Good morning.

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

It’s good to see everyone back on campus.

I hope you had a nice holiday break – and that your travel plans or activities were not thrown into disarray by the polar vortex.

I know that many of you were very busy, as well, with Winter Intersession or grading.

In fact, the Registrar’s Office reports that more than 99 percent of the fall semester grade rosters were submitted on time.

This is the highest percentage in at least 34 years, so thank you for your diligence.

I’d like to extend a special welcome to our incoming Provost, Dr. Fraka Harmsen.

Her first day on the job will be Feb. 3, and she has been very busy preparing to move from Chico.

At the same time, I want to take a moment to acknowledge Interim Provost Gossett.

Charles has worked tirelessly over the last several months, and he dealt with some very big challenges.

He will be returning to the faculty in SSIS.

Please help me welcome Dr. Harmsen and thank Dr. Gossett.

I also welcome all the parents, alumni, community members and friends of the University in the audience today.

Among those friends are representatives from the March of Dimes.

Sacramento State is partnering with the local March of Dimes chapter this year, and I’ll have an announcement regarding them later this morning.

We have another busy semester ahead, so let’s get started.
Budget and Enrollment

Sacramento State is once again on target to meet our annual enrollment goal.

About 1,750 new students will be joining us this spring semester, with the total headcount likely to exceed 27,000.

Fall applications were also very strong, coming in just slightly below our all-time high.

In terms of the budget for the CSU, we are anticipating another modest increase from the state.

Two weeks ago, Governor Brown released his budget proposal for the 2014-15 fiscal year.

The plan is generally good news for us and our students, because it once again freezes tuition fees at current levels.

It also includes a general fund increase of about $142 million, which is in line with what we were expecting.

Some of you may remember that the governor has proposed a four-year budget plan for the CSU, and this is Year 2 of those modest increases.

As always, my usual caveat applies here:

The budget can go through many incarnations between now and the summer.

This year is also an election year for the state – so we will continue to monitor the developments at the Capitol very closely.

For our campus, this means that we have to maintain the same cautious approach that we developed during the years of deep budget cuts.

In fact, the language in the governor’s proposal itself is sending a message that we all should take to heart.

The governor’s proposal says – and I’m quoting it here:

“As the state reinvests in higher education, it cannot fund the business-as-usual model of providing instruction at its higher education institutions.”

It continues to note that, “The state has just emerged from the largest recession since the Great Depression, and its finances remain constrained.”

“The state must continue to rebuild its universities’ budgets, but only in a manner that is sustainable over the long term.”

So if anyone didn’t believe that public higher education policy in California is transforming before our eyes, this latest budget summary should leave no doubt.
And here’s what I feel is the biggest point, and again, I’m quoting:

“The Administration’s long-term plan moves away from funding higher education based on enrollment targets.”

The message here is clear.

As educators who have to plan for the current and future needs of our students and California’s workforce, we should be thankful for the promise of stability.

But we also must change.

I can report that Chancellor White has acknowledged the need for change, as well.

The budget proposal emphasizes as priorities affordability, completion rates, time to degree, and transferring more students from the community colleges.

In many ways, we have already begun to make these changes, as we Redefine the Possible at Sacramento State, and that is a credit to everyone who has helped us confront some very challenging issues.

One example is our work to comply with the CSU’s 120-unit threshold for programs.

I am happy to announce that by this coming Fall semester, all programs that formerly required between 121 and 129 units will be in compliance.

This is a testament to the commitment of our academic departments to revise major requirements, and the Faculty Senate to change General Education.

Thank you, faculty, for working with us to implement these changes.

By all indications, there is more difficult work ahead, given the new pressures on public higher education, but we are off to a strong start.

In the meantime, I’m pleased by our ability to make progress with the resources we have.

For example, although hiring is not where we would like, we are able to at least move in the right direction.

We expect more than 40 new faculty members to begin this Fall, thanks to plans developed by the deans.

**High-Impact Efficiency**

One aspect of Sacramento State that will not change is our vital importance to the region.

We are finding ways to use resources that provide maximum benefit to our campus, to our students and to the community we serve:
One example is the Department of Physical Therapy’s move into Folsom Hall.

The move is complete, and everyone is benefiting.

Two cohorts are under way in the Doctor of Physical Therapy program, and when the third begins this fall, we will have increased the number of graduate students in PT by 50 percent.

The added space in Folsom Hall also allowed the department to launch the STEPS program, which provides no-cost treadmill therapy to children with neuro-motor impairments.

Like the School of Nursing before it, Physical Therapy is using the enhanced facilities to strengthen its value to the community, as well as to students, and this is precisely what we envisioned when we made the acquisition.

Folsom Hall is well on its way to becoming a Center for Health Professions, and the next department scheduled to move is Speech Pathology and Audiology.

Elsewhere on campus, we are moving forward on four initiatives that will have a big impact in the community.

First, Viridiana Diaz is the new director of the Serna Center.

She will expand the center’s role in areas such as public policy, access for students, and civic engagement.

Second, we have received a $75,000 grant from Wells Fargo to help our student-veterans transition from college to civilian careers.

Our Veterans Success Center has earned wide acclaim for its work to ensure the academic success of these students, and the new funding will build on that leadership.

Third, the College of Continuing Education and our CAMP program are following up on the success of last year’s Es El Momento event, by bringing it back to Sacramento State.

Es El Momento is a college festival aimed at promoting academic achievement and higher education for Latino families.

More than 6,500 people came to our campus for the event last year, and the second-annual event will be August 23rd.

Next, the College of Health and Human Services is partnering with Sacramento County District Attorney Jan Scully on the establishment of a Family Justice Center.

Although at this point in its development the Justice Center won’t be on campus, the partnership will include opportunities for faculty research, student internships and community service in multiple disciplines.
Already, the center is working with our Academic Technology and Creative Services unit on making a promotional video.

Speaking of video, Sacramento State’s holiday card video has generated nearly 14,000 unique hits. The video was produced by the Office of Public Affairs, and it eliminated the cost of producing and sending a paper card.

**Campus Improvements**

We are making physical improvements to the campus with the same methodical, value-driven approach.

To help address the bottleneck in introductory chemistry courses, we have completed renovations of 4 labs.

The work increased storage capacity for the glassware students need for the courses, and the department can now offer an additional 10 sections per semester.

Over Winter Break, Facilities also worked with IRT to upgrade 14 classrooms with smart technology.

This is part of an ongoing plan to modernize our classrooms as resources become available, and more classrooms are scheduled to be updated over the summer.

Plans include development of space that can be used for learning in a collaborative seminar format, and we will be seeking faculty input on how best to make it work.

Facilities has taken the same step-by-step approach with exterior lighting on campus, with new lights being installed near the residence halls.

The next area for improvement is coming at an ideal time in terms of resource management – and that is the restrooms on campus.

With California in the middle of another drought, water conservation has become a very hot topic in our state.

Our campus has bathroom fixtures from the 1950s and 60s, and these fixtures use more than double the water of current standards.

So in the months to come we will be replacing bathroom fixtures across campus, and thanks to $78,000 in grant money from the City of Sacramento, more than half the estimated cost will be covered.

In many cases, the new fixtures will use about a third of the water.

This will save water and money – and it will pay both environmental and financial dividends for years to come.
I'll spare you the details, but I will say that for our campus, every flush counts.

That's because we essentially pay twice for the water we get from the City.

We pay for every gallon of water that comes in, and we also pay for every gallon that goes out to the sewage system.

**Campus Announcements**

Another important change that some of you may have seen is the renaming of some of our roads.

For years, there was a lot of confusion about the perimeter road around the campus.

For instance, no one really knew where State University Drive South became State University Drive West.

And some of the interior roads didn’t even have names.

Earlier this month, we changed all of that.

Based on the recommendations of a campus-wide task force, we have implemented new names for many of our roadways.

The biggest change is that College Town Drive now extends all the way around the west side of campus, past the stadium, the softball field and the soccer field.

Some of the shorter roads were given new names based on trees.

You can see all the new street names on the interactive campus map online.

This change will make our campus easier to navigate and assist police and fire personnel who use our roads when responding to emergencies.

I want to thank the task force members who spent about two years on this process.

Now, I can’t mention roads without talking about traffic.

At the beginning of last semester, we had more difficulties than anticipated, with cars backing up seemingly everywhere.

UTAPS is looking at long-term solutions, and in the meantime we will continue to direct traffic throughout the semester as needed.

This is a good time to remind everyone that the main issue we saw last semester was drivers circling campus in search of a spot.

We have sufficient parking capacity, but it’s the driving around that generally causes the problems.
So if you see a spot, take it, and don’t count on being able to find your perfect spot.

Now I’d like to move on to announcements that deal with the future of our campus.

With our budgets and enrollments appearing more certain in the near term, we hope to make headway in several key areas.

The Student Housing Advisory Committee has been working on a proposal for more on-campus housing.

The proposed site of the new, 350-bed residence hall is in front of Desmond Hall.

It would feature views of the American River, which has long been an underappreciated asset for our campus.

If the project is approved by the Chancellor’s Office, we hope to open for the Fall of 2017.

The new hall would likely be configured in “pods” that accommodate 10 or so students.

This configuration enhances privacy and community – which are both important factors for students making choices on where they will live.

Construction would be financed using housing revenues – so there would be no state dollars needed.

Traffic and student housing are two of the many considerations that have gone into the development of the Campus Master Plan.

I know that a lot of you provided feedback when the architect was on campus in the fall.

Many of those suggestions are being incorporated, and the architect will be back this spring to present an updated design.

Our goal is to submit a final document for approval to the Board of Trustees this spring.

Once that is done, we will seek ideas from interested parties on how the larger elements of the plan could be developed.

Another component related to the future of our campus is the expansion of the University Union and the WELL.

During the fall, the Union Well Inc. Board of Directors launched an alternative consultation process to change the Union fee.

The goals were expanding the University Union and The WELL, and building a Student Events Center on campus.

The process was informative.
We learned a lot about what the students want, and we listened.

After looking at all of the feedback, I felt that we needed to scale back the scope of the plan and reduce the proposed $250-a-semester fee increase.

As a result, I have asked staff to examine how Sacramento State could address overcrowding in the University Union and The WELL – without an events center.

They are developing a modified proposal that would be more cost-effective for our students.

The revamped alternative consultation will begin this semester.

Also this semester, University Enterprises will continue transforming the former Copy Graphics Center into a Starbucks.

We had hoped to open it this spring, but the schedule was pushed back, and we now are likely to open in June.

Moving from caffeine to nicotine, I am pleased to announce that Sacramento State will be a tobacco free campus by the Fall of 2015.

This change stems from the recommendation of a campus-wide task force on tobacco – and the work of a student group called Hornets for a Healthy Hive.

My staff and I met with the students several times last semester, and I signed a memo calling for the tobacco ban.

Again, it will not take effect until Fall of 2015.

We wanted to give everyone ample time to prepare for the change, so we will use the ensuing months to make the campus aware of the ban and create a final policy document.

My final update this morning deals with Sacramento State’s new Strategic Plan.

The process is going very well, with many people from the campus and the larger community providing input.

I encourage everyone to go online to the Strategic Planning website to submit feedback.

The process will continue this spring, and we hope to have it completed by this Fall.

**March for Babies Partnership**

My final announcement involves Sacramento State’s partnership with the March of Dimes.

The March of Dimes is the leading non-profit organization supporting health initiatives for mothers and babies.
You may remember that in the Fall, I announced that I had accepted an invitation to serve as chairman of the March for Babies fundraising event that will take place April 26.

I agreed to the offer because the campaign fits with our commitment to be a resource for the community.

The campaign also gives us the chance to showcase some of our greatest strengths – such as public service, students and faculty who have deep ties to our region, and educational excellence in areas that include health care and nutrition.

This semester we will be ramping up our efforts for the March, and that begins today.

Outside the Ballroom, representatives from the March of Dimes will be available to share information on how to get involved with the March for Babies.

They will also have computers set up so you can register to be a team leader in the fundraising effort.

I hope that everyone on campus will get involved.

By signing up as a team leader, you can recruit colleagues, friends or students to support this important cause.

In fact, right after the speech, I am going to go out to the lobby and sign up.

I invite you to sign up as well.

In the coming weeks, we hope to announce prizes for top teams and fundraisers.

I know that a group of students from Family & Consumer Sciences has already signed up, so the rest of us are going to have to catch up quickly.

So if you are interested, please stop by the tables outside.

Thank you for coming this morning.

Enjoy the semester, and let’s work together to redefine the possible and our collective future at Sacramento State.