I am honored to represent this world-class group of dedicated teachers and scholars. Together, we and our predecessors have created a place that is unique on planet Earth. Indeed, there is something in these hills, these hallways, and these classrooms that elevates the spirit. It may not always be a conscious thought, but each member of the Clemson family, on occasion, looks up and realizes that we are in a paradise. Some days it may feel more like purgatory, but times like today we reflect on the year past and the year approaching, lest we forget... we are in a paradise.

Last year the faculty senate was active, guarding the important values we share: our academic integrity, the affordability of a Clemson education, and a campus climate that enthusiastically embraces each and every member of our Clemson family. The year was not without a hiccup or two. A vote on the proposed constitutional amendment did not achieve a quorum. But, moving forward, the senate will continue work to ensure that faculty colleagues at our remote campuses have seamless access for full participation in our governance.

Over the past several years, we have made significant progress toward two extraordinary goals here at Clemson. Faculty salaries are now in parity with appropriate benchmarks. That took a very significant investment and we are grateful to the board and the administration for their support. We also accomplished a meteoric rise into the Top 20 of public universities. This happened largely as a result of an unprecedented campus-wide buy-in, and an exceptional collaboration among Clemson’s administration, its board, its staff, its students and its faculty. And, now the question is... how do we sustain and build on this momentum?

At Clemson University, we have made significant investments... land, buildings, and people. One of Clemson’s biggest investments is in its faculty... the scientists, the researchers, the innovators, the teachers of our sons and daughters. I think of us, the faculty, as an organic, critical mass of enormous potential productivity. How do we unleash the full potential of the Clemson faculty?
On the athletic field, we’ve seen the extraordinary success achieved by a coach who engenders a passionate motivation in his team members. I want to see passionate motivation drive ever-increasing faculty success. I believe this can be accomplished by open and direct communication among the faculty, the administration and the board. I believe open communication is the basis of sound university management.

I’m told that management theory has evolved significantly over the past hundred years. In the early 1900s, the newborn discipline of management emerged to motivate assembly line workers, largely uneducated, to sustain their productivity on jobs that involved long hours and repetitive labor.

Well… long hours and repetitive labor aside, I believe Clemson University is better viewed, not as a production line, but as a knowledge economy. Some world thought leaders now believe that the optimum management style in a knowledge economy is radically different from what emerged in the early industrial age. In a knowledge economy, the goal is to motivate creativity and innovation in a highly skilled and educated workforce. The workers in a knowledge economy are subject matter experts who can contribute positively to organizational leadership. I believe a knowledge economy is optimized in a more horizontal organization, with clear lines of open and direct communication between the decision-makers and the innovators. Okay, I’m not recommending a change in our organizational chart… but I am outlining my rationale for the nature of the relationship among the faculty, the administration, and the board.

My view of open communication is proactive, inclusive, and mutually collaborative. A world class faculty fully engaged with its strategic plan merits transparency. We thrive in an environment where clear procedures exist for making critical decisions, and where those procedures are followed.

A world class faculty fully engaged with its strategic plan merits shared governance. If there are decisions that radically alter our campus, we insist on a seat at the table. This is not to bog down the wheels of progress in a mire of debate upon debate. We do not seek to undermine a nimble
institution that can make rapid and thoughtful decisions. We do want to offer expertise from our unique, ground-level view of daily university function. Decisions may not always go our way, but if we have a role in the discussion, we remain fully engaged in university mission success.

So, open communication with transparency and shared governance… it’s not just a necessary evil visited upon decision makers to complicate their lives. It is the golden ticket, the motivational key to unlock the enormous productivity from inspired and engaged teachers, scientists and innovators.

With open communication, we can move forward in a collaborative, coordinated manner to address Clemson University’s most pressing challenges. We must take active control of our future, our reputation, and our brand. That requires bold leadership and a campus anchored in breadth of thought. A diversity of ideas converging into one body is the essence, the literal definition of the word “university”. We must address our history in meaningful ways to define our future while owning our past. When another university is faced with the great challenges of these times, we want them to ask, “How did Clemson solve that problem?”

In conclusion, I believe that open communication with shared governance is the motivational basis for reputational enhancement and overall mission success. Working together with the board and the administration, a passionately motivated faculty can further leverage our success, and multiply our national reputation. You, the faculty, are the life spirit of Clemson. You are its central nervous system. You are the lens through which the light of this great institution illuminates the lives of the next generation. Several years ago, our leaders asked us to stand and deliver. And we did. We are a Top 20 institution with a world class student body, and staff and administration. And you surely are a Top 20 faculty and I am proud to be your colleague, your friend… and your most vocal advocate.

Thank you