I extend a warm welcome to the faculty, staff, administrators, Trustees and community members who are joining us today here in the Ragan Theater or across our campus via the Internet. I thank the members of the cabinet for coming today. Thanks to all of you for your hard work and constant service to the students who walk our halls and fill our classrooms. And, to any of those students who are here with us today, I extend a special welcome. You are the reason we do what we do here at UVU.

It remains such an honor to serve this institution. I regularly mention to my wife, Paige, and my children just how lucky I feel to be at this University with such caring, intelligent and admirable individuals . . . as well as people like Ian Wilson. We all love Vice President Wilson, our local Canadian super hero. When I was complaining the other day about the cold, Ian smirked that at 60 degrees, Americans turn on the heat and the Canadians plant gardens. With escalating tones of Great White North patriotism, he continued that at 20 degrees Utahns wrap up in coats, scarves, and hats but Canadians throw on a T-shirt, and at 10 degrees below zero, Californians fly away to Mexico when Canadians don only a light jacket. In a closing note of bravado, he boasted that at 20 degrees below zero, people in Miami cease to exist, but Canadians go lick flagpoles. I believe I bested him, though, when I stated — and this is rock-solid fact — that at 150 degrees below zero, hell freezes over and the Toronto Raptors finally win an NBA title.

On a more serious note, I would like to express my profound appreciation to Ian for the way he has effectively stepped into the academic vice president’s role, accepted the position on a
permanent basis, and led out with his characteristic blend of fairness and firmness in the cause of increasing our academic excellence.

I wish we had the time for me to mention by name so many of the rest of you and what you have done for me personally or, more importantly, what you have done for this campus. I freely confess that one of the best parts of my job is the chance I get to brag about you, whether it be to a parent of a prospective student, a new legislator, a large gathering of community members, or even someone sitting next to me on a plane — like the nuclear engineer I visited with last week on a flight home from Washington, D.C. I never shy away from sharing my admiration and respect for the tremendous faculty, staff, and students we have on this campus.

It used to be a tradition in this country that, if circumstances warranted it, when the president of the United States began the State of the Union address, he would begin with the simple declaration, “the state of the Union is sound.” Today, as an institution, we are facing some extremely challenging issues and circumstances. Yet, in spite of those issues and challenges, I say, without an ounce of reservation, that the state of the University is sound. This is so because of you. It is because of your countless hours of effort, your spirit of ingenuity, your passion for ideas, progress, and doing what needs to be done to help students succeed.

It is worth noting here that these are not just the ramblings of a blindly proud president. This also happens to be the disinterested perspective of the Northwest Commission of Colleges and Universities (NWCCU), the acclaimed and authoritative accrediting agency for institutions of higher education in our region. Although I recently sent notice through e-mail, I would like to announce, once again, that our accreditation has been reaffirmed at the associate and baccalaureate degree levels, and we now are accredited at the master’s degree level. These designations are a tribute to all of you. Here, I must also give a shout out, again, to our
accreditation executive team for their yeoman’s effort in preparing our self-study and hosting the site team. Thanks to all those who worked so hard on this effort, led by Linda Makin, Linda Pierce, and Mohammad El-Saidi, who, rumor has it, established on Monday a political action committee as he contemplates a run for president of Egypt. In any case, after a thorough review of our self-study and every corner of our institution, the accreditation site team that visited our campus came away mightily impressed by the institution as a whole but especially by the individuals they met. If I may, I would like to highlight just a few of the final commendations we received.

1. The committee commends the faculty, staff, administration and Trustees of UVU for their extraordinary efforts to accommodate the rapid growth of the institution, for their willing spirit as they have consequently done more with less, and for their engagement with the institution and its programs.

2. The committee commends UVU for remaining student-centered throughout the transition in status and the transformation in size.

3. The committee commends the institution for undertaking important additional work on academic, faculty, and student issues required for the maintenance of its unique dual mission through the “Advisory Council on Our Unique Educational Mission.”

Indeed, the state of the University is sound. In thinking about this great vote of confidence in the quality of what we are doing at UVU in the midst of such challenge, my mind goes back to a distinct image. Two months ago, I was on the east coast for a few days of university business that took me to New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. Very late one night, after an event in Manhattan, the streets were remarkably empty, and I took a slight detour
back to my hotel to drive by, and then over, perhaps my favorite sight on that storied island — the Brooklyn Bridge.

Coming at it at night, as I drove down East River Drive, the floodlights cast what was for me an electrifying glow on the bridge’s long and intricate web of suspension wire, as well as the majestic limestone towers, which stand as indomitable pillars of support, massive passageways, and great works of architectural art themselves with their neo-Gothic arches. It is truly an engineering and artistic marvel, rightly considered one of the seven wonders of the industrial world. It is also, for me, an apt symbol for what we are about here at UVU.

In many different ways, I see UVU as the region’s most important and attractive bridge. First and foremost, it is a bridge of success for thousands and thousands of students every year — many of whom would otherwise languish for the rest of their lives in economic doldrums, intellectual ignorance, and civic obscurity were it not for the substance and skills they acquire as they pass through the portals of this campus. It is also a bridge between the needs and resources of the University on one hand and the community on the other. Such a bridge is more critical than ever for providing our students with the kind of projects, mentors, and supporters required to make engaged learning practical and meaningful, as well as for providing our surrounding community with the kind of economic development and regional problem solving needed to sustain a stable and healthy civic infrastructure, which is key for delivering a host of public goods, including education.

As we face new and unprecedented levels of growth in this region, both the need and difficulty of providing an adequate educational bridge of success is more pronounced than ever. The challenge facing the developers of the Brooklyn Bridge was that conventional wisdom had most people convinced that you could build a long, large bridge that was structurally weak or a
short, narrow bridge that could withstand volume and weight. And, in the case of the Brooklyn Bridge, a long and wide bridge traversing the East River, which is more like an oceanic tide than a lazy river, the threat of structural instability seemed almost guaranteed.

Today, at UVU, we face some similar challenges. Conventional wisdom suggests that we must choose between being a large-scale provider of an educational product of marginal quality, or we can stop growing and become a much more selective institution of “grade-A” university offerings. Restrictive and sturdy, or expansive and weak — those would seem to be our choices as we face a torrential stream of new students over the next 10 years. But, like the daring Roebling family who envisioned the possibility of the Brooklyn Bridge, then gave it their all, quite literally, to see it executed, we see a third alternative. We see an educational bridge that is, at once, inclusive and serious. More on those themes and their relationship shortly.

Thanks to our predecessors, and the work we have done already, construction of this bridge is underway. In some ways, it is already built. As our accrediting report indicates, we are providing a large-scale, university-quality product that retains a remarkable degree of student focus and attention as well as core set of community college offerings. But the demands and volume of those who are to pass over our UVU bridge are increasing rapidly, and it does not appear that flow will abate any time soon. Whether we are building or simply expanding such a bridge, the requirements are the same. It will require thoughtful and careful planning, as well as disciplined, long-term commitment in terms of construction. So, what, specifically, are we to do? Some of it we have done, or are already doing and simply need to continuously improve. Other plans are still in development and require a bit more consideration by the cabinet and the campus as a whole before we move more aggressively into the construction phase, so to speak.
Perhaps the most convenient way to address this is to turn to several elements noted in our commendations from the Northwest accrediting agency, which nicely line up with our core themes and planning principles.

**More engaged than ever**

The Northwest Commission was particularly and explicitly struck with how “engaged” the whole institution — faculty, staff and administration — is with carrying out the mission and key aspirations of the University. As most of you know, engaged learning has been a defining feature of UVU’s evolving identity for the past four years. The University’s commitment to this distinctive approach to teaching and learning has deepened in recent months with organizational changes we believe set us on a solid course for many years to come. Upon my arrival, I recognized that engaged learning was a model uniquely suited for our teaching mission — a way to encourage scholarly activity and research that draws out the best energies and interests of our faculty and students without putting us on a path to become another Research 1 university, a model we cannot afford and the state does not need right now. As a result, I was determined to integrate engaged learning into the academic backbone of the campus. After a period of planning and transition, we developed a new administrative structure that could move us forward with purpose and resolve.

In August, we reconfigured Val Hale’s responsibilities, moving alumni and development under newly hired Vice President Marc Archambault, tasking Val to spend roughly half of his time as vice president of university relations, actively meeting with and seeking out corporate and civic partners for various engaged learning projects and activities. At that same time, after a robust national search for an associate vice president for academic affairs who would oversee the academic side of engaged learning activity and work across campus to develop the programming
and support necessary to advance this core theme, we hired our own Brian Birch — a veteran faculty member in philosophy and religious studies who was active in engaged learning long before the term became fashionable.

Another key move was our effort to recruit Cary Boone Jones to academic affairs as senior director for engaged learning. Her leadership with the Institute for Professional Engagement and in Career Services has provided valuable experience and perspective. Marsha Haynes and her team in Internship Services have also joined Academic Affairs, and they are welcomed into a family of centers and programs designed to enhance the applied dimensions of student learning.

These changes demonstrate the commitment of the University to engaged learning, and as we look to the future of the university, our aim is for every student to be connected in rich and meaningful ways with faculty, their peers, the University, and the community. Furthermore, we would like faculty in every department to have a meaningful voice in giving shape to this concept. This is not to say that engaged learning can mean whatever anyone individually thinks or wants; rather, it is to say that there are a handful of core principles to which the University is committed and in reference to which students, faculty, staff, and administration can work together to develop applications that fit their discipline.

This is not the place to discuss those core principles in detail, but I do invite you to collect and examine the materials that Brian Birch and his team will have available just outside this hall once this event is over. At this point, let me just offer of few examples of the ways the core principles of engaged learning are being advanced by different individuals across campus.

For Anton Tolman and the Faculty Center, engaged learning is tied to teaching practices that involve the active participation of students in shaping their classroom experience. For Alexis
Palmer and the Volunteer & Service-Learning Center, engagement connects classroom learning to community service. For Jeff Torlina and Peace & Justice Studies, engaged learning means exposing students to the dynamics of global interaction and interdependencies. For Cheryl Hanewicz in Technology Management, engaged learning means providing students with hands-on technical experience to leverage greater success in their professional pursuits.

Our aim here is nothing less than to create a culture of engagement on the campus such that these practices are naturally part of what we do in every department and discipline. Vice President Wilson and I will continue to work with Brian Birch and Val Hale and others across campus to provide support for the integration of engaged learning into the curriculum. We will work toward providing faculty and students the resources they need to find projects and activities that are meaningful and will provide the vital experience necessary for students in their pursuits as professionals, citizens, and life-long learners.

To better accomplish these objectives, some additional organizational realignment has been necessary. The Center for Engaged Learning has given way to a new Office of Engaged Learning, which includes an expanded portfolio of programs and initiatives. The CEL was, of course, best known for its grant program, which to date has funded more than 90 projects and involved nearly 300 faculty and 2,000 students. Renamed “Grants for Engaged Learning,” the program’s continued success depends on our ability to cultivate worthy projects for longer-term institutional support. Thus, in addition to funding innovative new activities, a portion of grant monies will be set aside for high-profile projects funded in collaboration with the deans and Student Services. These partnerships will allow colleges and schools to phase projects into their areas and provide sustainable support for students and faculty. As we move forward, we will also do a better job of assessing both the academic and community impact of the grant awards. Please
note that as the screening process for these grants gets more rigorous — and it will — this does not signal that the money is now somehow set aside to support traditional scholarly research, even when it is top rank. The grants will remain dedicated to cultivating scholarship and educational activity across all levels and disciplines of the University that engage students and faculty in the world around them. In addition to the grant program, the Office of Engaged Learning is pleased to announce a handful of initiatives intended to help generate support and maximize university resources.

Among the most exciting features of the University is this remarkable array of conferences, lectures, and symposia we host on this campus. For many years now, the University has supported faculty and staff in hosting top quality academic events designed to expose our students to a variety of exemplary thinkers and practitioners. The Student Engagement Initiative is a project designed to amplify the educational value of these events. In addition to recording and archiving events for viewing, students are developing supplementary Web resources, including readings, interviews, and blogs.

In our effort to strengthen community partnerships and lead out on economic development, we have successfully launched our Business Engagement Strategy. Initiatives here range from developing a China Studies capability (a Chinese minor is already under way) to developing a robust technology transfer program. As to the latter initiative, I am pleased to note that we have hired Kent Millington, a seasoned and successful veteran of commercializing intellectual property, especially if it is technology related. He stands as a resource to any faculty or student with a great commercial idea. So, to any of you out there with that next big thing after Google, come and see Kent . . . right away.
Finally, we also recognize the important contributions we can make to our local civil society. As a companion to the Business Engagement Strategy, our Civic Engagement Strategy will promote dialogue on issues that extend beyond those primarily related to business and economic development. The strategy calls for three specific efforts: 1) establishing a Utah Valley Civic Forum, a platform for dealing with some issue, or issues, of broad, regional concern; 2) instituting regular civic visits to constituent communities to discuss issues of a more localized concern; and 3) creating a community engagement award to celebrate outstanding community engagement efforts by students, faculty, citizens or organizations.

I congratulate Brian and his team for an extraordinary start on these essential aims.

**Accommodating the rapid growth by doing more with less**

Another point of praise from the Northwest Commission was the way we have been able to handle rapid growth, perceived as a function of our spirit and ability to do more with less. We have certainly done that. From Jim Michaelis, scrambling to build out 15 offices over the summer in hallway space, to department chair Rob Cousins, adding dozens and dozens of English sections in the month of August, this campus rose up and collectively found a way to handle a record-breaking enrollment of 32,670 students. The collective opinion of most educators throughout this state is that this coming fall (2011), UVU will be the state’s largest public university in terms of headcount.

Here it must be noted that while Northwest was duly impressed with our ability to do so much more with less, our growth rate does give them — as it has already given us — significant cause for concern. Perhaps the most sobering element of the whole report reads:

“The Evaluation Committee recommends that Utah Valley University complete its work on a strategic plan for managing growth so it is clear that additional resources must accompany
additional growth. While the institution has accommodated recent rapid growth in enrollment and has acquired some additional human, physical and financial resources for that endeavor, it is clear to the committee that a goal of additional growth must be consistent with both UVU’s mission and its resources.”

Said another way, the Commission is telling us we are to be commended for doing more with less, but we cannot continue on this trajectory and survive. Also, they emphasize that we must rapidly finish what — fortunately — we had already started before the site visit . . . that is a formal plan for dealing with all of this growth. Special thanks here to Linda Makin and her committee who were tasked with developing “phase one” of this plan, which consists of identify just how much growth is coming and detailing every legitimate option for managing that growth. After laying out a clear case for action — given our mission and the best analytics we have ever done on enrollment forecasting — her report offers more than 170 possible tools for tackling this problem. The cabinet is in the process of winnowing down and prioritizing this list for a broader University conversation come next month. What I can share with you now is the preliminary findings on just how much we think we will grow and what that will require in terms of expanding our current resources — the first and most important approach that Linda and her committee recommended.

Before sharing that, though, I think it is important to stress why we are even contemplating trying to accommodate the future demand we anticipate. It goes back to this vision of UVU as a bridge, a big, wide-open structure artfully accommodating as many travelers as possible. Among other things, such a vision is rooted in our institutional DNA.

Over the last year, as I have toured the campus and visited with many of you individually and in smaller groups, my clear sense is that most of us genuinely desire to live up to our
mission of being the higher educational service provider in our region, reaching students where they are. Put another way, this vision speaks to our core theme of inclusive. Now, inclusive means several things, including making UVU a safe place for people of differing ethnicities and political, moral and religious viewpoints. But it also means that we actively reach out to students who need a second chance and a leg up academically. It is inclusive in this second sense that drives us to keep open enrollment and to service as many students as possible who want to come to UVU and are willing to do the work.

Increasing access to and participation in higher education are not only an important part of our institutional mission, but the Utah System of Higher Education has included participation as one of its three primary goals (along with completion and economic development). The Board of Regents and the Commissioner’s office have also declared goals in the HigherEdUtah 2020 plan that would necessitate an additional 70,000 to 100,000 students entering the Utah higher education pipeline. This is in an effort to achieve the goal of 66 percent of Utah adults with some form of collegiate or university training at the certificate level or above. Currently, only 39 percent of Utah adults have completed a degree or certificate. That number used to be higher. We used to be a top-10 state in terms of percentages of adults with some form of higher education. We are now 24th. We are headed in the wrong direction. More than ever, we, as a whole state, need to be looking at how to get more students into the system, not weed more of them out. All of these things, and others, thus point us toward handling substantial amounts of growth in the years ahead. So, does this mean we just need to plan on taking every student who wants to walk through our doors in the future no matter what? Of course not, this would be inconsistent with our other core theme and aspiration to be a “serious” institution of higher learning, with solid academic expectations and proper institutional support for those who come and study here.
What it does mean, I believe, is that we should plan to accommodate as much of the demand for higher education in our region as we can, as long as we can get sufficient resources to maintain a robust university infrastructure and climate. To the degree we cannot get the latter, we will have to diminish our commitment to the former.

Planning for growth requires data about the indicators and projections of future growth. In this analysis, we have factored in the following data, demands, and projections:

1. Historical enrollment data. Cues from past demographic patterns have helped shaped assumptions about how UVU’s service region will grow in the coming years as the primary seat of expansion in a dynamic, fast-growing state.

2. UVU’s own changing student demographics — for instance, the increasing rate at which junior and senior students are staying enrolled here at UVU.

3. Regional and state population projections. Over the decade, this county alone will see an influx of 24,000 who fall within the 18 to 21 age demographic. The majority of these who will go on to college will likely come to UVU.

4. USHE projections

5. Participation improvement initiatives for underrepresented groups. As we make special efforts at outreach, say to young women, who have historically under-enrolled at UVU, we will see additional increases in our student population.

Working closely with the Commissioner’s office on this, we now have, for the first time in the history of the institution, a UVU projection model that matches and can be duplicated by the analysts at the Utah System of Higher Education. Based on all of these indicators mentioned,
UVU is projected to enroll 46,340 students in headcount and 37,330 full-time equivalent students by the end of the decade.

Now, before you all faint in your seats, let me illustrate how this target just may be in reach. In order to plan for this growth projection, what do we need to add to the University over the next decade to maintain our current benchmarks of university quality? Here are the numbers:

- 1.4 million square feet of space (102 gross square feet per Fall FTE student)
- 4,900 parking stalls (one stall per three students)
- 350 salaried FTE faculty (55 percent of instructional credit hours by salaried faculty—our target for university status)
- 272 adjunct FTE faculty
- 503 staff (one staff per 25 students)
- $45.6 million in tax fund revenue ($3,145 per FTE student)

On the square footage aim, we think an ambitious but still realizable effort would be to request three buildings from the state over the next 10 years. This would actually be a rate not too different from our historical average. If, in addition to this, we could pick up two buildings on our own through some creative local gifting, bonding and lease arrangements — options we are actively pursuing right now — we would be coming fairly close to 1 million square feet of space. Of course, a gap remains. The difference would then have to be made up through other internal efficiencies, like delivering a greater percentage of our curriculum online, or through other distance education technologies. Moving to expand summer school registration, as well as weekend and evening scheduling, would also have to become high priorities.
The parking, of course, might be the biggest hurdle of all. It is, already, the No. 1 issue of complaint that comes into my office. Let me just say here that we are at work on the parking problem. This past year we converted Lot B into a new visitor lot and gained greater utilization of Lot D by making it an employee lot. We have received permission from the Corp of Engineers to convert the brush on the west side of campus into a new, 400-stall parking lot. We have also proposed to the Legislature, as part of the new Student Life and Wellness Building, our first parking structure, which will be built into the center of campus and add another 536 stalls at a cost of $8 million, to be funded by revenues generated by parking fees. For a more-detailed report about our long range planning on parking — including that notion that we, like the rest of the county, are simply going to have to become more aggressive users of public transportation in the years ahead — please see Val Peterson’s very good piece on parking on the UVU blog at the University’s website.

On the faculty hiring aim, this target would mean hiring roughly 30 faculty a year. Last year we hired 44 new faculty. So, this hardly seems beyond the pale.

As for the base budget, we could deal with growth through tuition hikes. But, of course, for an institution trying to make higher education more accessible, not less, tuition hikes cannot solve this problem alone for us. We will have to have help from the state. And, if for whatever reason, down the road it becomes clear that the state cannot provide that help in terms of buildings and base budgets, we will then have to open a dialogue with our Trustees and Regents about reconsidering our mission and our commitments to handling the kind of the growth the state right now would like us to try to handle. Meanwhile, it is my personal commitment that we will do everything we possibly can to draw additional efficiencies from the institution. As I
mentioned before, Linda Makin’s committee came forward with more than 170 suggested tools for dealing with this growth. The tools can be categorized roughly under the following headings:

- Expand resources (efforts to secure state funding for buildings and base budgets)
- Maximize efficiency of existing resources
- Expand delivery options for programs
- Streamline the curriculum
- Provide student support for timely graduation
- Shape enrollment growth
- Restrict enrollment growth

Again, over the coming weeks the cabinet will sift and prioritize a set of objectives for the campus to weigh in on this spring. Also, please note that dead last on the list, a tool of last resort is restricting enrollment growth. Now, let me be perfectly clear. I do not want to restrict enrollment — doing so would fly in the face of our broad institutional commitment, and my own personal commitment, to access and opportunity. But let me tell you why it must remain an option. As mentioned earlier, we have to have resources to match our enrollment growth. If adequate resources for faculty, advisers, support staff, buildings, and parking do not accompany student growth in the years ahead, we must be prepared to act in such a way to protect the integrity and quality of education offered at Utah Valley University. It does students no good to welcome more and more of them with open arms only to fail them in providing meaningful educational experiences and reasonable avenues to timely graduation. Such a move would suggest negotiating a fundamental change in our institutional mission and role within the Utah System of Higher Education, but we must be prepared to move that direction if we are left without the support necessary to sustain sterling university credentials and infrastructure.
Our unique educational mission

As we wrestle here with the ways that high rates of growth add challenge to pursuing our unique educational mission, growth is not the only issue on the table. You will recall that earlier in the year, I commissioned an advisory council to meet regularly and come forward with a report and set of recommendations on how we deal with some very specific issues related to student transitions, faculty qualifications and academic programming in order to advance the university offerings and academic standards of the institution even as we remain steadfastly committed to access for students of different aptitudes and provide the kind of certificate and two-year programs more generally associated with a community college. This group met regularly through fall semester and into spring semester, taking their responsibility very seriously. They have also just recently provided to me a fairly thick binder of recommendations with the rationale behind such.

I am just now working through this material myself. It is clear that the group recognized that it was only an advisory group, offering, in many cases, several thoughtful options for how to deal with these issues. As with the material from “phase one” of the strategic plan for growth, my plan is to work with the cabinet in winnowing down things to a manageable size, indicating the next steps that we believe should be taken. However, before any final decisions are made, this synthesized material, along with the material from the strategic plan for growth, will first be discussed in various leadership/governance groups (the deans council, UPAC, faculty senate, etc.). After revising things based on those exercises, as undoubtedly we will, the revised material will be posted on the Web for anyone on campus to review. A mailbox will be established to submit comments and reactions from anyone on campus who wishes to weigh in on these topics. I commit to do what I have always done so far with such exercises, which is personally read
every comment submitted and revise our positions as seems warranted. Again, it is of note, I believe, that the Northwest Commission has tacitly acknowledged its approval of our “dual mission” and explicitly applauded us for this process of determining the concrete ways of bringing it into existence.

**Student centered**

In conclusion, let me note, again, the Northwest Commission’s commendation that made me proudest. It is the remark that despite massive growth and dramatic mission change, this institution has kept a student-centered focus. This is most gratifying in that student success is at the heart of our institutional mission. UVU’s students are excelling in the classroom and in so many other ways. Part of this is because we have such extraordinary students. But a big part of it is because of you, the extra efforts you make to reach out and lift up young people who otherwise would not see their own potential or have the opportunity to flourish. I encounter these stories every week of my life, as I sit lunching with students in the Valley View room, or getting letters of thanks and appreciation about things you have done. I wish I could share them all, but let me just a note a few.

Recently, Rusty Butler played a key role in getting UVU and some other Utah schools to be part of a delegation of student leaders to visit Russia. As a result of this, Richard Portwood, our student body president, not only joined the trip, but emerged as the de facto leader of the delegation, which included student body presidents from nearly all of the Ivy League schools. Just last week I witnessed Richard deliver a report to a delegation at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. He was so impressive that the librarian of congress requested his presence in a number of other private meetings with other leaders for purposes of follow-up projects and
activities. Richard has expressed that his success has been made possible because of the support he has received from so many of you, starting with Rusty Butler’s initiative.

For those of you who read our UVU Magazine, which should be all of you, you will have seen the inspiring story of Daniel Parkins. He endured a volatile family situation and attended three different high schools while working fulltime to help support his family. His parents were divorced and he found himself at a difficult stage where he rebelled against a lot of things — most notably, education. He received a diploma, but was not expecting to do anything with his life. In fact, by the time he graduated high school, he had been kicked out of his house and was living in his car. His GPA and ACT scores were low. His educational future looked bleak, let alone his future prospects for work and a stable life. One day he was approached by Dr. Laura Hamblin, professor of English at UVU. After hearing about Daniel’s story, Dr. Hamblin took it upon herself to ensure that Daniel had an advocate. After reading some of his writing, Laura suggested that Daniel pursue the honor’s program. He was accepted into the program, and currently has a 3.7 GPA majoring in English and is absolutely flourishing.

Emily Ballstaedt was a single mother who didn’t know how she was going to provide for herself and her two kids. She was scared and didn’t know what to do. A friend of hers suggested that she meet with Turning Point, which then partnered her with the Women’s Resource Center. She was introduced to Peggy Pasin, who found Emily a sponsor, as well as helped her find resources so that Emily could focus on her schoolwork and family. Peggy checked in with Emily regularly and worked to motivate, inspire, and support Emily constantly. Due to Emily’s ability to focus on school, Emily joined the Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) and was selected as one of seven of UVU’s top public relations students. With this small group, she was able to go to New York, where she met with top business professionals in elite companies
such as Pfizer Pharmaceuticals, Nestle and Johnson & Johnson, and talked to them about the PR industry. This engaged learning experience opened her world in remarkable ways. Emily said the following: “The thing that has helped me the most at UVU is the access to resources they have for single parents. I would not have been able to complete my education without Turning Point and the Women’s Resource Center. Without a bachelor’s degree from UVU, I would be in a dead-end job, struggling from paycheck to paycheck. I have no idea what I would have done without UVU.”

Thank you Rusty, Laura, Peggy and hundreds others just like you who are out there making a difference, a huge difference, one student at a time.

Now the tasks before us remain great. We are indeed building a massive bridge of success, a bridge looking to be long and wide and sturdy. Just like the builders of the noted Brooklyn Bridge discovered, world-changing works typically require tremendous fortitude. John Augustus Roebling, the leading bridge architect of his day, first had the vision that the Brooklyn Bridge really could be built — despite what all the cautious naysayers around him said. Sadly, shortly after work began, he suffered a crushing blow to his foot when it got pinned between a ferry and a piling. The injury was so bad that he had to have his foot amputated. Not long after this, an infection set in from the surgery and he died. His son, Washington Roebling, devastated but undaunted, stepped in to fill his father’s shoes. But tragedy soon struck again. By spending so much time in the underwater caissons, Washington contracted compression sickness. He did not die, but became so debilitated that he could not oversee the project first-hand. At this point, his wife, Emily Warren Roebling, a life-long learner who had been working with her husband to learn principles of math and engineering, rose to the occasion and for 11 years served as the critical link between the mind of her husband and those engineers on the site executing the
project. This is just a glimpse of the challenges that had to be overcome to complete this project. And, how fortunate that those founders and builders never gave up, never quit, never gave into the temptation to conclude it was too hard and the naysayers were right.

Ladies and gentlemen, we need that same kind of fortitude. We need it because at some level, I believe we face challenges of similar magnitude. More importantly, though, it is my conviction that we are in the process of building a bridge even more significant than the one they built, for we are not building a bridge simply to transport millions of human beings from geographic point A to geographic point B; we are building a bridge that will ultimately transform millions of human minds and human hearts that will in turn transform the world around us for generations to come. There could be no greater work.

Thank you.