

James L. Oblinger
Installation Response
April 20, 2005

Governor Easley, Chief Justice Mitchell, President Broad, President Emeritus Friday, Mr. Burns and other members of the Board of Governors, Chair Blank and other members of our Board of Trustees; Chancellors Ammons, Ballard, Bardo, Bryan, Burnim, DePaolo, Moeser, Peacock, Sullivan; Chancellor Emeritus Monteith, Delegates, Faculty, Students, Staff, Alumni, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am very grateful and proud to accept the honor—and responsibility—of serving as North Carolina State University's 13th chancellor.

- I will do my best to fulfill the oath of office and to carry on the tradition that makes NC State a truly great university.
- Let me thank all of you who have participated in the planning and in the events leading up to this wonderful ceremony.
- Let me particularly thank Dean Marvin Malecha, and Mr. David Rainer who co-chaired the Installation Committee.

This is not a celebration about me. This is a celebration about us—all of us associated with NC State.

Let me also take a moment to publicly thank my wife, Diana, and our four sons and their families for their unfailing love and support.

- Diana and I are fortunate that they all live here in North Carolina—and we are very proud of them.

Pride is a good word to think about today.

- I am proud of this great institution and all the wonderful people associated with NC State—whether faculty, staff, students, alumni, partners, or friends.
- How could someone NOT be proud of NC State?
- Wolfpack pride permeates everything we do.

- What a great community of achievers!
- Extending into all 100 counties and the Cherokee reservation, NC State has always prided itself as the People's University—of, by, and for the people of North Carolina.

You've heard me say it before—and you'll hear me say it many more times—NC State is a GREAT university.

- Our founders could never have imagined the greatness that this university would achieve in the 21st century.
- As a research-extensive land-grant university, NC State was founded in 1887 to educate the common man.
- But NC State is far from commonplace.
- Think of the national honors, the impressive rankings, the stunning growth, and the talented people—as well as the good NC State has done for North Carolina and the nation.
- An uncommon university in so many ways—one that has never forgotten that it is the People's University.

On October 8th— a day I'll never forget—my appointment as chancellor was announced.

- I talked with you then about the goals I believe we need to achieve—and we WILL achieve them.

First, we must have **scholarship for the 21st century**, in our teaching and learning, in our research and in our extension and engagement activities.

- Engaging the external community, understanding its needs, and doing all we can to address those needs.
- Our remarkable community of scholars—in disciplines ranging from science and technology to history, the arts, design, and the humanities—not only preserves the past but also creates the future.
- We are the state's science, engineering and technology flagship but we also graduate students with cultural literacy and management skill.

- The results of the high quality of education at NC State are evident in the competitiveness of our students for prestigious national scholarships and fellowships such as the Goldwater, the Marshall, the Udall, the Mitchell, the Truman, and the Gates Cambridge.
- When it comes to National Science Foundation fellowships, NC State ranks with the best universities nationally.

Second, NC State must be a cornerstone of **innovation** for it will take innovation to solve the world's challenges.

- Innovation advances teaching and learning as well as our extension to—and engagement with—our constituents.
- Innovation will allow us to reach millions of people with research-based knowledge that strengthens our state and national economies, protects the environment, and improves the quality of life for North Carolinians.
- Our faculty include 18 members of the National Academy of Sciences, the National Academy of Engineering and the National Institute of Medicine, placing us in the top 25 universities in the nation.
- In the past 10 years, our researchers have received 85 National Science Foundation Presidential Awards and a Presidential National Medal of Technology, again ranking us with the best.
- Our innovative research programs present important opportunities for graduate students and undergraduate students to blend academic knowledge, mentored investigation, and public service.
- NC State ranks 7th in total research funding among public universities without medical schools, and 19th overall.
- We rank 3rd among all public universities in corporate supported research.
- And we rank 24th in the country in the number of doctoral degrees awarded—a clear indication of the robustness and the relevance of our research programs.
- Each year, both our aspirations and our reputation grow.

The third goal I mentioned in October is that we must create a campus environment where a **culture of inclusiveness and diversity** of people and programs dominates.

- Diversity is a great source of strength for any academic institution because it helps open minds and hearts. I'm proud that the number of minority graduate students at NC State has increased by a third over the past five years.
- Our international students have increased by nearly a third, as well, enriching and broadening the world view of their fellow students.
- The growing number of women in science and technology fields as well as administrative posts is further important evidence that our culture of diversity and inclusiveness continues to grow.

The fourth goal is to **operate efficiently and effectively** in every sector of our enterprise.

- To achieve our great potential, NC State must have the right underlying infrastructure so our faculty, staff, students, and supporters, as well our legislative, community and industry partners, can all do what they need to do.
- Thanks to the higher education bond issue and our own fundraising activities, we've expanded and improved campus facilities significantly.
- The Achieve Capital Campaign as well as our faculty's competitiveness in grants and contracts brings in new dollars that help us continue our tradition of achievement by providing scholarships, endowing professorships and providing research and programmatic support.
- And there are so many people who work behind the scenes to make sure that new buildings are brought online, that the campus is safe, that paychecks arrive on time.
- The work of so many people makes NC State the outstanding university that it is.
- We must do things right—and do the right things—to achieve extraordinary results.

You all know that I know NC State well. Nineteen years can provide a lot of perspective.

- I could look back and reflect on our past; but we don't have enough time to do that today.
- I could tell you about all our accomplishments, department by department and unit by unit; but I won't do that today either.
- But what I will do is emphasize what really counts—our values.
- NC State has three overriding values that ensure we will never be satisfied with the status quo but will always be stretching for that next great achievement.

Those 3 values are:

- People
- Innovation
- Action

Today, I ask that we all recommit ourselves to people, to innovation, and to action.

(Pause)

We value people at NC State.

- People are what we are all about.
- Seeing the potential in people—and developing it.
- Listening to the needs of people—and acting on those needs.
- Recognizing the great strength we draw from diversity—in ethnicity, faith, national heritage, family composition, economic background—and building on that diversity.
- We must value people.
 - Valuing people means that even though we're the state's largest institution of higher education we treat each student as an individual.
 - Valuing people means that we treat each other with respect, whether we're from the administration, the faculty, the staff, or the student body.
 - Valuing people means that we welcome people to our community—whether they're from Cherokee, Chicago, or China.

The four leaders you just heard from—General Hugh Shelton, Barbara Mulkey, Phil Freelon and President Bill Friday—were valued as students at NC State.

- Their teachers and fellow students recognized them as leaders even then, and gave them the encouragement and resources to grow.
- Look at how much society has gained because of those investments.

And our student athletes are leaders in their own right and are valued not just for the way they perform and promote our university's identity and spirit—but also for the way they draw people to NC State.

- Look around at any athletic event.
- You'll see a Wolfpack family that includes people from all walks of life coming together to celebrate NC State.

Take a look at the people around you—students, staff, faculty, alumni and friends.

- Each of them has greatness within him or herself.
- As the People's University, we have the obligation—we have the privilege—to see the potential in the people around us, and help them be all they CAN be.

When you value people, you listen to them.

- A measure of how much we value the citizens of this great state is how well we listen and respond to them...and their needs.
 - We listen when our students, staff, faculty or alumni have concerns.
 - We listen when our public schools need help.
 - We listen when rural communities need our help with economic development, agricultural diversification, workforce training, or land use planning.
 - We listen when new fields of discovery or new science-based industries need our help to emerge and prosper.

Diana and I have had the pleasure of visiting many parts of the state since I was named chancellor.

- People have told us about things that concern them—about things we've done to support them—about things they're proud of.
- They've told us about how well our faculty are preparing our students for the workplace of tomorrow, encouraging civic engagement, character, and responsibility.
- They've told us how we can help the children and senior citizens in their communities—and what we can do to help this state grow in so many ways.
- We have the obligation and the privilege of listening to people before we respond.
- It brings relevance and it brings reality to our teaching, research, and extension and engagement activities

I challenge myself—I challenge all of us—to value people and to listen to them.

Secondly, we value innovation at NC State.

- We EXPECT to be innovative in ALL that we do—in teaching and learning, in research, and in extension and engagement.
- We must never be satisfied with yesterday’s accomplishments.
- We must lead the way with innovative ideas.
 - As our researchers make textiles that heal while we wear them, they innovate.
 - As our faculty improve teaching and learning in a technology rich environment, they innovate.
 - As student affairs professionals put students to work in the community through service learning and develop programs that enhance our student’s experience, they innovate.
 - As our extension professionals help develop new crops for new markets and assist in community development activities, they innovate.
 - As our students work on research teams, they innovate.
 - As our staff develop and manage new programs and new technologies to increase our efficiency, they innovate.

Innovative partnerships—such as those that bring together business, government, and academia on our Centennial Campus—catalyze new discoveries, new businesses, and new jobs—not to mention new ways to educate students.

Innovative individuals in laboratories and studios, whether inventing new materials or writing software, have taken NC State to sixth place nationally in the technology strength of our patents and spin-off companies.

- Our students thrive in this culture of innovation that allows them to work side-by-side with outstanding faculty.

Crossing traditional disciplinary boundaries in research and education stimulates innovation—and prepares our students for emerging disciplines.

- The names of some of these new disciplines remind us just how interdisciplinary today's world really is.
- Disciplines like:
 - textronics
 - evolutionary robotics
 - biomechatronics
 - systems biology
 - bioethics and
 - nanotechnology.

We must constantly innovate if NC State is to be ready for a future defined by interdisciplinary fields yet to be discovered.

In order to innovate, we must also have **trust** in each other as professional colleagues, mentors, and friends.

- For it is trust that provides the springboard for risk-taking—and a cushion for the occasional fall—enabling us to push on to greatness.
- We must trust each other to dream big ideas and to move forward, pull back or change course.
- Trust empowers each of us to try things we never imagined we could do.

Innovation is about ideas.

- It's about working in partnership.
- It's about crossing boundaries.
- Innovation makes it possible to conquer new frontiers.
- When you think of all the challenges in the world, when you think of all the dreams and potential discoveries, we must value innovation.

I challenge myself—I challenge all of us—to value innovation.

And thirdly, we value action at NC State.

- We see the potential in people and act on it.
- We learn of a need and act on it.
- We take pride in being able to turn an idea into an accomplishment.
- We ARE “innovation in action.”

But when we act, we don’t necessarily act alone.

- Today’s challenges are too complex for any individual or institution to have all the answers.
- Today’s challenges cross disciplinary lines—even national borders.
- Individual action counts—but individuals working in partnership absolutely TRIUMPH.

NC State has a history of collaborative action.

- Think of the richness of perspective, diversity of skills, and strength of commitment represented by the 16 institutions of our great University of North Carolina system.
- Add in the North Carolina Community College system.
- Add in corporations in North Carolina, in the US, or in the international community.
- Can we do more working together than apart?
- Absolutely.
- It’s smart.
- It’s the right thing to do.
- It’s the way we can ensure the best results for the people we serve.

Let me give you three examples:

First, consider Centennial Campus, booming, and in its 20th year, with over 125 industry, government, and university units working in partnership.

- Centennial Campus is not just a place; it’s a concept—a concept that is being applied throughout the university, blending our extension mission with leading-edge research and experiential education to generate new-age economic development.
- Through partnering, our education and research programs become more relevant and more responsive—and our partners become more competitive.

Next, consider the joint biomedical engineering department recently established by our College of Engineering and the School of Medicine at Carolina.

- We didn't let historic athletic rivalries or the miles between our two institutions stop us from partnering to leverage our respective areas of expertise.
- Biomedical technology is one of the fastest growing industries in the U.S., and North Carolina is among the top-ranked states as a place for biomedical technology businesses.

And, third, consider the Biomanufacturing Training and Education Center—or BTEC, as we call it.

- In January 2007, thanks to the generosity of the Golden Leaf Foundation, the support of our Governor and our State legislature, and our partnership with the Community College System and North Carolina Central University, we will open the 34-million-dollar BTEC facility on our Centennial Campus.
- What an opportunity for us to contribute to the state's economy through workforce development and enhancement—for a high-tech industry perfectly suited to North Carolina.

Leadership is not about always being at the front of the room.

- Real leadership is about seeing a need, building a coalition and getting results.
- NC State is a leader in the truest sense of the word.
- Acting together is better than acting alone.

I challenge myself—I challenge all of us—to value action with, and for, others.

There is another kind of action I also ask you to consider.

- That action is giving back.
- All of us here today are very fortunate.
- Education has given us a great advantage.

The measure of NC State's success will be the degree to which we give back.

- What we give back to our citizens, the nation, and the world, is a true measure of our greatness.
 - When we visit a classroom and take a hand, or open a mind we help shape the future. We're giving back the hope and the inspiration on which education, and our future, depends.
 - When we teach English as a second language or design accessible housing, we're giving back dignity and independence.
 - When we are consulting with an entrepreneur, a veterinarian, or a farmer—or helping government agencies avoid catastrophic wildfires—we are giving back to the state's economic well-being.
 - When we are helping a business apply research to create a new product line that will create more jobs, we are giving back the kind of opportunity that each of us has benefited from.
 - We can all give back—faculty, staff, students, alumni and friends.
 - Recently, over 100 of our students gave back their spring breaks to tutor Navajo children, deliver meals to AIDS patients, and build Habitat for Humanity homes in Central and South America.
 - Our student athletes interact with elementary and middle school students, promoting academics and physical fitness.
 - And each year, hundreds of NC State students, faculty and staff provide service to nonprofit organizations.
 - Ask any of them about giving back, and I guarantee that they'll say they received more than they gave.

NC State is giving back—and demonstrating that **we value people, we value innovation and we value action.**

I firmly believe that as we demonstrate these values, we will keep delivering on the four goals I mentioned earlier.

- You will see scholarship for the 21st century.
- You will see a culture of innovation.
- You will see a campus committed to a diverse and inclusive environment.
- And, you will see greater organizational capacity and effectiveness.
- NC State will be an even greater institution tomorrow than it is today.

I know you are committed to NC State.

- I know you set high goals for yourselves.
- You KNOW what to do and you KNOW how to do it.
- Together, we will create the future we have imagined for NC State.

Today's celebration is not about me.

- Today we celebrate us.
- We are NC State....and

NC State is a GREAT university!

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