Thank you, Provost Hamilton for that introduction and for your leadership of the Division of Academic Affairs. As we prepare to close out the spring semester, I am pleased to report that the state of the University is strong and that NSU is transitioning toward of new path of prosperity, critical reflection, and meaningful engagement.

Since arriving on campus in January, I have established and communicated a clear set of priorities and expectations that focus on student success, faculty engagement, revenue growth, and the elevation of NSU’s visibility and impact among our partners and peers. In support of these priorities and expectations, I have met with a wide range of internal and external stakeholders, which have included students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community and corporate leaders.

NSU’s strong sense of community is what sets us apart from our peers. Under my leadership the University has renewed its commitment to fostering a supportive environment for all members of the community while advancing a culture of excellence across all areas of the institution. We have rekindled the spirit of collaboration and reaffirmed commitments to continuous improvement, and professional growth through our collective work on the Teaching Faculty Handbook and our Promoting the Intangibles Initiative. We have also reaffirmed our commitment to shared governance by engaging directly with the Faculty Senate leadership on a range of issues and by reviving the President’s Executive Council.
I am pleased to report that NSU’s relationship with the City of Norfolk is flourishing and that we are in the early stages of discussions regarding the potential transfer of real property from the City to NSU and the increased use of NSU’s athletic facilities by Norfolk City Schools. We are also aggressively exploring public-private partnerships to support the future construction of student housing.

Our outreach has also included Virginia’s elected officials. As you know, Governor Ralph Northam was on campus earlier this month to help officially open our new Cybersecurity Complex. Virginia Lieutenant Governor Justin Fairfax was on hand this past weekend to serve as our commencement speaker. I have also met with State Senator Lionell Spruill and other key leaders in the Virginia General Assembly and Congressmen Bobby Scott and Scott Taylor. NSU is on the move and we are building relationships that will help advance our future.

The face of the campus is also rapidly changing. Ground will soon be broken on a new 730 room residential housing complex, which will greatly enhance the on-campus housing experience for our students. This summer construction will begin on a new entrance gate at Park Avenue that will provide a more welcoming and defined point of entry for our students, parents, alumni, and friends. We will also be installing artificial turf on the football field to better accommodate the use of our athletic facilities by our community partners.

We are confronting the challenges that face NSU head-on and have made difficult, but necessary staffing decisions to ensure that the right leaders are in the right roles to advance our shared agenda of change. This Administration is committed to serving as good stewards of the public resources that we have been entrusted. Whenever and wherever possible, we strive to eliminate or mitigate risk. The senior management team and I meet regularly with the University’s Internal Audit Executive to identify risk and develop action plans for risk mitigation. Policy
implementation and compliance is a critical component of Enterprise Risk Management. To improve the University’s policymaking process and to increase overall policy compliance throughout the institution, we have developed a new policymaking life-cycle, which draws upon best-practices from other institutions of higher education in Virginia. NSU’s new policy-making life-cycle will be fully integrated by the start of the fall academic term.

As this faculty is well aware, the university is in the midst of preparing for reaffirmation of accreditation by SACSCOC. Every division, department, and unit throughout the university is involved in this important work. I appreciate all of your hard work on SACSCOC this semester. Please know that you have the unconditional support of the entire university as we work collectively to pass the mission critical test of reaffirmation of accreditation.

The University Strategic Plan Committee, which has included stakeholders from across the University has brought to a close more than two and a half years of work to produce a draft of NSU’s 2019-2025 Strategic Plan: Forging Onward Toward a New Horizon. The plan charts an ambitious, but achievable path toward distinction for NSU over the next six years. The strategic plan is a living document that will transform over time to meet the emerging needs of the University. The Administration and senior leaders from across Academic Affairs will work with the University’s Board of Visitors this summer to finalize work on the strategic plan, which we hope to unveil to the University community at the beginning of the fall term.

My goals for the 2018-2019 academic year include a focus on implementation of the strategic plan and the continued growth of undergraduate and graduate academic programs that will help give our students a competitive advantage in the 21st Century global economy. We have already begun this work with the approval of our new Bachelors in Drama and Theater and a
proposal of a new Ph.D. in Computer Science, which was approved by the Board of Visitors last Friday.

I will soon announce the creation of a Special Taskforce on Student Retention and commit the necessary human capital and financial resources needed to bring about marked improvement in this very important area.

Lastly, we will continue our focus on philanthropy to increase and diversify the University’s resource base. We have set an ambitious goal of raising $7 million and are well on a way to bringing this goal to reality by having raised more than $2 million. Thanks to all who have supported the Faculty and Staff giving campaign. If you have not yet given, please know that it is still not to late to make your gift.

On the road ahead, I will look to partnering with the faculty as we work together to redefine NSU’s future. Thank you for your many contributions to the University. We could not do this work without you. Have a safe and enjoyable summer.