Good morning.

Thank you for coming today, and welcome to the beginning of another semester.

It's good to see everyone back on campus, and I hope you had a nice holiday break.

I want to begin by addressing the budget, which I know is on everyone’s mind.

Although it didn’t feel like January right after the break – in fact I saw a few people wearing shorts on campus before it got cold – the beginning of the calendar year means that the budget season is under way in California.

As many of you have certainly heard, Governor Jerry Brown has proposed a budget for the CSU that is essentially flat.

That means the $750 million in cuts that we took for the current year were not restored.

Additionally, his budget relies on a tax initiative being passed by voters on the November ballot.

If the measure does not pass, we will again face “trigger” cuts.

The proposed amount of those cuts is $200 million, or double what the trigger was last year.

There are still many negotiations and machinations that will unfold over the next few months at the State Capitol, so stay tuned.

I will continue to send out messages whenever there is important budget news.

For our campus, the situation for the rest of this fiscal year has not changed.

We are using reserves to cover the current trigger cuts, and we continue to reduce spending where we can.

Fortunately, our enrollment is once again where we want it to be.

That, combined with our cautious approach to budgeting, has left us in relatively better shape than we could be.

That said, I don’t want to understate how difficult this is for everyone.
Using reserves is a one-time option of last resort.

Once those funds are gone, they're gone.

Over the last few years, we have cut back, implemented efficiencies, cut again, made sacrifices, and then cut even more.

We have persevered and remained professional, despite those who would view our work as an expense, instead of an investment in the future.

And most of all, our faculty, staff and students have found ways to succeed and overcome the most difficult challenges to ever confront public higher education in California.

For that, you deserve a round of applause.

Your success in this environment leads directly to my next point.

Friends and colleagues, it has been more than a year since the conclusion of Destination 2010.

We continue to enjoy many of its successes.

We have put in place a framework that better encourages collaboration and achievement.

We have modernized classrooms and added learning spaces.

Faculty research is winning accolades at international levels, and we are publicizing it over social media.

We are, as resources allow, upgrading space for departments and colleges.

And we are better prepared to address competition, both from traditional campuses and proprietary institutions.

In fact, the application trends for our campus suggest that more students are seeing Sacramento State as a campus of choice.

So the evidence of your good work can be seen every day, right here on campus.

Thank you for that.

Now, the logical question is: What's next?

It's a question we need to answer not only for our community and for the students we serve, but for ourselves as well.

Today, I am here to lay the groundwork for the answer to that question.
And some of what I say will seem familiar, because a lot of this is based on the great work you have already been doing since the end of Destination 2010 – along with the feedback you have provided in discussions about the future of our campus.

In other words, I heard you loud and clear.

Both your actions and your words have convinced me that if we are to succeed in a state where funding is at the mercy of Capitol politics …

And if we are to succeed in an era of higher education where competition for students is popping up everywhere …

Then we must learn from the last few years of budget cuts and think differently about how we can improve.

We know that we can no longer simply rely on the state to restore our funding.

It is up to us to demonstrate our value to the region we serve – and to become the best University we can be, a University of choice for students, and a University for the 21st century.

Already, we are seeing changes that are leading us in the right direction.

We have examined how we deliver education at nearly every level and recommitted ourselves to academic advising.

We have seen colleges and departments engaging in exhaustive, and at times difficult, program reviews.

We have seen the General Education Committee implement learning collaboratives with amazing success.

We have seen divisions across our campus reinventing themselves in terms of both efficiency and quality.

And in the weeks and months following the end of Destination 2010, dozens of you participated in the Futures Initiative focus groups that were essential to helping us shape what we are doing today.

Your work on these efforts has proven that Sacramento State is ready, not just for the next step, but ready to make history in terms of leadership and success in higher education.

I believe we have the desire, the talent, and most importantly, the people – and by that I mean the faculty and staff – to make this happen.

But since the conclusion of Destination 2010, the one thing we have lacked amid all the great work has been a unifying, campus-wide ambition that could help us focus on our larger goal.
And it was clear that we didn’t want Destination 2010 2.0.

Or something like “Vision 2020” that would be like everyone else.

Instead, in recognition of your efforts, and in hopes that a new initiative can further unleash our potential and open up innovative possibilities, we are launching an initiative that will marshal our intellectual resources and make Sacramento State a campus for the 21st century.

And we are calling this initiative: Redefine the Possible.

The first aspect of this initiative that I want to share with you is that you have my full support – and the full support of senior leadership on this campus – as you embark on endeavors that can change Sacramento State for the better.

So when I hear that a faculty member has put forward an idea to create “theme semesters” that promote multi-disciplinary study of issues like terrorism, water or race relations, I want you to know that we welcome such creative thinking.

Or when an entire college seeks to reorganize to better reflect today’s educational expectations, I welcome that discussion.

Or when the Graduation Initiative Steering Committee seeks to implement road maps for student success for every major, I say let’s do it.

Now, we must always be mindful of our financial resources when we explore ideas, but one of the most promising conclusions of the focus groups was that bad state budgets did not dominate the conversation.

Our students, faculty, staff and community members were ready to move forward – and I agree that the time is right.

The adversity of the last few years gives us an opportunity to think boldly and creatively, to create new pathways to success … to Redefine the Possible.

That brings me to the second aspect of the initiative.

There were some common themes that emerged from the Futures research, and they really helped us develop a set of values that we can use.

So based on feedback from across the campus community, here are the values we identified.

A University for the 21st Century is:

- Excellent and Accessible
- Agile and Efficient
- Modern and Attractive
- A Source of Pride for the Region and Beyond.

Now, in listing these values, I purposely did not seek to limit their reach or scope.
Think of them as clues on a treasure map, instead of turn-by-turn directions on Mapquest.

Again, the goal here is to unleash creativity.

I want each and every one of us to use these as a beacon, around which we can gather our creative energies.

So in the months ahead, I will ask the vice presidents to conduct “possibility audits” and report back on specific areas where we can work differently so we can be better.

It is my hope that these “possibility audits” will not only provide additional goals, but also give us new direction for some of the goals we are holding onto, like:

- A new science building
- Faculty-driven uses of novel teaching technologies
- And better customer service for students and visitors

We will also work with the Faculty Senate as curriculum revision continues to move forward and identify how we can cooperatively capitalize on the opportunities before us.

And we will set up a web page to keep everyone informed of our work, and to solicit ideas for how we can change.

This brings me to the final aspect of the Redefine the Possible initiative.

I sought a lot of feedback from inside and outside the campus, and the consensus was that our “Leadership begins here” slogan served its purpose well, but we’re beginning to outgrow it.

We have placed ourselves at the forefront of higher education, and we are thinking about the future in unprecedented ways.

Now, we will not redefine the possible by merely reaching for the next highest rung on the ladder – because you have already demonstrated that we can reach even higher.

The journey of Sacramento State is one that I hope will be measured in giant leaps, as we blaze new trails in higher education and give our students the inspiration to achieve their dreams.

To redefine the possible, we must Do the Unexpected.

Our work to create a university for the 21st century will require a major commitment to looking beyond the limitations we now perceive.

We must not look just at how we can improve, but how we can re-invent ourselves in the name of improvement.

We must stand up for innovation and stand out in our community, state and nation.
I have seen a lot in my 33 years in higher education, and we are right in the middle of a time of great change.

There is a theory in evolutionary biology called punctuated equilibrium.

I am a psychologist, so I will try to make sure I get this right.

Punctuated equilibrium says that species exhibit little change for most of their history.

But when significant change does occur, often in periods of environmental stress, it happens very rapidly.

I believe we are at the precipice of rapid change.

Higher education in the 21st century will be defined by the decisions we make in the years ahead.

And the fork in the road is clear.

As I have said before, if we fail to meet the challenges of today, and of tomorrow, we risk becoming a quaint memory of how higher education used to be.

I believe that will not be the story of Sacramento State.

I believe that we can, and we will, Do the Unexpected.

Now, I know that I’ve been speaking to you about ideas and concepts.

But, in reality what I’m really focusing on is you.

It’s people who make up the university.

It’s people doing their jobs as part of a larger endeavor who make the difference.

It’s people who care about our students who make their dreams a reality.

And it’s people who want to see Sac State be the best and who move us forward as an institution.

This morning I’m asking you, each of you, to re-commit your efforts to building a positive future for our university.

I’m asking you to redefine the possible and to do the unexpected.

I can tell you, I will.

Thank you very much.