

Remarks by President-elect Kimberly Andrews Espy to the Board of Governors
June 30, 2023

Thank you, Governor Gaffney. Good afternoon, everyone, and thank you so much for being here. I also thank the Board of Governors for electing me the 13th president of this truly outstanding institution. I am just so honored and humbled to serve the Wayne State community as its next president. I know that my service will begin on such a solid foundation of the university's remarkable 155-year history. And I particularly appreciate the last decade of transformative leadership by Dr. M. Roy Wilson. Thank you. While 13 is not commonly known as a lucky number, if one digs just a little bit deeper, the number 13 actually represents transformation and renewal. The completion of one cycle and the beginning of another. I actually can't think of a more fitting number for today.

I look forward to joining you all in person soon and spending time with the campus and the Detroit community. I cannot tell you how ready I am to get started! But in some ways though, I feel like I already belong. The search committee that included so many colleagues from every corner of the campus was just so welcoming and thoughtful, and made clear what a very special place Wayne is.

During the search, and interacting with both the committee and board, it was abundantly clear that serving as Wayne's next president is truly an opportunity of a lifetime. This university — today and through its history — has served such a vital mission that has positively impacted so many. Generations of students from all walks of life have been able to attend a university renowned for its scholarship and innovation, and then go on to become productive, prosperous citizens and community leaders. Many were first in their family to go to college, or from diverse backgrounds where many doors were historically closed to them. Or had children of their own at home to care for while in college pursuing their own dreams. Wayne State's doors were open then, and remain open today and into the future, welcoming students from every background with a straightforward message: You belong here, and you will succeed.

In fact, Wayne State is a leader in redefining academic excellence that is enabling students to succeed through access to a world-class education with a faculty second to none. This mission of transformative social and economic mobility is at

the center of my own values and one that I have championed throughout my career. It was clear to me that everyone with whom I spoke during the search was equally committed to these core values that are woven so deeply in both the history and the fabric of Wayne State. What an honor it is for me to be joining such a university and such a wonderful community.

In my mind, the past, the present, the future of Wayne State and Detroit cannot be separated. Neither Wayne State nor Detroit would have achieved its success without the other. As a native Midwesterner, I am familiar with the cycle of revitalization, and the renewed excitement for an even brighter future that builds on the past legacy of success. Fundamentally, thriving cities and communities are enabled by great urban public research universities. And in turn, research universities are enhanced through deep engagement with the cities they serve. This reciprocal, mutually beneficial relationship between Wayne State and Detroit is truly remarkable. And a national model for how a university, its faculty, staff and students can play a critical role in the life and health of a city—whether it be the innovations and new businesses that are spawned through TechTown, Wayne’s impactful medical research and services that improve community health, or the well-prepared Wayne State graduates that supply the region's workforce year in and year out. I embrace his urban empowerment model, and I am eager to join the university community to take up this important work. In short, I am really excited to make Detroit my home.

From my perspective, Wayne State has all the ingredients to achieve its vision: a focused strategic plan; a great team that includes a distinguished and supportive board and strong university leadership; a commitment to the success of its rich mosaic of students; nationally recognized faculty with outstanding scholarship and impactful health services; an expanding research portfolio; and a vibrant campus in the heart of a great city with an innovative and entrepreneurial spirit. What positive momentum for the future!

So let me close where I started. I am deeply grateful to the board for this opportunity. As your president, I look forward to embracing the challenges ahead together. Being president number 13, I am now in fact your number one Wayne woman Warrior! And I am honored to join this great university, and I look forward to serving with you all our students and community. Thank you all very much.

