Ernest May, Secretary of the Faculty Senate, introduced Chancellor Subbaswamy. Chancellor Subbaswamy received his B.S. in Physics in 1969 from Bangalore University, his M.S. in 1970 from Delhi University, and his Ph.D. in physics in 1976 from Indiana University. He spent the next ten years ascending from assistant professor to full professor of physics at the University of Kentucky. In 1992, he became a fellow of the American Physical Society. From 1993 to 1997, he chaired the Department of Physics at the University of Kentucky. From 1997 to 2000, he served as Dean of Arts and Sciences at the University of Miami. From 2000 to 2006, he returned to Indiana University to serve as Dean of Arts and Sciences, where he experienced Responsibility Centered Management (RCM), a highly decentralized system with rather autonomous schools. He raised $120 million for A & S and made numerous academic improvements. From 2006 to 2012, he was Provost and Director of the Research Foundation at the University of Kentucky. There, he led the campus effort to respond to a legislative mandate to become a top-20 university by 2020. He has assumed numerous other responsibilities as well, such as being a member of the board of NACUBO, an unusual post for a provost; he was program coordinator for the AAU’s annual Arts & Sciences Dean’s Meeting; and he was a presenter at the Big Ten Fundraising Institute. Chancellor Subbaswamy has a rare combination of high intelligence and aspirations, a wealth of relevant experience in academia and higher education administration, realistic grounding, a very warm personality, and a wonderful sense of humor. He seems to be as comfortable getting into the weeds of university life as viewing the whole enterprise from 30,000 feet. We have great confidence that he is exactly the right person to guide the Commonwealth’s flagship public university to become all it can be.

Chancellor Kumble Subbaswamy thanked the Senate for the privilege and honor for the opportunity to speak and to be the Chancellor of such an outstanding campus. He then addressed the Senate:

Secretary May mentioned the state of Kentucky’s mandate that the University of Kentucky become a top-20 university by 2020, and you will notice that I did not stay there until 2020. I like to say that both the president and provost would be arrested if that goal was not achieved, as it was a legislative mandate.

I truly believe that a vibrant and constructively engaged faculty governance body is essential for the well-being of a campus like ours. I am committed to transparency and consultation. You might not always agree with my decisions, but you will know exactly how and why I made them. I have worked closely with the Rules Committee for the past couple of months. I am grateful to Professors Bartolomeo, May, Whitehead, Billings and others who have freely given me their council and advice. I am happy to be here before the entire Senate.

I want to talk about my vision for the campus based on all the conversations I’m having with both internal and external audiences around the University. I am going to share with you what I have learned so far, and it’s an evolving picture.

Before that, however, I would like to make a few observations. Some of you have been on the faculty for many years and have seen too many Chancellors come and go. Some of you may not have a full appreciation of the unique nature of the campus on which you serve and the incredible impact it has on the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. UMass Amherst has more in-state alumni, about 117,000, than any other college in Massachusetts, whether private or public. The Amherst campus contributes more than $1.5 billion of economic activity to Massachusetts. As a newcomer looking at UMass Amherst with fresh eyes, I can tell you that this is an impressive and very dynamic campus. This fall’s incoming class is the most accomplished first-year class in the history of this campus. The class of 2016 includes approximately 4,560 students with an historically high academic profile, their old SAT combined mean of 1196 and an average high school grade point average of 3.66. This comes while preserving a very diverse student body. The Commonwealth Honors College allows us to recruit the best and brightest not only of students but faculty as well. Exciting programs attract talented faculty and students alike. No other public college or university in New England has anything quite like it. This fall, over 600 Commonwealth Honors College students arrived on campus with an overall high school GPA of 4.15 and combined SAT scores of 1345. There are a number of programs on campus that are acknowledged national leaders. Food Science, Kinesiology, Polymer Science, Engineering, and Linguistics have
long been ranked among the country’s top programs, public or private. Many other programs are emerging as leaders. The Isenberg Online MBA program is ranked tenth in the nation for quality, marketability and affordability. Isenberg’s Hospitality program is ranked sixth in the nation. I run into Isenberg HTM graduates at every convention I attend. UMass Amherst is a top-ten school for internships, according to U.S. News and World Report. We are third in the nation for Gillman Scholars who win study-abroad scholarships while receiving Pell Grants. We conducted research that led to $181 million in research expenditures last year. In 2011, the University was selected by the federal government to lead a consortium of seven universities and host a major new center, the Northeast Climate Sciences Center. The Center for Collaborative Adaptive Sensing of the Atmosphere (CASA) receives funding from the National Science Foundation as a coveted engineering research center. Alternative energy research initiatives include microbiologist Derek Lovely’s discovery of the geobacter species bacteria and its capabilities for energy transfer; microbiologist Susan Leschine’s development of the Q microbe to turn biomass into ethanol; polymer scientist Thomas Russell’s work to make less expensive and more efficient solar power cells out of polymer films; and chemist Sankaran Thayumanavan’s design of a hydrogen fuel cell that could make that technology more efficient by improving proton conductors. Our commitment to the environment is unmatched by public or private universities across the region and nationally. The campus received a gold and a top-ten rating from the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education’s Stars System. The student-led Permaculture Garden, as is well known, was honored by the White House as a campus champion for change.

So what is it about the culture here that has allowed UMass Amherst to thrive at a time when so many public institutions have struggled? This is a place where a spirit of innovation has been integrated into every aspect of the campus, with an eye toward measurable positive impact on students and society as a whole.

Innovation, integration, and impact appear to be the key words that describe UMass Amherst and undergird its leadership role as the flagship campus of the public research university of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Some examples: the Center for Teaching and Faculty Development with its various programs and the two new team-based learning classrooms are serving as models for TBL classrooms planned for the University’s New Academic Classroom Building, iCons, the Integrated Concentration in Science, integrates scientific expertise across disciplines and gives students the opportunity to work on real-world problems from the very first day; it was developed to produce the next generation of leaders in science and technology with the attitudes, knowledge and skills needed to solve the inherently multidisciplinary problems facing our world. The Integrative Experience requirement of the University’s General Education curriculum addresses the challenges associated with educational fragmentation; positioned in the upper-division, the IE provides students with a structured opportunity to look back on their early college learning experiences, reflect upon, and make connections between those earlier experiences and the more advanced work of their major; and use that integrated learning to prepare for the demands of the world beyond the University. The UMass Innovation Institute is finding common ground with industry in the region to find mutually beneficial research and development projects.

Put simply, we are a leading public research university devoted to innovation, integration, and impact. But the only way we are going to continue to excel is if we continue to innovate. We are faced with an external environment bringing to us three imperatives: the economic imperative, the demographic imperative, and the technology imperative. With the country’s economy still reeling from the recent recession, state appropriations for higher education have continued to decline or fail to keep pace with cost increases to maintain quality, resulting in significant increases in tuition and fees. Universities are under increasing pressure to control costs both from the legislature and also from the public. We are being asked to be more accountable. At the same time, innovative educational models such as the free massive online open courses (MOOCs) are calling into question the value of the more expensive residential, immersive model, particularly on a research university campus. Public flagship campuses like ours have turned to out-of-state recruitment, new construction funded by long-term debt, and other such measures that further call into question the future viability of our financial model. Serious consideration for cost containment must accompany the search for new revenue sources if the essential elements of the flagship research university are to survive. In talking to our various stakeholders—alumni, donors, legislators—I have found that the pursuit of vague notions of prestige that drive up the cost of running the University are not resonating with them. It comes across as a tired, old message. On the other hand, a message of leadership via innovation, integrative education, and increased impact on society excites them. I am confident that we will receive support for our pursuit of solutions to the Commonwealth’s educational and economic challenges through innovation, while also advancing our own goals of moving up among public research universities in reputation and impact. If we don’t innovate, we will be left behind. If we don’t ensure that innovation is integrated into all aspects of our endeavors—educational, research, management—
we will be left behind. If we don’t see that our integrative innovation has an impact on the financial, demographic, and technology imperatives we face, we will be left behind. That impact should be felt in the pathways to jobs we create for our graduates—far too many of our graduates are still not finding their way to employment; the translational research we conduct that leads to alternative energy sources or breakthroughs in the Commonwealth’s innovation economy; and in the agricultural advances, such as our Cranberry Station; or the impact we will have in closing the educational and economic disparities in the state. As the flagship campus of the University of Massachusetts, UMass Amherst is a leader in serving the public through innovative approaches to providing access to excellence in education and conducting impactful research that makes a real difference in the lives of the citizens of the Commonwealth and beyond.

I look forward to working with you in reasserting that leadership position for UMass Amherst in the years to come.