Thank you, Thaisa, for that lovely introduction.

I want to begin by acknowledging that we are on the land of the Coast Salish peoples which touches the shared waters of all the tribes and bands within the Suquamish, Tulalip, and Muckleshoot nations. Here in this sacred space of wałabʔalxtʷ — Intellectual House, it is a special honor to acknowledge the tribes and the native people who founded and remain a part of our community.

And we are indeed a community! I thank and welcome those of you here today — and those watching remotely — for coming together in that spirit. And a special welcome to the Regents here today. Your leadership and wise counsel ensures that this great institution continues to thrive. You represent the people of Washington and their support and investment in our University.

The last year has been full of challenges — global, national, and right here. A lot has been thrown at all of us, but it’s important to acknowledge that some have been challenged, and indeed threatened, more than others — including our DACA students, our trans community members, and people of color more generally, as well as so many in our community who have been affected by what seems like an avalanche of natural, and not so natural disasters.

We are also facing a difficult economic environment across all three of our campuses, with some of our schools, colleges or units feeling the pinch more than others. I know it’s NOT an easy time — and I’m happy to take questions about any of these issues or any others during the Q&A. But, I’m going to focus primarily on those things that unite us— aside from the @uw in our email addresses or the fact that we all look fabulous in purple — and on what we have and can accomplish when we pull together. This is not to minimize or ignore our challenges — I think about them every day (and too often at night). Yet, I believe the best way to prepare for and confront challenges is by building on our strengths and pulling together as a community, on behalf of the greater good.

About a decade ago, when I was a Vice Provost, I helped lead a project to assess and improve working conditions at the UW. We surveyed more than 6,000 UW faculty and staff and interviewed hundreds of others. I was struck by two features of our community that were overwhelmingly positive: almost 90% of those surveyed “agreed STRONGLY” that they “care about the UW” and that they “are proud to be part of this university”. Finance and IT professionals, medical techs and nurses, as well as janitors, cooks, and electricians told us that while their day-to-day work was not that dissimilar to what they might be doing elsewhere, it mattered to them that they were a part of THIS community and that what they did was in support of our larger mission of education, discovery, patient care.
Well, I’m proud to be part of this community too; I’ve often said that I think of it as “home,” a concept that, as someone who came to this country as a refugee, has special meaning. In my house, home was an almost mythical concept, something that was out of reach, that had disappeared — but, I’ve found it. It’s here and I take joy in my dedication to this very special place.

I’m proud of our students across all of our campuses who work so hard to gain admission to the UW and then work even harder once they get here. From suburbs and small towns, islands and farms, from all over — New York and Nigeria, Las Vegas and Laos. From mega-cities like Beijing, China and small towns like Gustavus, Alaska.

Most come from Washington...Mt. Vernon, Spokane, Woodinville and Federal Way, Prosser, and Port Angeles, Odessa and Aberdeen. There’s a street or lane on this campus named after every county in the state, and I would bet that there’s a student here from every one of them too. I visited Yakima recently and talked to students in Davis High which produced 113 of our current students.

I’m proud to be a member of this faculty – where my colleagues invest themselves in this University as teachers, mentors, scholars, artists, and researchers, unafraid to take risks, to take their work, and our university, to the next level. I’m proud of the doctors and nurses and other health care providers in UW Medicine who work every day to improve people’s health.

And we could not be a great university without the staff members who support and advise our students, work side by side with our faculty and who keep our campuses, hospitals and clinics functioning, our grounds beautiful and safe, and who conduct the behind the scene business of our university.

And, then there’s our alumni, who link us to our past and connect us to the world, who remain members of our community no matter where they live.

Our reputation is strong. The UW ranked 13th in the world – and third among all public universities – in this year’s Academic Ranking of World Universities. In the National Taiwan University Rankings we were #6 worldwide, in the US we were only behind Stanford, Harvard, and John Hopkins (and one slot above MIT). It’s just a number, but because it’s based on output – like the number of articles published in top journals like Science, and by how often articles were cited, not on “reputation”, which looks backward not forward, I’m proud of what it signifies: the vast reach and exceptional quality of the scholarship and discovery produced our faculty, the staff we work with, and the students we mentor. Wow!

And once again we’ve been ranked THE most innovative public university in the country. I love this one because it reflects our willingness to think and work outside the box in ways that are unusual and unexpected.

I’m not into chasing rankings per se. But, I AM proud of the output and impact this set of rankings represent. It doesn’t happen thanks to one smart scholar – or even a hundred smart scholars – working in isolation. It happens when you assemble a complex ecosystem to support groundbreaking art, scholarship and research that pushes the boundaries of human knowledge. It happens when interdisciplinary thinking is built into the system and when thousands of people, working on disparate and varied projects, share a common vision of building a better world.
The strength in that ecosystem shows up every day in national and international coverage of our – your – work and its impact. It’s what enabled UW researchers to discover the first 2-dimensional magnet – a discovery that could impact computing technology on the scale of the invention of the semiconductor.

It’s what enabled faculty, students and community scholars and activists to work through the Women’s Center to produce research that delves into the conditions that allow human trafficking to persist in our state, and make policy recommendation on how to reduce it.

It’s enabled the work of our faculty and students in Law, Societies, and Justice with prisoners in the Monroe Correctional Complex and the work of a faculty in UW Tacoma Social Work with Girl Scouts beyond Bars, which aims to support girls whose mothers are imprisoned.

It’s enabled the innovative work by UW Bothell’s School of Business in partnership with the Evans School to reimagine philanthropy to address pressing social issues.

Our faculty carry out this work side by side with students because we are, above all, a community of educators committed to excellence, with a rich and expansive definition of what it means to teach and learn.

The proof of that excellence in teaching is all around us in the students and graduates who are showing what it means to “be boundless” in new ways all the time.

It’s in budding lawyers who work for justice, like Washington’s Attorney General Bob Ferguson and Solicitor General Noah Purcell, both alumni and former leaders of student government, who brought the court case that halted the travel ban.

And in Elese Washines, a graduate of our math program and a Costco Scholar. She’s now manager of the Yakama Nation’s higher education program and Assistant Professor of Math and Education at Heritage University. She’s helping create a pipeline of Native students into higher ed here (we have 17 students from the Yakama Nation on our campuses) and across the state.

And it’s in Sophie Nop who was student body president at UW Tacoma, who graduated with a degree in computer science last year and is now a Fulbright scholar conducting ethnographic, participatory research in Cambodia to help identify STEM potential in students. When she finishes up, she hopes to enroll in the Seattle campus’s program in human centered design. Another double-dawg in the making.

Bob, Noah, Elese, and Sophie — once our students, now the teachers, scholars, professionals, continuing to serve their alma mater AND the world!

The proof of that excellence is in the 8,000+ undergraduates participated in research. More than 5,000 engaged in public service, and more than 2,000 completed university-affiliated internships. In countless examples, UW students are inventing new ways to stretch, learn and grow through their Husky Experiences.

Yes – we grouse and sometimes even whine — this region is becoming expensive and our pay isn’t keeping up, someone else is getting a new building and we aren’t, even worse – the new building is blocking OUR view! We didn’t get the class we wanted this quarter, and at the risk of bringing up a sore
subject, yes, we lost a football game, but it’s often the defeats we learn the most from and they get a week to regroup.

Oh, and yes –
I know about the problems with Workday, we have a terrific integrated services staff working on it, we appreciate your patience.

I’m really not just making light of things, I know if it’s YOUR paycheck it’s a big deal. But, despite it all, for the fourth year in a row, the Chronicle of Higher Education named the UW a “Great College to Work For,” based on an anonymous survey, so people said what they REALLY thought. We were especially singled out for having an environment of respect and appreciation, for strong relationships between departments and their chairs, for our supportive teaching environment, and for our collaborative governance. (And for confidence in senior leadership, which certainly made some of us in Gerberding smile). None of our other university peers were recognized in so many categories... and, of the two peers who were recognized (Michigan and USC) both were also recognized for their high compensation, indeed, that was the only category Michigan was recognized for.

So, yes... we must continue to work to improve compensation, and we WILL. The data does show that money really doesn’t buy you respect or strong relationships— but, you do need enough for rent...
We’re going to continue to work on the problem, but it will require us to make difficult decisions, about the size of our faculty, staff, or our course loads, or, faculty mix....

And these are the kind of decisions we must make together thoughtfully – because that’s what a community does. And, yes — we’ll be working with the legislature too, because everyone in this state has an investment in keeping the UW excellent.

Our reputation for excellence is well-earned. It’s based on what we’re doing today and tomorrow, not yesterday, and we’re doing it not by being selective, taking pride and scoring points for the number of students we turn down (in fact, almost 60% of in-state undergrads who apply are offered admission on our Seattle campus, and it’s higher at Bothell and Tacoma). Still, we turn down more than I’d like...which is why we keep growing...We strive not to be selective, but inclusive – we know that to build a better world we need all hands on deck working together.

That’s why a decade ago we started the Husky Promise. I am deeply proud of the impact of the Husky Promise, and what it did for students like Caroline Raymundo, the child of immigrants, a biology major who has volunteered her time at health clinics as close as South Seattle and as far away as Vietnam. She also serves as a peer tutor for the OMAD Instructional Center.

Since its inception a decade ago, over 39,000 students across our three campuses have attended one of our undergraduate programs, without paying ANY tuition. And today, roughly 30 percent of UW resident undergraduates are attending through the Husky Promise— that’s about 10,000 students – the size of a not so small university. Who says we don’t have a free college in our state? It’s right here, on our campuses.

Our excellence comes from the diversity of our community. Its breadth and depth allows us to do things that most others can’t, to work across our disciplines to tackle big, audacious problems... The inclusivity and comprehensiveness of our community IS our competitive advantage.
Our population Health initiative is a perfect example – I may call it a “presidential initiative,” but it’s anything but top-down. It weaves together strands that were already there. It’s built on our strengths in data or e-science, on the comprehensiveness of our health sciences, on our nursing, social work and education programs on all three of our campuses, on our language and cultural studies programs, and on the biggest College of the Environment in the country. That’s what attracted a Fortune 500 company, the Aga Kahn Development network and the China CDC to partner with us on exciting initiatives to improve health in Central America, across Asia, and in Africa.

But we’re also making these connections throughout our state and region. The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation has partnered with King County to produce a study of health disparities – men face an 18-year life expectancy gap in our own county. We continue in active discussions with King County on ways to expand our collaboration and support our public mission.

One of the things that makes us boundless if, in fact, the deep connections between the global and local.

And speaking of Boundless…..

The strength of our community is seen quite obviously in the Be Boundless philanthropic campaign. It’s been a joy to see how deeply our public mission has resonated with the broader community – alumni founding scholarships, in part, because they too were scholarship students. Or the many who didn’t come here, but for whom our mission resonates. Last year, our campaign drew in a total of $542.4 million, more than any other public university in the country. But, even more impressive is the over 150,000 donors who contributed, an institutional best.

We describe the campaign as “historic” because its ambition — to raise $5 billion by 2020 — is among THE most ambitious campaigns of ANY public university ever. But what history will remember is not the number, but the impact that number represents: the hundreds of thousands of people who saw in this campaign an opportunity to serve a mission greater than themselves. Thank you --

Community is also about our values and in the WAY we work together, and how we recognize and support the contributions of all its members.

That’s why we continue our work on Race and Equity. I’m grateful for the committed and passionate work that co-chairs Ed Taylor and Ricky Hall and the entire steering committee, are doing in leading this important work. To date, over 1,000 faculty and staff have participated in diversity training, and thousands of students have participated in difficult conversations confronting their own biases and helping us identify and examine institutional policies that might be exclusionary or biased.

From student activists who played a key role in the inception of OMAD – happy 50th birthday!!! – to our Regents who started a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Advisory Committee, our community is working to increase social justice as we better people’s lives.

A wonderful and recent example of what we can do when we work together is reflected in our brand new licensing agreement with Nike, signed just last week. The new contract ensures that the Workers’ Rights Consortium, a labor rights monitoring organization, has access to investigate Nike’s supplier factories when they are accused of labor violations. This was recommended by our Advisory Committee on Trademarks and Licensing and United Students Against Sweatshops. In my Provost Town Hall in 2015, I noted that student activism has played a positive role in this university and has had a material
influence on companies like Nike. USAS has fought tough battles on behalf of human rights but has also been willing to work with our committee structures and collaborate with administration when they believe we can work together in good faith.

That balanced approach has arguably played a role in a victory for workers around the globe. It’s just one more example of what we can do when we come together as a community and recognize our common values, our belief that what people have in common is far greater than what divides us.

College campuses are and will continue to be center stage as we debate difficult issues on which there are a diversity of opinions. As a community of people with deeply-held values, it is both our obligation and our opportunity to demonstrate how to disagree without shedding our humanity.

Justice Thurgood Marshall wrote, “In recognizing the humanity of our fellow beings, we pay ourselves the highest tribute.” To offer all people dignity and respect is how we give those same gifts to ourselves.

Our values underpin our support for DACA students, and our assertion that Black Lives Matter. It’s why we stand against white nationalism, trans and homo-phobia and against the targeting of people based on race, gender, nationality, or faith.

Our values include respect for science, truth, reason and evidence. We honor them when we advocate for federal investment.

We honor them when we work for human rights and dignity, whether for our neighbors suffering from homelessness or for coffee plantation workers in Latin America.

And we live up to them when we protect our shared planet in ways that are fair and equitable.

We value diversity, both as a moral good and a practical need for everyone’s creativity, passion and intelligence. Innovation is a powerful force, but if we only listen to the same few voices — or types of voices — we become bounded instead of boundless, and we risk confusing novelty for innovation. Our opportunity, in our labs and classrooms, at CoMotion and the Global Innovation Exchange, is to channel that powerful force into a world of good.

I know we are a deeply determined community. Every dream we have for our future, and for our children’s future, depends on that determination and the willingness to work together. We are all essential to the great tasks that lie ahead of us. Thank you for being in this community. You are not only deeply valued, you are urgently needed.

Thank you and I look forward to hearing from you now.