

## **Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen:**

It is my pleasure to welcome back to the University those of you who have been instrumental in helping us achieve so many important milestones in our short twelve year history. I am reassured that by seeing so many familiar faces today our future will be even brighter than our past. I want to especially acknowledge the dedicated work of Provost Dan Johnson and his team. Many thanks to all of you.

As I look around today, I also see quite a number of new faces who I know will bring valuable new talent, energy and innovative spirit to our university as we enter our 13<sup>th</sup> year. Welcome to each of you; I look forward to learning about your experiences and aspirations.

Together I am confident that we will have a superb year, one filled with opportunities to meet the many challenges that our President His Excellency Sheikh Nahayan has set before us.

Ladies and gentlemen, the United Arab Emirates is fortunate to have extraordinary leaders who are dedicated to creating here on the Arabian Gulf a knowledge-based society. Our leaders expect Zayed University to take an active role in propelling this pivotal and rising nation to a global leadership position – a place where innovation, education and knowledge generation come together to advance the quality of life for its citizens

This morning we heard His Excellency Sheikh Nahayan describe the exciting future that awaits Zayed University. I am happy that you will be a part of that future. Our goal is to become **“The Great University” in the Great Cities of Abu Dhabi and Dubai**. This is a goal that will demand the best efforts of each of us here today and those who will follow us. And, as Sheikh Nahayan said this morning, our success in the future requires a strong focus on our goals and objectives, as well as a continuing focus on the core values that are imbedded in our University mission.

Today, I want to express my total commitment to the aspirations and directions that Sheikh Nahayan outlined for the future of our University. For me, the key factor which will help us maintain our leadership position in higher education will be the connections we make as a university: connections with our students, connections with our community and our economy, and connections with the global knowledge system. These connections, to a very great extent, define who we are and what we hope to become.

His Excellency Sheikh Nahayan spoke this morning about our plans for moving to the new Abu Dhabi campus. The new campus will open up opportunities to expand enrollment, to enhance our academic offerings, to improve teaching and learning, to enrich the lives of our students, and to establish Zayed University as a major center for research as well as for graduate studies and continuing

education. This year, then, will be a year of important planning for the University. We want this planning to be bold and innovative, yet realistic . . . . . inspirational, yet practical. We want to focus on raising the excellence of Zayed University and its reputation throughout the region and around the globe.

The governments of first, Dubai, and now Abu Dhabi have provided us with truly world class facilities. The creation of these facilities is an outward expression of the confidence these two governments have in Zayed University. We thank them for their past and future support. Now, it is our responsibility to create bold, innovative programs and activities that address local and national needs and priorities. Our programs need to feature global best practices which meet the international standards required to create a world-class university in each city.

In this respect, I remind you of an idea Sheikh Nahayan has often raised. He has stated that as we move forward with our agenda for the future, we must be able to continually measure our success, both internally and externally. He has encouraged us to identify several prominent institutions of the world that we can regard as the model to which we aspire. We can then use these institutions as benchmarks for Zayed University. We will look to them as we measure our progress. By examining the best practices of these institutions, we can learn about new ideas and approaches to the issues facing universities today. I look forward to linking our planning for the new Abu Dhabi campus to the best programs and practices found in prominent universities of the world.

**Ladies and Gentlemen:**

I want to take this opportunity to reinforce the other ideas that Sheikh Nahayan presented to us this morning. I emphasize his strong assertion that Zayed University is a learning-centered institution. Our attention is focused on student learning and how that learning is assessed. Our systems and procedures promote and document good results and provide feedback mechanisms to improve those that do not meet our standards and objectives. Our environment nurtures and enforces the important values of honesty, integrity, and hard work.

Above all, we are taking our responsibility to help our graduates find gainful employment very seriously. We will continue to make every effort to learn about the labor market, to collect all relevant data and information, to understand the skills needed for available jobs, to partner with local and national companies and organizations, to organize career fairs and other avenues for interaction between graduates and employers, and to continually improve our academic offerings. Furthermore, we must help students understand the expectations and opportunities in various employment sectors. We are committed to demonstrating our commitment and resolve to fulfill our responsibilities for graduates' placement in productive jobs.

As we aspire to become an even greater, more comprehensive university, we must expand our graduate, research and outreach programs with goals to serve our country and the region. I expect that some of these graduate programs will be for full-time students and, therefore, will require research components. We will also expect to create the conditions for our faculty and students to engage more fully in scholarly, research and creative activities with particular emphases upon, but not limited to, national needs and priorities. I believe that a major responsibility of a great university in a great city is its outreach and continuing education programs. We must continue to enhance our commitment in these areas.

These are essential parts of our mission of serving our students and our community. As we begin a new year, and a new stage in the university's history, our success in fulfilling this mission requires a renewed commitment to our institutional value system. Teamwork and individual initiative are encouraged, and the sharing of ideas is nurtured. This also requires us to develop an ongoing evaluation process that measures institutional performance. Most importantly, our university mission and value system, . . . in which "excellence" is the keynote phrase, must encourage our students to be responsible learners who value hard work, tolerance, and mutual respect.

**Friends and colleagues:**

Zayed University has been successful in its ability to attract creative and innovative faculty and staff capable of achieving these high goals. As Sheikh Nahayan said this morning, we will work together to have a university that is worthy of the United Arab Emirates and its people. Our two cities of Abu Dhabi and Dubai deserve nothing less than our maximum effort to make Zayed University become a great university worthy of these two great cities. I invite your active engagement in these important endeavors. Both Provost Dan Johnson and I will do everything we can to help all of you to accomplish these goals.

Thank you again for your commitment and hard work. My best wishes to all of you, for a successful and enjoyable year.