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Good morning! To those of you who have been away during the summer, welcome back, and to all of you, welcome here this morning as we prepare to open the 1999-2000 academic year. I’m particularly pleased to welcome our new faculty and staff who are beginning your Western experience. We are honored for you to continue, or in some cases begin, your career in higher education at Western Kentucky University. You bring new intellect, energy, creativity, and excitement to our campus. Will all new members of our faculty and staff please stand and let us welcome you to the Western family? As family in context, I would also like to recognize those of you who have served this institution long and with distinction. Would all faculty and staff who have served Western for 25 years or more, please stand? This is indeed a place which inspires one to serve long and serve well.

Joining me on the stage are members of the Administrative Council, our deans, and our campus leaders. Before recognizing these groups, I would like to recognize three important new appointments which have recently been completed. I am very proud of all three of these appointments and congratulate those who served on the search committees for each. On the Administrative Council, while he is unable to be here this morning, his duties do not begin until August 30, I want to call to your attention the appointment of Dr. Richard Kirchmeyer as our new Vice President for Information Technology. Dr. Kirchmeyer has been serving as Chief Information Officer at the University of Arkansas, Little Rock. A second new appointment to the Administrative Council is Dr. Wood Selig who begins his duties as Director of Athletics on August 31. Dr. Selig has been serving as Associate Director of Athletics at the University of Virginia since 1990. New to our group of deans is Dr. Karen Adams, Dean of the College of Education and Behavioral Sciences. Dr. Adams has been serving since 1994 as Dean of Education at Tennessee Tech.

Please recognize each group after they are collectively introduced: the Administrative Council includes Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Barbara Burch, Vice President for Student Affairs Jerry Wilder, Vice President for Development and Alumni Relations Tom Hiles, Chief Financial Officer Ann Mead, General Counsel Deborah Wilkins, Chief Public Affairs Officer Fred Hensley, Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs John Osborne, and Director of Athletics Wood Selig. I also want to acknowledge the work of Dave Wilkinson and his staff for filling in during our Vice President for Information Technology search and for keeping our network upgrades on track, and we welcome Dave back from kidney surgery. I also want to thank Pam Herriford for serving as Interim Athletics Director during our search for Wood Selig. Our Administrative Council. (Applause) Now our deans: Dean of the College of Education and Behavioral Sciences, Karen Adams; Dean of Ogden College of Science, Technology, and Health, Martin Houston; Dean of the Gordon Ford College of Business, Bob Jefferson; Dean of Potter College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences, David Lee; Associate Vice President of Student Affairs and Dean of Student Life, Howard Bailey; Dean of Libraries, Mike Binder; Dean of Graduate Studies, Research, and Extended Programs, Elmer Gray; and Frank Conley is serving in
the interim while the search for a Dean of the Community College unfolds. These are our Deans. Also, let me introduce five elected campus leaders and ask you to recognize them as a group: Our Faculty Regent, Professor Mary Ellen Miller; our Staff Regent, Ms. Joy Gramling; our Student Regent, Ms. Amanda Coates; the Chair of our Faculty Senate, Dr. Arvin Vos; and the Chair of our Staff Council, Ms. Linda Cantrell.

Somehow it seems appropriate to begin these remarks with some acknowledgment about the summer months which are, at least on the calendar, drawing to a close. The heat, I am sure, will continue for another month or so. Those of you who are in buildings with air conditioning problems, we beg your patience. Our facilities staff is doing everything possible to be responsive. Perhaps this is indicative of some of the remarks I will reference in a few minutes regarding some of our challenges. The heat and drought have taken their toll on the campus this summer. I am very proud of some of the progress which our facilities staff has made in improvement of our grounds. Their task was compounded by difficult weather conditions throughout the month of July. In that regard, I do want to encourage all of us to take personal responsibility in our campus and its appearance and its cleanliness and to encourage others to do so as well. The work you see to keep our campus environment clean, attractive, and inviting is both part of a renewal of campus pride and a clear and unabashed attempt to tell our visitors that this is a place where they are welcome and to tell prospective students that this is a place where they can enjoy living and learning and do so in an environment which they, too, will take genuine and lasting pride.

In this regard, I want to welcome—wherever they may be—here on campus or on their way—approximately 2,500 new students who comprise our class of 2003. The lights atop Cherry Hall are on this week in tribute to these new members of the Western family. I had the opportunity over the summer to speak with most of the groups of students and parents who came to 14 orientation, advisement and registration sessions. The one message I delivered to each group was that we will not view these students upon their arrival as freshman. We will view them as members of the class of 2003. There is an important difference. We will do all we can to help make their transition to collegiate life smooth, productive, and informative, and we will do all we can to help them graduate on time with their class. They need to view themselves, and we need to view our new students, as members of the class of 2003 and facilitate the fulfillment of that objective. Important efforts are under way to work with members of the class of 2003 to help ensure the timely completion of their degree. Approximately 1,500 new students are currently engaged in the Master Plan program. You will see them throughout the campus this week—learning new skills, new habits, new friends, and new places. They will be well acclimated by the time some 1,000 additional new students arrive this weekend. But it is the 1,500 Master Plan students who will be off to the best start possible as classes begin on Monday. My compliments to Brian Kuster and his colleagues in the office of Residence Life for their extensive efforts to facilitate the transition to collegiate life for the class of 2003.

I also want to compliment the approximately 100 faculty and staff who will be teaching 95 sections of the Freshman Experience course. This is a volunteer effort on the part of the faculty and staff who participate because they know how important it is for these new students to learn
the skills, attitudes, and habits necessary to succeed in college. I am one of those volunteers teaching a section of the Freshman Experience course. I will be team teaching with Peggy Haas, an Area Coordinator in Residence Life, and I look forward to spending this fall semester with my class of new students.

I want to talk a moment, if I might, about change. Considerable change is taking place at Western these days. Many people are working very hard to change some things about Western while working equally hard to nourish some things which should not change. But everyone, I trust, is seeking to improve the quality of our campus environment, our campus spirit, and our intellectual capacity. This must be part of our daily behavior. Our charge is to educate our society and lead meaningful change and improve the quality of life for us and those around us. I know change is difficult, and I know some of you generally resist it. I am sensitive to that, but I am equally aware that change, or I prefer to call it growth and improvement, is essential. The most encouraging thing to me is that most of the things we are doing are coming from ideas which many of you have suggested. I have listened and continue to do so.

Change is now a fact of life, and it is accelerating. There is no turning back. Today’s students need the ability to learn new things, to take new initiatives, to be enterprising, to take charge of their own learning. Faculty feel and must embrace these challenges. Technology, multiculturalism, globalization, self-directed learning, collaboration—these all require new adaptations in rapidly changing times.

Great teaching is in tune with the times in which students live—and these times carry powerful challenges—and opportunities. Diana Walsh, the President of Wellesley College, professed at least two profound thoughts in her remarks to the American Association for Higher Education’s Conference on “Faculty Roles and Rewards.” She said, “If the task of a college or university professor is to inspire students with a love of learning that will accompany them—and perhaps even bedevil them—throughout their lives, then surely we want faculty who are themselves on fire with a passion for their work.” And she said, “The main purpose of higher education—the significance of ‘professing,’ with its root sense of being bound by a vow and expressing allegiance—is that it ‘succeeds or fails in terms of motivation, not cognitive transfer of information. It succeeds if it instills in students a willingness to pursue knowledge for its own sake; it fails if students learn simply in order to get a degree.’”

The changes taking place across this campus are clearly outlined in our strategic plan. All are designed to improve our learning and living environment and all are taking place while trusting you, the faculty, to keep our curriculum relevant and moving toward our vision to be nationally competitive. Those are the key words that I keep coming back to over and over again. Our strategic plan is designed to cause Western to be nationally competitive across our academic and administrative programs. We must be able to compete nationally for students. Our curriculum must be comparable to the best universities like us. We must improve our facilities in order to be competitive. Our research must be relevant in order to strengthen our primary undergraduate mission. We simply must improve the quality of life on this campus—intellectually, culturally, socially, and physically—in order to gain a competitive advantage; in order to be as our mission statement says: the university of choice for faculty and students. We must continue to exploit our
successes and those things which are changing. As is the case with anything which is continuously improving, exploitation will, sooner or later, lead to genuine innovation. There comes a point when the small steps we are taking result in major fundamental change—something that is genuinely new and different and better.

Our Challenging the Spirit strategic plan is providing a campus road map for progressive and constructive change. My compliments to the faculty and staff in every unit across campus that have participated in this strategic planning process and in the implementation of the five-goal categories outlined in the plan. Our progress at the end of the first year has been exceptional. My compliments to Jim Flynn for coordinating the data collection and documenting the progress. Our points of progress are much too numerous for me to reiterate this morning, but in most areas, we are well ahead of first-year projections. A detailed, first-year progress report is being prepared this fall. We have every intention of continuing to redirect existing and newly budgeted resources to priorities in our strategic plan, particularly, those priorities which struggle or have little capacity to create revenue on their own. One area where we simply must make progress is also the focus of a new special committee of the Board of Regents which was created through the efforts of Faculty Regent Mary Ellen Miller to more effectively recruit and retain African-American students and faculty and to further internationalize our student body and our curriculum.

Perhaps the most encouraging aspect of our strategic plan is the fact that it is absolutely parallel with the strategic plan recently approved by the Council on Postsecondary Education for our eight public universities and the Kentucky Community and Technical College System. CPE’s strategic plan trails our plan by one year. Our plan runs from 1998-2003 and the CPE plan runs from 1999-2004. Our goals, objectives, and performance indicators are amazingly in sync. The model the state has adopted is nearly a mirror image of the model we initiated in 1998. And I assure you, this has not gone unnoticed by relevant parties in Frankfort.

The CPE budget model has changed dramatically. Many of you know most of the details, but in summary, through a statistically driven process, CPE has identified 19 benchmark universities to which Western has been and will be compared with regard to state appropriations. We are generally pleased with the group for Western, which is different from groups respectively selected for each of the other universities. We are in the process of making some adjustments to the benchmark group which this campus community selected in the spring of 1998 to serve as our own point of measurement. Five universities, out of our original ten, ended up on CPE’s list of 19. They are East Carolina, Marshall, Ball State, Indiana State, and Appalachian State. After considerable discussion with the board of advisors in May and with the Board of Regents in July, we have determined that for the sake of simplicity, comprehension, and efficiency, we will change our group to be more in line with the CPE group. Therefore, we are going to eliminate from our core group of ten the five universities not included in CPE’s list and replace them with what we collectively determine as the best ten out of the 19, including the five which we already had on our list. Therefore, our benchmark group against which we will measure our own progress will be the five I just mentioned plus Illinois State, Northern Iowa, Eastern Michigan, and two more
on which we are trying to reach consensus. In my opinion, in making this change our group is less an aspirational group as it is a good peer group, but there are still numerous categories where we must improve in order to penetrate the upper quartile of this new group of ten. This group will continue to serve well the measurement of progress in our strategic plan.

I must talk for a moment about the funding model which is unfolding with the state with regard to Western and higher education. It is CPE’s intention to secure funding to enable Western to achieve the 55th percentile of state appropriations received by the 19 institutions in our benchmark group. If this occurs, then projections suggest as much as 17 million new dollars for Western. That’s the degree to which we at the 55th percentile are relatively under funded in state appropriations. Clearly, we are encouraged by this funding model and will work very hard to help CPE be successful in achieving this objective. CPE is also currently projecting eight new incentive funds which we trust will be funded at adequate levels and which we will have the opportunity to penetrate with our documented performance. These incentive funds could mean new funding for Western from a few hundred thousand to several million dollars, respectively. The projected incentive funds at this point in time include funds targeted for a renewal of the faculty endowment incentive fund; a new incentive fund for the comprehensive universities which focuses on access, student success, and faculty engagement in the community; a capital renewal fund; a fund supporting teacher education; a technology and equipment fund; a fund for workforce development, a fund aimed at reaching new populations of prospective students; and a fund to increase enrollment and retention. These incentive funds will replace incentive funds designated in the 1998 legislative session. They are the result of analysis of those funds after implementation and an attempt for CPE to facilitate a statewide action plan.

In a similar context, we have just, within the last few weeks, negotiated with CPE a series of targets which we will be expected to achieve during the course of the state’s strategic plan through 2004. This is where everyone assembled here today comes in to play in a direct and critical way. Our funding, at least as it relates to the enrollment and retention incentive fund, and to some extent, our overall appropriation, will be based on our ability to achieve these numbers. We have agreed that our enrollment will grow by 800 students by 2004—a 6.3 percent increase. We have agreed that our one-year retention rate will grow to 70 percent. We have agreed that our graduation rates will grow to 41.3 percent. In each of these cases, the state target, while viewed as ambitious to some, is consistent with our own strategic plan. In fact, if we achieve the targets in each of these categories in our strategic plan, we will exceed by 2003 the figures targeted by CPE for 2004. Therefore, we are confident of success, but it is important that we all fully understand that our funding for basic operations for salaries and for everything on which we spend state appropriations may be dependent upon achieving these numbers.

The days of student recruitment, retention, and graduation as the responsibility of a given department or given staff are long gone. It is the responsibility of each and every one of us to recruit capable students, to retain them, and to graduate them. Our fundamental budgeting process is dependent upon achieving these numbers. Your raises over the next few years depend upon achieving these targets. It is that important. The same phenomenon exists throughout
public higher education in Kentucky. I would also point out that the incentive fund called access, success, and engagement is targeted for the comprehensive universities. It focuses on the heart of our mission of student access, success for those students who do access us, and engagement of our faculty in our primary service area of the state. This new funding model is a partnership between the universities and CPE. There is great trust that we both will succeed.

I wish to talk just a moment about tuition as part of the deregulation of higher education, an emerging phenomenon which I find encouraging. CPE has relinquished its historic authority to set tuition levels. Our Board of Regents has now been empowered to set tuition levels for Western. This is the first time we have had the opportunity, and I do consider it an opportunity to be strategic with our tuition, to be market sensitive, to assess the variables of undergraduate and graduate, in-state and out-of-state, full-time and part-time students, to gain competitive advantage in geographic areas important to us, to help us be accessible, while also putting us in position to determine our own fate and factor the goals of our strategic plan into our enrollment process.

Even though we are dramatically under funded compared to benchmark institutions, in both state appropriations and tuition, we will remain sensitive to the economic considerations within our primary service area and try to use tuition as a strategic tool to help us achieve the enrollment numbers I described earlier and to indeed be the university of choice for college-bound students. We are expected to present preliminary revenue projections from tuition for the next two years to the Council on Postsecondary Education in September. We are not likely to deviate much from historic trends these next two years. Decisions in future years will, however, follow considerable analysis and strategic positioning.

Perhaps the most difficult aspect of this important process is judging the degree to which CPE will be successful in securing legislative support for the new budget model. We will not know the success achieved with the funding model until the legislative session has run its course this next spring. Our staff in Enrollment Management and in Financial Affairs have spent numerous hours over the last few months assessing our options. My compliments to Ann Mead and Luther Hughes for their thoughtful analysis and recommendations.

There has been so much activity over the course of the last few months that it would be difficult for me to get into any kind of detail this morning, but there are several things that I simply must call to your attention as we initiate this academic year. I will try to be brief as I touch on a wide variety of topics.

Regarding our physical plant, the new Journalism and Technology building is being designed. We anticipate the design work to be completed by December 1999. Groundbreaking is targeted for April 2000. This building will take approximately 18 months to build. I can assure you that no one is more frustrated than I in working with the state process on such an important project. The adage "patience is a virtue" is being severely tested on this one. Western projects in Glasgow and Elizabethtown are following similar time lines.
In the area of technology, we have just completed an upgrade of all 500 computers in student labs and at extended campuses to at least a Pentium level. All labs have updated and printing equipment improved. And keeping our pledge in this budget cycle, over 100 new faculty computers have been acquired and all new faculty have been assigned new computers. And nearly all of our Y2K conversion is complete with only a few tasks to be addressed in the next few weeks. All systems will be tested this fall.

My compliments to the group of faculty in Ogden College which has been working hard to pull together a plan to renovate our science facilities and create replacement space for Science and Technology Hall. This important capital project is our absolute number one capital project priority in the coming legislative session. It is a project of some 45 million dollars. It is absolutely fundamental to the quality of our life and physical sciences, to our core curriculum, and to the success of our first program of distinction.

We also have numerous deferred maintenance projects unfolding—a long list of air conditioning problems, roofs, and life safety projects. The window replacement program in Cherry Hall should be under way this fall, and we will continue to try to improve the overall condition of our buildings and grounds.

I do also want to compliment the Parking and Transportation Committee. This is a thankless job for which everybody has an opinion, and I expect over the last few months, most of them have been expressed. The bottom line from where I sit, however, is that parking opportunities are being increased, traffic flow is being improved, and overall, our parking and transportation conditions are getting better in both quantity and quality. We are now applying parking and transportation related revenues to parking and transportation related improvements. There is some work being done on big red way and when completed, Big Red Way will be fully repaved. Work on University Boulevard should be completed this fall. We are continuing to increase parking in the 14th Street/Kentucky Street area and to the south of Tate Page Hall. Bob Cobb and Aaron Hughey, thank you for your leadership on the Traffic and Parking Committee.

Let me touch on some of the major academic projects which will be receiving attention this fall. We will be going forward to the Council on Postsecondary Education to approve a second program of distinction, this time in Journalism and Communications. Some money made available in the 1998 legislative session for our programs of distinction was purposely left on the table in hopes that we would come back and get a second program approved. This process should be completed in the fall giving Journalism and Communications an opportunity to access some of the P.O.D. money.

Many of you may have read in recent weeks about our intention to create the Kentucky Academy for Math and Science. This is an exciting initiative which I think will further define the intellectual life on this campus. Our proposal is to be the host site for a Kentucky Academy which targets the best math and science students throughout Kentucky high school districts. Our plan is to accept 100 high school juniors and 100 high school seniors—a total of 200 at any given point in
time—from throughout the state based on act score, rank in class, grade point average, and other relevant criteria. These students would come to Western, live in a renovated Florence Schneider Hall, take classes with our faculty, with our students, in our laboratories, be engaged in real and meaningful research, and when they graduate from the Kentucky Academy, they will have completed 60 hours of college credit. The data from those dozen or so states throughout the southeast which have similar academies is most impressive in terms of the number of students who having achieved 60 hours of college credit in their home state choose to stay in that state to complete their bachelor’s degree. If approved, this program will have its own advisors, counselors, and other administrative personnel dedicated to ensuring social and cultural development as well as intellectual development for these young people. We believe they would add to the intellectual stimulation on this campus, and we look forward to legislative approval for this program in the coming legislative session.

We are also working with CPE to strengthen our engineering curriculum, having recognized the critical role that Western faculty, particularly in our engineering disciplines, must play in the economic development of south central Kentucky. We are getting considerable pressure from business and industry which have located in south central Kentucky to further strengthen our engineering program and serve as a scientific resource and a source for a qualified work force.

Before this academic year is out, we will have completed our biennial legislative process. As we head into the 2000 legislative session, I want to publicly compliment Governor Paul Patton for his continuing leadership. Governor Patton, Lt. Governor Steve Henry, and Speaker of the House Jody Richards, along with our local State Senators Brett Guthrie and Richie Sanders and Representatives Roger Thomas and Rob Wilkey, have been extremely receptive to our requests, to our concerns, and to our needs. I have personally met with Governor Patton twice in recent months to discuss programs we are creating or seeking to create. Our legislative priorities for the coming session include funding for our science complex renovation, the creation of a third regional postsecondary education center involving Western, this time in Owensboro. Renovation of Schneider Hall as part of the Kentucky Academy for Math and Science and further funding for deferred maintenance. From an overall funding standpoint, it will be our responsibility to facilitate CPE’s efforts to fund, to the extent possible, the higher education funding model which I described earlier. We are particularly eager to renew funding in the endowment incentive trust fund to further facilitate our creation of endowed faculty positions at Western.

Let me also mention a few of our administrative projects which will receive considerable attention in the months ahead. Perhaps the most significant relates to our residence halls. As a candidate for this position in the summer of 1997, the single most frequently asked question among our students was: “What can you do to improve our residence halls?” Well, we’ve put together a plan to do just that. The Board of Regents, at its July meeting, authorized the creation of a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit Student Life Foundation. David Cole, former chair of our Board of Regents, has agreed to chair the Student Life Foundation. The board of that foundation is now in place, and the Board of Regents will be transferring to the Student Life Foundation Board the
deed to 17 of our 18 residence halls, excluding Schneider Hall. The Student Life Foundation, upon receiving the deed to the halls, will issue tax-free financing of approximately $50 million. The tax-free financing will be used to immediately pay off some $21 million in existing debt on our residence halls and spend approximately $25 million on renovating our residence halls over the next three years. The financing will also create a reserve fund which will supply a permanent maintenance revenue stream unlike in the past when we have had no ongoing maintenance capacity. In addition, we will be implementing over the next three years a plan to replace North, South, East, and West Halls with apartment style residential units principally designed for upper classmen. This project is an innovative, exciting, public-private partnership which allows us to turn physical assets into financial assets to, in turn, improve those assets. The tax-free financing will be repaid over the next 20 years with a fee increase which compares favorably to the 5.2 percent average fee increase experienced in our residence halls over the last 25 years. Brian Kuster will serve as Executive Director of the Student Life Foundation, and his staff in Housing and Residence Life will continue to administer all policies and day-to-day activities related to our residence halls. The transaction will be relatively invisible to students except for the physical transformation in their living environment.

One of the major projects awaiting Dr. Selig's arrival as a new Athletic Director is that of renovating Diddle Arena. Diddle Arena is over 35 years old and in desperate need of a renovation—a renovation important to not only our athletic programs to become more nationally competitive but to serve as a proper entertainment venue for south central Kentucky. Feasibility studies will precede presale of the revenue streams necessary to do the renovation. This project must be completed through revenue streams generated by the arena itself as we have pledged not to seek state appropriations nor access the university's e&g budget. Private suites, club level seating, retail space, signage and other revenue considerations are under review.

The Board of Regents meets in ten days to consider a contract for our on-campus health service. Ann Mead has been chairing a committee which has spent a considerable part of the last seven months assessing our options for a university health center. The work of this committee, which has included three students, has been remarkable, and I am satisfied that its work will result in improved service, better facilities, and eventual access by faculty and staff as an added option for our self-insurance program.

There are some important recognitions due as we start this academic year. Faculty should be congratulated for instituting new systems which will enable us to better demonstrate the quality of our work and our productivity and vitality—all of which are reflected both in the newly instituted academic program review policy and the implementation of our new post tenure review system.

I also want to compliment our faculty on your success in sponsored programs. Phil Myers and his staff provided excellent leadership and would be the first to acknowledge that it is you, the faculty, who continue to show remarkable growth in sponsored programs. Our strategic plan calls for us to reach $18 million in sponsored research by 2003. I trust that you are duly
impressed that you, the faculty, have already surpassed $18 million in just the first year in our strategic plan. In fact, you were awarded over $19 million in external funds for 1998-99, a record for WKU. The total for FY 98-99 was $19,309,697. Proposals submitted for the year just ended were nearly $35 million compared to a typical submission level of $25 million, and our indirect cost revenue nearly doubled from $527,000 in 97-98 to $910,040 in 98-99. More important than the money, however, is the importance of the basic and applied research in which you engaged and the degree to which it is improving our curriculum at the undergraduate and graduate level and improving the quality of life for us and those we serve. I am particularly impressed with the number of young faculty who are contributing to these growth numbers. Our sponsored research has grown by 90 percent over the past five years.

I also want to compliment our faculty, particularly in the Departments of Agriculture and Biology, for their work with our Commissioner of Agriculture Billy Ray Smith and the Chair of the Legislative Ag Committee Representative Roger Thomas. Through the leadership of Department Heads, Dr. Jenks Britt and Dr. Blaine Ferrell, we are in a position to facilitate a major biotechnology emphasis in Western Kentucky and to add significant research to alternative uses of the tobacco commodity. This is further evidence of the value of our program of distinction in Ogden College.

I want to also congratulate those faculty and staff who have been involved in increased philanthropic giving to Western. Led by Tom Hiles and the staff in the Office of Development, many of our faculty and staff have been involved in prospect identification, in direct communication with prospective donors, and in the closing of significant new gifts for Western. Our cash flow from gifts has grown by 40 percent from 1997 to 1998 and by 34 percent from 1998 to 1999. In that two-year period, cash deposits from philanthropic gifts have increased from $3 million to $5.7 million. In the process, we have created eight new professorships largely through the public-private partnership embraced by the state’s faculty endowment incentive trust fund. The Western endowment has grown from $16 million to nearly $32 million over this two-year period. We are well on our way to surpassing our target of $50 million by 2003. Most of this endowment is dedicated to endowed faculty positions and undergraduate scholarships. In addition, our deferred gift inventory, gifts to be realized later through bequests and trusts, has grown from $6 million to $28 million since 1997.

I also want to recognize two new members of our Distinguished University Professors group. Dr. Sam McFarland and Dr. Marion B. Lucas are newly appointed bringing to eight the total number of Distinguished University Professors. I had the opportunity to have lunch with this group last spring and intend to do so each semester and utilize the incredible capacity of this group as an advisory group on all matters of university importance, but particularly, matters important to our faculty and our academic environment. Will our Distinguished University Professors please stand?

And while recognitions are being extended, I want to thank our Facilities staff for your important work throughout this campus every single day. These people keep our buildings clean,
keep our grounds safe and orderly, are constantly working to make repairs and solve problems in our buildings, and make sure this is an environment in which students, faculty, staff, and guests can function in a thoughtful and productive manner. Many of these folks have been working around the clock to prepare for the opening of this academic year. Would all members of our facilities staff please stand and let us thank you for what you do to help ensure a quality campus environment?

I would also like to ask another important group to stand and be recognized. We could not possibly function without strong support staff. Our secretaries and office associates throughout this campus represent a dedicated, loyal, and hardworking group of professionals. They make many of us often look better than we deserve. Would all of our secretaries and office support associates please stand and let us recognize you?

Before closing, I want to touch on some things that will receive a lot of attention in the months ahead, each of which will require our thoughtful analysis and careful decision making. Many of our faculty are engaged in an important discussion in the creation of a University Senate. Many of our colleagues on the faculty continue to work to find the best, most constructive, and productive academic governing structure for Western. I have watched this process with great interest, but as with any matter that relates to our academic environment, I will not become personally involved until our faculty has determined a proper course of action. I have complete and absolute trust in our faculty to govern matters of faculty concern in a thoughtful and prudent manner. I look forward to seeing what you, the faculty, determine is best for Western and will be pleased to forward your recommendations to the Board of Regents.

In the coming year, I expect there will be times when our Student Government Association and our Faculty Senate will need to work together on matters of mutual concern. I would expect meaningful and effective dialogue between the two as we address opportunities of mutual interest.

There are some concerns I find myself thinking about as we begin a new academic year. I continue to be concerned about making improvements in our campus buildings. Much of this campus has been neglected and has deteriorated over the years. Our patience will be tested, but please know that we are dedicated to improving our buildings and grounds and to making this a safe and comfortable campus. We have initiated an Environmental Health and Safety Audit. Charlotte Reeder in our Office of Environmental Health and Safety is coordinating this effort. We simply need to identify a check list of environmental and safety related tasks which deserve our attention.

You have my commitment that we will continue to try to make progress in our salary structure. For two years now, we have made progress in correcting historical imbalances between faculty and administrative salaries. We have hit the 5 percent increase target for faculty for two years in a row and staff averages have been in the 3 ½ to 4 percent range. We will need to begin achieving balanced increases in the future and will do all that we can within the new CPE funding
model and with our own institutionally generated revenues to continue to make progress in reaching our benchmark institutional salary levels.

The matter of benefits continues to be an area where progress needs to be made. We are pleased with the new self-funded insurance program we implemented this past year, but you do need to know that cash flow for the self-funded health insurance plan is getting our attention. Because of the convenience and quality of our self-funded plan, medical claims have gone up this past year causing tight margins between our projected cumulative surplus and our actual cumulative cash position. We will monitor these numbers closely in the months ahead. We know that Western’s contribution per employee is significantly below that of our benchmark institutions. Therefore, we intend to address our self-funded health insurance numbers first through increasing the university contribution per employee. Our intention is to hold the line on employee contributions for at least another year. We will communicate further in this regard as the year progresses.

In closing, I want to come back to some thoughts I referenced at the beginning of these remarks that have to do with campus pride, institutional self esteem, and our collective ambitions for Western. I sense considerable momentum is generating for this university. I trust all of you share the personal pride which I feel for Western. Please join Julie and me in doing everything we can do to exhibit the Western spirit, to care for this campus physically and emotionally. Our collective goals, the goals of our Challenging the Spirit plan call for Western to be separated from the pack of comprehensive institutions in this state and in other states. You, the faculty and staff assembled here this morning, are not just employees of Western. You are Western. Everything about Western is embodied in you the faculty and you the staff. What you do in the classroom and what you do throughout our other programs define how this university is perceived. I encourage you to be uninhibited in showing your passion for Western—your passion for students, for learning, certainly for your respective disciplines, but also for this place—our campus, our reputation, our image, our vision, our results. I encourage you to take ownership in all of these things. There are flaws. There are frustrations. There are things our resources simply limit us from doing, but all the resources in the world won’t help us achieve national prominence unless that is our individual and collective resolve and we each take personal responsibility for our growth and improvement.

It is important that we enjoy each other and that we enjoy this family and this campus. It is important that we support our events, our programs of Potter College, our student activities, our teams—academic and athletic. Relish in the success of our forensics and our debate teams, and the national success of our journalism programs and our publications. Judy Woodring and Bob Adams will try to sustain the success of their respective programs, and we will continue to support them and encourage them. Compliment those students when you see them for what they are achieving.
Our football team returns to the Ohio Valley Conference this fall. Come to the stadium. Show them your support. Your spirit spreads throughout the community. We need our community support, but let’s start with our own support. Show up in Diddle Arena this winter. In fact, support all of the young people who represent this university in whatever scholarly group, club or athletic venue in which they compete.

I also encourage you to welcome those guests who visit our campus. Treat colleagues, students, and guests with respect and with a smile. What will you do personally to further the image and reputation of your program, of your department, and of our university? What will you do to improve or distinguish your program or Western to enhance our living environment and our quality of life and the people who define that quality. Be positive. If you cannot be positive, be constructive. Enjoy our good parts and help improve our lesser parts.

On a specific community note, it may be of some interest that I have agreed to chair the Warren County United Way Campaign for this year. This campaign serves social service agencies throughout our community. Western is our community’s largest employer. People less fortunate than us do have needs throughout Warren County so I encourage you to be supportive as Alton Little and Kit Tolbert serve as co-chairs for our campus effort this year. The campaign will run through the month of September.

And by the way, I trust all of you know that your personal philanthropic support of Western is important and appreciated. Many of you have begun a pattern of making a personal restricted gift to your department or program or some other part of Western about which you care deeply. Faculty and staff support of Western goes a long way toward demonstrating to our alumni and friends the value and need for their enhanced support.

I am here to support you, to help create a climate in which you can be successful and Western can prosper. Thank you again for your service on committees and for your extra efforts to address the things I have described this morning. We are fortunate to be part of a special place—a place on the cusp of meaningful transformation. I personally look forward to talking less this year about what we are going to do and more about what we are becoming. Julie and I value your friendship. We value our progress. This promises to be a benchmark year for Western. I am inspired by my partnership with you and look forward to serving you as we close one century and initiate, with great promise, the 21st century. Thank you!