Good afternoon, everyone.

Thank you all for coming. And thank you all for the personal support—your notes and thoughts and letters—as I faced cancer over the past year. I’m happy to report that my recent tests tell me that I am cancer-free.

On August 30th, I celebrated my second anniversary as President of Wayne State. And as I reflect on that, I realize how fortunate I am to have been selected by our Board of Governors. And how fortunate I am to have their support. Now fortunate I am to work with all of you—to work at Wayne State University.

Today I will share with you some highlights of what has been an extraordinary year. I believe they demonstrate that we continue to move ahead. I am glad to be a part of it, and grateful for this opportunity. It is a highlight of my career. So thank you, to our Board, and thanks to all of you for your hard work and support.

Time passes quickly—even more quickly, I have learned, when you are a university president.

There’s never much time to slow down. But every now and then—among the traditions of higher education—we give ourselves a moment to pause. To assess where we’ve been, what we’ve done, and where we’re going.

It has been a very full year.
We have worked hard. We have completed difficult tasks. We have started others. We have disagreed at times; and we have come together. We have accomplished much. And we have more to do. But we have continued, despite difficulty, or uncertainty, or frustration, to move ahead.

So, in the spirit of tradition, let’s stop for a moment to celebrate all we accomplished over the past year.

It is fitting to start with faculty achievements.

Our faculty serve the most important purpose on this campus — the discovery and sharing of knowledge for the sake of our students and the future of our world.

Our well-deserved reputation is the result of the hard work and creativity from the men and women of our faculty. Thank you all.

You may have seen posters around our campus and in our elevators—the ones titled, “Professors Who Do.” I call them the “elevator people.”

This is not a sign of disrespect. I would be delighted to have my picture there. These posters celebrate our many faculty members who are experts in their fields, and champions in their classrooms. They are thinkers, mentors, pioneers—and they do all that here at Wayne State.

Here are some of our “professors who do.”

• Barbara LeRoy, director of the Developmental Disabilities Institute, received a five-year, 2.7 million dollar core grant for Wayne State to be a Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities.
• Assistant professor Karin List of pharmacology received a five-year, 1.6 million dollar Research Project Grant from the National Cancer Institute and National Institutes of Health to study breast cancer development and progression.

• Kezhong Zhang [KeZONG Jong], assistant professor of molecular medicine and genetics, received a 1.7 million dollar grant to explore how molecular elements in the body regulate the development of certain types of liver disease.

• We are honored that two Wayne State professors — Robert Harr and Paul Karchin from the Department of Physics and Astronomy — participated in the discovery of the Higgs boson particle.

• Some have called the Higgs boson the “God particle.” Both the physics and the religion are beyond my comprehension. But what I do know is that our faculty were part of one of the most important discoveries in modern day physics. You will soon see their pictures on posters around campus — two more of our many “Professors Who Do.”

Some of our professors have been honored recently by their peers:

• Wen Li [Wehn Lee], assistant professor of chemistry, received a Presidential Early Career Award—from the real President—the one in Washington D.C.

• John Corvino, associate professor and chair of the Department of Philosophy, was recognized as a Distinguished Professor of the Year by the Presidents Council of the State Universities of Michigan.

• Professor Geralyn Stephens from the College of Education received the Blackboard Catalyst Award for Exemplary Course Design.
Margaret Campbell, associate professor in the College of Nursing, received the Flame of Excellence Award.

Professor Howard Matthew in chemical engineering was elected to the College of Fellows of the American Institute for Medical and Biological Engineering.

Linda Hazlett, distinguished professor and chair of Anatomy and Cell Biology at the School of Medicine, received a 2012 Alcon Research Award for her outstanding contributions in the field of vision research.

And ESPN Sport Science, a TV series featuring Professor Cynthia Bir from biomedical engineering, won a Sports Emmy.

Their honors are well deserved, and we are honored these professors are part of Wayne State.

Even as we celebrate these great people and achievements, it is fitting that we remember some who are no longer with us. Last week we lost a beloved member of the Wayne State community, with the passing of Ben Burns, director of the journalism program in the College of Fine, Performing and Communication Arts.

Ben’s accomplishments are almost too numerous to mention. He had a remarkable career as an editor and journalist—working for the Detroit News and other papers. He pushed hard—and succeeded—in creating opportunities to increase diversity in journalism.

But I think Ben will be most remembered as a teacher and mentor to hundreds of graduates and journalists—some of whom I heard from recently—who spoke of Ben with admiration and fondness—as a true Wayne State legend.
We also remember Dr. Jerome Horwitz, a world-renowned cancer scientist, and a member of our Medical School and the Barbara Ann Karmanos Cancer Institute. Dr. Horwitz’s work in cancer research led to the discovery of AZT, which was a critical breakthrough in the treatment of HIV and AIDS. If he had done only this, it would have been enough. But Dr. Horwitz had a long and productive career in medical research, and the world is better off for his work and dedication.

Though not a professor, Steve Hauser—a captain in our police department—served Wayne State and the community with distinction for 42 years. We will miss Steve’s contributions, and his leadership.

A few weeks ago, we submitted our proposal to retain the Perinatology Research Branch of the National Institutes of Health.

We of course hope to retain the PRB right here at Wayne State. Many people in Michigan and Washington — people like the Governor, our Congressmen and women, our Senators — have given their support to this important project. Because the PRB has done great science that is improving the health of infants and mothers, and saving lives.

Not all of our accomplishments happened in classrooms and labs.

This past year we agreed upon new admissions guidelines to ensure the students we admit will have every chance of success.

Wayne State will remain a university of opportunity, but “opportunity” cannot mean open access. “Opportunity” must mean our doors are wide open for students with the will and the aptitude to succeed — even if their educational backgrounds are not what they should be. Developing the new admissions guidelines was not an easy task. It was hard work...but it was the right thing to do.
I’ve reported on this in the past, but the Huron Consulting Group completed their assessment of our operations. Their analysis covered a broad range of university services. We continue the process of implementing their recommendations, with the goals of increasing our efficiency and effectiveness—which means saving millions of dollars annually—and helping Wayne State become more “student-friendly.”

On a completely different topic, our Warrior athletes gave us a lot to cheer about over the past year.

Wayne State’s football team was a Cinderella story. We made it to the NCAA Division II National Championship for the first time in school history.

Coach Winters was recognized as the 2012 American Football Coaches Association Coach of the Year. We’ll put aside, for the moment, Saturday’s game—it’s a long season, we remain confident.

In May, the women’s swimming and diving team won the NCAA Division II National Championship for the first time in program history. And the men’s team captured its seventh conference championship in the past decade.

I should note that in fall 2011, sixty percent of our student-athletes’ GPAs were above a 3-point-0. Our athletic department recognizes the priority wording in the phrase “student-athlete.” The “student” always comes first. Our student-athletes also accumulated more than 7,400 hours of community service—more than all other schools in our conference — combined.

We have other Wayne State news to share:

Wayne Raskind is our new dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. He comes to us from Arizona State University where, for the past three years he was
director of the School of Mathematical and Statistical Sciences. We are happy to have Dean Raskind’s leadership in our largest college.

Cheryl Waites is our new dean at the School of Social Work. Dean Waites joined the School of Social Work in 2007 as an associate professor and associate dean for academic affairs. She is a Hartford Geriatric Social Work Faculty Scholar, and among other things, she conducts research into healthy aging. (She and I will talk shortly.)

Our most recent dean addition is Ambika Mathur, the Interim Dean of the Graduate School. Ambika joined Wayne State in 2003. She continues to serve as Academic Director of the M.D./Ph.D. Program in the School of Medicine, and Academic Director of the Postdoctoral Office. She also is Associate Director of the Institute of Medical Education, where she co-directs the Pediatric Global Health Graduate Certificate.

Apparently, she didn’t have enough to do, so she added “dean” to her responsibilities.

Corinne Webb is Wayne State’s new associate vice president for enrollment management. Corinne comes to us from the Higher Education Compact of Greater Cleveland. Previously, she was in charge of enrollment services at Cleveland State University and Rutgers. She brings just the right experience for her new job at Wayne State.

Wayne State continues to play a leadership role in the development of Midtown—both on and off campus.
By now you’ve all seen the impressive Schaap chemistry building addition, which you can spot from Cass. Less than a year ago, the Damon J. Keith Center for Civil Rights opened its doors at our Law School.

And next month we’ll be celebrating the official groundbreaking for the Multidisciplinary Biomedical Research Building.

This will be the major center for biomedical research in our region. When complete, it will be the largest construction project that Wayne State University has ever undertaken.

I must mention one other construction project.

It may seem small in comparison, but in the spirit of building and maintaining a beautiful campus — we are in the process of restoring the reflecting pool outside the McGregor Memorial Conference Center. The project will return the pool back to its original design, created by architect Minoru Yamasaki. In some ways I feel this project is a metaphor for much of what we have to do. Rediscover the best of our past—and remake it for the future.

Beyond our campus, we have new shops and restaurants, and the continued, successful Live Midtown program to increase residency in Midtown. It is certainly working. Midtown’s occupancy is at 95 percent. That is success.

All of these are signals of Midtown’s growth and potential. And signs of Wayne State’s leadership.

We have accomplished much. We are making good progress in many areas. And we should be proud.
I’d like to emphasize that point. We should be **proud** of what we’ve accomplished.

The other day I shared some of this same information at a faculty meeting, and the President of the Faculty Union describe it as a “feel-good speech.” I don’t think he meant it as a compliment. But I am going **take** it as a compliment. Because I **do** feel good. We **should** feel good. Because we **are** moving ahead.

But there are some who choose to take a narrow view. Based on personal interests. Or past issues.

Do we still have problems? Yes. There will always problems

Do we have more to do? Yes, we have more to do.

There are the ongoing challenges of running this University with which we are all familiar. Working to grow our enrollment—our primary source of revenue. Keeping the pressure on improving our retention—we can’t let up for a **moment** on this.

We must keep working to ensure our academic offerings are excellent, and our student services likewise.

We have building projects to finish—and start—and reflecting pools to fill. We have labs to update and people to hire. Football championships to win.

We have to conclude our contract negotiations. This has been a busy year for collective bargaining.

Earlier this summer we concluded contract negotiations with the Union of Part-Time Faculty, and with the Professional and Administrative Union. Both contracts have been ratified by their respective membership. We have nearly finalized a new, three-
year contract with the GEOC, which represents graduate teaching assistants and graduate student assistants.

We’ll soon begin contract negotiations with the Trades, with AFSCME, and with the Supervising Engineers.

Of course, the contract negotiations getting the most attention are the AAUP negotiations. We are making progress—despite what you might hear. Please stay calm. I am optimistic we will have an agreement soon that best serves our University.

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If we look even further ahead, we are working with the Board—or soon will be working with the Board—on a number of strategic projects that bode well for our future.

Last week we reviewed an updated master plan for Wayne State’s campus—it’s infrastructure, its facilities, and buildings and grounds. Rick Nork and Hilary Ratner and their teams did an excellent analysis based on input from many members of the faculty and administration. We don’t have enough money to do everything we’d like. But we are discussing the possibility of borrowing in the neighborhood of $100 million to facilitate the projects we have prioritized. And they will help transform the campus.

In the Development area, we have hired some very talented people to the team recently. This is in preparation for a new capital campaign.

We have not yet announced the campaign—though here I am talking about it—because we need the structure and people and resources in place before we do so. We need the themes of the campaign—the focus. But I am confident of its future success—it will make a big difference for Wayne State. We’ll be asking many of you to become involved in the planning, and the asking, as we progress.
At the direction of the Board, we are reviewing the Freeh Report on the Penn State situation. We will use this detailed report to do a thorough examination of our university.

We have many things in place; but there is much we can learn, and plenty of areas where we can improve. The risk of not doing so is far too great, and all too apparent.

Prior to the Freeh report, we had some projects related to this already in play. One is a set of self-administered training modules meant to help all of us be more sensitive to others—so that Wayne State can be a more inclusive and welcoming place.

The feedback on these initiatives has been interesting. I received plenty of support, but also—and this surprised me—protest. Most recently, the head of the faculty union objected.

Instead of encouraging people to make a small commitment to better understand and avoid sexual harassment—the subject of the first module—he chose to distribute an insulting email on the subject—along with his permission to ignore the training modules.

I also received a very thoughtful note on the training from a member of the Law School faculty. He pointed out that this may not be the most nuanced or sophisticated training. But I am reminded of some of the janitors at Penn State. They saw things that were wrong, and did nothing, out of fear of retaliation. We need people at Wayne State to know what to do. We can all benefit from this training.

So, there’s a lot to do. There will always be a lot to do. And, as important as what we do, is how we do it. The culture we choose for Wayne State University.
I’ve talked and written about this before. It is sometimes referred to as the “soft” stuff. But it is indispensible to our success.

Some other feedback I received—from a very few people in the faculty I should add—is that the “soft stuff” doesn’t apply to academia. That academia is—by definition—a place where criticism is part of the fabric. Where challenging assumptions and attacking positions is a normal part of the intellectual process—necessary to expanding the boundaries of knowledge. I accept that. But how we do this makes a difference.

So, in the spirit of academia, let’s continue to challenge—but in a way that motivates.

Let’s continue to critique—but in a way that instructs.

Let’s share our opinions—but in a way that is respectful.

Let’s build up—rather than tear down.

Let’s not fear or refuse to learn—when learning can make us better. Isn’t this more the nature of higher education?

And sometimes, the benefit of criticism isn’t necessary. Just because we may have done something differently doesn’t mean it’s wrong. “It is the mark of an educated mind,” said Aristotle, “to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it.”

Sometimes, we can just say, “Good job. Well done.” Because all around us we can find so many examples of people doing good work. It’s OK to appreciate it.

We may not always get the budget we want. Or build the building we want. Or get the grant we want. But we can choose the culture we want. We can choose how we treat each other. Whether we collaborate or compete. Whether we share or withhold.
Whether we respect or belittle. If we choose correctly, we’ll have a better chance at success. And the journey will be more enjoyable.

Our mission is to be a university of choice—competitive with the best across the board. We can only accomplish this through the constant pursuit of excellence.

How can we do that if we don’t tap the best in each other? If we don’t use our unique perspectives to find a better solution?

If we pull together, we may find we can overcome some of our most intractable challenges. If not, we risk succumbing to the relentless drumbeat of negativity that some would pass off as legitimate academic culture.

Respect. Collaboration. Service. Optimism. These are the values that make up a culture of success. Are they possible here at Wayne State? I would like to think so.

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We all have a role to play at this University—faculty, students, staff, administration, leadership. All of us. We are both caretakers and leaders for a moment in time.

Wayne State was here when we arrived. It will be here when we leave. How will we leave it? Better, I hope. That is why I decided to come here.

When you welcome a new President next year, I hope you will welcome him or her as you welcomed me. I hope you will demonstrate the enthusiasm and desire for excellence I have seen from you. I hope you will continue what we have started, including our efforts to make our University a place where everyone is welcome, respected and included. And I hope, most of all, we hand our new President a university that is better than when we arrived. Thank you.