Good morning! While the Faculty Convocation is always a celebratory event, today’s ceremony holds special significance as we observe our sesquicentennial. One-hundred and fifty years ago, after the signing of the Morrill Land Grant Act, the University of Massachusetts Amherst was born. The legislation profoundly changed our nation, rendering higher education accessible to anyone, regardless of wealth or social status.

Today, the flagship campus of the Commonwealth, the University of Massachusetts Amherst, remains true to its founding tenets of teaching, research and engagement. As a research university, we do something extraordinary at the intersection of education and research. We bring together scholars who infuse their teaching with the fresh perspectives of the researcher. They introduce their students to the important questions and the emerging methods in their fields, and they train the next generation of specialists who will advance the frontiers of new knowledge. From founding Professor Levi Stockbridge’s revolutionary patented fertilizer that multiplied the yields farmers could coax from their fields to advances in polymer science, computer science, food science, radar technology and alternative energy, UMass Amherst has been a wellspring of innovation that has improved the well-being of populations far beyond our campus. From breaking gender, race, and sexual orientation barriers in the academy to delivering solutions to current-day challenges and improving the human condition, we demonstrate the value of engaged scholarship on a daily basis. From our Fine Arts Center to the Renaissance Center, we contribute to the cultural enrichment of both our students and our publics.
This morning we have witnessed the fruits of our extraordinary environment as we recognize the accomplishments of our illustrious colleagues seated on this stage.

And as we gather to acknowledge a new academic year, we celebrate the continuous stream of accolades that now define us:

- We have the most academically accomplished student body in our 150-year history. For our current freshman class, we had 36,000 applicants for a class of 4,600. And the resulting Class of 2017 sets yet another historic academic high, continuing the record-setting trend of recent years. Compared to last year, average SAT scores increased by about 11 points to 1208, and high school grade-point average increased from 3.66 to 3.73. In addition, on average, our incoming students rank in the top 5th of their high school class.

- For Commonwealth Honors College, the numbers are even more impressive: SAT scores rose to 1357 and high school GPA increased to 4.21.

- We are highly ranked among New England public research institutions in the number of faculty members in the National Academy of Sciences, National Academy of Engineers, and American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

- We offer some of the best doctoral programs in the country and we graduate more than four times the number of PhDs than any other public campus in the Commonwealth.

- Our strategic research initiatives are broad and originate throughout the campus and across disciplines. Nearly 500 faculty are principal investigators on sponsored projects and more than 70 campus research centers and institutes focus on both basic and applied research.
• Approximately $149 million in federal, state, and private funding for 1,043 research projects was awarded to our campus in fiscal year 2013, continuing an upward trajectory for sponsored research. In fiscal year 2012, we conducted over 44 million dollars in NSF funded research; within the Commonwealth, the only universities ahead of us were MIT and Harvard.

• The Massachusetts Center for Interdisciplinary Renaissance Studies, the Center for Family Research, the Political Economy Research Institute are the best exemplars of interdisciplinary research anywhere, advancing scholarship and improving policy development.

Indeed, as a research university, we do something very special. And, as a public research university, we provide access to this rich, competitive educational environment to a wide range of students from across the socio-economic spectrum.

I know I speak for all of us when I say that it is a privilege to participate in and advance the mission of this great institution.

But today, I must also speak to the challenges ahead of us. For they are real and they are substantial.

We all recognize that our university, like society at large, faces economic, demographic, and technological imperatives that demand innovative solutions. The need for institutions like ours is as great as it has ever been. Yet today, one of the greatest challenges we face is that our basic organizing model — the convergence of immersive, residential undergraduate and graduate education in a rich research environment — may not be sustainable if it cannot adapt. While our model is extraordinarily effective at fueling innovation, it is also resource-intensive.
The reality is that the financial model for the research university has frayed. Growth in federal research dollars has stalled. And although we are grateful that our state has increased support for higher education with the passage of the first installment of the 50/50 plan which has resulted in freezing in-state tuition and fees, overall state appropriations for higher education have declined in real terms, and tuition and fees have increased significantly in recent years. Understandably, universities are under increasing pressure to control costs. And some see educational models such as free Massive Online Open Courses – “MOOCs” – as calling into question the value of our more expensive residential immersive model. We know, however, that our residential immersive education cannot be measured by the dollars input alone, for the reward offered by the residential experience is invaluable: the transformation of our students. As the third largest residential campus in the nation, our immersive education is inextricably woven into our overall undergraduate experience. Our challenge, then, is to adapt our operations so that they can sustain us through these challenges and into the future.

As we celebrate our sesquicentennial, we must acknowledge that we have reached a critical juncture. We must take a new approach and change in two significant ways. First, we must become more effective at demonstrating value to those who hold a stake in our success. And secondly, we must learn to operate effectively in a new and much more challenging resource environment.

Being called upon to demonstrate our value may seem a difficult task since much of what we do is measured subjectively and over time. To us, the value of what we do may seem not only self-evident, put also unquantifiable. But to students and their families, funding agencies, policy makers, employers, donors, and other key groups on whom we rely, confidence in the value of what we do has been eroding for some time. As we make plans for the future we need to
refine, reassert, and reinforce our value as a university in the public interest and rededicate ourselves to the public good.

Since 1978, the cost of a college education has increased by more than one-thousand percent. As the cost of attendance has increased, students and families have become more insistent on seeing an appropriate return on their investment. At the same time, policy makers are faced with impossible choices for the use of tax dollars. Mounting student debt and increasing rate of loan default loom as growing threats to the national economy. Funding agencies face their own difficult choices, needing to prove that expenditures on university research can be justified in the face of other societal needs. Donors, who can choose to give to varied causes, want to know that their gifts to the university will advance the causes important to them. All these sources of financial support have a compelling reason to be shown we remain a sound investment.

Therefore, if we are to become more effective at building support for the university we must expand our definition of success. Traditional indicators of quality — research funding, number of publications, doctoral production, and faculty recognition by national organizations — certainly remain relevant. But today, undergraduate student success and broader societal impact have become essential to attracting investment for public research universities.

To flourish successfully in the decades to come, we must be highly valued by the full range of our constituents who hold a stake in our success. Our students must be able to achieve their educational and career goals at a cost commensurate with their success. Our faculty must be engaged not only in advancing knowledge and graduate education but equally devoted to student learning using cutting edge technology and pedagogy. Our scholars must be engaged not only in basic research, but also in translating its results for the benefit of society where appropriate. Our
new Institute for Applied Life Sciences funded by the Massachusetts Life Sciences Center is a window to what our future might look like.

Our faculty and staff must work together to achieve common goals that create an optimal living and learning environment worthy of investment. We must develop a compact with the local, state, and federal governments for a share of support commensurate with our demonstrated benefit to the public. And finally, we must ensure that our alumni acknowledge the direct value of their degree and our benefit to society, and invest in the continued success of the university.

From many perspectives it is difficult to imagine an investment with higher payback than education — both direct and indirect — in terms of stimulating economic activity, expanding employment, supporting key innovation sectors, and improving the quality of life in the Commonwealth. In that context we will continue to advocate for a balanced and sustainable cost sharing between the state and students to support general operations of the campus. The success of those efforts will rely in large part on our success in demonstrating continued value and effective stewardship.

We will position UMass Amherst for its continued success and improvement for the next decade through two major collective undertakings this year. One is the continuation of the strategic planning process begun last year, and overseen by the Joint Task Force on Strategic Oversight. The other will be the development of a rational resource allocation process for the campus, to be overseen by a Joint Task Force on Resource Allocation which will be presented to the Faculty Senate for approval. These task forces will have representation from all sectors of the campus. It is critical that all of us work as a team in these endeavors.

Today 75% of our operations are funded by resources the campus itself generates. In addition to proving our worth to the state, revenue generation is part of our new reality. All
public universities are adopting strategies to expand and solidify their revenue bases, and this campus has been creative and effective in this area. By far the greatest growth, however, has come through increased revenue from undergraduate fees. These increases, while only partially offsetting losses in state tax support, erode affordability and create competitive challenges in attracting the highest quality students. We must, therefore, find other ways to generate revenue.

For instance, with a competitive educational offering and extensive experience in online education, the campus has a strong presence in continuing and professional education. In FY13, our Continuing & Professional Education programs generated more than $20 million in net revenues for the campus, and several colleges make extensive use of their CPE revenues to underwrite their core activities. Revenue growth has slowed as the online market has become more crowded. Opportunities for growth remain, however, and degree programs offered through CPE are positioned to meet the needs of many “post-traditional” students. The campus must build on its success and open new educational markets to increase net benefits for programs.

In addition to revenue generation, increased private support plays a key role in our future. UMass Amherst has launched *UMass Rising*, its first fully formed major capital campaign. To date, we have raised a little over 200 million – which is fantastic – but we must keep working to reach our goal of 300 million well ahead of the campaign timeline. The resources raised through *UMass Rising* and its successor campaigns will help position us competitively for the future by allowing us to recruit and retain exceptional faculty, attract outstanding students with merit- and need-based scholarships, conduct research that improves the human condition, and create buildings and infrastructure that promote learning.
Finding alternate revenue sources will remain important, but cannot be our only strategy for responding to losses of state support and escalating costs. To compete successfully requires learning how to achieve priorities more efficiently, which means spending fewer dollars on a given activity. Closely related — and often inseparable — is the need to spend resources more effectively, which means getting more value for the dollars spent. We must, then, emphasize efficient and effective use of our resources in all that we do.

In our new reality, information technology will play a more central role in our strategies and resource utilization. In terms of instruction, the buzzwords of technologically related innovation abound: “flipped classes,” “hybrid courses,” “blended learning,” “team-based learning,” and, most recently, “MOOCs.” Developing and adopting instructional innovation requires a much different toolset and support structure. For example, we will need tools to enable video, multi-media, and other pre-class material preparation, as well as the ability to distribute these materials to large numbers of students. Similarly, much greater use of interactive tools such as enhanced personal response systems, team-based learning technology, and adaptive learning can be anticipated. Tools to support the instructional experience, including “learning analytics,” success predictors, and client relationship management will be applied to issues of enrollment management and improved student advising. Computing hardware, software and real-time data analysis have become basic building blocks for all aspects of university mission.

Whether through the competitive use of technology, the quality of the undergraduate experience, or unprecedented fundraising, the leading public research universities of the next generation will be flexible, adaptive, and creative. In that sense, UMass Amherst is well positioned to adapt. If we can create a new, more sustainable model for operating, then our future
as a premier public research university, with an invaluable immersive residential educational experience, will be secure.

As the University of Massachusetts Amherst commemorates one-hundred fifty years of service to the citizens of Massachusetts, the Commonwealth’s flagship campus is committed to the original vision of the Morrill Land Grant Act. We will continue to be a force for innovation, with a positive and powerful impact on society, reaching all segments of society. Today we celebrate a new academic year and the accomplishments of our colleagues. And as we look back with pride on the past one-hundred fifty years, we also look to our future with the resolve needed to adapt successfully and flourish for years to come.

Thank you.