

Remarks by Andy Feinstein UNC Investiture, April 12, 2019

Thank you. Thank you very much. And thank you for being here today.

Trustees, Executive Director Paccione, Mayor Gates, community members, guests and Bears everywhere—I am deeply honored to serve as the 13th president of the University of Northern Colorado.

My California friends warned me about the Colorado weather, so I wisely insisted on waiting until mid-April to have this event. My fair-weather friends whose flights were canceled are now watching on Livestream.

Kerry, Nick, Rachel and I were meant to be here. You have welcomed us as family—your family. And we are grateful.

I follow in the footsteps of just a dozen leaders appointed president of this university over the past 130 years.

Three of them—Dick Bond, Robert Dickeson and Hank Brown—are here today. I am thrilled to have you here.

Kay Norton, who graciously supported my transition, is now cruising around the world enjoying retirement, as she should be.

Isn't this a beautiful venue?

Today is not only about recognizing leadership transition and celebrating the university, it's also officially opening the Campus Commons and this magnificent theater.

Imagine all the wonderful memories we're gonna have over the next few year.

The many students, staff and faculty who make UNC a national leader in the performing arts deserve this state-of-the-art venue like this.

The Commons and this theater are an inviting front door to the university, showcasing who we are and what we stand for:

A determination to make students our top priority.

Academic excellence.

A warm and welcoming spirit.

And a commitment to fostering deep campus and community connections.

The Campus Commons and this facility are exemplifying what is possible when we row with purpose.

We would not be here without the coordinated efforts and generosity of numerous people—including many of you.

There isn't time this afternoon to recognize each person who helped bring this building to life over the past five years.

But I do want to publicly thank Kirk Leichliter, our Assistant Vice President for Facilities Management, and Nate Reinhard, for managing this project with efficiency, precision and diplomacy. We could not have done this without you.

I am a people person.

It was no accident that I chose hospitality management as my field of study.

And no accident that I was attracted to this place where people truly care for one another.

I am deeply moved to have family, friends, mentors, and former colleagues from around the country here today. Many of them are from my former universities—Penn State, University of Nevada Las Vegas, Cal Poly Pomona, San Jose State—and the California State University System.

Among them are:

- CSU Bakersfield President Lynnette Zelezny,
- Fitchburg State University President Rich Lapidus,
- Idaho State University President Kevin Saterlee,
- Adams State University President Cheryl Lovell,
- Western State University President Gregory Salsbury,
- California State University Trustee Romey Sibelius,
- University of Maine at Farmington President Emerita Theo Kalikow,
- And Sue Martin, former president of Eastern Michigan University and San Jose State.

I wish there was time to recognize everyone. Just know that I am delighted to have all of you here today.

I am also grateful to see so many UNC students, staff, faculty, alumni, and supporters. Our Trustees. And leaders from our community and around the state.

I am a lucky guy.

I am also fortunate to be guided by a board of trustees that is ably led by Chairman Dick Monfort.

Unfortunately, Dick could not be here today. One of his close friends of 40 years passed away

unexpectedly and he is right now at the funeral. That's the kind of guy Dick is.

He is the rare leader who welcomes calls at all hours. He provides advice and counsel with a clear head and steady hand. He always has the interests of his alma mater at heart.

I am grateful for his trust and support.

I appreciate everyone who supported the Feinsteins on our journey to Greeley. It's been filled with wonderful people who made such an impact on my life.

I was an overachiever early in school, especially in math, but I lost my motivation in high school. When I graduated, I really didn't know what I wanted to do or who I wanted to be.

After a year as a ski bum, much to my parents' relief, I discovered that the field of hospitality appealed to me. So in 1986, my dad and I walked unannounced into UNLV's Harrah College of Hotel Administration.

The founding dean, Jerry Vallen, greeted us.

Dean Vallen—the dean, mind you—took us on a tour, answered our questions, and promised to meet with me often if I enrolled.

That blew me away. I did enroll at UNLV. And Dean Vallen kept his word.

My sophomore year, I took the first of several purchasing and finance courses from Professor John Stefanelli.

John was smart, funny, and dedicated to his students. Thanks to him, I eventually began to imagine a career in education.

But that took a little time.

First, comfortable as I was with math and technology and drawn to hospitality, I took an internship my junior year with a New York hotel appraisal firm.

That led to a job after graduation, which sent me to Los Angeles, Las Vegas, Boston and New York.

But working fourteen-hour days at a computer, grinding under enormous pressure, was far removed from what I loved about hospitality—connecting with people and making them happy.

At John's urging, I returned to UNLV to earn a master's degree in hospitality administration.

There, teaching undergraduates and writing a chapter for John's textbook, I fell in love with academic life.

A few years later after Kerry and I were married, I was accepted into a Ph.D. program at Penn State University.

But before we headed to State College, the California Culinary Academy convinced us to make a detour through San Francisco.

And that was the dawn of the Internet age. And they were offering me venture capital funding to build a technology company that would develop these new things called 'websites.'

A foodie husband and his young professional wife couldn't resist the draw of one of the world's culinary capitals.

Fortunately, back at Penn State, Stuart Mann, the school director who would eventually become my dissertation advisor, offered to defer my enrollment and fellowship for a year.

Kerry and I had a great experience in San Francisco — until I decided that there wasn't much future in the Internet.

We went to Penn State, and fate again intervened.

In a strange twist, while I was at Penn State, Stuart left to be the dean of UNLV's Harrah college of hotel administration.

Professor Sara Parks stepped in as the school director and was generous enough to become my dissertation advisor.

As much as Stuart had inspired my interest in the mathematical side of things, Sara helped me turn my simulation modeling into an instructional tool and pushed me to complete my research.

When I graduated from Penn State, Stuart was still the dean at UNLV and John Stefanelli was chairing the department in which I had studied as an undergraduate.

At their urging, I returned to my alma mater as a tenure-track faculty member. A few years later, I succeeded John as department chair.

John, Stuart and Sara are here today.

I am deeply grateful to each of you—for paving the way for me from Penn State to UNLV, Cal Poly Pomona, San Jose State and now, to UNC. Thank you.

William Ross, who led this institution from 1948 to 1964, later attributed his selection as president to “being in the right place at the right time.”

I know what he meant.

I had the good fortune to meet a dean willing to invest time in an 18-year-old prospective undergraduate. Then, three faculty members saw something in me—

who knows what—and opened doors that might otherwise have remained closed.

And there were others—professors Audrey McCool, Dave Christy, Bob Bosselman.

Later, I was blessed to work with exceptional leaders like David Ashley, Sue Martin and Loren Blanchard, who modeled what strategic, humanistic, student-centered leadership looks like.

I strive every day to live up to those high standards.

And that brings us to the people who accompanied me on every leg of this journey. My family.

My parents, Sheldon and Elaine, are here today. They were children of immigrants who left Europe for the promise and opportunity of America.

Their families settled in Cleveland where they eventually met, married, and began building a life.

Unable to bear children, they adopted my brother and me as infants.

My dad was the first in his family to go to college. After earning a master's in architecture at Columbia University, he taught at the University of Kentucky before launching a successful career as an architect.

Mom would have prospered in college, but women were not encouraged in those days to take that step. So she raised us and managed our family as we moved from Cleveland to Hawaii and, eventually, to San Diego.

Dad taught me many things—how to be a good father, and what it means to be a life-long learner. After retirement, he went back to school and earned a master's in history.

Among many other things, Mom influenced my love of food and hospitality. She often came to my school to do cooking demonstrations, which made me the coolest kid in my class.

To an adopted child, nothing matters more than being loved, and wanted.

At this, my parents have no peers.

Mom, dad, I love you.

Meanwhile, Kerry, Nick and Rachel have been patiently sitting here, probably wondering if I would ever get around to mentioning them.

Well, I was just saving the best for last.

Kerry and I met in 1992. She has always encouraged me to take risks and follow my heart, even after we were married and started our family.

An accomplished administrative professional, she put her career on hold to support mine.

That meant moving to San Francisco. State College. Las Vegas. Los Angeles. San Jose. And now Greeley.

Kerry has sacrificed a lot for me. And she is tough—a trait she probably inherited from her dad, Dennis, who boxed, played and coached football, hunts, and is a Marine.

Imagine being the guy who wanted to marry Dennis' daughter. It was a scary, to be honest. But I won him over...I think. Thank you, Dennis. Kerry, you are far and away the biggest “win” of my life. I love you.

No matter what you think of me as your president. I know you won't regret having Kerry as your president's partner.

Our kids have sacrificed, too. When this opportunity arose, Nick was looking forward to his senior year of high school and a starting position on the varsity soccer team. Rachel was well-established on a competitive cheer team at her middle school.

Both had many friends in San Jose, relationships they knew they would be leaving behind. But they never gave us any reason to hesitate.

Nick, Rachel: I love you both with all my heart. I cannot imagine making this journey without you.

It has been heartening to see Greeley so warmly embrace Nick and Rachel.

Young people have always been a priority in this community.

As emeritus professor Robert Larson recounts in his history of UNC, within three years of Greeley's founding in 1870, the community was vying to become the home of a higher education institution.

After numerous political and financial setbacks, the State Normal School of Colorado was awarded to Greeley in 1889. Our first students enrolled in 1890.

It was an early example of what can happen when a community rows together.

At the time, similar schools were springing up all over America. But in Greeley, something truly special happened.

In less than two decades, we transformed ourselves into a four-year college, quickly becoming a national

leader in teacher preparation, and a go-to source for innovation and bold ideas.

We also connected our education expertise to other fields, like nursing. In the 1930s, nurses came in the summer to Greeley from all over the country to further their education, a novel idea at the time.

You might wonder how a university on the Front Range became a national powerhouse in the performing arts.

Greeley was an influence. An opera house had opened here in 1886; a philharmonic orchestra followed in 1911.

Probably not by coincidence, drama classes were included in the school's first academic catalog.

The Little Theater of the Rockies, Colorado's longest-running summer stock, has been pairing professional actors and UNC drama students since the 1930s.

Just as the community helped elevate UNC's national reputation in the performing and visual arts, the university helped solidify Greeley as a regional hub for culture, arts and entertainment.

Fueled by an increasingly diverse economy and outstanding quality of life, our region also steadily grew.

Greeley's population has almost doubled since 1980. Thanks to the oil and gas industry, agriculture, and an influx of bright, diverse talent, Weld County is one of the fastest growing regions in America.

UNC is deeply invested here. According to our last economic impact report, we add more than 329 million dollars annually to the regional economy.

I have pledged to community leaders UNC's continued commitment to Greeley, Weld County, and Colorado.

We are ready and eager to keep rowing with you.

Let me take a moment to put rowing into perspective.

The graduating class of 1910 left as its gift to the university an entry gate on 10th Avenue, inscribed with the motto: "Rowing, Not Drifting."

I spent much of my childhood in Hawaii and Southern California, a good deal of it in the water.

When Kerry and I lived in California, she called herself a "surf widow" because I spent so much time deep sea fishing, free diving and bodyboarding.

Although I have not spent much time in a rowboat, the message from the Class of 1910 resonates with me as a powerful, relevant metaphor.

Rowing requires working together. Communication.
Trust. Balance.

Every rower helps dictate the direction and fate of the boat. When you pull together, the boat glides in a beautiful line.

Throughout much of its history, UNC has rowed with purpose.

We became a national leader in teacher education thanks to a clear vision, focus, and a collective commitment to reaching a common goal.

Over time, UNC has become a multi-dimensional, comprehensive research university.

In contrast to the state's big public universities, UNC's relative intimacy and location created a distinctive niche.

We were—and are—big enough to offer students a wide range of disciplines and experiential opportunities, yet intimate enough to keep faculty and students closely connected.

Today, UNC ranks among America's top universities for fueling the upward economic and social mobility of its students.

The diversity of our students is one of UNC's great strengths. Almost half of our students are the first in their families to go to college. Roughly a third are students of color. We are recognized nationally as an LGBTQ-welcoming campus.

There has been plenty of purposeful rowing over the years.

And yet, we cannot ignore some warning signs of drifting.

Three in ten first-year students are not returning.

Some of our business processes are inefficient, redundant, or both.

Despite past successes, **overall** research productivity has declined.

Market research tells us that our identity is muddled.

There are concerns that UNC should be more engaged in the community.

We have been wrestling with a \$10 million structural deficit.

And I have heard many times a version of this question: *Where do we go from here?*

For starters, we are rowing our way out of that budget hole.

With tremendous help from the President's Leadership Council, we identified a host of cost-saving measures and asked for campus input.

There were four thousand responses, which helped us decide our next steps.

Some of the budget actions have been difficult. Eleven people lost their jobs. We eliminated 77 vacant positions. We will be spending less on employee benefits.

These were difficult and painful but necessary steps and will allow us to eliminate our deficit by 2021.

I want to thank the campus for investing enormous time and energy in this very difficult task. It would not have been possible without the commitment from everyone to row with purpose.

We are also building on the work of task forces that convened last fall.

We are building a strategic enrollment and student success plan that will support students from the moment they apply to the day they graduate.

And we are creating a division of student affairs, which together with Academic Affairs, will unify our efforts to promote student success.

Next fall, we will take up that question—“Where do we go from here?”—in earnest.

We will invest considerable time reaffirming our values and considering existential questions about UNC’s long-term future.

The involvement of campus and community stakeholders will be integral to our success.

It will be an opportunity for us to ask ourselves big questions.

What should UNC look like in ten years? In twenty years?

What will our future students need from us? What will our community need from us?

How do we maintain clarity of purpose and prioritize the right things?

How do we inspire, engage, and empower everyone in our community to be their best and do their best?

How do we reinvigorate our research enterprise?

How do we meaningfully celebrate and nurture diversity and inclusion?

And, how do we sharpen UNC's story?

It will take all of us to find the right answers.

I have great confidence that we will find those answers—largely because of all of you.

Our people are the reason why UNC has prospered. I sensed it when I sought this presidency. I have become convinced of it in my early months here.

I have spent as much time as possible visiting all corners of our campus, our region and our state. And I intend to continue doing so.

A president learns a great deal by listening.

What I have learned shouldn't surprise anyone.

We have bright, entrepreneurial students who reflect the rich diversity of Colorado. Hard-working. Eager to learn. No sense of entitlement. They intend to change the world.

We have dedicated, loyal staff. People who get up every day excited about helping students.

Who create an environment where every student can thrive. Who keep us safe. Who take great pride in making this campus beautiful.

Our faculty are brilliant educators and researchers.

They are breaking ground in human cancer research. Developing sustainable farming practices. Writing best-selling textbooks and giving them away to students free of charge.

We are surrounded by supportive business, political, community and educational leaders.

We have proud, loyal Bear alumni and friends all over the world ready to help UNC be respected for all that it is, and all it can be.

Thanks to their support, UNC tonight will celebrate the culmination of its first-ever comprehensive fundraising campaign.

UNC has a rich legacy of excellence in teaching. Research. Learning. Exploring. Serving.

We now are poised to build on that legacy, and it will take all of us.

There is plenty of room in the boat. We are headed in the right direction.

Let's keep rowing.

Thank you.