Greetings, honored trustees.

Today my peers and colleagues want me to thank you very much for the contributions of your valuable time and efforts to the care of our institution. Along with our thanks, the single most important message that my colleagues would like me to deliver is that a Purdue education continues to be highly sought after, well-rounded, and forward thinking.

You have read that some colleges and universities across the country are stumbling and have had to make drastic changes, such as creating a large number of online degrees or vastly expanding enrollment. You have read that there are those who feel that universities have lost their way and are failing to produce good citizens. We would like to tell you that Purdue is not stumbling. Purdue is not failing its students. Purdue has not gone astray. Purdue’s graduates succeed economically and they find satisfaction in the workplace and in life. Purdue is not academically adrift.

However, if you genuinely feel that certain parts of the university’s basic education need a change in direction, we would beseech you to learn as much as you can about what we are doing now but then work very closely with the faculty on any reforms that you might envision.

You have told us that you were concerned about the future of higher education in America. It is not surprising that as trustees of a major university, you are following closely the discussion. But we would urge you to not get distracted by the problems of universities and institutions that are very different from ours, and instead to focus your attention most closely on the case of Purdue.

You have asked the faculty to find a reliable way to measure student growth. For various reasons, we are not yet as far along as you and we would like. Now, for better or for worse, the matter has garnered public attention and we must get this right. President Daniels has committed the resources and the autonomy needed, and we are currently engaged in a good-faith effort to move forward as quickly as possible. However, we would like to ask you as clearly as we know how to follow the recommendations that the committee might bring back. To bring honor on Purdue, this student growth initiative must be carried out with the collaboration of the faculty.

We have also talked this year about the new Core Curriculum. It brings us into alignment with the mandates from the Indiana Commission for Higher Education and should make it much easier for students to change majors and transfer into Purdue without wasting time and money.
The Core is the result of a lot of thoughtful work by faculty and other stakeholders across campus. It is much more than a list of classes; it is a deep reflection by representatives from all colleges on what it means to be educated. As the new Core rolls out, we will be able to judge its success and fine-tune it. We Purdue faculty feel very keenly our responsibilities to be the architects and guardians of academics at our fine institution. The buck stops with us.

We would like to encourage you to work hand-in-glove with the faculty on any academic initiatives, and we would caution you against over-extending yourselves. Public conversations on these matters directly affect morale.

The laws of the state of Indiana give you almost unfettered power, so what you say in public is scrutinized. People are looking for clues as to your intentions to act, now and in the future. When you and the President speak, people listen, and your words directly impact our ability to recruit and retain the best and brightest faculty from around the world.

All together, we faculty have literally thousands of years of experience in designing and imparting higher education, and we believe we have earned at least a measure of your trust.

We are living up to our solemn duty to educate students for a lifetime. Forty-eight percent of our students graduate with no debt at all, and of those who do borrow, the average amount for in-state students is $26,000 – about the cost of a new car. We can guarantee you that a Purdue education does not depreciate the minute you drive it off the lot.

Thank you so much for your dedication and your generosity to Purdue. The faculty really appreciates all you do, and we look forward to a continued positive and productive collaboration.