I can hardly believe this is my ninth State of the University speech to the UNLV family. I do remember how strongly my first speech emphasized the need to establish a strategic planning process—to bring together all the wonderful things the university was doing and articulate a shared future—and how successfully we have, in fact, made planning an integral part of our life here because it has been translated into major new advancements for UNLV. If one re-reads each speech (and I know you all do that regularly), it is clear how iterative the process actually is: themes are sharpened and developed in each subsequent year.

But if you read the speeches from 1995 and 1996 and then move to the speech from 2002, the changes are dramatic; the conditions and opportunities that have framed our life here were simply unpredictable seven or eight years ago. And that is the lesson we have learned about planning: in order to be memorable and to create structure and a framework for decision-making, planning goals must remain simple, direct, and comprehensive. On the other hand, the planning process must be nimble, dynamic, and flexible enough to respond to new challenges—and particularly to new opportunities—or the value of planning in a relentlessly changing environment will be minimal.

So let me try to recap where I think we are now and where, as an integrated academic and student community with some shared sense of our future, we seem to be going.

“...the changes are dramatic; the conditions and opportunities that have framed our life here were simply unpredictable seven or eight years ago.”
Part I | Planning To Create A Shared Future

The overarching statement of vision for UNLV is that we are well into the process of becoming a “Premier Metropolitan Research University.”

There is no doubt that this vision has changed in the last half dozen years. It has evolved from “premier urban university,” the first statement of vision we created out of our collective discussions in 1995-96. What does that change represent? Well, the two constants are “premier”—we continue to recognize and trumpet quality as a core value—and “university”—a description of our type, as opposed to a college or community college, and an even more important descriptor since the Regents and Legislature have created a distinct state college in Nevada and will, at some point, probably create others. But I believe it may well be a significant period of time before the state will create another university.

And what does it mean to call ourselves a university when, in fact, we take that appellation totally for granted? Does a modern university really represent, as Charles Clotfelter has written, “the complexity of a major conglomerate, the technical sophistication of the space program, the quaintness of a medieval monastery, and the political intrigue of a Trollope novel … a peculiar institution indeed”? Or are we closer to what Frank Rhodes describes as “a substantial institution, with an established campus, a large enrollment, a significant residential component, a comprehensive scope, graduate programs, professional schools, and a commitment to both undergraduate education and significant research”? Clearly, we see ourselves growing steadily into the entity Rhodes describes and intend to continue down that very path, as our vision unequivocally suggests.
But how did we evolve from “urban” to “metropolitan”? As only academics can do, the planning council debated these alternative choices of adjectives for several meetings and many hours, ultimately deciding that “metropolitan” was more inclusive, more cosmopolitan, more far-reaching—a good choice, as we are named for an increasingly sophisticated city in which we are becoming central and important in the advancement of our culture and economy.

And how did the word “research” become so prominent in our vision? Because we began to realize how important to our city and our state a major research university in Southern Nevada would be. We also realized what such a university could bring to the advancement of our community in every way, the topic of my address today. The community at large does not always understand this: I am repeatedly asked, “Why a major ‘research’ university?” In the simplest terms, premier metropolitan research universities are a central component of community transformation.

These evolutionary changes in our sense of direction were articulated through the planning process, but they occurred through profound changes in UNLV’s culture. When I came to UNLV in 1995, we were a good, regional, primarily teaching institution. Now we are fast becoming a cosmopolitan “university” in Frank Rhodes’s sense of that term: multidimensional, complex, and a far cry from the tiny conglomeration of programs that were provided by outcasts from the University of Nevada, Reno, to what was first simply a “branch campus” of UNR in 1951.

Imagine 30 students, three part-time faculty, and a classroom or two at Las Vegas High School. By 1957, the year we celebrate as our anniversary because the university opened its doors to 300 students in Frazier Hall, we were still the “Southern Regional Division of the University of Nevada,” a stepchild of the university at Reno. But it wasn’t until 1968 that UNLV won its independence after students burned then Governor Laxalt in effigy. Imagine, what, in 35 short years, we have built. Las Vegas has increased its population more than tenfold, but UNLV has increased its enrollment from 300 to more than 26,000—almost a hundredfold. And we are still advancing.

From those humble beginnings in the 1950s and ’60s, we have become increasingly a major resource to our community and state. National rankings reflect that evolution: We are now ranked by U.S. News and World Report among the nation’s 250 major national universities when, as recently as 2000, we were ranked among “regional” institutions and resided on the list next to Montana Tech. Likewise, the Carnegie Commission ranks us as “Research-Intensive,” a category that would have been three steps above the “Masters Comprehensive” designation we had until 1999.

So what does it mean unapologetically to make this leap and envision ourselves becoming this Premier Metropolitan Research University, and whose company will we join?
Some of the answers to that are embedded in our mission. And we have a very nice, densely textured mission statement at the introduction to our planning document that defines many of our characteristics and aspirations. But it is not easy to commit to memory and it may not qualify as the most inspirational of statements, given that it was written by a committee of 25 and revised 200 times. It serves its purpose very well indeed, however, because it embodies our character — our uniqueness and similarities — among universities of our type.

But having just participated in a strategic planning session for the NCAA and its new president, Myles Brand, I was challenged to think about what the lead consultant from Tecker Consultants called the “Big, Hairy, Audacious Goal,” a simpler, more memorable statement for the university that is characterized by the following:

- “Huge challenge with a clear finish line
- Unifying focal point of effort
- Clear and compelling
- A catalyst for team spirit
- Applies to the entire organization
- Requires 10-20 years to complete”

I was struck by how interesting it would be to create such a “Big, Hairy, Audacious Goal” for UNLV and have been working on it ever since, using only the phrases and ideas that have informed our evolution and planning nomenclature over this past several years. So today I present it and will turn it over to the Planning Council for them to decide if this statement embodies what we can use everywhere to remind all of us where we are going.

**UNLV’s Big, Hairy, Audacious Goal**

To enhance our presence as one of the major higher education resources in the Southwest, transforming and adding value to the community (local, national, and international) in every way through the creation of a superior learning environment; the development of meaningful research, original scholarship, and creative performance; and by manifesting a commitment to service beginning in Las Vegas and Southern Nevada.

The newly revised planning document, with its eight goals and 11 research-related macrothemes, gives us the action plan that evolves out of the vision, the mission statement, and the Big, Hairy, Audacious Goal. Moreover, our recent retreat began the process of developing measures and performance indicators that will allow us to determine how successfully we are achieving our goals across the board. Driven primarily by data and data analysis, the ability to measure success in demonstrable ways will add the leg to the planning stool we are now prepared to construct.
To return to the major theme, we are already a flagship university that both transforms and improves its community, but we aspire to do this even more effectively. To reach this audacious goal, UNLV must produce the finest educated citizens and leaders, help solve many of the community’s most pressing problems, strengthen the area’s economic base and health, and produce exceptional creative, cultural, and athletic activities. We can help raise our state’s fortunes in every way.

Most universities in the country that do these things best (and simultaneously) are known as Research I or Research-Extensive universities. Let me describe some of their common characteristics, particularly for those who may not fully understand what it means to be in this class of university.

Major Research Universities Improve Student Learning in a Variety of Ways

Great universities transform the lives of students in truly marvelous ways. At graduation each year, we take time to celebrate some of the most impressive of these personal transformations.

The old chestnut that research universities abandon teaching is simply a myth. Great research professors are, more often than not, great teachers, as we know from long experience in the academic world. In our work to create a student-centered learning environment, students are encouraged to study with outstanding teachers who are active researchers as well.

Faculty with research agendas are usually more up to date, closer to their colleagues across the nation and the globe, experiment with novel methodologies, and create new knowledge or make new discoveries. One of the critical byproducts of this faculty activity is that students have access to the most current information in their disciplines, an outcome that improves student learning dramatically and directly. At UNLV, we develop human capital one individual at a time!
“...the most significant discoveries that improve the lives of individuals and nations have occurred on university campuses...”

Major Research Universities Keep the Best and Brightest Students in Their States

Good students often investigate many institutions before deciding which ones they will attend. They ultimately make their choices based on many factors, but certainly the perceived quality of the faculty and the opportunity to explore many different programs and disciplines are two of those factors.

Moreover, many of the very best students are attracted to a university because of the opportunity to participate in the active intellectual life of the faculty. Outstanding research programs, those that give the most to the community and to students, help attract great students. For example, the William F. Harrah College of Hotel Administration is ranked as the top hotel school in the country in overall quality. This national—even international—reputation is helping UNLV recruit and retain the absolute best and brightest students in this field of study. If UNLV does not have these programs in multiple disciplines, Nevada’s best students will search for them outside the state. When this happens, it is a tragedy for Nevada because these bright people often do not return to live and work here but instead stay in the state in which they studied.

Major Research Universities Are Selective or Highly Selective in Their Admissions Practices

This particular characteristic of the major universities in our country is a challenge for Nevada and particularly for UNLV to meet. Because there are only two universities in our state and because we have a very real and deep commitment to broad access, we have been slow to come to the conclusion that we must be defined, in part, by our ability to provide students with the clearest paths to success, even if that means we must enroll as first-time students only those who are truly prepared for university work and who are most likely to benefit from direct enrollment from high school. The new standards for admission we have set—to take effect in 2006 and 2010—will boost our efforts in this direction, especially in light of the recent large increases in enrollment at UNLV and the options provided for access at Nevada State College.

The UNLV Honors College serves as a wonderful example of a program that offers talented and academically motivated students the best possible educational programs, comparable to those at highly selective, diverse universities. The university must find ways to better serve its brightest and most talented students and to sustain the recruiting of these superior students. Supporting national and international scholarship programs such as the Rhodes, Marshall, and Goldwater Scholarship...
competitions, is one such way. With my encouragement and support, the Honors College has begun a program to help students prepare and apply for these scholarships. Efforts to identify these academically talented students should be shared by all of us and are essential to our goal to create and sustain a student-centered environment.

Furthermore, we are already highly selective in our professional schools—particularly law and dental medicine—and most graduate programs; it may be time to raise the bar for undergraduate students as well, always recognizing the need to ensure that no disparate effects of such a practice will be felt by any one group and also allowing other avenues of entry for nontraditional and transfer students.

Major Research Universities Improve the Quality of Life in Their Communities

Universities with active faculty and research agendas are hotbeds of ideas. Many of the most significant discoveries that improve the lives of individuals and nations have occurred on university campuses, as early examples of the faculty team of Hewlett and Packard at Stanford readily attest. Silicon Valley was born out of this collaboration and had, and continues to have, of course, ramifications that are global and life-transforming in the development of new technologies.

Sometimes these collaborations produce immediate effects in the local community, as our alternative teacher licensing and social work programs or our family-counseling efforts do. UNLV’s legal and dental clinics are serving many of our citizens who would not otherwise be served, and the leaders and faculty of these schools are committed to motivating their students to continue to provide community service when they become practicing professionals. So the value of a major university to the social fabric of a community can also be immeasurable.

Researchers in our colleges of science and engineering are doing important studies of the effects of increased carbon dioxide levels on plant ecology in a desert environment, are creating drought-resistant plants, are conducting research on medical imaging that improves diagnostic techniques, are examining alternative modes of transportation for the city, are developing systems to improve pedestrian safety, and are exploring alternative sources of energy. While all of these things begin with a specific relevance to the needs of Southern Nevada, their ultimate impact has the potential to be global.

And think about health care. Perhaps nothing has a greater impact on our families, communities, and each of us personally than the state of health care. The great health centers in our country are, more often than not, centered in universities. At UNLV, faculty members and students in the Cancer Institute and the Dental School are doing sophisticated research on oral and other common forms of cancer. An increasing number of nurses and physical therapists are graduating from UNLV. Additionally, faculty members in the Division of Health Sciences are, among other things, conducting research on stress reduction and exercise designed to help us more successfully deal with the pressures of everyday life. Also, a forensics laboratory is being developed that will
assist our entire community in dealing with crime and counter-terrorism—an area of national urgency that may produce some of the most significant partnerships with the federal government that have existed in the history of UNLV and in the state of Nevada. And we continue to engage in discussions with Mayor Goodman regarding our potential involvement in the development of an academic medical center in downtown Las Vegas.

In the humanities, the oral history project will collect, disseminate, archive, and publish unique collections, voices, memories, memorabilia, and other artifacts from the community’s history that can only be captured while individual community pioneers are still alive. The International Institute of Modern Letters will continue to bring internationally renowned writers to Las Vegas and to UNLV and students who themselves have the capacity to be some of the great writers of our future. The film department is providing everything from professional film crews to television and film screenwriters, at the same time we honor one of our most well-known alumni, Anthony Zuiker, creator of the popular television shows *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation*, *CSI: Miami*, and maybe even a third iteration of the show. We awarded Anthony, one of our youngest and most grateful recipients, an honorary doctorate in May. Anthony has committed himself to work with us to help build the film studies program and often volunteers his time to speak to classes of students.

And the list goes on and on. With over 800 faculty members and more than 26,000 students, we are a remarkable resource for the rigorous examination of the many problems we face locally and globally. Life for our entire community will be improved because of programs we create, services we perform, artistic and athletic endeavors we share, and research we conduct at UNLV.

**Major Research Universities Have a Direct and Positive Effect on a Community’s Economic Development and Diversification**

More than any other activity, faculty creativity that emerges from research helps move a community to a more diverse and sustainable economy, with a wider range of employers, a stronger tax base, and educated employees for emerging industries. All over the world, but particularly in the great cities of the United States, technological innovation emerges from universities working with business partners. Some of the most important discoveries 

“...their ultimate impact has the potential to be global.”
in recent decades have come from university research, including developments in fiber optics and lasers, examination of DNA, and advancements that have revolutionized medicine and agriculture.

Research parks, begun much as ours has, with a grant of land to a university, have created knowledge clusters that lead to new industries and new jobs as well. UNLV’s research and technology park, a 115-acre parcel located in a booming area of southwest Las Vegas, has the potential to attract new businesses that will collaborate with UNLV and its faculty and staff to create whole new opportunities to diversify Nevada’s economy. We are talking with pharmaceutical entrepreneurs, communications experts, data managers, and a host of possible partners for research park development.

Research brings money into a community that leads to more jobs at the university itself and an increased need for goods and services from the larger community. We have increased external funding from $19 million to nearly $60 million last year, a 300 percent increase since 1996 alone. This funding represents new money for salaries, equipment, and students, both graduate and undergraduate, and we expect external support for UNLV to continue to grow.

**Major Research Universities Are, in Fact, Recognized as the Most Prestigious**

As the quality of education and students improves at UNLV, we contribute positively to the quality of life in the community, and as we help diversify the economy, UNLV’s reputation will continue to grow, as will the reputation of the city of which we are such a central part.

When I came to UNLV in 1995, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching ranked the university in the “Masters Comprehensive” category; 611 institutions are in this category—or 15.4 percent of all institutions in the country. Included in this group are some good places like Adams State College, the University of Southern Colorado, Boise State, and Westminster College of Salt Lake City, as well as many of the California State Universities.

“...Doctoral/Research-Extensive is the most transformational in terms of its effect on the community.”

In 2000, UNLV was elevated to the Doctoral/Research Universities category, which includes 261 institutions, or 6.6 percent of all institutions in the country. This category is divided into two groups: Doctoral/Research-Intensive and Doctoral/Research-Extensive. UNLV is currently ranked with 110 other universities in the Doctoral/Research-Intensive category. Institutions in this group typically offer a wide range of baccalaureate programs, and they are committed to graduate education through the doctorate. There are, again, some fine institutions in this group: Northern Arizona, Northern Colorado, Idaho State, University of Montana and Montana State, and the University of Central Florida, a university to which we
are often compared because we are both based in tourist-driven cities with tremendous population growth and are developing new programs and rapidly improving the entire educational enterprise.

But the category of Doctoral/Research-Extensive is the most transformational in terms of its effect on the community. It is also the most prestigious category and one that we hope to achieve no later than in 2010. Many of the excellent institutions in our Mountain West region are in this category, and you know them well: the University of Arizona and Arizona State; Brigham Young; the Universities of New Mexico, Colorado and Colorado State; the Universities of Idaho, Utah and Utah State; Wyoming; and, of course, the University of Nevada, Reno. On the national level, this category includes virtually all of the Ivy League, Illinois, Wisconsin, Ohio and Ohio State, Indiana, Texas, UCLA, Washington, USC, North Carolina, Michigan, Virginia, and many others you know very well. Indeed, the vast majority of our faculty, as well as many leaders of our business community, are graduates of these first-rate universities.

**Part III | What It Takes To Get There**

So, of course, we aspire to join these great institutions, because providing high-quality academic programs and research activities that directly benefit Nevadans is our paramount concern. We aspire to be a great university because of the rewards that will be reaped by our community and region: We have the capacity to transform our community, our state, and our nation, and we hope both our internal family and external supporters and benefactors will pull together to help us achieve this goal.

Speaking of benefactors, one of the other things that major universities have in common is the creation of substantial sources of private and external funding to support virtually all activities that go beyond core teaching and administrative functions. Those major institutions that are also public are often characterized by the shrinking portion of their budgets that are supported by state tax-generated dollars. As you can see for UNLV, from 1993 to 2003, the state’s portion of our budget declined significantly from 55 percent to 36 percent. The state percentage has increased for fiscal year ’04 because of the increased funding levels and roll-in of the estate tax into the general fund, and we are grateful to Governor Guinn and our state legislators for this enhanced funding. It is important to note, however, that even at the ’04 levels, the percentage of state funding is still well below the 55 percent we received in 1995, the first year of my presidency.

When I spoke to you last year and created the fantasy of what we could do with a billion dollars, I described a feasibility study process that would, we hoped, lead to the creation of a capital campaign, raising our sights to levels unprecedented for higher education in Nevada. We are still in that process and expect to enter a campaign at some point in the not-so-distant future. We are examining the economic conditions we find ourselves in, the interest and commitment of major donors and donor prospects, and are beginning to identify critical leadership for this effort to succeed. But this is a slow and deliberate process that requires unparalleled enthusiasm and effort from the entire leadership group of the university and community and cannot be entered into lightly or with unrealistic expectations. We
are heartened by many of these conversations and excited by the prospects for success. In fact, before we end this day of aspirations, I want to share some of the most recent developments on the private fund-raising front.

In my address to you three years ago, one of the highlights of my life as a university president (now 15 years’ worth) was the introduction of two people to the campus family: Wole Soyinka, Nevada’s first Nobel Laureate, and Glenn Schaeffer, the community entrepreneur and benefactor who brought the International Institute of Modern Letters to UNLV and endowed a $2 million chair in creative writing to which we recruited Wole. In the humanities, gifts like this are rare; creations of major institutes of modern letters even more rare. So today, it gives me equally great pleasure to announce that Glenn has increased his commitment to the institute and has pledged additional funding to UNLV for its development over the next several years. Glenn, would you stand once more as the major benefactor to the creative arts in UNLV’s history?

In a parallel development, you might remember that we spent much of last year in very difficult negotiations regarding state funding, both for university operations and capital construction. We owe Chancellor Jane Nichols a debt of gratitude for her tireless work with the governor and Legislature in helping us achieve a good budget from our largest benefactor, the state of Nevada. I would also like to acknowledge the community members who appeared before the Nevada Legislature on UNLV’s behalf, including Don Snyder of Boyd Gaming Corporation, Jim Rogers of Sunbelt Communications, Mike Maffie of Southwest Gas Corporation, and Ken Ladd and Somer Hollingsworth of the Nevada Development Authority.

Within the approved capital budget is $35 million toward the building of one of the most important capital projects in Nevada’s history, the $75 million Science, Engineering and Technology Building. Like the other advances I mentioned earlier in terms of UNLV’s growing research status, this building will allow faculty to develop cutting-edge, multidisciplinary research in four of the research cluster areas we have identified in our macrothemes, including entertainment technologies, one of the most broad-based and interesting areas of multidisciplinary expertise I have ever been part of nurturing and supporting.

As a condition of the state’s commitment to fund the major portion of this facility, they required us to contribute $25 million, or one-third of the cost of the building. Such a hefty local contribution requires all kinds of creative thinking about finances on the part of many of the senior staff of the university as well as commitments of private dollars from individual and corporate donors throughout our state.
I am deeply, deeply grateful for the wonderful commitments of the following people and organizations to the Science, Engineering and Technology Building. Each will provide an opportunity for naming a proportionate area of the building in honor of the benefactors, individuals, or corporations who made these critical contributions.

“... will allow faculty to develop cutting-edge, multidisciplinary research in four of the research cluster areas we have identified...”

It gives me tremendous pleasure to introduce the following individuals and corporate representatives, all of whom have signaled, in the clearest way possible, that they understand the importance of our research activities and of this building for Nevada, and that they wish to be our partners in this remarkable enterprise.

First, one of the leading engineering firms in Southern Nevada, PBS&J Engineering, who unfortunately could not have a representative here today, has committed $100,000 to the project, and has committed another $50,000 for the engineering program itself.

A true engineering and technology leader in the country, Bechtel National, represented today by Bechtel Nevada President Fred Tarantino and the company’s director of community relations, LeeAnn Umodomi, has committed $500,000 toward this project. This gift is Bechtel’s largest corporate gift ever in Nevada. I want to add my special thanks to Fred and to LeeAnn, who were extremely supportive of UNLV in our conversations about this gift with the company. We deeply appreciate your help.

Fred and Harriet Cox, who are traveling and could not join us today, have committed $1 million to this project. Fred and Harriet have a lifetime of very successful experience in engineering and business and have also started an endowment in engineering to fund awards for senior design projects. Fred is a member of the UNLV Foundation Board, and together they are helping the community understand the vital importance of engineering and science research for the future of Southern Nevada.

And finally, it gives me great pleasure to introduce the organization that has provided the largest contribution toward the Science, Engineering and Technology Building. When I met with the president of this company over the summer to discuss the project, he took me by complete surprise by making this remarkable financial commitment.
I am deeply honored to announce that Sierra Health Services, partnering with its subsidiary company, Health Plan of Nevada, has contributed $1,350,000—the largest single gift for this project. Company president Dr. Anthony Marlon is here today to represent the company, along with many of his senior executives. Although Sierra Health Services and its people have been wonderfully generous to organizations in Southern Nevada, this commitment is the single largest gift Sierra Health Services has ever made.

“...I am thankful every day for the opportunity I have been given to lead this university, and I am profoundly grateful to all of you for your dedication to this wonderful institution.”

There are no better days in the life of a university than those like today. We are immensely grateful to each of these people and to their companies for this support and for the community leadership that it represents. Without your help, this building would not be possible. Please join me in acknowledging these individuals and corporate representatives for their wonderful generosity.

I am thankful every day for the opportunity I have been given to lead this university, and I am profoundly grateful to all of you for your dedication to this wonderful institution.

In closing, I want to remind all of you that we are fortunate to be involved with an extremely important enterprise. Our efforts have huge implications for the welfare of people—in all walks of life—here in this community and elsewhere. We are able to fill our days with challenging, important, and fulfilling work—work that really makes a difference to those around us. Unfortunately, many people cannot say this about their lives and work. I know there are days, perhaps many days, when we may lose sight of this.

So today, I want simply to affirm your personal importance, each and every one of you, to what we do at UNLV and to congratulate you on the terrific job that you do in support of our students and our community—including the classified and support staff who toil in the groves of academe, often unrecognized.

Thank you again for your participation in this event today.