INTRODUCTIONS
Good morning! Thank you, Provost Edmond, for your introductions, and for your outstanding service already to the University of Montana. You are bringing fresh ideas and a “get it done” attitude to the University and I am delighted to work with you. What an excellent group of new faculty members that you just introduced! Also, welcome to UM!

We have several other people to introduce this morning, but before doing so, I want to give my thanks to all those collectively who came before and who have ended their active roles at UM. So many dedicated individuals have held this institution in their hearts and have given their professional lives to making UM better.

I’d like to thank my wife, Mary, for being here today, and for being such an integral part of this work together.

I am pleased to say that we are joined by Regent Fran Albrecht this morning. Thank you, Regent Albrecht, for all that you and the Regents do to support higher education in Montana.

Now, I would like introduce a number of folks who are either new to campus or new to their position. They are all eager to move UM into the future. Please stand when I call your name and remain standing until I have called all the names. Please hold your applause until the end.

- Beverly C. Edmond, Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
- Thomas Crady, Vice President for Enrollment Management & Student Affairs
- Thomas H. DeLuca, Dean, College of Forestry and Conservation (not here today; will be starting January 1)
- Christopher Shook, Dean of School of Business Administration
- Ray Ekness, Director, Broadcast Media Center
- L. Scott Mills, Associate Vice President of Research for Global Change and Sustainability
- Andrew Reinert, Department of Defense Grant Funding Coordinator
- Mario Schulzke, Associate Vice President of Integrated Communications and Chief Marketing Officer
- Shannon Schweyen, Women's Head Basketball Coach
- Paula Short, Director of Communications, Office of the President
- Hillary Stowell, Director of Academic Fiscal Affairs, Office of the Provost

Please welcome them to the UM family!

And speaking of family, we’ll be holding a very special event a week from today – WelcomeFEAST. It will begin at 11:30 a.m. on Friday, September 2nd on the Oval. This year, instead of doing separate events for employees and students, we decided to do one large event with everyone to emphasize that
we are one family – the Griz family. We’ll also be making a human M on the Oval and taking a picture shortly after noon, using a drone. Wear maroon and don’t miss this historic event!

“LET’S GO THERE”
I want you to watch now a new message about the University of Montana.

The University of Montana – Let’s Go There!

Of course this phrase has multiple meanings.

It means that as a University, let’s go to where the frontiers of knowledge are – whether that is in the dance studio, the Greenland ice sheet, or the farthest reaches of the universe. It means let’s go to where the challenging questions are examined – in our classrooms, in our excellent academic programs, and in our foundation as Montana’s liberal arts and sciences, research university. It means let’s go after the amazing opportunities in front of us – our civic engagement program, our proud diversity of thought and experience, and our competitiveness in academics and athletics.

It also quite literally means “let’s go there” – as in enrolling in the University of Montana. Let’s work together to ensure as many students as possible come here to get an education that is outcome-focused – that outcome being a fulfilling life of impact, leadership, and contribution.

In the end, “let’s go there” means let’s go forward, let’s continue to build one of the great universities of our country.

I will spend the first part of today’s talk looking at a number of areas in which UM is moving forward, thriving, and leading. I will then talk about two areas of intense focus for this year: enrollment management and strategic directions.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS
Our students are definitely on a trajectory of success. Everywhere I go, I love to tell stories about our amazing students.

This summer, UM graduate student Joanna Kreitinger of Manhattan, MT, was one of only 48 people selected across the country for a prestigious Immunology Fellowship, the first Montanan to be chosen for this award. She earned the award through her work in Professor David Shepherd’s lab studying environmental toxins.

Six of our recent graduates have been selected as Fulbright finalists, continuing UM’s exemplary record of producing competitive students and faculty for this prestigious recognition. These scholars will teach and study in Germany, Taiwan, Poland, Nepal, and Kenya.

Our students are examining some of the most pressing issues of our times. 15 Journalism students spent several weeks in Germany this summer documenting the Syrian refugee crisis.
Their motto, “learning by doing” is the perfect descriptor of the experiential learning we aspire to create for our students in every program here at UM.

A team of three music students, one undergraduate student, one graduate student, and one soon to be student took third place in the national String Chamber music competition.

Our student-athletes are setting new records in the classroom as well as in competition, last spring achieving the highest grade point average ever, while representing the Big Sky Conference as the strongest athletics program overall.

Just last week, the Cabinet was invited to attend part of the ASUM retreat, as our student governance body made their plans for the year. I came away even more impressed by the sophistication of our student government and by the dedication they have to UM. This year’s leadership team – Sam Forstag, Elizabeth Engebretson, and Chase Greenfield – is as strong as I have seen, and that is saying something as we have had exceptional leadership over all the years I’ve been at UM!

And our alumni excel as well, due in no small measure to the education they received while at UM.

Creative writing graduate and now author, William Finnegan, received the Pulitzer Prize for his book, Barbarian Days: A Surfing Life.

DHC graduate and BFA recipient, Lilly Gladstone, appeared in the film Certain Women, which was featured at the Sundance Film Festival, and earned her rave reviews.

Our students perform so strongly because of their own initiative and ability, guided by our stellar faculty and staff.

A new report from a group called Academic Analytics ranked UM’s Wildlife Biology Program as the top program in the U.S. and Canada based on faculty productivity, publications and citations, research grants, and other awards. Those same faculty members are outstanding teachers, and what an opportunity for our students to be taught by the best in the nation! Wildlife Biology is a joint effort between CHS and CFC.

Our Business School is ranked 18th in the nation on the CPA exam pass rates; the only school in the northwest in the top twenty. This is on top of an overall ranking of 131 in the country from US News and World Report.

Biology Professor Doug Emlen has many accolades to his credit. I’d like to congratulate him on his more recent distinction – his election to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. He is the first Montanan ever to receive this honor.

English Professor Amy Ratto-Parks took first place in the Phi Beta Kappa poetry contest.
Media Arts faculty member Greg Twigg has been nominated for an Emmy in Graphic Design and Art Direction for a film he worked on with several former students. They are going to NYC next month for the ceremony.

Our Athletic Training program was among the first to be created in the nation, and they continue to lead as one of our fastest growing graduate programs. They recently underwent an accreditation renewal, and received a perfect score!

You may recall that our accrediting agency, the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, selected UM as one of four institutions to participate in a special project on defining and assessing student learning outcomes. We considered it to be quite an honor to be a part of the program. More recently, NWCCU asked our Associate Provost, Nathan Lindsay, to actually lead the entire project because of his exceptional work.

Last year, I launched the Women’s Leadership Initiative, or WLI, to focus on building a culture at UM that is supportive of women’s advancement, retention, and recruitment. I am pleased to report that the inaugural year was a resounding success, with significant public education and outreach both on campus as well as in the wider Missoula community. One tangible outcome was the creation of NEW Leadership Montana. The Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University has selected UM as the sole host of a statewide program to educate and empower the next generation of women leaders. The selection of UM allows the state of Montana to join just 20 other such programs across the country. Directed by Sara Rinfret of political science, Deena Mansour of the Mansfield Center, and Representatives Kim Dudik and Geraldine Custer, 20 female students from across the state will be selected in a competitive process to convene on our campus in June 2017 to develop the skills and confidence to effectively participate in politics and public policy.

Our faculty and staff accomplishment and initiative has never been higher. I want to introduce to you this year’s leadership of the Faculty and Staff Senates: Professor John DeBoer and Professor Mary-Ann Bowman and Jennifer Zellmer-Cuaresma and Maria Mangold. Please stand.

The three shared governance Presidents became full members of the Cabinet in the spring and it has definitely enriched the conversation.

Research and creative scholarship have never been more vibrant at UM.

A key performance indicator is the amount of external funding received to support the work of the university through research, education innovation, and outreach. I am pleased to report to you today, that this past year, the University set a new record for external research funding. We received a record $87 million dollars of awards. Actual research expenditures were at an all-time record of $78 million. Faculty and Staff submitted 684 proposals, 55 more than the previous year.

Through research, we are supporting innovation and entrepreneurship with several centers for excellence in innovation.
Our business incubator MonTEC provides mentorship, networking, funding, and other resources to assist entrepreneurs in bringing their vision to the marketplace. Our campus-based entrepreneurship program, The Blackstone LaunchPad, supports and mentors UM students, employees, and alumni with their business startup questions. As we speak, Missoula is hosting “The Last Best Conference” highlighting entrepreneurship, much of which is generated by UM.

For the third year in a row, we’ve set a fundraising record thanks to the generosity of the many supporters of our university.

This year, the UM Foundation has again exceeded $50 million in philanthropy with a total of $53.7 million raised. Here are some of the remarkable gifts from the past year.

Mark and Cheryl Burnham, and Eric and Blair Sprunk, made a $2 million gift for the first-ever endowed deanship at UM. That endowment helped us recruit our exceptional new Dean, Chris Shook.

Dennis Eck has made a series of donations that have helped marry our strong liberal arts disciplines with state-of-the-art technology through the construction of a new vertical technology corridor in the Liberal Arts building. I recently had the chance to tour the new facilities, and I know they will provide a tremendous addition to the learning environment for essentially all of our undergraduates, who take the majority of their general education courses in the Liberal Arts building.

David and Suzanne Peterson made a transformative gift that established the new endowed professorship in the area of Gifted Education, and allowed us to hire a remarkably qualified new faculty member, Tracy Missett.

Ian and Nancy Davidson’s most recent gift has resulted in the renovation of the lower level of the Davidson Honors College, bringing together many aspects of student engagement into one area.

I am grateful for the hard work of Shane Giese and his team at the UM Foundation, for the zest with which our Deans have pursued philanthropic contributions, and for the hard work of our volunteers in both the Foundation and the Alumni Association.

Our campus atmosphere and learning environment, through the combination of the vibrancy of on-campus programming, our top-ranked college town of Missoula, and our stunning surroundings, make this among the most stimulating academic settings in America.

Through our new Freshman Wilderness Experience, nearly 100 incoming students just returned from trips into the Bob Marshall, down the Missouri River, or one of several other outdoor options unparalleled at other schools.
Tonight, Missoula will host the River City Roots Festival, an annual musical tribute that signals the start of the new school year.

Throughout the year, the Festival of the Book, the Missoula Symphony, the Buddy DeFranco Jazz Festival, and the numerous other theatre, art, and music programs provide everyday opportunities that make our community a cultural hub.

Grizzly Athletics is an integral part of who we are at UM.

We’re just a week away from the first football game of the season in Washington-Grizzly stadium, where we attract the largest crowd in the nation for Division 1 FCS football. Last night, Caras Park was full of fans with the Great Griz Encounter.

Soccer is off to a strong start with a big win over Purdue. They are playing Wyoming today.

We have come to the end of the Robin Selvig era of Lady Griz basketball after 38 years and a remarkable 865 wins! You met Shannon Schweyen earlier, and we are excited that she will take over our program.

In only its second year, the softball team went to the Big Sky tournament, earning Coach Jamie Pinkerton recognition as Big Sky Coach of the Year.

Men’s basketball is on a trajectory to greatness as Coach Travis DeCuire has lined up an all-Division 1 schedule this year including the powerhouse programs, Pepperdine, Oregon, and Wyoming.

The Washington Champions Center is under active construction, and the turf on the field is less than three weeks old. The academic center opened last fall.

We continue to provide facilities and infrastructure commensurate with the quality of education.

In the past year, IT services have continue to expanded wireless across campus. Our library is implementing a new library management system with the other institutions across the state.

The new Missoula College building is nearing completion, and it is magnificent! This spring we will begin moving in and the building will be in full swing next fall. Brand new classrooms, laboratories, and a state-of-the-art culinary facility complete with riverside café, will provide students and faculty with the finest two-year education building in the state.

In response to student feedback, the UC has invested student dollars to rejuvenate the UC Commons dining room with new furniture. This effort directly aligns with UM’s efforts to create a dynamic learning environment in all areas of campus.

The Branch Center, named after Vice President Teresa Branch, will open as a community space for student diversity and inclusion this fall in a newly renovated portion of the UC.
We have accomplished a great deal together this year. Now, let’s turn to the special work we have ahead of us.

**ENROLLMENT**

No doubt about it, enrollment is both our biggest challenge and our biggest opportunity. Put simply, we need more students – resident, non-resident, international, undergraduate and graduate – to benefit from a UM education. I won’t repeat the various reasons for our enrollment situation here as I’ve done that in previous talks. Instead, I want to focus on four areas in which we are moving forward.

First, we hired Tom Crady as our Vice President for Enrollment Management and Student Affairs.

This is not a new administrative position, but a reconfigured one with the emphasis primarily on enrollment management. Tom was selected because of his record of performance in a highly competitive recruiting environment, his intimate knowledge of and reliance upon data, and his laser-beam focus on providing prospective students what they need to make a decision.

Tom and his team are working to improve the basic operations of enrollment management at UM. He is moving the office to a paperless system so that responses to inquiries can happen immediately and accurately. He is moving communication with prospective students to start much earlier, beginning in their sophomore year. He is doubling the size of our prospect database by focusing on new non-resident markets. He has fully implemented the use of Hobsons, an enrollment management database.

I visited with the Admissions staff a few weeks ago and I know they are excited, full of energy, and ready to get the job done. I ask you all to give them your full support.

Second, under the leadership of Mario Schulzke, we are investing in more extensive and effective marketing and communications.

We are increasing our television presence with advertisements such as the one you saw just a few minutes ago.

We are continuing to grow our social media presence.

The University Relations team is focused on producing more stories about student accomplishment, faculty scholarship, and the improvement to our campus environment.

Our IT and Marketing departments have produced, in record time, the new UM App. Everyone should join the 2500 others who have already downloaded it to their phone. It will be an increasingly important tool for current students, prospective students, employees, and friends.

Third, we are committed to improving our customer service.
I will be honest with you, we have considerable work to do in this area. Whether you like to think of our students as customers or not, the fact is that we are in a highly competitive market where students have choices. They are making decisions based just as much on how welcome they feel, and how their questions are addressed, as they are on curriculum and location.

Customer service is everyone’s job. To help keep this on our minds continuously, we will start a monthly Customer Service Award, given to a program, office, or individual who models the new standard of customer service at UM. Please begin thinking about who you’d like to nominate.

VP Mike Reid recently forwarded me an email that reflects the new tone we’re working to set. From a parent of an incoming student, the email reads, “Thank you! We love your school. Best customer service ever!” The email was sent to Ruth Williams, Collections Specialist in Business Services. Thanks, Ruth, for setting the new standard.

Fourth, we are constantly evaluating the relevance and attractiveness of our curriculum.

Let me be quick to point out that this does not mean we are abandoning the foundational disciplines that have been at our core all along – the liberal arts and sciences. Indeed, the most precious outcome of a college education is the ability to think critically, to formulate and solve problems, to communicate, and to develop a deep understanding of the human condition.

The campus signaled loudly last year that the liberal arts and sciences must remain in our hearts and souls as educators and I couldn’t agree more.

But, we must also remember that our mission is a broad one, and we must prepare people for the specific professions and opportunities upon which our society thrives.

A year ago, the Academic Alignment and Innovation Program task force, under the leadership of Professor Andrew Ware, made a set of important recommendations for strengthening our programmatic offerings in certain critical areas. Based on those and other recommendations, I announced in November several growth areas for us, including the health professions, business and entrepreneurship, data and information, and specific workforce needs.

Our faculty and staff are responding to critical curricular needs through the design and implementation of new academic programs.

The brand new Masters of Science in Business Analytics in SOBA will launch this fall. The new program focuses on decision-making in the business world by collecting, processing and analyzing huge data sets.

Last year, faculty from across campus launched a new neuroscience major at the undergraduate level and the program attracted more than 30 majors.

Computer Science is on the move with a new grant that is aimed at the attraction and retention of students.
Another cross-campus effort, the University of Montana Health and Medicine program, or UMHM, is underway to continue strengthening this important area. Perhaps the most in-demand set of programs in today’s world, the health professions provide opportunity for growth for UM. A glance at the UMHM website shows that we have over 50 academic programs under the UMHM umbrella, with plans to add several more.

We are responding to the shortage of Ph.D. trained graduates in speech-language pathology with the addition of that degree program.

A program of extremely high impact to the state of Montana is the Family Medicine Residency Program. We just graduated the first class of ten residents, six of whom will be staying in the state to practice family medicine.

Many other programs are in the queue for expansion or initiation. I appreciate the nimbleness of the faculty process in moving these curricular proposals through the system.

Along with content areas, we must also think about delivery mechanisms that facilitate our excellent programming reaching more students. As I see it, two major opportunities exist.

First, our online portfolio is underdeveloped. Approximately 8% of our course offerings are online; that number should be more like 20% in today’s world. We have very few programs that are fully online. I have asked Dean Roger Maclean to make a priority of assisting faculty in moving more courses and programs online, and I am asking the faculty to respond to the challenge of moving our online offerings to that 20% level. I acknowledge that it will be hard work, but so has every other curricular innovation we have had in higher education over the decades.

Second is the opportunity to expand into evening, weekend, and short-form offerings. We can add more flexibility in scheduling to be attractive to working professionals. Missoula College and the new Gilkey Center offer much potential in this area. The School of Law has already offered special spring break format courses with state-wide impact.

I have said this many times before, and I will say it again now: enrollment is everyone’s job. Whether it is involvement in the recruiting process; working toward retention, persistence, and graduation; improving customer service; or adjusting the curriculum and experience we offer, we all have a part to play. I am pleased to see campus response to this challenge, and I thank you all for your hard work!

**STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS**

My last topic this morning is our Strategic Plan.

We have operated under the strategic plan *UM2020: Building a University for the Global Century* since 2011. This plan has guided decision-making on multiple fronts during the intervening years. We should be proud of the accomplishments we have made under that plan. Accomplishments such as the
initiation and implementation of the Global Leadership Initiative – which has a waiting list among our incoming freshman, driving research productivity to record levels, pushing fundraising to new heights, and adding millions of dollars in facilities and IT infrastructure.

After five years, the time has come renew our strategic plan. The landscape has changed and many new people are part of our university, bringing with them new strengths and experiences. As such, our goals and strategies must be revised.

After asking for expression of interest, I invited a group of highly interested, energetic, and forward-thinking people to join the Strategic Planning Coordinating Council, or SPCC. Their charge is to build a new strategic plan around these parameters:

1. A clear articulation of our mission, vision, and values;
2. A set of major strategic issues for the next five years;
3. Specific goals, strategies, and metrics of progress; and
4. A communications and action plan to ensure that the plan remains front and center in our decision-making.

Their task is huge. Under the leadership of Dean Brock Tessman, the group has been working hard all summer. With the start of the fall semester, they will launch a series of forums and input avenues to give everyone the opportunity to contribute to the new plan. At the end of the input stage, the SPCC will write a comprehensive strategic plan that sets our path for the upcoming years. Please participate by lending your experience and creativity to the planning process.

In addition to the data the group gathers, they will also incorporate the thinking that has come from a number of other recent exercises.

For example, our campus has been engaged in iLab, a special project of the American Council on Education that has been a detailed reflective look at our internationalization work, an area in which we take tremendous pride. The iLab has produced a set of important strategies and recommendations.

Likewise, last year we charged ourselves with an Administrative Review to parallel our AAIP work. Led by CIO Matt Riley, the Administrative Review has made a number of hard-hitting observations and recommendations.

CONCLUSION
Today’s world of higher education is characterized by conditions unlike those of the past. The Chronicle of Higher Education recently put out a special publication called: “2026: The Decade Ahead; The Seismic Shifts Transforming the Future of Higher Education.” It addresses three key areas: the students of the future, the changing face of the faculty, and the future of learning. I won’t go into detail about any of these now, but suffice to say that we have both challenges and opportunities ahead in a dynamic world. The next five years will be exciting and they will require hard work and creative thinking on our part.
I believe that the University of Montana can be among the most effective institutions in that exciting world. From my point-of-view, our work should be guided by this statement:

Today’s world presents exciting and complex opportunities and challenges like never before. Our job is to educate students so that they thrive in that complex environment and to contribute knowledge applicable to those opportunities. Our vision is to prepare the Leaders, Citizens, and Professionals who will contribute to a vibrant and prosperous democracy.

We achieve that vision

- Through a broad range of educational programming essential to today’s needs and opportunities, firmly grounded in critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills, taught by a world-class faculty of teacher-scholars.
- Through groundbreaking research and scholarship focused on questions and opportunities of high impact, that enriches the education of our students, and that generates pride and excitement among our constituents.
- By building a distinctive and vibrant student-focused learning environment that capitalizes on our expansive campus life, our unique host community, and our stunning natural environment.

Yesterday, I had the opportunity to talk with many new students and their parents during orientation, both on the Oval and in the Theatre. Both groups exude energy and eagerness for the future. Let’s let our own energy and eagerness be equal to theirs!

Thank you, and have a great year!