Good morning. I am appreciative of all members of the team who assisted in planning for the Fourth Annual District-wide Conference Day.

Our last District-wide Conference Day was an outstanding event, and I am confident that we will achieve a new level of excellence this year.

This is a very special day for the WCCCD family as we all come together to celebrate our achievements and plan for the future. I want to begin by thanking each of you for the contributions you have made to the success of our students as well as our businesses and communities that we serve. Whether you are a member of the Board of Trustees, a faculty member, a member of an office staff, a technician, a custodian or a maintenance person, or an administrator, your work is very important to our success.

As I look back on my decade of service as Chancellor, I am reminded that for 35 years Wayne County Community College District has enriched the lives of thousands of students. I don’t think that a day passes when I’m approached . . .

As we move forward with our mission to serve those who ask for our help, it is important to remember our past. I know that the District’s achievements are due to the great effort of people who helped build this institution through determination and courage.

It was Sir Isaac Newton who once said, “If we have seen farther than others, it is because we were standing on the shoulders of giants.” And we have been able to achieve so much and transform many lives because of the strength of giants like Dr. Reggie Wilson, our guest speaker and former president of the College. Someone once said that a leader is a dealer in hope. Hope is an emotional magnet – it keeps people going even in the midst of a huge challenge. A leader’s hopeful outlook enables people to see beyond the moment to tomorrow’s answers. Hope binds people together. Dr. Wilson that is your legacy.

Pathways to the Future (these are our transformational buzz words). It defines our unrelenting transformational movement – one that has allowed us to put in place a new wave of practices that trigger needed changes.

Our transformation has been about replacing old memories with new memories and new realities. Transformation of the magnitude we are experiencing brings with it tremendous opportunities. When the ground moves beneath us, the resulting fissures open up more territory in which to maneuver – more space to imagine possibilities and find ways to make our dreams happen. There is nothing like a dream to create the future.

We could think of creating new memories as painting a new picture of our College District in the minds of those we serve. We want the picture to be painted with brilliant colors that never fade – colors of excellence, of responsiveness, of respect and caring concern for every student that we serve. We are painting that new picture every time we interact with students, with citizens in the community, and at state and national meetings.
We are creating new memories every day as we improve our programs and services. I wish to thank each and every one of you for what you do each day to help create new memories and new realities for our great educational enterprise.

While it is important to recognize our achievements, we must also make sure that we recognize and remind ourselves of our collective goal.

Our goal is to continue to enhance valuable educational services and to make significant contributions to the quality of life and economic well being for students, employers, and our community.

We have made every effort to make stewardship the hallmark of this administration. Stewardship involves not only financial health, but also academic performance. We can look with pride on the positive results that have been brought to fruition by our dedicated faculty. (Please let us stand and acknowledge the dedicated work of our faculty.)

When I began my tenure, I shared with the Board of Trustees and the District's community that we would and should embrace the past, engage the present and envision our future – and that together we would create new memories and new realities.

As we celebrate the past accomplishments, we now stand poised to engage the future. While there is much to celebrate, the District’s most important initiative is commitment to the next generation. Is there anything more noble than that of teaching a rising generation? I think not.

The District will continue to anchor itself to the rich traditions of academic excellence and to provide accessible and affordable education to students from all walks of life. Our constant quest will always be to improve and transform lives.

As we look to the future and to the task of creating the best community college, I want to share with you these key points from my personal dreams and aspirations for the District in terms of things I feel that we must do as we embrace the future:

We must reach and teach the new digital learner, and to that end, we will implement on-line registration this spring with zeal and excitement.

Gone are the days when pioneering faculty had to sell reluctant administrators on the benefits of technology. No where in this transformation more evident than on the campuses of community colleges. Our students are demanding that technology be a key component of their learning experience and businesses are requiring that we train workers using state of the art equipment. It is critical that we remain on the cutting edge by advocating the use of technology in all areas of our operation.

- We must develop new ways of teaching and learning.
- We must discover what technology engages our students.
- We must realize how to get the most out of technology.
- We must bring an open mind and a willingness to embrace new insights.
- We must remember that learning is a human enterprise.
- We must embrace the reality that there is not one best way to teach, reach and learn.
In working to develop the best community college and to creatively use technology, our work must embrace the value of learning for a lifetime. It is not enough to learn about technology, we need to learn with technology in order to understand its true potential.

We must find the tools and techniques needed to coordinate often uncooperative data systems, learning management tools and other applications to support learning in a more unified and seamless way for students.

We must welcome thoughtful cultural balance.

We must embrace expanding markets.

We must be vigilant about the details of providing exemplary services to our students and communities.

We must ask hard questions as we look to the future. Keeping in mind that learning is our primary return on investment.

We must envision exciting horizons for this is a great day to work in higher education. There has never been a time when education has been so essential and accessible. Yet there are many questions for us to consider as we seek to make our Community College District the best Community College District as we create new memories and new realities.

− What can we do as we take bold steps down the road ahead?
− Can we open the doors of education even wider?
− Can we improve the learning experience even more?
− Can we customize learning so that it efficiently and effectively engages students with little or no bureaucracy or wasted time?
− Can we inspire more civic participation and involvement?
− Can we, through education, fuel the economic engine of our nation?
− Can we help more people launch their own learning journeys?
− Can we help more people live better, freer and more fulfilled lives as a result of education?

While we don’t have all the answers, I must encourage you to welcome the questions and join with me in seeking answers.

According to Thomas Jefferson, “If a nation expects to live ignorant and free, it wants what never was and what never will be.” That is why we want the Wayne County Community College District to be the best community college. Why the best community College? In Collin’s book, Good To Great, he was asked the same question. Why greatness? And he said, “It is almost a nonsense question. If you’re engaged in work that you love and care about, for whatever reason, then the question needs no answer. The question is not why, but how.” When your work moves to greatness so does your life. It’s something special about knowing that you have had a hand in creating something of intrinsic excellence that makes a contribution.

Change is difficult in any circumstance. However, effecting change without knowing what and why to change is an almost impossible task.

It is clear to me that we must be prepared to respond to the needs and demands of today’s student that is correctly described as the “Net Generation Student.”

Who is the “net generation student?” These are multi-tasking students who have had relatively short lifetime experiences with computers: instant messaging, chat rooms, Googling, online games, virtual tours, and bulletin boards. The Net Generation student expects state-of-the-art technology at home, in the classroom, and on campus.

Let me conclude with these brief observations regarding what I have learned during my first ten years as Chancellor:
• I have learned that all relationships need cultivation.
• I have learned that we go to a higher level when we honor the dignity of others.
• I have learned that working together increases the odds of winning together.
• I have learned that who we are determines how we see others.
• I have learned that each person we meet has the potential to teach us something.
• I have learned that people are interested in the person who is interested in them.
• I have learned that believing the best in people usually brings the best out of people.
• I have learned that a dream adds value to our work.
• I have learned that trust is the foundation of any relationship.
• I have learned that compassion lifts us out of the small minded worries that center on ourselves and expands our world by putting our focus on others.
• I have learned that the journey is more fun if you know where you are going.
• I have learned it is importance of reaching out to students, faculty, staff and others. And to this end, I am forming the "Chancellor’s Lunch and Breakfast Club” where I will periodically invite students, and others in small groups, to dine with me.
• I have learned when work, commitment, and pleasure all become one and when we reach that deep well where passion lives, nothing is impossible.

As I have stated on more than one occasion: The Wayne County Community College District must continue to live up to its reputation of providing a safe harbor . . . where students, staff, and community members can peacefully congregate to learn more about themselves, each other, and the world in which we live . . . a comfortable, secure, and stimulating gathering place for diverse peoples with many different ideas and opinions . . . a community in the truest sense of the word, where people of goodwill can rest assured that civility, compassion, and honesty with consideration will be the hallmarks of authentic learning conversations.

In conclusion, together we will create new memories and new realities. To do so, we have to listen reflectively. It is not enough to be able to hear clearly the chorus of others voices; we must also hear the contribution of our own voice. It is not enough to be able to see others in the picture of what is going on; we must also see what we ourselves are doing. It is not enough to be observers of the situation; we must also recognize ourselves as actors who influence the outcome.

Bill Torbert of Boston College once said, “If you’re not part of the solution, you’re part of the problem” actually misses the most important point about effecting change. The slogan should be, he said, “If you’re not part of the problem, you can’t be part of the solution.”

All of us, each one of us in this room must work together to co-create new realities and new memories. We have to shift from down-loading and debating to reflective and generative dialogue. If we are able to do this, we will help our students and ourselves restore hope for the future. And in so doing, we will truly become the “best community college.” Thus, creating new memories and new realities.

And remember, the greatest gift of our work is hope.

THANK YOU.