[President Leland will introduce you.]

Thank you, Dr. Leland.

It’s a pleasure to be on this campus today for many reasons -- but principally because of the opportunity to meet with this group.

During the eight months that I have been on the job, I’ve had the opportunity to visit all 35 campuses, many more than once.

I’ve met with presidents, faculty, staff, students, community leaders, and legislators.

Various System groups also have asked me to meet with them.

As I’ve made the transition from the energy sector to higher education, I’ve likened my education to being force-fed by a fire hose. [Dog caught car]

However, I am enjoying the experience and I have been continually energized by the individuals with whom I’ve met and with whom I work.
• We have a great deal of talent on our campuses that is making a real difference within the System.

• This group, of course, is special, from a talent perspective.

• You represent faculty at both public and private colleges and universities across Georgia.

• Collectively, you have a sense of the academic universe that is larger than just a single campus or even our vast System.

• But the more compelling reason for my interest in meeting with you today is that you represent the heart and soul of higher education -- our core missions of teaching and research, along with public service.

• And this is the theme I want to develop very briefly today -- what makes higher education unique and how we can protect and strengthen our work in our core mission areas.

• Now I understand this group has some specific points of concern, so, I want to take this opportunity to touch upon those as well.

• They include shared governance, tenure, salaries, and retirement programs.
• So let me begin with these bread and butter issues, and then move on to the larger philosophical and strategic theme I have outlined.

• First -- shared governance.

• I recognize that in higher education there exists a well-established culture of shared governance.

• And it is important that we have a broad representation of interests providing honest input to the decision-making process.

• But I also believe that while input is welcome, while shared-decision making has a place and a role, it also is critical to establish clear accountability for decisions.

• My operating principle is that the individual who will be held accountable for a decision is, in the end, the one who has the sole responsibility and right to make that decision.

• Please understand that this is not about my authority.

• In fact, we are working to push down many approval processes from the Board and System level to the institutions.

• Four task forces led by eight presidents are involved in this effort.
• But responsible management and leadership requires that if approvals are pushed down, individuals need to be assigned responsibility and thus we establish clear accountability.

• There is a timeworn but true adage: "When everyone is responsible, no one is responsible."

• So as we move forward, I will be working with our presidents, staff and faculty to explore how we set clear lines of accountability while preserving the collegial culture that gives everyone needed input for decisions.

• Another area of concern to faculty is that of tenure -- particularly the fact that we are doing something different at our newest institutions, Georgia Gwinnett College.

• In creating Georgia Gwinnett College, the University System envisioned a different kind of institution right from the start.

• One of those differences, at least at the outset, is in faculty contracts.

• It was interesting to me that approximately half of the current Georgia Gwinnett faculty, admittedly a small sample, gave up tenure at another institution in order to move to GGC.
• GGC is evidently attractive as an institution to faculty members for reasons other than tenure.

• I would not, however, interpret the institutional decision at GGC regarding faculty contracts to constitute any kind of System signal.

• The Board understands the importance of the System's national reputation in attracting the best instructors and researchers.

• Rightly understood, tenure is part of the tradition of the academy, and the University System clearly stands in that tradition.

• I need your help, though, in making sure the public understands the proper role of tenure.

• It is often misunderstood as a lifetime contract without supervision and without accountability.

• We know that is not true.

• The AAUP has an important part to play in changing this misperception, in changing the language of the public debate from one of entitlement to one of preserving academic values.

• Let me touch on salaries.
• Higher education is in a very competitive market -- not just among institutions, but also with the private sector.

• Coming from the private sector, I recognize and understand the importance of compensation in attracting and retaining quality people.

• After all, our primary asset in higher education is our people.

• While public higher education operates under many unique constraints due to our relationship with our state funding partners, we will continue to make the strongest case possible for compensation packages that reward excellence.

• But here again, you are part of the solution.

[My job – tools --- including compensation]

• But, I cannot cruise by and periodically throw money over the transom to eagerly outstretched hands.

• You need to work with your leadership to provide compelling indicators of performance. [Put in my hands]

• I use the word “compelling” because your indicators must wow people and compel them to give.
• The reality is that you are not going to get increases merely because you are here or happen to be a lot smarter than most.

• It takes more than that to separate people from their money these days!

• Related to compensation is retirement.

• And for those of you in the University System who are under our Optional Retirement Program or ORP -- as, indeed, I am -- I understand the level of concern regarding the new employer contribution levels.

• Let me just take this opportunity to state that we have listened and we will be pursuing a legislative remedy to a number of your concerns.  [Questions later]

• Now let me turn to this larger theme -- what makes the academy unique and how we can work together to protect that and strengthen it.

• Our efforts in this area are critical, but they have taken on an additional urgency with the heightened profile given higher education by the release of what is popularly known as the “Spellings Report,” the recommendations of the bipartisan Commission on the Future of Higher Education.
• The Commission identified as the most serious concerns in higher education the issues of accessibility, affordability, and accountability.

• In addition, while American’s higher education system continues to be a key strength for the nation, other countries have made and continue to make great strides in improving their higher education systems.

• The fact is that national leaders realize that higher education is the engine to drive economic growth.

• As Secretary Spelling noted, “Other nations educate more of their young adults to more advanced levels than we do.”

• Two-thirds of high growth jobs require a college degree, which only one-third of Americans have.

• What does this mean for us -- both in public and private higher education?

• It means that our customers -- whether political leaders, alumni, businesses, or students -- are looking more than ever to higher education to meet the nation’s needs for a highly educated workforce, looking for research, looking for the knowledge to help the nation maintain its competitive edge.
• And with this increased focus on the Academy and our performance, the expectation is that we will address -- not depreciate -- these key issues of concern: accessibility, affordability, and accountability -- and turn out more and better graduates.

• As I have moved around the state and learned more about the University System of Georgia, it has become clear to me that we have a great opportunity to make some significant improvements that will address these issues.

• And in so doing, we can also secure the increased resources you all covet, to strengthen the teaching, research and service mission.

• While I am focusing on observations and actions within the University System of Georgia, these observations and actions have some applicability to private institutions as well.

• My first observation is that we need to understand what it is we do that is unique and different from any other organization and what is not.

• There are those who say, “Higher education is different -- it cannot be treated like a business.”

• There is no question that our teaching, research and service mission is unique.
• It is what makes the Academy special.
• The creation and dissemination of knowledge is the single most important activity of any civilized society.
• Each of you understands this mission.
• As do I.
• When I look back on my own college experience, it was truly a transformative one.
• As a young man, I may not have fully appreciated the power of that experience upon me, but I did understand that it was opening my world and challenging me in new and different ways.
• During my college days, I had the pleasure of working directly with future Nobel laureates at Carnegie Mellon, and was then literally surrounded by them at the University of Chicago.
• It was both uplifting and humbling — all at the same time!
• When I left college, I took away more than degrees.
• I left with a deep appreciation of what a unique place and environment the academy provided me -- as it should provide to all who enter its portals.
• This appreciation has only become stronger over the years as I’ve worked on higher education boards in Wisconsin, Illinois, and my own Carnegie Mellon.

• So I do begin to understand the unique and special role that higher education plays in the lives of our students and the fortunes of our communities.

• And my first goal is to do all that is possible to preserve, protect and strengthen that mission.

• But while this core mission is unique and cannot and should not be viewed in the same light as commercial businesses, those activities that support this mission are not unique.

• Keeping the lights on, the roof repaired -- making payroll -- soliciting bids -- construction -- paying invoices -- contracting for health benefits -- these operations are the same, regardless of the setting.

• This is an important distinction and we must understand it.

• Why? Because by understanding this fact, we can position ourselves to create a culture of continuous process improvement in these areas.
• By analyzing our back office operations to ensure our procedures and processes conform to the highest standards, we can actually address some of the key issues of accessibility, affordability, and accountability.

• From my past experience, I can say with little hesitation, that we don’t seem to have a lot of world class back offices.

• Right now in the University System, we have a number of actions underway -- and more planned -- to strengthen our effectiveness and efficiency.

• Fundamentally, some cultural change is necessary.

• It means moving on a fast track to create a culture geared toward truly using all of System’s combined resources on behalf of this state and this nation.

• Our customers -- students, government, business -- demand our maximum efficiency and total focus on meeting these challenges.

• If anyone has doubts about this and the expectations of the academy that exist, then the Spelling Report should dispel those.

• We will respond to our customers -- all of them -- and we will meet and exceed expectations.
• The best example of this cultural shift I can point to is the United Way -- a great organization with an important mission.

• This is an organization that has changed its culture.

• Comparing the University System with the United Way -- right now we more closely resemble the old UW -- but like the new UW, we are changing and becoming more strategic.

• The old UW model was to collect funds for agencies almost as a convenience – at the agency level.

• The new UW model is to collect money to fund programmatic and strategic thrusts.

• The new UW also helps agencies manage better, plan better, and focus better. It is a facilitator, an enabler.

• We are doing a great deal right as a system -- but we can and should be flexible enough to embark on a journey of continual process improvement.

• As stewards of multi-billions of state resources and priceless intellectual capital, we must use System resources to advance the state -- both educationally and economically:
• It’s important to address change in order to provide the additional resources that can be first, harvested by the System and then reinvested into what makes us unique -- our academic mission.

• As we provide additional resources to the academic mission, we can then focus on the bottom line of improving student success.

• We need more students ready for college, more students enrolling in college, more students graduating ready to work.

• This a key part of what we do -- whether you like the terminology or not, students are our “core customers.”

• If you’ve listened closely to what I’ve been saying, I hope you have come to the conclusion that I am working on your behalf to get you the resources you need to perform the transformational magic you do.

• Frankly, the folks under whom I’m lighting the fires are primarily our chief business officers and our administrative staffs as I ask them to look at new ways of operating.

• We have a great opportunity here.

• We have a University System created and sustained for 75 years by the people of Georgia.
• We have a System with clear strengths in a number of areas.

• We have the talent on our campuses to build upon this legacy and these strengths.

• And we have good partners in both government and the private sector to support our efforts to change in ways that best serve the state.

• We have an excellent private school network, which also receives substantial state support.

• With these positive factors, there is no reason not to act to create an even more robust, dynamic and responsive educational system -- a true system that fully mobilizes all of its resources on behalf of Georgia and the nation.

• It will require some honest reassessment and a change in culture to be successful.

• It will not be easy.

• Changing large organization requires big steps -- as Sheila Shineburg once noted, “You can’t leap a cultural chasm in three baby steps.”

• The University System will be up to this.

• All of higher education can achieve new levels of effectiveness -- whether public or private.
• We will look to our people -- and particularly our faculty -- for the creativity, the knowledge and the ideas to make needed transformations.

• Our faculty plays a key role -- let me rephrase that, the key role -- in fulfilling our core mission.

• My job is to give you the context, the environment, the tools to operate and be successful.

• You have a responsibility to help keep us focused on that core mission.

• I appreciate what you do. I appreciate both your past and your future contributions in our shared efforts to “Create A More Educated Georgia.”

• Thank you.

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