Thank you, Nat…..and hello UMUC alumni, faculty, staff, and friends. I am thrilled to see so many of you here this evening to celebrate both the Alumni Association's 20th anniversary…and your alma mater's six plus decades of academic excellence.

As the nation’s largest public university...and a truly global academic enterprise...UMUC is now more than 90,000 students strong and growing...with enrollment and retention rates at their highest levels in five years.

Our alumni ranks are also swelling. This year, we cheered as more than students graduated in seven commencement ceremonies around the world...including our first ever on the ground in Iraq.

Moreover, I am happy to report that UMUC remains one of the most diverse institutions anywhere in the world...having become the university of choice among traditionally underserved students. Last year alone, more than a third of our students were the first in their families to attend college...while over half were women...and nearly half were members of minority groups.

And UMUC continues to build a longer and stronger academic pipeline for the rapidly growing number of community college graduates...who want to move seamlessly on to a four-year degree...without losing credits or ever leaving home. In fact, UMUC's Community College Alliance Program has grown to include all 16 of Maryland’s community colleges, as well as 24 from out of state...including Northern Virginia Community College...one of our newest Alliance members.

All of these achievements are closely aligned with UMUC's founding mission and ongoing reputation as an international leader in adult education...at a time when adult learners are the fastest growing segment among all college-ready students in the United States. In fact, some 85% of all students now entering the higher education market are what we once considered “non-traditional.”
Like so many of you, these busy, working adults come back to college for any number of reasons. To earn a degree or update a credential...to get ahead in the job or change careers altogether...to learn something new or pursue an ongoing interest. And, for some, it is a critical step in breaking the cycle of poverty.

So they are looking for leading edge academic programs...world class services...flexible learning options...state-of-the art technologies...and affordable tuition. All of which we work around the clock to provide here at UMUC.

In fact, this university has consistently proven both its willingness and its ability to meet the unique needs of adult students...whether here in Maryland, across the country, or around the world...beginning with next generation skills they must have to effectively compete in today's highly volatile job market.

For example, given the critical demand for 30,000 qualified cyber professionals in the Washington Metropolitan area alone, UMUC is gearing up to become the nation's center of gravity for cybersecurity education and training.

So beginning this fall, we will offer a bachelor of science degree Cybersecurity...as well as two master of science programs...one in Cybersecurity and one in Cybersecurity Policy. And only a few weeks into enrollment, the sections are filling fast...thanks in large part to our Marketing and Communications Team and its extremely well-executed marketing campaign.

This national, multi-media campaign includes a series of targeted ads across a broad spectrum of Internet, TV, radio, and print media. And so that you may fully appreciate the quality of this effort, I have brought two of the television spots with me today. Could we please run them now?

Because so many of our prospective students are looking for a doctoral program that is explicitly different from the traditional PhD track...UMUC now offers two...the Doctor of Management and the Doctor of Management in Community College and Policy Administration.

What's more, these degrees are so popular that our DM Program has grown by more than 300% in the last three years...now enrolling over 400 exceptionally talented doctoral students. Likewise, having been launched less than a year ago...UMUC's DM in Community College and Policy Administration now has three cohorts up and running.

I am also pleased to report that UMUC continues to expand its global presence...having forged academic exchange programs with more than a dozen
universities and technical schools around the world...including two new programs in Bulgaria and Turkey.

Beginning next spring, we will partner with the Higher School of Insurance and Finance (VUZF) in Bulgaria to offer both a B.S. in Finance and an A.A. in Business and Management. The following fall, we will provide a B.S. in Business Administration and an A.A. in Business and Management, in conjunction with the Istanbul Aydin University in Turkey.

 Needless to say, as UMUC alumni, you have a great deal to be proud of. But then, you have had a big hand in making this university what it is today. And we can certainly use your help in building an even stronger future.

You might begin by contributing to one of our 236 scholarship funds...while also working with your employer to secure additional corporate and foundation dollars.

In addition, we can use your alumni power to strengthen our recruitment and retention efforts...with follow-up calls and emails to prospective students...or an encouraging word to those who are having a hard time balancing the demands of school with the responsibilities of life.

Likewise, you can spread the UMUC message among your family, friends, and co-workers who are in the market for a valuable degree. And, of course, you can come back to earn another one of your own.

I would also ask that you join UMUC's faculty and staff in sending a special message to our military students on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan...by signing one of the banners that are hanging here tonight. These banners will be sent to UMUC's downrange sites there...as a way to thank those extraordinary men and women in uniform...who sacrifice so much for our freedom here at home.

Let me end tonight by saying how grateful I am for the many amazing contributions you have made over the years. Indeed, with your leadership...your accomplishments...and your generosity, UMUC will continue to remain on the leading edge of adult higher education...both now and in the years to come.

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