

Good Morning, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is my pleasure to welcome you today as Zayed University begins a new stage in its remarkable history of service to its students, to its two cities of Abu Dhabi and Dubai, and to the United Arab Emirates.

I recognize and welcome our distinguished guests—thank you for joining us today and for your continuing support that is so essential to the growth and success of Zayed University.

I am especially pleased to greet our faculty and staff. Those of you who are returning have brought the University to its current level of excellence. I thank you and I am delighted to see you again. And, to the newcomers, I am counting on you to provide new energy, enthusiasm, fresh and innovative ideas about teaching and learning, and research activity that will accelerate even faster our progress toward achieving our vision of becoming an internationally recognized premier university.

You, new members of our faculty and staff, have arrived at an historic moment for the University. Here we are on this phenomenal new campus in Abu Dhabi – a beautiful facility of iconic stature that brings a great sense of pride and

presents us with an opportunity to renew our commitment to the mission of the University and to refresh our faith in its future as we look forward to greater achievements in the years ahead.

I am deeply grateful to the Government of Abu Dhabi, and particularly to His Highness the President, Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al-Nahayan, and to His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahayan, the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, Deputy Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, and Chairman of the Abu Dhabi Education Council, for providing Zayed University with such an extraordinary campus for teaching, learning, and research, and for the marvelous opportunities open for Zayed University and Abu Dhabi to partner in shaping the progress of the nation.

I am also grateful to everyone at the University who has been involved in planning this stupendous structure and in occupying it so successfully. That monumental task has at times been difficult and trying, but you have overcome obstacles and worked with great efficiency. Thank you for your effort and dedication.

I am also pleased to welcome Larry Wilson as the Provost of Zayed University. I will not say new Provost since he served earlier in that capacity for many years. We are

indeed fortunate to have Dr. Wilson rejoin us as few people have the depth of experience and knowledge about education in general and the UAE in particular as does he.

As you returning veterans know, the deans and several members of the Provost's Office, present and past, devoted a significant amount of time last year to preparing plans for the best use of this new Abu Dhabi campus. Faculty and staff from both campuses assisted in that work which resulted in the publication of an impressive document last June. I trust that you have read **“Zayed University and the Future of Abu Dhabi: A Great University for the Great City of Abu Dhabi”** on the University's Intranet. This document describes plans for making Zayed University the great university for the great city of Abu Dhabi and lays out a clear vision for an essential University role in establishing Abu Dhabi as a global city. To all of you who contributed to the vision and the plans contained in this document, I express my sincere appreciation for a job well done, and I look forward to a parallel plan for the Dubai campus that you will develop this semester, with the goal of making Zayed University in Dubai the great university for that great city. These visionary plans for the two campuses will be the basis for our operations and our budgeting process in the years ahead.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are not dealing with little plans. Indeed, we seem to be following the advice attributed to the nineteenth-century American architect Daniel Burnham, designer of the City of Chicago, who said: **“Make no little plans. They have no magic to stir humanity’s blood and probably will not themselves be realized.”** We hope that our Abu Dhabi plan will work its magic. The University has always set big goals and expressed high ambitions, such as graduating students who are today recognized for their ability and determination to succeed and to lead, achieving international accreditation in just six years after the first students graduated, and national and regional recognition for innovation and quality.

To this day, Zayed University has always delivered on the goals and promises it has made to itself and to the nation. Therefore, even though our plans are big, I am confident that the University will achieve its objectives. We are determined to begin implementing the Abu Dhabi plan now and the Dubai plan as soon as it is developed and approved. I have asked the Vice President and the Provost to begin immediately to develop the Dubai plan so that we can capitalize on the momentum that our faculty and staff have already established as the University progresses to a solid international reputation and stature.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Today, I am not at all reluctant to raise our expectations and to ask for your utmost attention. I am able to raise our expectations thanks to the opportunity afforded the University by the historic leadership and enlightened vision and guidance of the University's namesake, the founder of the United Arab Emirates, the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahayan. Sheikh Zayed, (رحمه الله ، وأسكنه فسيح جناته), supported the establishment of the University and encouraged its continued development and success. Bearing the name of Sheikh Zayed places special responsibility upon our University to become worthy of this name. As we begin a new academic year, we affirm our pride in our name and our respect to Sheikh Zayed's historic leadership, and we renew our commitment to his vision that demanded excellent education for all the people of the United Arab Emirates.

It is also with a great deal of respect that on this day we express our gratitude to the President, His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al-Nahayan for his strong interest and support for Zayed University. We are likewise grateful to His Highness, the Vice President, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum who has been so instrumental in the development of Zayed

University. And we appreciate, as well, the support and encouragement of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahayan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces. We thank Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed, in particular, for his generous support of this astounding new campus in Abu Dhabi and for his wish to make it an iconic monument in the city.

We are indeed fortunate in the UAE to have national leaders who appreciate the value of higher education and who understand the special contributions that Zayed University makes to our country. With their guidance, we pledge adherence to the pursuit of excellence and express our determination to establish Zayed University as a major regional and international center of education, research, and community engagement.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The United Arab Emirates has come to trust and appreciate Zayed University for its service to the nation and for the quality of its programs. The nation will expect us to succeed in our big plans because it recognizes and values ten basic characteristics that have defined our University over the past thirteen years. These ten characteristics are:

One: A focus on excellence and quality. Each college of Zayed University sets rigorous standards and intellectual expectations for students that are equivalent to those in major universities throughout the world. Excellence in education results in graduates with the ability to use knowledge in the innovative ways that create a knowledge society so vitally essential in today's world.

Two: University plans that recognize the importance of international standards and at the same time place a high value on innovative ways for promoting learning. Every eligible program is seeking accreditation by the appropriate international organization. Every faculty member is trying to enhance learning.

Three: A determination to inspire students with the desire to contribute to their community and a responsibility to help our graduates find productive employment.

Four: A commitment to educating graduates who are eager to continue learning and able to deal with changing conditions. Alvin Toffler reminds us that "**the illiterates of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn.**"

Five: A continual and comprehensive quality-assessment program that promotes methodical improvement in all aspects of our work. We seek an environment that prizes strategic planning and expects accountability in our operations.

Six: A commitment to recruit and retain outstanding faculty and staff and nurture an institutional environment that values collegiality, mutual respect, integrity, teamwork, and open communication.

Seven: A strong belief that valuable research and creative activity mark a great university. We encourage and support those intellectual endeavors, especially when they focus on the priorities of the United Arab Emirates.

Eight: A University commitment to engage with the community and to seek outreach opportunities and partnerships with the public and private institutions of the United Arab Emirates.

Nine: An obligation to enhance our global network and establish productive relationships with the best universities in the world.

Ten: A keen awareness of our University's strengths: its students, its faculty, its location, its fine reputation, and its clear sense of purpose to become the leading university in the region. An awareness of our strengths and our unique opportunities guides our most effective actions.

Friends and Colleagues:

We must, of course, work always to strengthen those characteristics and ensure that daily activities move us forward toward our goals. To that end, I see some especially important tasks facing us this year.

First: We have already begun the process of renewing our accreditation by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. This academic year will demand intense concentration on our Self-Study. I want to stress the importance of this renewal in enabling Zayed University to achieve its goal of international distinction. I am confident that all of you will work together to prepare an outstanding Self Study so that we successfully document ZU's worthiness for reaffirmation of accreditation.

I would also like to commend the college faculty and their deans who are taking their colleges through specialized accreditation. The accreditation of Art and Design by

NASAD, Education by NCATE, Communication and Media by ACEJMC, Business by AACSB, and Information Technology by ABET will confer important international recognition on the Zayed University's academic programs.

Second: I understand that those of you in the Academic Bridge Program have been working on a revision of the curriculum. I expect that the new program will feature innovations that will reduce the attrition rate and stimulate students to move more quickly and in greater numbers through the Bridge Program and into the colleges. In this process of innovation I want you to consider carefully the number of hours students spend daily in the program, their success rate, and especially the inclusion of information technology and quantitative methods in the program. I look forward to reviewing the evidence of student progress in all these areas and to supporting the process of improvement.

Even while you are improving the Academic Bridge Program at the University, the United Arab Emirates is placing the highest priority on strengthening the college readiness of all secondary school graduates so that the country can reduce and eventually eliminate the very need for these programs in its colleges and universities. This year, I expect Zayed University to be a major partner with

the Ministry of Education in devising plans for reducing and eventually eliminating the need for remedial programs at the higher education institutions. This is a project of great urgency.

Third: I am also calling today for continuing improvement in your support of the University College. The distinctive features of the Colloquy program, managed by the University College, provide the foundation for student success at the University. I encourage you all to be fully aware of its offerings and to support all efforts that will assure its quality and effectiveness. I look forward especially to improved development of students skills in bilingual language acquisition, information technology, scientific understanding, and quantitative methods.

As the University continues to focus on developing the language skills of its students in both Arabic and English, it must be realized that a significant element of Zayed University's fine reputation derives from the ability of its graduates to exhibit an admirable proficiency in both English and Arabic. We are all language teachers, and we must always do everything within our power to help our students improve their facility in Arabic and English, no matter what other academic discipline we may profess.

Fourth: We must multiply effective ways of incorporating leadership, service learning, and entrepreneurship in the University curriculum. I am particularly pleased that we are moving in the direction of making those matters an integral part of the curriculum for all students. I am also pleased with our growing attention to an international dimension in the education of our students. Zayed University is in a position to provide national leadership in all these important areas.

Fifth: We must always look for ways to enhance the value of the educational experience that we provide. I have previously highlighted the importance of involving every student in the research process, an undertaking that depends on reading and writing, information literacy, and critical thinking, three of our basic learning outcomes. We expect you to devise major-specific activities that allow students to experience the thrill of research and discovery; the satisfaction of largely independent work and the clear, logical expression of facts and ideas.

Sixth: I want to emphasize once again that we must ensure that the programs in each of our colleges meet high international standards and are relevant to the needs of the United Arab Emirates. Our academic programs feature

specific learning goals and outcomes that are systematically assessed and improved via feedback loops. We must take every opportunity in every part of our curriculum to advance those outcomes and lead students toward the achievement of those goals. For us to graduate students who do not meet the stated objectives of their respective programs and the university-wide learning outcomes is to undermine our standards and destroy our integrity.

Seventh: I never tire of reminding you of our special responsibility to graduate people who are primed to contribute to the economic and social well-being of their country. Although the curriculum plays a definite role in preparing students, the advising and mentoring of students in their majors are key and essential and must be effective.

We must help our graduates find gainful employment that will take advantage of their skills and allow them to provide leadership within the U.A.E. community. We must make every effort to learn about the labor market, understand the skills needed for available jobs, partner with local and national companies and organizations, establish career fairs and other avenues for interaction between graduates and employers, and adjust our academic offerings routinely in response to changing needs in the labor market. We must

help our students understand the expectations and opportunities in various employment sectors. We must also work in close partnership with parents, business, and government. And we need to continue building strong relationships with our alumni.

And last, but certainly not least, we must actively and aggressively recruit and employ National graduates at the University. Zayed University must create appropriate employment opportunities for UAE Nationals and provide them with the opportunities for their success. Nationals employed in our university are very productive and make unique and valuable contributions to the organization. Zayed University must implement an aggressive plan to recruit and employ Nationals.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

If the University accomplishes those particular eight tasks and also begins to implement the Abu Dhabi campus plan and construct the Dubai campus plan, it will be, as usual, remarkably busy and highly successful. I realize as well that the formal fall celebration of the opening of this Abu Dhabi campus and the hosting of the fourth Women as Global Leaders Conference next spring will further require your time and energy.

Today, we have in front of us the historic opportunity to transform the very nature of Zayed University. Our two splendid campuses in Abu Dhabi and Dubai have made it possible for us to re-examine – re-think – indeed, to re-envision Zayed University. The excellent planning document you prepared for this new campus in Abu Dhabi points the way toward that transformation.

The theme of that document is “**Partnership for National Progress.**” The opening of this Abu Dhabi campus has helped us realize the intimate connection between the University and the city. To be sure, Zayed University has always studied community and national needs when establishing its majors and graduate programs. Various outreach programs have long marked the ZU scene. Students themselves, have served as interns in the community. Student Life has reached out to the community, and, of course, our curriculum has prepared graduates to take their place in the community and contribute to its flourishing.

We can, however, do more, much more, to engage the communities of Abu Dhabi and Dubai. Because Zayed University is blessed with an innovative and creative faculty and staff, I am confident that you will imagine and plan

effective ways for intensifying our partnerships with Abu Dhabi and Dubai to support and promote the progress and well-being of the United Arab Emirates and its people. Our task as a great university in the cities we serve is to advance individual, economic, and social well-being. At the same time, we should view our engagement with the community as a way to enrich the University and provide its students and faculty with important opportunities for learning and discovery.

The University administration must remove barriers to formation of community partnerships and adopt policies that promote and reward community engagement. We must create an environment that values and supports the application of the intellectual resources of the University to issues of importance to society. We must plan imaginatively and proceed under sound leadership. Deans and directors must exercise strong leadership in setting positive tone in all of their units and in helping the university be responsive to changing demands and expectations. I have asked the Vice President and the Provost to make attraction and retention of the right leadership at all levels of the University a very high priority. Successful leaders will ensure that the University strengthens its commitment to

the community and establishes the systems that support and encourage this endeavor.

And here I want to be clear. Community engagement is not a goal separate from our teaching and research missions. The three are intertwined. I see community engagement as building the needed characteristics and learning outcomes in our students and graduates. I see community partnerships as key to enriching the learning experience of our students and securing productive employment for our graduates. I see our partnerships with business, government and cultural entities as our way of contributing to national economic and social development. I see deepening our relationships with community partners as a way to reconfigure our research activities and thus achieve a “scholarship of engagement” as it is known in practice. In engagement scholarship, research outcomes help to transfer knowledge to the community. They promote economic growth. They will help link the community to the world. And they speed progress toward sustainable socio-economic development.

I call on you today to make our partnership with the community for national progress, already one of the ten characteristics of the University, a point of truly remarkable

distinction for Zayed University. I call upon you to embrace this mission and to raise awareness about university-community engagement. I call on you to create the necessary organization and to develop an action plan. And I call on you to develop appropriate measures and metrics that describe the University's progress in this area and that help in continuous improvement. This is the primary focus of my message to you this year, as we work together to make Zayed University the great university for the great cities of Abu Dhabi and Dubai.

My best wishes for a very successful new year, and may this new and wonderful campus allow our university in the years ahead to become the great university for the great city of Abu Dhabi.

Thank you.