

Thank you, Professor Stedman, and thanks to all of you for taking the time during this busy week to join me this afternoon. A special shout out to those watching via streaming video.

Welcome, everyone, to the start of a new academic year at the University of Florida! Whether you were in Gainesville for the summer, working at another location, or travelling for business or pleasure, I hope your summer was productive and restorative, and that you begin this fall with renewed energy and focus.

Linda and I spent the last two weeks of July, just before summer commencement, on our property in upstate New York near Lake Skaneateles, one of the easternmost of New York's Finger Lakes. My first week was devoted to manual labor, including installing storm doors and plumbing, which was a good break from administrative duties. Our children joined us for the second week. We enjoyed being with our children, their spouses, and our two grandsons, one who was three months old and the other who was almost two.

While doing yard work, plumbing, and repairing doors I reflected on the global and national turmoil and particularly the violence internationally and the horrific shootings here in the US. I was struck by how those here on campus this summer responded with grace, compassion and unity of spirit.

Following the shootings at Pulse Nightclub in Orlando in June, Century Tower was lit with rainbow colors. That announcement brought hundreds of emails and messages on social media from people proclaiming pride in the lighting and support and solidarity with the LGBTQ and the Hispanic and LatinX community. Thousands of viewers watched on Facebook Live at dusk as the rainbow lights went on.

The campus held a Celebration and Unity Ceremony at Century Tower midst the rainbow lights. Hundreds of students, staff, faculty and community members gathered to hear speakers decry hatred and affirm love for all humankind. There were faculty, students, and staff that night from the foot of Century Tower across Newell Drive and well into Turlington Plaza, standing close by one another holding candles in unity.

Unfortunately, it wasn't long before there was news of more horrific violence: The early July police shootings of black men in Minnesota and Louisiana and then the shootings of the five police officers in Texas.

The week of these events I attended a gathering at the Reitz Union Intercultural Engagement Center. I listened to black staff and faculty describe their experiences of racism – and how many of them felt unsupported and excluded from our university and from campus life. This is a chronic problem, one that was heightened by a lack of expressed empathy and understanding from their colleagues following the violence.

Although difficult to hear, I needed to hear this feedback, to take it to heart, and to respond.

Much of what I heard and learned about that day mirrors the concerns identified in a Black Student Affairs Task Force Report completed this summer and our Campus Climate Survey this past year. This impresses upon me the importance of making our campus more welcoming and embracing black staff, faculty and students – and indeed of all of our many diverse constituents. I ask that all of us across our campus renew our efforts to foster a truly welcoming and inclusive culture.

We're gathered today just three months before a presidential election in a period of continued unease nationally. I share this unease, yet I am also reassured by being part of our special university community.

I am greatly heartened by thinking of our many students who will have the privilege of voting for the president for the very first time, right here at the Reitz Union, Precinct 31! Our students are fortunate to be at one of the nation's very best universities with a long tradition of civil discourse. With this election, I'm hopeful they will absorb that tradition, becoming champions and ambassadors for the free and respectful exchange of ideas that is so central to our lives here at UF.

With those hopes and goals, let me now turn to the business of the day, an update on the "State of the University."

We begin this academic year with 53,744 students, the largest fall enrollment in our university's history.

We have 7,306 freshmen as of the first day of classes Monday, of which 6,844 are new freshmen residential students, and the remainder are online or PaCE students. In addition, we have 1,459 new transfer students and 4,498 new graduate and professional students.

As we welcome this year's unusually large class, our long-term goal remains the same: To keep residential undergraduate enrollment stable, and to grow graduate and professional enrollment and also grow our on-line community.

The students of the Class of 2020 are among the most talented and bright students we have ever admitted. My wife and I had the privilege of living last week in room 2026 Jennings Hall with a number of these students.

Except for the shaving cream fight last Thursday night it was a great experience. Our students know that they have arrived at a university that is growing in excellence and reaching new heights in research, education and public outreach.

This past year we hired 436 new faculty, a number of whom are not replacements, but represent a much needed growth in our faculty numbers.

Through the generosity of the State of Florida and also donors, our beautiful campus is being enhanced with much needed new facilities.

We opened two new residence halls last fall and the much-expanded and revitalized Reitz Union in January, and four facility projects will be completed this year. These are:

- 1) The overhaul of the O'Connell Center. Except for the exterior shell, the O'Dome will all be new. We expect to wrap up work in December in time for fall commencement.
- 2) The new chemistry building, Joseph Hernandez Hall, will open in the New Year. Chemistry is critical not only to the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

but our entire university. Indeed, 50 percent of UF undergraduates take at least one chemistry class.

- 3) I am particularly pleased that the new Newell Hall Student Learning Commons will open in April. Newell Hall, completed in 1909, is one of UF's earliest buildings. Originally the home of the Florida Agricultural Experiment Station, the grounds were designed for students to do hands-on farming research. The current revitalization returns Newell to our students, this time as a central 24-7 study center with designated spaces for collaboration, research and individual work.
- 4) I'm sure you have seen the two new UF Health hospital towers rising on Archer Road. The towers are the future homes of the UF Health Heart & Vascular Hospital and the UF Health Neuromedicine Hospital. This \$415 million expansion is on track to finish by December 2017.

In July, we opened the Otis Hawkins Center for Academic and Personal Excellence in Farrior Hall for UF's nearly 500 student athletes. We're continuing the Farrior Hall renovation with the revitalization of the CLAS Academic Advising Center.

As we complete these buildings, we're actively planning the overhaul of historic Norman Hall, home to the College of Education. The Legislature provided more than \$14 million this spring toward this much-needed infrastructure upgrade. We're also planning the Herbert Wertheim Laboratory for Engineering Excellence in the Wertheim College of Engineering. The Legislature has appropriated nearly \$14 million for this effort.

The Wertheim building is critical to the engineering college's plans to increase its stature. In April, the college launched UF Innovation Station Sarasota County, the college's first of potentially several engineering extension offices modeled on UF's agricultural cooperative extension.

Looking ahead to next year's legislative session, one of our top facilities priorities is obtaining the funding to address the significant deferred maintenance needs of our aging infrastructure across campus.

Under the leadership of our chief operating officer, Dr. Charlie Lane, we are also in the process of creating a UF Strategic Development Plan. This will identify the best opportunities for wise growth, economic viability and livability. We're engaging the City of Gainesville as our partner in fostering opportunities that support a diverse and innovative population.

As thrilled as I am with the growth and renewal of our campus physical plant, I'm most inspired by the achievements of our faculty, starting with their rising accomplishments in research and scholarship. I will provide only a few examples.

UF faculty set a new research funding record of \$724 million this past fiscal year, up \$17 million from the previous year.

The bulk of that funding, about \$450 million, came in the form of competitive grants from federal agencies, led by the National Institutes of Health. NIH funding increased 17 percent to nearly \$180 million. One especially noteworthy NIH-funded project was the founding of the UF Health Alzheimer's Disease Research Center. This is Florida's only fully staffed Alzheimer's research center and a critical new resource in a state where half a million residents suffer from Alzheimer's.

With the rise in NIH funding came an increase in funding from the National Science Foundation, up 35 percent to \$63 million! With so much competition for NIH and NSF grants by our peers, this increase is a strong signal of our faculty's research excellence.

Examples of that research excellence include UF's physics professors who played a key role in the landmark discovery of gravitational waves announced in February. A paper in *Nature* authored by a UF Health neurosurgeon Dr. Duane Mitchell was recognized as one of the top-10 papers in clinical and translational science.

Of particular note are the two UF professors elected to the National Academies: Archaeologist Kathleen Deagan and Botanist Pam Soltis.

Adding to her scientific work, Dr. Soltis began a new tradition of distinguished UF faculty members delivering the commencement address at our doctoral commencement ceremony, our only university wide commencement. Since her address at UF's December 2015 commencement, our new Ph.D. graduates have been privileged to also hear from William Logan, professor, poet and distinguished teaching scholar in the English department, and Linda Bartoshuk, the UF Bushnell Professor of Food Science and Human Nutrition.

As a university, UF is intentionally and intensely comprehensive, with the highest aspirations for all our diverse disciplines and units. With my background in engineering and the information sciences, I feel an urgent personal obligation to champion the arts, humanities, and the social sciences. These areas of inquiry and education equal the importance of the STEM disciplines at our nation's very best universities – and particularly at the University of Florida.

Examples of our national leadership and excellence in the arts and humanities include ...

College of the Arts Professor Emeritus Jerry Uelsmann who last fall won the Lucie Award honoring the greatest accomplishments in photography for his famously surreal and thought-provoking images. This year Coco Fusco, the Andrew Banks Family scholar in the arts college, won the prestigious Greenfield Prize in visual art. Dr. Fusco is performing her latest performance piece in London, Liverpool and here in Gainesville in October, where I am greatly looking forward to being a member of the audience. Meanwhile, School of Theatre and Dance Professor Tony Mata will be inducted into the College of Fellows of the American Theatre this spring.

In the humanities, English Professor Pamela Gilbert has been awarded a 2016 Guggenheim Fellowship for her new book project, Victorian Skin: Surface, Subjectivity, Affect. The UF Center for European Studies won a significant grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities in support of exploring the subject of war through humanities sources. And I was very proud to read in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* this spring that UF has more Fulbright scholars than all but one other university in this country, representing excellence across our university.

There are hundreds of equally important other examples from this past year of our faculty excellence I could have referenced from across the university.

As our faculty achieve new heights, our university begins the academic year in overall strong financial health.

The Legislature this spring provided UF with an increase of \$15 million for meeting state performance goals. Lawmakers also added 10 million in preeminence dollars, enabling us to continue to hire new faculty. The state further provided \$24 million for infrastructure and repairs of UF buildings and facilities. While much more is needed to keep up with our maintenance needs, this appropriation is a great step.

Looking to the future, we're seeing promising growth as well in technology commercialization and philanthropy.

The UF Office of Technology Licensing signed a record 122 licenses and options this past fiscal year, up an incredible 43 percent. We launched 17 startup companies, another new record. We ranked eighth nationally for startups, and seventh for licenses and options, among both public and private universities in the 2013-14 fiscal year. That is the most recent year for which data is available from the Association of University Technology Managers.

One week from today, we'll gather for the groundbreaking of Phase II of the Innovation Hub at Innovation Square. This is a \$17 million expansion that will double space for startups to hatch and grow. With so much demand from the local startup community, it couldn't come soon enough!

In fundraising, alumni and friends gave or committed a record \$402 million this past fiscal year, a nearly 30 percent increase over last year's \$315 million, which was itself a record! This year's gifts included a \$50 million naming cash gift for the Herbert Wertheim College of Engineering – the largest cash gift in UF's history.

We are busy preparing to launch our next campaign next fall. It will be a \$3 billion campaign, the largest in our history, and one of the largest in the history of all public universities. Major goals include doubling UF's endowment from \$1.5 billion to \$3 billion, adding 200 endowed professorships and creating 400 student scholarships.

Tom Mitchell, vice president for advancement, will present more details about the campaign at an upcoming Faculty Senate meeting.

We are fortunate to be joined by several terrific new university leaders this year.

They are Brian Jose, director of the Phillips Center for Performing Arts; David Parrott, vice president of student affairs; Jodi Gentry, vice president of human relations, and Chimay Anumba, dean of the College of Design, Construction and Planning.

Brian Jose could not be present, but David Parrott, Jodi Gentry and Chimay Anumba are all here. Would you please stand and be recognized? Thank you!

Additionally, we continue our search for a new athletic director following Jeremy Foley's planned retirement later this fall. And Provost Glover has formed a search committee to replace John Kraft, dean of the Warrington College of Business, who will retire at the end of this academic year. Jeremy Foley has been a member of the UF community for 40 years, 24 of those as AD, and John Kraft has been dean for 26 years. UF will forever be better and stronger because of Jeremy's and John's leadership.

With that overview, I'd like to devote the remainder of my time to the subject of university rankings. For more than a decade the University of Florida has declared that its aspiration is to be "a top-10 public university". This is connected most recently to the "preeminence" initiative in which we have received state funding to recruit senior faculty to UF. There are now more than 100 senior faculty members at UF funded by that initiative.

The UF Board of Trustees will have a retreat next week to discuss what it means to be "a top-10 public university," how we measure our "rank" today, and what will we do to enhance our rank.

At the retreat, we will begin by discussing not our rankings, but rather what we value, cherish, and intend to nurture.

For example, our heritage is that we were founded to be a university that makes a difference in society and in the lives of people. I would argue that our land grant history is a part of the DNA and responsibility of every college, department,



program, and institute. We intend to nurture and grow our engagement with society and with economic development. We are particularly proud to be located in the state of Florida and UF is committed to Florida.

We value our comprehensive breadth, and although we understand that we need to have focused excellence and points of bright light, we will continue to nurture our comprehensive excellence and breadth across all our colleges.

We love our 2,000-acre Gainesville campus filled with palms and pines and beautiful facilities. We value our combination of a central location where the mothership for all our programs, departments, and colleges is here in Gainesville. However, we also have UF programs and facilities in more than 140 other locations around the state and the globe.

Financial accessibility for our students is important to us and will continue to be our focus. Wise and efficient stewardship of our resources is also a mark of UF in which we take pride.

We will always value excellence in both education and research. We will not sacrifice one for the other. We take pride in the breadth of our NCAA athletic programs, both in their athletic and academic success. Finally, we value the diversity of our people and the warm, supportive, and collegial environment in which we work and study.

Before discussing rankings, we will also review our seven goals as set out in *The Decade Ahead*. These goals describe the type of university we are striving to be, even though they do not mention rankings. We are committed to “Being a premier university that the state, nation, and world look to for leadership.”

Although I enthusiastically embrace the goal of “being a top-10 public university,” I personally use the word “stature” rather than ranking.

I believe stature captures the concepts of comparative excellence and reputation. Also, I frankly believe that “top-10 public” is not sufficiently aspirational. Our long term goal should be to be a “top-5 public university”. Also, our competition is not only public universities. Our competition is both private and public universities. Thus, I would argue that our long term goals should be “top-5 public” and “top-10

public and private.” However, I agree that our short term goal, for which we are accountable, is to achieve the status of “a top-10 public university.”

Before I jump into rankings and metrics, let me share what I believe is the only truly important and necessary ingredient for raising our stature. It is simply our faculty. Thus, whatever we do as administrators or staff should directly or indirectly enhance the stature of the faculty and their excellence in scholarship, education, and impact on society.

Faculty members too must work to enhance the stature of their colleagues, department, college, institute and the university. Our commitment to hiring the very best faculty in the world, creating an environment in which they can be the very best in research and teaching, and having the highest standards for tenure and the highest expectations of ourselves and our colleagues is what is truly important, not the rankings and metrics that I am about to mention.

I firmly believe our rankings, our preeminence, and our metrics will take care of themselves if we recruit and promote the very best faculty and provide an environment in which they can be successful.

Let me provide some historical context for my comments on rankings.

The AAU (American Association of Universities) is composed of 60 US universities, of which 34 are public and 26 are private. By any measure these are the most excellent research intensive universities in the U.S.

The AAU was founded in 1900. In 1905, the Florida Legislature passed the Buckman Act, which merged four small colleges into one university, the University of Florida. The president of one of those colleges, President Andrew Sledd, became the first president of the University of Florida, and in 1906 UF started classes here in Gainesville with 102 students.

Four years later the first university rankings were created by the federal government at the urging of the AAU. Colleges and Universities were ranked in four categories based on how prepared their graduates were to go onto graduate school. Most of today’s top universities were ranked in the highest category,

category one. UF was ranked in category three. Remember UF was only four years old at the time of the first ranking.

In 1920, our second president, President Albert Murphree wrote with great pride in the President's Biennial Report that we had been accredited by not only the regional accreditation agency, but we had also been acknowledged by the AAU.

In 1985, when Marshall Criser was president, we were invited to join the AAU, which was truly an important moment in the history of the university. As we remind our friends across the state, there is only one AAU university in the state of Florida.

What about our ranking today? Let me provide some additional context, this time across higher education in the US.

There are 4,224 colleges and universities in the US today; 1,644 are public, 1,730 are private non-profit, and 1,290 are private for-profit. Out of these, there are only 329 doctoral universities. The Carnegie Classification classifies 109 as moderate research, 105 as higher research, and 115 as highest research. If you take the 115 highest research universities, 60 are in the AAU and we are one of them.

Thus, out of 4,000 colleges and universities we are in the top 60 both private and public across the 50 states – and 1<sup>st</sup> in the state of Florida. Of the 60 AAU universities, there are 34 publics and thus we are one of the top 34 public research universities in the U.S.

Among those 34 publics, how do we rank?

First, let me mention some of the well-known rankings. As we all know, in *US News* we are ranked 14th overall among publics and 13th among the public AAUs. In this week's *Washington Monthly*, Stanford, Harvard, and MIT were ranked 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup>, and we were 18th (among publics and privates) and 10<sup>th</sup> among publics. There are numerous rankings in which we are in the top 10, many in the top three, particularly if the ranking links value and quality. There are other rankings in which we are not in the top 10, sometimes considerably lower.

In the past 10 years a new proprietary tool has become available to compare specific departments across multiple universities. That tool is *Academic Analytics* and is used by the provost and deans in assessing relative stature of departments. Also, we have dozens of specific metrics that we track at the level of the university, for which we compare ourselves against our AAU peers. Some we self-report to the State of Florida and to the Board of Governors and others we track internally. Let me mention a few of those metrics, particularly those that I believe are relevant in ranking UF.

On the resource side – what I call the “inputs” – we track our undergraduate student-to-faculty ratio. We rank 34<sup>th</sup> out of 34 among the AAU publics in this metric, i.e., our student to faculty ratio is much too high. This is a priority to be addressed and one that we will work to obtain the resources to correct. It affects education quality and research productivity. We also must compensate our faculty based on market and merit at a level that is equivalent to our aspirational peers. We must further provide stipends for grad assistants that are equal to our aspirational peers and again, we are below those peers.

A significant resource is the revenue we receive from the state and from tuition. If you add the revenues we receive from the state to the revenues we receive from tuition and divide by the number of students, we have made progress but we still have much work to do. The state has recently been generous and we have moved up to 26<sup>th</sup> out of 34. However, again, we need to compete with our aspirational peers in our revenues if we are to address our student-to-faculty ratio and the level at which we compensate our employees.

Another input is our philanthropy and size of our endowment. We have made amazing progress in the area of philanthropy the last few years, but our endowment is ranked 20<sup>th</sup> out of 34 and again is at the bottom of our aspirational peers. All of these are resources and they are the responsibility of the president, our board of trustees, our friends and alumni, and the State of Florida.

We also need to enhance the number of our faculty in the National Academies. This is an area for which our faculty must take responsibility. We rank 24<sup>th</sup> out of 34 in National Academy members and 19<sup>th</sup> out of 34 in major awards received by our faculty. I urge you to nominate your colleagues for major awards and National Academy membership.

Research expenditures are not relevant in all areas of scholarship, but they are measured and ranked and are particularly important in the sciences and engineering. We have mixed news. We are 15<sup>th</sup> out of 34 in total research expenditures but only 21<sup>st</sup> out of 34 in federal expenditures.

There are a number of areas in which we do exceptionally well. We are 6th in the research doctoral degrees we produce, 4th in the startup companies coming out of our IP, and 5th in the number of licenses and options on our IP. Our six-year graduation rate for undergrads is excellent: We are 6th. We are good, but not as good in our four-year graduation rate, where we rank 9th. In the SAT scores of our undergrads we rank 14<sup>th</sup> out of 34.

If we use the metrics I've described above to create an overall university ranking, we rank 14th out of the nation's top public research universities.

Let me summarize.

- 1) There is much about this university that we cherish, value, and will nurture and enhance. Many of the attributes that we value have nothing to do with rankings.
- 2) What is truly important is a persistent focus on our faculty, on recruiting and promoting only the world's very best faculty and supporting them in the success and excellence of their scholarship, teaching, and engagement with society.
- 3) Our resources as measured by revenue per student and total endowment size are below our aspirational peers.
- 4) We must increase the number of faculty (focusing on quality), increase the compensation of faculty (based on market and merit), and increase stipends of graduate assistants to the level of our aspirational peers.
- 5) We as faculty must nominate and support our colleagues in receiving nationally recognized awards and membership in the national academies. This is truly important.
- 6) In the sciences and engineering, we as faculty need to increase the amount of our competitive federal funding.

- 7) Our technology transfer is among the very best and our graduation rates and SAT scores are good, but we will continue to work on even further excellence in these areas.
- 8) Finally, UF's stature and ranking is in the stratosphere of our nation's 4,000-plus universities and colleges. We are relatively young and yet are among the very best universities. However, our ambition is to be the very best.

Whether you are a faculty, staff, or student, it is a great privilege for me to be to be your colleague. I look forward to celebrating all the amazing things each of you does and how you contribute to this university and to our students.