

## **Good Morning, Ladies and Gentlemen:**

Welcome to the Opening Convocation to celebrate the 12<sup>th</sup> year for Zayed University. Our achievements in the first decade of the University are impressive and I am confident that the year 2009-2010 will again be a year of important successes and accomplishments.

It is a pleasure to welcome those faculty and staff who are returning to the university and I thank you for the extraordinary contributions that you have made to ensure the success of Zayed University. And to those who are joining us for the first time, welcome. You bring new talent and energy and I very much look forward to meeting each of you later this morning. I also want to welcome our now not-so-new Provost, Dr. Dan Johnson, who is beginning his first full year with us.

To Dr. Karen Holbrook from the University of South Florida, thank you for joining us today. We very much look forward to your presentation and contributions to our deliberations. And to our distinguished guests, thank you for your continuing support of and contributions to Zayed University. Your involvement with the university has greatly enhanced its progress.

**Ladies and gentlemen,** these are unsettled times. In the few short months since our last convocation the global economy has faltered. Many individual nations have seen their economies taken to the brink. The world financial system is said to have been on the verge of total collapse. Experts and laypersons alike strive to understand what has been taking place. There are recurring questions of what really happened, who is to blame, and how it will be resolved.

I raise these issues because the world situation today presents concerns that extend far beyond matters of economics and finance. Our attention must necessarily be focused on matters such as social justice, politics, the environment, ethics, morality, and education. These issues are indicative of those that leaders all over the world are dealing with on a daily basis. These are also issues that countless individuals throughout the world, at all social and economic levels, must be concerned with in their daily lives and professions. And it is to institutions like Zayed University that we look to teach the skills of analysis and critical thinking, the values of individual and collective responsibility, as well as the understanding of ethical, moral, and cultural values. These are the qualities that are so important for effective leadership and for individual

understanding and participation in matters of local and global importance.

The world situation today underscores dramatically the importance of the quality of the education we provide our students as we prepare them to take their places in society, and to fulfill the roles we anticipate for them as leaders in business, government, the community, and the home.

From its founding, Zayed University has been dedicated to preparing its graduates for life and work in an ever changing world, becoming proficient in the use of modern technology, and developing a true sense of global citizenship.

There are many indicators of the University's success.

Examples include:

**First:** Accreditation by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. This is a distinction for Zayed University and for our entire higher education system.

**Second:** The Academic Bridge Program, which prepares students for the rigors of a demanding university education.

**Third:** The distinctive general education program, which integrates important components of liberal learning with the development of bilingual and critical thinking skills, with the understanding of our rich culture and heritage, and with the development of global perspectives.

**Fourth:** The Zayed University Learning Outcomes, which guide the shaping of the educational program. These six outcomes, namely: Language Proficiency, Global Awareness, Information Literacy, Information Technology, Critical Thinking, and Leadership form the basis of the Zayed University educational experience.

**Fifth:** The University's academic programs, which strive to conform to the highest world standards.

**Sixth:** Graduate programs, which address national needs and priorities, and extend the university's research and scholarly activity and its community outreach.

**Seventh:** The Institute for Community Engagement, the outreach arm of the university with a mission to transfer knowledge and expertise from the university to the wider UAE community.

**Eighth:** The addition of male and international students. This is an important step in our becoming an even more prominent university and will greatly enrich the experiences of our students.

**Ninth:** Employers report a high degree of satisfaction with Zayed University graduates. These graduates are articulate, confident, ethical, globally aware, motivated, and devoted to advancing the United Arab Emirates.

In short, our faculty and our students are engaged in learning activities, research and scholarly work, continuing education, and outreach programs which focus on national priorities and regional needs. As a public university, we will continue to identify issues of national importance and create opportunities for faculty and students to come together to address them. Our new campus in Dubai, and soon to be in Abu Dhabi, provides excellent spaces and resources for the teaching, research and outreach that exemplify the public nature of Zayed University and bring distinction to its programs and activities.

**Ladies and gentlemen:**

There are any number of analogies one might draw in considering what Zayed University has accomplished and what its future might look like.

For example, a building analogy might suggest that we have laid a solid foundation, and essentially finished putting up the walls. What is left for us to do now is construct the roof, and then proceed to operate efficiently, moving ahead as we serve the needs of our students and the country.

Personally, I prefer a more dynamic, even visionary, comparison. I like to think of these very successful early years as the time in which we have built Zayed University

into a launching pad that will serve as a base from which we will continuously launch new ideas and creative programs, and where imagination and innovation support entrepreneurship and serve the public good. As you can sense, I see Zayed University as a remarkable institution that will serve as a wellspring for new ideas and initiatives to shape the future.

I view what has been accomplished so far as an enduring tribute to the wise leadership and lasting vision of the founding president of the United Arab Emirates, the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahayan, the person whose name Zayed University is honored to bear. Zayed University has reached or exceeded many of the initial aspirations of Sheikh Zayed, but there is much more to be done. I am confident that Sheikh Zayed's wish was for us to set our goals high and work diligently to achieve them.

**Ladies and Gentlemen:**

Last year, I cited seven key strategic priorities for the University. I refer to them again today because of their continuing importance.

**First ---** We must address all the issues and concerns raised during **the accreditation process.**

**Second ---** The **University's strategic plan**, our guide for the future, must reflect our commitment to excellence and to new directions and emphases as they arise.

**Third ---** We must have in place an effective, comprehensive **Enrollment Plan**.

**Fourth ---** Expanded **graduate and continuing education** programs must figure prominently in our future.

**Fifth ---** Our **research** output must achieve international standards and must include effective partnerships at home and abroad.

**Sixth ---** It is important that we **serve the wider community** needs and that we establish effective partnerships with government, industry, and the public schools.

**The seventh issue I raised a year ago** was that of establishing a **University Endowment** as well as the establishment of an effective fundraising operation.

As you can see, ladies and gentlemen, these seven priorities represent ongoing goals that will shape the future of this university. I am very pleased to note that, thanks to all of you, significant progress is being made in each of

these areas. We are confident that this progress will continue until our goals have been achieved.

**Ladies and Gentlemen:**

Following the leadership and vision of the President, His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al-Nahayan, and with the continuing encouragement and support of the Vice President, His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, and His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahayan, the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, Zayed University will continue to utilize international best practices and quality assurance. Our university is committed to the highest standards for the education and personal growth of our students and for innovative and rigorous education and assessment.

This commitment is incorporated into the University's core values and overarching priorities.

In fact, Zayed University's institutional core values are the essential and enduring tenets of the University. They define the operating philosophy of the institution and guide internal conduct as well as external relationships. They transcend changes in personnel and curriculum. Stated briefly, our core values are represented by the following:

## **First -- An Absolute Commitment to Quality**

In all our work, our goal is quality. We have sought out world standards for our programs and every impulse for improvement should be guided by the highest standards. Every change, whether large or small, whether immediate or long-range, must move us toward a higher level of quality.

Every effort must be made to develop attitudes and practices of high quality, flexibility and effectiveness in the work of each member of the faculty and staff. We must have a situation where everyone assumes responsibility for the ultimate outcome: the successful education of each student. All faculty and staff are empowered to identify areas requiring improvement, to carry their ideas to their colleagues, and to join, as a team, in making the improvements. Only by setting high standards, nurturing an effective work environment, and establishing evaluation procedures to measure our progress can we achieve our goal of a world class university.

## **Second -- Innovation and collaboration in the pursuit of knowledge**

A university has many objectives but at the top is the drive for excellence in teaching and learning. Achievement of

this objective is exemplified by nurturing in its students a passion for learning, the ability to convert a plethora of information into useful knowledge, and the curiosity to pursue life long learning.

In this sense, we need faculty and students, who, in the words of a noted Nobel prize winner “... **see what others have seen, but think what others have not.**”

Consequently, the hiring of highly qualified faculty who will bring creativity, originality, energy, and entrepreneurial skills to our university is of highest priority. These are the people who will cause the intellectual abilities of our students to grow and flourish. But development of a high quality faculty does not stop with the hiring. The university has the responsibility to mentor all faculty members, to ensure use of best practices, to provide on-going development programs, and to constantly improve teaching effectiveness.

Increasingly, important discoveries occur at the interface of the traditional academic disciplines. To better prepare our students for careers and life in a knowledge-based, global society, we must increase the collaboration between and among our colleges and departments. We need to adopt strategic approaches to help the UAE as it enters the

knowledge economy where newly emerging disciplines are forged from collaborations between the traditional ones and partnerships are formed with business and industry.

### **Third -- Global Citizenship**

It is essential that we continue to develop, not only in our classrooms but across the entire collegiate experience, opportunities for our students to learn about, to experience, and to engage in cross-cultural and international activities. Through short term study abroad, the “Women as Global Leaders” conferences, the enrollment of international students, video conference exchanges, and the hosting of groups of students visiting in the UAE, Zayed University students will learn about other cultures, make new friends from abroad and develop continuing relationships.

### **Fourth -- Integrity, Open Mindedness and Tolerance**

These are necessary elements of all aspects of faculty, student, and staff behavior and action. Students must take responsibility for themselves and for one another. They must act against all forms of dishonesty, cheating or other such behavior. Members of the university, faculty and staff, must take responsibility to help students understand this core value, ensure that they incorporate it into their university experience, and support those who practice it.

At our Opening Convocation last year, we committed ourselves to develop and put into practice an honor code to promote student integrity and honorable academic behavior. Today, I charge the Vice President, the Provost, and the faculty, working with the Dean of Student Affairs, to give this matter the very highest priority for this academic year. I expect that this honor code will be approved and in place by the end of this fall semester.

Our mission at the University is to develop leaders, and effective leaders know how to exercise their responsibilities in an honorable fashion. Any act of cheating or any similar misconduct will not be tolerated.

### **Fifth -- Leadership for the Public Good**

Following the models exemplified by the leaders of our nation, leadership and the pursuit of public service is one of our most cherished values. Each of our colleges and departments, as well as programs in the student affairs division, should teach aspects of leadership. To achieve this core value, we should take a multidisciplinary approach to public service, one that draws upon the talents and knowledge of all members of our community. Through class work, clubs, internships and volunteer service, students at every level of study should become experienced in leadership and service to their community and the nation.

## **Sixth -- A Strong Commitment to Function as a Center of Intellectual and Research Activity within the UAE**

When we started the University eleven years ago, we envisioned an institution that will serve the wider educational and research needs of the communities in Abu Dhabi and Dubai. And we have come a long way in achieving that vision. We have succeeded in making connections with our students' potential employers. We have held workshops and conferences that enable members of our community to become familiar with the University. We are offering professional programs in response to the growing demands for continuing education in the country. We undertake research and scholarly activities that address national needs and priorities. We are committed to developing strong relationships with our colleagues in other educational institutions, both at home and abroad.

The University is also in the process of launching major initiatives in the area of service to the community and the nation. In addition to the Institute for Community Engagement, these initiatives include the Institute for Islamic World Studies, the Abu Dhabi Judicial Academy, the Zayed Diplomatic Academy, and the Institute for Social and Economic Research. I encourage all of you to continue to

explore opportunities for enhancing this important function of Zayed University.

**Ladies and Gentlemen:**

I strongly believe that living by these core institutional values prepares students to graduate from Zayed University as educated, enlightened leaders, ready for effective engagement in private and public life in their communities, their professions, and the world. These core values govern everything we do and will always shape our priorities.

This past spring the “**Destined to Lead**” document was developed. It contains a rich collection of possible opportunities and initiatives. Now we must study the nearly fifty initiatives suggested in the document, identify those that will reinforce our core values, select and prioritize those which align with our overarching priorities and give them our most urgent attention.

I remind you again that one of the overarching priorities for the next year and beyond is the **Enhancement of the Student Experience** at all levels. Building upon our already strong base, we must deepen our academic requirements, engage students in research and service, and expand international opportunities and experiences. We must also increase learning through teamwork, cross-

disciplinary study, and applications of technology, and continue to align our curriculum with the most pressing national and regional concerns.

All students need sound advising and mentoring to guide them through their years of study. Academic, personal, and career advising must take an even more prominent role for faculty and student affairs staff.

We must also continue with our strong commitment to help students obtain productive employment after graduation.

We must be knowledgeable of the characteristics and trends in the national labor market. We must continue to collect information, and to understand the needs of various jobs, all while building strong relationships with employers.

As we plan for the future of the University, we must always factor in the attributes of leadership and service in any new programs or experiences offered to our students. I am hopeful that the “**Conversation on Leadership**” which will occur this year will help sharpen our focus on the role of leadership studies and experiences in and out of the curriculum.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen:**

I close by referring back to the world economic situation. There are those who believe that the current world

economic crisis will lead to permanent, far reaching changes in the world as we have known it, possibly including the end to globalization. There are others who anticipate an almost certain return to a world not unlike that which we knew before the present crisis.

I do not intend to venture into the realm of economic forecasting today. I do not know what the future may hold. But I retain the optimism for the future that is the key to every endeavor in education. To believe in education is to believe in the future. I do feel confident that if we at Zayed University hold true to our core values we will have a reliable touchstone as we plan for the University's future. If we all do this, and work together, we will serve our students and the country well.

We are proud that Zayed University has indeed become a launching pad. In its first decade, the university has reached and surpassed most of the goals set for it and now enjoys a national and regional reputation for the very high quality of education offered. We now can choose to consolidate our many accomplishments or we can continue to push ourselves to an even higher plane of excellence and achievement. It is my belief that the second option is the only one to pursue. Therefore, I challenge and urge you

to rekindle the spirit of innovation and creativity that has brought the University so far and so quickly.

I look forward to following your achievements and innovations which will accelerate the evolution of our university, and which will enrich the United Arab Emirates and the entire region and achieve the noble objectives set for us by our national leaders.

I wish you all the best in these endeavors. Thank you.