastructure continued to develop this year, with the completion of the renovation of the academic core, the Belk Plaza, the North Tryon entrance, and the Gage Undergraduate Admissions Center, among others. This next year will see the completion of the University Recreation Center in early January, and continued progress on both the new Science Building and the UNC Charlotte Marriott Hotel and Conference Center, both of which will be completed in 2021. I will no longer be Chancellor, of course, but I’m counting on the 5th Chancellor to make sure that the 4th Chancellor and his wife stay in the Chancellor’s Suite at the time the hotel is dedicated!

We will also continue our work on replacing Moore (residence) Hall, and will make a final decision on the future fate of Sanford (residence) Hall. And although all plans are subject to change within a leadership transition, we will work with the Trustees this year to make further progress with respect to the 2021-2025 Capital Facilities Plan, our working document for repair and
renovation. We have multiple facilities challenges and all of them require money to be properly addressed. Fortunately, pending the resolution of the current budget impasse between the General Assembly and the Governor, we are pleased to see that the budget under consideration includes a long-term commitment of $45M to renovate the Burson and Cameron buildings after the Science Building has come online. At the same time, we will need to be creative in the use of available state repair and renovation funding and our own resources to address significant challenges in some of our older facilities, including McEniry, Colvard, and the Cone Center.

As I think I mentioned last year at this time, we will need to continue to work on making our space utilization more efficient. The many small space silos that we have around campus are certainly convenient to the local users, but they don’t make a lot of sense from the perspective of meeting our overall needs. For example, consider the designated conference rooms on campus. Our 253 conference rooms consume, in the aggregate, over 80,000 square feet of space. How much space is that? If these conference rooms were all in the same building, it would be larger than the current assignable space in Macy, Kennedy, Garinger, Denny, and Winningham—combined.

One of the major challenges that will face us this year relates to our budget which will be perhaps the most constrained of any since the Great Recession. Part of why we will have a constrained budget this year is related to changes mandated by the General Assembly in how enrollment change funds are calculated and then allocated to the campuses by the UNC System Office. Converting over from a methodology based on projected enrollments to one based on actual enrollments has meant that there is a one-year “gap” year in which no new enrollment increase monies are distributed to any campus. New enrollment funding will not be available until the fall of 2020.

But the more significant concern with respect to our budget relates to our actual enrollment this fall and moving into spring. Beginning in the days immediately following the shooting, about 160 students who had previously told us that they intended to enroll at UNC Charlotte in the fall decided to go elsewhere. It doesn’t seem possible to conclude that anything other than the shooting on April 30 caused these students and their parents to rethink their plans. Although we extended our enrollment commitment deadline from May 1 to May 15, we also saw other institutions opening up their waitlists for additional students. And for reasons we do not yet fully understand, the enrollment of new transfer students has declined.

Overall, when all the numbers are in, we expect our enrollment to be down significantly from last fall. That has a consequence both for the amount of tuition and fee revenue we’ll be able to collect this year, but also the appropriation that will be calculated next fall on the actual enrollments we have at that time.

Obviously, this situation is one we want to both monitor and understand as it will affect our recruitment strategy for spring of 2020 and the following fall semester. We will also want to understand the budgetary consequences and to develop options for managing a shortfall. I think most of you know that we have relied significantly upon enrollment increase dollars to fund a variety of initiatives, including the allocation of more than $29.4M to augment employee salaries in the absence of significant state-funded salary increases, and the use of enrollment dollars for one-time uses such as facility repair and renovation. For instance, from FY13 to FY 17, we spent
nearly $80 million on repair and renovation projects. Using our carryforward authority of enrollment increase funding and other one-time savings from our operating budget, the campus funded nearly $66M (84.6%) of these needs, with the state funding only about $13M (16.4%).

Beyond the items I have mentioned here this morning thus far, let me mention some of the more important initiatives originating within our administrative divisions.

Provost Lorden has already given you a full run-down for Academic Affairs, but let me make special mention of the importance of the BerryDunn assessment of our IT organization.

Within the Division of Information Technology and, indeed, for the entire campus, the largest issue this year is the resolution of the question of what our IT organization might look like in the future. While I think that some of the expressed concerns about the process we have used are not founded in fact, I also think it is fair to say that, for purposes of discussion, I pushed BerryDunn to challenge the campus with a very centralized model for the delivery of IT services. It’s pretty clear now that I was successful in scaring the bejesus out of many of you. I have heard those expressions of concern and I am now leaning toward a middle ground that achieves many of the goals of the organizational analysis while ensuring that IT services continue to be responsive to the needs of the campus community.

In the next few weeks, I will issue a draft decision for one last round of your evaluation and feedback. I will be giving you about two weeks to respond, so please give that document your earliest attention when you receive it. It will not be helpful to me for you to say that you are opposed to all change in our IT organization. It will be helpful for you to assess whether the reorganization proposed, while perhaps not your preference, nevertheless has a reasonable chance of improving the effectiveness and efficiency of our collective IT resources.

Business Affairs, under the leadership of Vice Chancellor Beth Hardin, will be leading the refinement of the 2021-2025 Capital Facilities Plan, managing the development of options related to a possible budget shortfall, and coordinating the work of the independent external review group hired to assess our readiness for the April 30 shooting and our response thereafter. Beth and her staff will also be intimately involved with the oversight of the permanent financing of the UNC Charlotte Hotel and Conference Center.

Student Affairs, led by Vice Chancellor Kevin Bailey, has a long list of “to do’s” this fall, but heading the list is working with Chartwells, Auxiliary Services, and subject matter experts within the faculty and the student body to eliminate food insecurity at UNC Charlotte. Bailey will also be working with the General Counsel’s office to figure out how best to address students’ interest in having legal services available to them. Student Affairs and Academic Affairs will also work in tandem on the development of a year-long orientation process for our first year freshmen and transfer students. Vice Chancellor Bailey will also lead the planning for the on-campus remembrance event on April 30.

Our new Division of Institutional Integrity just completed its second year under the guidance of Vice Chancellor and General Counsel Jesh Humphrey. Institutional Integrity encompasses a broad range of administrative areas, including Legal Affairs, Title IX, Internal
Audit, Ethics and Compliance, and Enterprise Risk Management, a function added just this year with the hiring of Steven Dunham. Each of those areas has a detailed agenda for the coming year but among the most important are new educational efforts to help faculty, staff, and students understand the administration of our free speech policies, and similar efforts to deliver annual Title IX training for academic departments and athletic teams.

Our Division of University Advancement is led by Vice Chancellor Niles Sorensen and includes responsibilities for our private fundraising, alumni affairs, campus communications, and our external governmental and community relations. With the Exponential Campaign currently at about $190M, we expect to pass our $200M goal during the upcoming year prior to the formal end of our five-year campaign on June 30, 2020. Using the momentum of passing our goal, Niles and his team will initiate planning for the celebration of our 75th anniversary year. Finally, Niles and the communications staff, led by our new chief communications officer, Colleen Penhall, will be launching our “We Are All Niners” branding campaign throughout the city and the region, most notably at Charlotte-Douglas International Airport.

My Special Assistant for Constituent Relations, Betty Doster, also has a full plate for the coming year, with continuing attention to build support and strengthen relationships with the Board of Governors, elected officials at all levels, and business and non-profit organizations. In a difficult legislative session, Betty did a fantastic job of working with the System Office and her campus legislative relations colleagues to help secure many of the UNC system’s most important policy priorities, as well as to obtain a long-term commitment from the General Assembly to renovate the Burson and Cameron buildings. Of course, acting upon that commitment awaits the legislative and executive branches working out their current budget impasse. While we wait, Betty will forge ahead with a special assignment as co-chair (with Professor Eric Heberlig from the Department of Political Science and Public Administration) of the campus-wide task force that will lead our engagement with the Republican National Convention in August, 2020 under the umbrella of the 49er Democracy Experience. She and her team are already hard at work on this event, which I’ll be watching with interest—from Georgia!

In Athletics, we have watched the whirlwind of change being orchestrated by Athletic Director Mike Hill since his arrival in March of 2018. He has hired five new head coaches and some key senior staff, including Ragean Hill as our senior woman administrator. Mike has launched an ambitious planning process to envision the athletic facilities we need for the future and will also be working this year to refresh the athletic brand. Last year, under Mike’s leadership, Athletics set a new record for private giving. We look to see that private fundraising success grow with the success we anticipate with our new coaches. The excitement around new Head Football Coach Will Healy will be on full display when we host our first-ever Thursday night football game just two weeks from now on August 29 at 7:30 p.m. against Gardner-Webb University. We anticipate a packed stadium with all of you in attendance. I gave Mike only one piece of guidance for the coming year: “Just win, baby!”

As I close today, let me say that Lisa and I are happy that we can leave UNC Charlotte in good shape and on our own terms. As you have seen in higher education generally and in the UNC system in particular, that is sadly often not the case, and the uncertainty associated with these leadership positions is obviously not good for the individuals concerned but, in my opinion, it is
not good for the institutions they serve. A rather stunning statistic is that since I began my tenure as chancellor in 2005, there have been 64 chancellors in the 17-campus UNC system, with 12 campuses having been served by 4 or more chancellors, including one campus having been served by 6. I’ve often quoted the late Clark Kerr, President of the University of California, who lost his job because of politics. Kerr said he left his presidency the way he had entered it—“fired with enthusiasm.” As Lisa and I leave, we are every bit as enthusiastic about our work at UNC Charlotte as we were in 2005, satisfied with what we’ve accomplished with your help, but also looking forward to controlling our own calendars and recapturing some of the benefits of a private life. I was just 46 years old when I became the University of Wyoming’s president in 1997 (and Lisa, of course, was much younger) and I will have served as a campus chief executive officer for 23 years as of next June, 15 of them here. That’s a long time. It’s time for a change—for us and, more importantly, for you.

I ask that you give your next chancellor the same amount of support and encouragement that you have given me over the years. The culture of UNC Charlotte has always been one of cooperation and collaboration, rather than confrontation. Even in the difficult times, as we saw in the depths of the Great Recession, we have pulled together rather than being pulled apart. Together, we have been committed to transparency, in dialogue and in decision-making. That’s been the case since Bonnie Cone led Charlotte College and through the lengthy tenures of our chancellors—Dean Colvard, E.K. Fretwell, and Jim Woodward. Longevity in the chancellor’s office is not a commentary so much on the skills of the chancellor as it is on the culture of the institution and its commitment to shared governance. Shared governance actually works here.

This next year will have some highs and some lows, for sure. We might have some budget and enrollment challenges. We will want to properly remember April 30—the victims and their families. And we will want to energize ourselves for the future, something I’m sure will accompany the selection of the 5th chancellor. Lisa and I will be here to take one last lap around the track with you and to thank you for our time here.

Today, I do want to share some important news with the faculty. As many faculty members know, I always tell pretty much the same set of jokes at each commencement ceremony, including one about how the Old Bell must be rung 8 complete times as we close out each ceremony, once for each of our academic colleges and once for the Graduate School. And to ring a bell eight complete times requires that you actually have to ring it 16 times—because each ringing of a bell requires one “ding” and one “dong.” Well, I have only 7 commencement ceremonies to go between the fall commencement and the ceremonies of next spring. So, spoiler alert: sometime, late in the afternoon of May 9, 2020, I will officially retire that joke. By my calculation, I will have told it 68 times since 2005. You have always laughed at it. I’m counting on you to do so that one last time!

Thank you very much.