



President Andy Feinstein's State of the University Address
Rowing, Not Drifting
September 18, 2018

Thank you, Stan, for the introduction. And thank you and the Faculty Senate for being so engaged and making me feel welcome. ...And yes, I do love crazy socks, but I'm not so sure any more about that gnarly surfer dude.

Good morning, fellow Bears!

We're just about a month into the fall term—and already I have seen, heard and experienced enough to know that my wife Kerry and I made the right decision to come to Greeley.

Hopefully, you already know how passionate I am about serving students and ensuring that they succeed in college, and in life.

I have enormous respect for UNC's legacy—as Colorado's Normal School, and as a longtime national innovator in education.

As the new guy, I suspect some of you are hoping to hear my vision for the future of our university.

But after 79 days on the job, I'm still listening and learning. It seems premature to talk about a long-term blueprint. I'm pretty sure a lot of important insights and good ideas lie beyond the fourth floor of Carter Hall, and I want to hear them.

I do know this: Advancing UNC will demand the best of all of us.

So today, I'm going to focus on what I have been hearing so far—from you; from alumni; from community and business leaders in Greeley and Weld County; and from our friends across Colorado.

Let me begin with a few personal notes.

The Feinsteins have quickly fallen in love with UNC, and with Greeley.

You have embraced us so warmly. How warmly? Our son Nicholas and I were greeted by name at the Greeley DMV office. No one gets welcomed like that at the California DMV.

Our daughter Rachel baked homemade cookies for our new neighbors, and it took all day to deliver them because everyone wanted to talk with us.

We knew that uprooting our family would be especially hard; Nick is a high school senior; Rachel is a high school freshman. But you've welcomed our family into the Bear family—and Kerry and I are deeply grateful.

Speaking of which, would you like to meet Kerry?

Kerry, would you mind standing?

Everyone, meet Kerry Feinstein—my wife, my partner, my best friend. I'm eager for you to get to know her. As I shared with the Presidential Search Committee, when you get me, you get The Feinsteins.

(applause)

By the way: Kerry's maternal great-grandmother, Dorothy Black, attended the Greeley Normal School in 1911. She lived a few blocks from here, on 11th Avenue. She left after her first semester, for financial reasons, and took a teaching job near Salida. Still, how wonderful is it that Kerry followed her great-grandmother to Greeley more than 100 years later?

We were meant to be here.

Nick and Rachel could not join us today; they are in classes at Greeley Central. I'm also proud to say that Nick is a starting midfielder on Greeley Central's varsity soccer team.

We are committed to being visible, on campus and off, so if you see us, please say hello.

Since early July, I have been on a whirlwind tour of our campus, Greeley, Weld County, and the state of Colorado.

I'm moving at high speed, and I know this takes a little getting used to. The frenetic pace is intentional, because there's a lot to take in. But I have to admit: I'm thoroughly enjoying it.

For us to realize our potential, I need—we all need—to understand UNC's legacy as Colorado's Normal School and as a respected national leader in educational innovation. This sets us apart from every institution of higher learning in our state. It enriches all UNC degree programs. And it is a distinction we should own.

Nurturing this legacy requires strong leadership, and I am fortunate to have inherited a solid group of senior leaders. I've asked you all to move at warp speed, and I appreciate your willingness to do that.

Please join me in thanking my Cabinet.

(applause)

I inherited this presidency from Kay Norton, who loyally served UNC from 2002 through her retirement in June.

The typical university presidency lasts about six years, and Kay served here for 16.

Many presidents are remembered for their tough choices, while their successes fade from memory or go unappreciated.

There are a couple of things I want us all to remember about Kay Norton.

Without her, the Campus Commons might well have remained just someone's grand idea. Kay's dogged pursuit of public and private funding, and her focus on what would happen inside the Commons, propelled the project forward. Our students, our campus, and the Greeley community will benefit when it opens this spring.

Kay also steered UNC's transition into the Big Sky Conference. She insisted that athletics be deeply integrated into the fabric of our campus.

And she cares more about substance—who and what we are—than she does rankings, or “badges,” as she often calls them.

I have witnessed several presidential transitions. Some went pretty well. Others were kind of awkward. I will spare you the details.

Kay, not many people know how generous you have been to me with your time and insights. Or the lengths to which you have gone to support this leadership transition.

I remember meeting you and Tom for the first time. You were decked out in Bear blue and gold—with a bear necklace and bear earrings. You love UNC. And Kerry and I will strive to be worthy successors.

All success is achieved on the shoulders of others. UNC is better for Kay's steady, solid hand over the past decade-and-a-half. Please join me in thanking her.

(applause)

We have another former UNC president here today. We are also honored to have President Emeritus Dick Bond joining us.

(applause)

I would like to recognize Student Trustee Malaika Michelle-Fuller, Faculty Trustee Joan Clinefelter, Student Body President Tim Hernández, Classified Staff Council Chair Maggie Kinney, and Professional Administrative Staff Council Chair Shawanna Kimbrough-Hayward.

(applause)

We are honored to have a number of community leaders here as well. I'll introduce them all, and then ask you to help me welcome them. From the City of Greeley, Mayor John Gates, and City Manager Roy Otto. From Aims Community College, President Leah Bornstein. From Greeley-Evans School District 6, Superintendent Deidre Pilch. From UC Health, Greeley Hospital President Marilyn Schock. And from the Greeley Chamber of Commerce, President Sarah MacQuiddy

(applause)

Let's talk about our university. It's a great time to be a Bear.

We have a strong foundation on which to build.

Our faculty love to teach. You care about students, and you are motivated to share your knowledge with others. You understand that at a place like UNC, teaching and research are complementary, not in conflict.

And staff members, you demonstrate daily how much you care about this university and our students.

Our students are the faces of Weld County and Colorado. They reflect the rich diversity of our region and the state. If you want to see this, just take a campus tour, as I did a few weeks ago.

More than a third of our incoming first-year students are first in their families to go to college. They are today's pioneers.

As UNC works to serve the people of Colorado, we are also getting closer to being a Hispanic Serving Institution. We have a tremendous opportunity to serve this growing population, and we will be intentional about it.

Our beautiful campus is intimate enough to feel like home, yet expansive enough to provide a diversity of thought and experiences.

We are located in one of the fastest-growing counties in America.

Our alumni love their alma mater. They are eager to help, and anxious for UNC to be better appreciated. I hear this everywhere I go. Fort Collins. Denver. Sterling. Colorado Springs. And right here in Greeley.

Every alumnus has a unique story. But they share a common bond: UNC became their home. They want to preserve its distinctiveness and intimacy, and they want others to know how special it is.

They value their degree. When I visited Denver, one alum told me: “I am proud to say I have used my political science degree every day since graduating from UNC.”

He also implored us to increase our visibility in the Denver metro area, and to better connect fellow Bears with each other. We should do that—and we must do that.

I have also visited several community colleges, including Aims, where President Bornstein has been very gracious. Our historic commitment to this region makes UNC the logical destination—the *obvious* destination—for transfer students seeking a high-quality four-year degree.

Business leaders in Greeley, Weld County, and across Colorado tell me that they need more of our graduates. They are willing to teach them the technical skills; but they need us to send them graduates who are adaptable learners, culturally adept critical thinkers, and effective communicators. Given UNC’s legacy for educational innovation, we are better positioned than any university to do this.

In late August, I met Zach Souffrant and Breanna Kelsch during a visit to the town of Sterling. Zach interned at the Colorado Popcorn Co. while studying at our Kenneth W. Monfort College of Business. He had transferred to UNC from Northeastern Junior College. After Zach and Breanna graduated in 2017, they purchased the company, and in just a year, they have doubled sales.

Zach told me that UNC taught him to learn something new *every day* — and he is applying that insight to growing their business, *every day*. For one thing, he’s figured out how to get product endorsements. (Slide showing popcorn from Colorado Popcorn Co.)

Community members also tell me how much they value UNC. To them, we are a primary source of intellectual, artistic, and cultural enrichment. They want us to be an active, engaged civic partner. And they are willing to help us address UNC’s challenges.

As Colorado’s original teaching college, education is not just *in* our DNA. It *is* our DNA.

Graduates like Zach Souffrant are taking what they’ve learned at UNC and putting it to use in every facet of their lives.

We really do create lifelong learners. This is rarer than you might think, and something in which we should take great pride.

Before coming here, I served at several other universities. All have federally funded research agendas. All field competitive athletics programs, most in Division I. All are located in vibrant communities with many extracurricular opportunities.

UNC has all of these things. And more.

We are considerably more intimate than most of our Colorado sister institutions.

This doesn't mean we can't grow, by the way. We have the capacity to add students—and we should, within reason. We also have to develop new programs and services, especially where they directly improve student success. And our research productivity surely must increase.

Balancing intimacy with institutional breadth—and focusing on the success of every, single student—is how we create lifelong learners. And we will take the necessary steps to ensure that people across Colorado and beyond understand and appreciate this.

I occasionally hear that UNC has outgrown its roots as a Normal School. I don't think so.

It is true that our founders might not recognize us. The Normal School opened with 96 students and four instructors. Today, we serve 13,000 students in five colleges offering more than 200 baccalaureate, master's and doctoral programs. We operate three satellite campuses. And some students pursue degrees and certification programs online, rarely if ever setting foot on campus.

To me, this validates the original Normal School mission. All of our graduates take a strand of that DNA with them—into schools and every corner of society.

Our forbearers would be proud of our Math and Science Teaching Institute and Northern Colorado Math Circles, which support mathematics educators and students. And proud of the University of Northern Colorado Cancer Rehabilitation Institute, which helps patients learn how to live with and beyond their illness. And proud of UNC's acclaimed School of Music, which brings world-class artistic brilliance to audiences near and far. And proud of our campus cultural and resource centers that not only support the unique needs of UNC students from diverse backgrounds, but also enrich our campus community.

We have always led the way in teacher preparation. Today, we also create nurses and geographers. Accountants and entrepreneurs. Artists. Scientists. Social change agents. And more.

We create lifelong learners, like Zach Souffrant. And tinkerers turned toy-makers, like Sphero's Adam Wilson. Change agents like Henrietta Fore, executive director of UNICEF. And Colorado Teachers of the Year—most recently, Christina Randle in Colorado Springs.

We can be proud to be advancing our founders' grand mission—and proud to be Bears.

The year ahead is full of promise.

We have new leadership in the College of Natural and Health Sciences. Dean Burkhard Englert came to UNC in July from California State University, Long Beach. Dean Englert, would you stand for a moment so that our campus can see and welcome you?

(applause)

We will also complete a successful \$45 million fundraising campaign next spring.

We will open Campus Commons, which will be a hub for student services and campus/community engagement.

We will bring to Greeley a year-long array of live theater, musical and artistic performances.

Men's and women's basketball squads will return to action after last year's record-setting seasons on the national stage. (GO BEARS!)

We will use next spring's Investiture to renew and revitalize our connections with alumni and community.

And last, but not least, in October, Roma Pizza will celebrate its 30th anniversary.

We also face some challenges, which I will continue to be direct and transparent in addressing.

First, there is a \$10 million budget deficit to erase. We will fix it—but it will require tough choices. It isn't someone else's problem. It is our problem, and we will address it together.

Second, I know there is a hunger for more transparency—a desire for faculty, staff and students to have input in decision making.

I have already convened a President's Leadership Council with broad campus representation, and we will be meeting every other week. We will also have a series of budget conversations, open to everyone, to make sure that we all understand our budget realities.

Third, it is clear that we must do more to retain the students we have and make it easier for all students to graduate in less time. We aren't alone; campuses everywhere face similar challenges.

When I was a Provost, this was my top priority, and it is a top priority for Interim Provost Theo Kalikow. Working together as a campus, we will make significant, steady improvements in

retention and graduation rates. We will narrow achievement gaps for traditionally underrepresented students and someday eliminate them entirely.

Related to this, I know that some of our traditionally underrepresented students have not felt fully supported or, in some cases, fully welcomed. This is unacceptable.

We remain committed to acting on the results of our campus climate survey, and we must ensure that everybody knows about this commitment. At the same time, we will continue to evolve as a welcoming and inclusive environment that looks to strike the delicate balance between civil discourse and protected free speech.

Fourth, community leaders tell me that they want us to be more visible and externally engaged. As I've said, opening the Commons is an opportunity to revitalize these connections and demonstrate that we are committed to meaningful community engagement.

Last, there is a hunger to see UNC's story told loudly and proudly. The alumni I've met are clamoring for us to be more visible in Greeley, throughout the state, and especially in and around Denver.

Market research tells us that UNC is seen as the proverbial middle child in Colorado higher education. We are a little too quiet, a bit too polite, and far too often ignored. This has to change, and working together, I am confident that it will.

Many things attracted me to Greeley and UNC: its Midwestern vibe, strong community spirit, and rich history.

I care a lot about history. I am proud to tell you that my office desk was once used by this university's fourth president, John Crabbe. Credit is due to Steven Abbath for finding the desk and bringing it back to its original luster. I hope you'll stop by Carter Hall and see it.

Our past really is a guidepost for our future.

Novelist James Michener described UNC as a "major influence in educational renovation, a place of great excitement in the midst of being converted from a typical normal school into a national leader. When you worked at Greeley you worked at the top of the educational effort."

He concluded by fondly describing the UNC he knew as "feisty." Feisty. I like that.

I will close by invoking the Greeley Normal School Class of 1910.

The Horace Mann Gate on 10th Avenue near 18th Street was that class's gift to the university. Inscribed on the gate is their class motto, "Rowing, not drifting."

Rowing demands collaboration. Tenacity. Coordination. Persistence. And focus. It's hard work.

It would be easy enough to drift, just glide along with the currents. Accept whatever comes our way.

I want us to be rowers, not drifters. I want us to row, together, with purpose—as faculty and staff, as students and community members, as alumni and friends of the university. I want us to seize opportunities and anticipate the rapids.

There's a lot to do. Let's get rowing.

Thank you.