We are meeting today in this classroom that is part of the Valley Performing Arts Center. So I would simply say to you, look around and note that even in the midst of dramatic change and difficulties, we at Cal State Northridge continue to move forward with improvements for our students and faculty and their teaching and learning environment. This is our largest lecture hall at Cal State Northridge, so enjoy. (Presidents are always going to do these kinds of comments, so a little advertisement for Cal State Northridge for those of you who are from other campuses.)

Steven has asked me today to set the scene with respect to the basic parameters and issues of the shifting changes that may transform—change—the California State University system over the next 50 years.

Now, I have to be really honest. I don't pretend to be able to outline in detail for you all of the ways in which the California State University will change over 50 years. I sometimes have a hard time remembering what happened from Monday to Wednesday, let alone Friday. But I am going to identify first today some basic trends that are shifting the ground for public higher education across the nation and in particular in California; that's my first set of points. And secondly, I do intend to make a few comments about the importance of how we as members of campus communities respond to that shifting ground and those changes.

So let me begin with an assertion that the world of public higher education is changing. I think this is a statement of fact pretty widely accepted. The specific reasons for the change are not necessarily agreed to, whether or not these changes are good or bad, the timing of the changes—all of these are open to debate and differing interpretations. Good, bad, beautiful, ugly, up, down, right, left—all these dimensions are part of disagreements.

There are a number of these changes, in fact, that are already in place. Let me remind you of the William Gibson quote which I think is quite accurate: "The future is already here. It is just unevenly distributed." So let me begin with some general areas of change that I believe are affecting public higher education and California public higher education.

First, the financing of public higher education in the state has changed, and the state is disinvesting in public higher education. The Governor and the elected officials of the state in the Assembly and the Senate have already passed, and the Governor has approved, a $1.4 billion cut to public higher education in the state, $500 million of which is a reduction to the California State University system. This follows a $625 million two-year cut in 08/09 and 09/10 with a partial reinstatement of some of that money in this current fiscal year. The CSU support budget has been reduced to the equivalent of the 1999-2000 level, even though the CSU now educates nearly 70,000 more students. This reflects a
long-term trend across the nation. If you go state by state in the United States, you see the same kind of public disinvestment in higher education.

The second major area of change – people on this campus know exactly what I'm going to say here – is accountability. It's a word that we use often in talking about the changes that are occurring. The public's expectations about higher education, about how we defend what we do, how we do it, why we do it, even the reasons for doing it, have increasingly created an environment in which we are called upon to be accountable. I might add that the transparency that is asked for from public higher education is a value that the public is going to expect for all constituencies that are in support of public higher education.

The third powerful area of change is technology. Frankly, I could give, and have given, a full 45-minute speech about the impact of technology on our universities, all the way from the changes in our business processes to our core activity, which is teaching and learning. We have a major planning challenge in the face of escalating changes in technology. What we did traditionally before the new technologies were available and present is no longer going to be satisfactory to today's students.

And that is the fourth area of change that I believe public higher education in the California State University in the next 50 years is going to have to respond to – there are a lot of ways in which our students, some of you are in this room, have changed. The faculty in this room know intuitively – in your gut, I would say – what it is I mean by these changes. We're admitting today a cohort of digital students who, unless our universities change, are going to struggle to find engagement in our analog schools. We're going to need to change our pedagogy and our curriculum to respond to these students. We're also going to need to change our curriculum and our pedagogy to reflect the changes that scholars within our universities who study how people learn have been able to elucidate and inform us about the realities of how people learn today. Also we need to be reminded that our students sometimes come to us for purposes other than those that we believe they should come to us for. Students are here to learn, but our students also want to be able to successfully work. They're here for professional reasons that create tensions sometimes within our environment.

Finally, let me speak to a set of changes that are very specific to the California State University and the Master Plan for California. Steven referenced the signing of the Donahue Act and the creation of the California Master Plan. California's ability to fulfill the vision of the Master Plan has been, in my view, severely compromised, and those words may be too benign. The Master Plan envisioned low fees and high state financial support for public higher education. That proportional relationship has been set askew; perhaps "torn asunder" would be a more appropriate phrase. Low fees depend on healthy tax returns and a public commitment to fund higher education proportionally. Neither factor is a political driver today. Steven referenced that when he talked about the prison system having an enormous power, an enormous call on the dollars of the CSU.

Now, those are the challenges from the changes. We are equally challenged, I believe, in how we are going to respond to those changes. We have a political structure and process that appear to be in paralysis. We're talking today about the California State University system, so that political focus today should be California, but equally we see the same kind of factiousness, paralysis, and inability to compromise to move forward at the federal level.

Perhaps this event today can serve as a model for all of us for how the state of California and how the California State University should move forward, because we have here today a program convened by
key constituencies of the university – the faculty, the students, a few administrators. We have here today a wealth of intellectual expertise brought from those constituencies as well as our elected officials and system leadership.

We have here today an approach that brings together ideas, ideas that not everyone is going to agree with, but disagreement is going to be a fact of how the California State University system can move forward in preparing for the next 50 years. Disagreement also must be responded to with civility and hopefully with dialogue. Dialogue means that people are engaged and committed to listen to one another, listen to those opposing points of view; that they do so without personal attacks; that they do so struggling and working hard to have factual information; that they do so with an understanding that those who are engaged in the conversation may have differing points of view about the way to respond to the change, but those differing points of view must be honored in the dialogue.

I speak to you today as the president of one of the 23 campuses in the California State University. I am one voice. I am one person. I am one president among 23 campus presidents. I do try to represent the constituencies on this campus, but it is impossible for me to speak words that satisfy all of you. It is impossible for me to follow the multiple pathways that all of you have as your best pathways to move forward, to respond to the changes in the California State University. But I will speak. I will act. I will make decisions to respond to these changes out of the values that I bring to bear, out of my commitment to the dialogue, out of my commitment to the California State University and its mission. And, of course, because I'm the president at Cal State Northridge, I believe that it's particularly special and wonderful here.

So join with me today in responding to changes with civility and with dialogue, because using those tools, the California State University will be able to respond to these tumultuous changes and remain healthy, vibrant, and serving the people of the state of California in 50 years. Thank you, so much.