Chairman Fenneman and members of the Butler University Board of Trustees, Senator Lugar, Mr. Langston, faculty, staff, students, alumni, friends, family, and distinguished colleagues, I thank you for that warm welcome and for being here to celebrate this special occasion for our University. I would also like to recognize the Butler students and professors who have performed today’s beautiful music.

I would like to express my gratitude to my lovely daughters, Melanie and Meredith; to my loving mother; to family members, and friends, for all their support over the years and for traveling to be here today; and to my wonderful wife, Bethanie, for being such an important part of my success.

I would also like to acknowledge my father, who passed away earlier this year. Throughout his career as a truck line manager in our hometown of Cleveland, he sought to lead others in a manner best articulated by St. Ignatius of Loyola: “...to give without counting the cost, to work without seeking rest, and to labor without expecting reward.” I am extremely grateful to my father for his example, his wisdom, and his encouragement.

Being entrusted with the leadership of Butler University is the single greatest privilege I have ever had. I can think of no profession more noble than the education of young people within a caring—yet challenging—academic environment, and I can think of no institution that does that better than Butler University.
As we embark upon the next chapter of Butler’s history together, I pledge to you that as the 21st president of this great University, I will do everything in my power to honor the hard work and dedication of the generations who came before us—and to help Butler achieve even higher levels of excellence for many generations to come.

A couple of months ago, Bethanie shared with me a comment she had heard from Al Barker, a trustee emeritus who has seen six presidents take the helm of our University. He explained that it had been a pleasure to work with all of them, because “each was just the right leader, at just the right time.”

What an insightful observation! Butler thrived during the tenure of my predecessor, President Bobby Fong, who is consistently cited not only for his great leadership and scholarship, but for his integrity and kindness. I would like to take a moment to thank Bobby and Suzanne Fong, who are here with us today, for their service to Butler University.

Before that, Gwen Fountain, whom we are also pleased to have on this stage today, contributed her talent to Butler in her successful role as interim president.

It is my goal to preserve and build upon the legacy of these and the many other leaders who have come before me.

The appointment of a new president provides our community with a great opportunity for self-reflection. It allows us to step back and think about where we’ve been throughout our history, where we are now, and where we’d like to go.

For my own part, as a new member of the Butler family, I have been a serious student of our University over the past 100 days. In my remarks to you today, I am going to discuss three things.

First, what have I learned?
Second, how does what I have learned intersect with my experience and beliefs? And

Third, where do we go from here?

Before I arrived on campus, my reading assignments included briefing reports from our academic and administrative divisions; Mac Waller’s history of Butler University; Roger Boop’s *Fulfilling the Charter*; and Susan Neville’s book, *Butler’s Big Dance*. I scoured our website, reading faculty biographies and student blogs, and I watched videos produced by Butler community members.

Since my arrival, I have spoken to countless students, faculty, staff, alumni, parents, civic leaders, and employers. I have asked you to share your ideas, concerns, and goals with me—and to “imagine the possibilities” by envisioning a Butler without limits.

I have met with fellow university presidents and the leaders of our athletic associations. I have attended classes and served as a guest lecturer. I have walked through our neighborhood with Senator Lugar and learned about his own family connections to Butler.

I have attended student performances, athletic events, and fundraisers. I have visited with our governor and our mayor. I have attended religious services and celebrated the Sukkot holiday with our students.

I have studied our strengths—and our challenges—within a larger context that includes the changing world of higher education, shifting demographics, and economic pressures.

So, what have I learned?

First and foremost, I have come to know and experience the “Butler Way”

While our Athletic Program uses the term to describe commitment, constant improvement, and the good of team above self, the Butler Way has become more broadly used to represent
the special manner in which we all pursue excellence in our own areas of talent for the
greater good of Butler University and society.

And in pursuit of excellence – both inside and outside of the classroom - we all strive to
maintain and support the highest ethical standards.

I have found talented faculty members who truly care about their students. I have found
students who truly care about doing things right—and doing the right thing. I have found
staff members who take tremendous pride in their work. I have found loving parents who are
engaged in the college experiences of their children. I have found alumni who give tirelessly
of themselves and find joy in being lifelong members of the Butler family.

Above all, I have come to know a University that inspires creativity and a bold, progressive
spirit of innovation; that links theory with practice in original ways; and that emphasizes
responsible citizenship—both here in our neighborhood and around the world.

Dr. Mary Mcmanus Ramsbottom and several other members of the Butler community have
created an inaugural exhibit at Irwin Library that does an extraordinary job of showcasing
Butler’s academic excellence in each of these areas. I would encourage all of you to go see
the exhibit if you haven’t already done so.

I’d like to share with you just a few of the ways in which imagination, experiential learning,
and service come together at Butler:

• two extraordinary partnerships with the Indianapolis Public School system, which have
brought about the great teaching that is happening at the Shortridge Magnet High School
and the Butler Lab School;

• the Real Life, Real Business curriculum, which empowers our students to work hands-on
with Indiana businesses;
• the Butler Community Arts School, which provides free or low-cost performing arts lessons—taught by Butler students—to hundreds of young people in our community;

• the Center for Urban Ecology and its campus farm, which will serve as a city-wide hub for teaching about food production and sustainability;

• the Communication Sciences and Disorders Program, which has provided free screenings to more than 6,000 local children;

• the student-run Butler Community Outreach Pharmacy, which provides our underserved neighbors with free medication and counseling;

• the university-wide Indianapolis Community Requirement, which ensures that all undergraduates take a course that involves active engagement with our city; and

• Clowes Memorial Hall, which enriches the lives of community members of all ages, including elementary-school children throughout the state.

Another important lesson I have learned is how our Athletic Programs distinguish Butler University, not just for the recognition gained by our successive Final Four appearances, but for the overall concerns for the academic success of all student athletes. Yes, we compete to win, but we do so with the highest level of concern for maintaining integrity and academic achievement.

Naturally, in addition to these and many other areas of strength, I have found a University that faces challenges in its pursuit of excellence.

First, we struggle with limited financial resources. With a relatively low endowment, our community is often frustrated by economic constraints, which interfere with the development and implementation of great ideas that could improve the educational experiences of our students and make a positive impact on society.
The good news here is that while we may lack resources, there is certainly no lack of vision, work ethic, or enthusiasm on our campus.

Second, we face increasing challenges in assuring that the overall student experience is as strong as possible, particularly as it involves certain non-academic areas. We need to address legitimate concerns raised by students about issues such as older housing units, study spaces, parking, and the quality and options of food on campus.

Third, we struggle with the attainment of true diversity on our campus. Since Butler’s founding, inclusivity and equality for all members of society have been fundamental to our culture. However, our theory and our practice are currently misaligned, as our campus is not reflective of the larger world.

Fourth, Butler University—along with all other traditional universities nationwide—is entering a period of turbulence unlike anything we have experienced before. The country’s economic situation, significant student debt, disappointing career placement statistics, campus closures, technological innovations, and the success of alternative educational models are harbingers of the changes we will undergo in the coming years—and to ensure that Butler comes out ahead, we need to be proactive, not reactive. Butler University will have to change.

So, how does my own experience inform what I’ve learned?

For those of you who know me, or my background, it will be no surprise to hear me say that the spirit of innovation is at the core of who I am.

I value shared leadership, collaboration, and a belief that you need to leave a place much, much better than when you arrive. I also believe in setting high expectations for yourself and for others.
I believe that open-mindedness is a necessary condition of our ability to successfully greet the opportunities and meet the challenges before us. We have to balance caution and prudence with a collective “can-do” attitude and sense of optimism. One of my mentors at Michigan’s Ross School of Business, the then-dean Joe White, called this approach the “presumption of yes,” and it’s an approach that I personally embrace.

Here at Butler, this means that if someone has a great and reasonable idea, and is willing to work to implement that idea, and it makes sense for the benefit of our students, then we must find a way to make it happen.

I believe strongly in providing high-quality service. I made this a priority in my own company, and I have seen over the past 20 years that this principle is just as important in higher education as it is in business.

Someone at Butler commented to me, and I cannot recall who, “If you’re not serving a student, you’d better be serving someone who’s serving a student.” That was a great observation, although perhaps we expand it to say “If you’re not teaching or serving a student.”

Those of us in university administration should understand our role as one of service and support to our academic mission. We need to provide high-quality service to our students—and to those who are serving and teaching our students—in a thoughtful, respectful, and supportive way.

I believe that greater recognition of Butler University as one of the finest academic institutions in the United States is fundamental to our success. It’s a goal we can achieve, and a goal we should pursue. Yes—our men’s basketball team has done a fantastic job of bringing us to the attention of a national audience. But that is just the beginning.

Finally, there is simply no excuse for a lack of integrity in all that we do. We are hearing far too many stories in the world of higher education that call into question ethical standards. As
educators entrusted with the development of young minds, we have a responsibility to be role models for the highest ethical standards possible. At Butler University we will continue to take that responsibility seriously.

The Search Committee and Board of Trustees had the confidence to bring us together in a partnership formed to pursue—and achieve—great things for Butler University. Now, at the conclusion of my first 100 days, I am more excited than ever to be here, and to work with you as our community reaches its full potential.

So, where do we go from here?

First—and most immediately—we need to focus our collective energy on formalizing our shared vision for Butler University over the short and long term. While we do this, we must continue to move forward without missing a beat.

I recognize that a lot of hard work and energy has gone into developing strategic and operational initiatives across the University. Yes—we may need to reassess certain decisions; but for the most part, let us continue our momentum.

The most important part of this shared vision will be its focus on our academic mission.

We will align great faculty with great students. We will empower all our colleges—with Liberal Arts and Sciences at the core—and all our academic divisions, centers, and faculty members to be the very best they can be. We will support academic improvements and invest in great teaching and scholarship.

And in pursuit of our academic mission, we will make our campus more diverse and reflective of the larger world.

Second, we will proactively address the dramatic changes that are occurring in the world of higher education. We will be agile, open-minded, and creative as we consider and change
some of our own approaches. In the midst of such innovation, however, we will not lose sight of who we are. We will protect, nurture, and celebrate the Butler way of educating, while retaining the traditions and characteristics that make our University great.

For example, we are a caring community that values the teacher-scholar model. We want our professors to continue being great educators, mentors, role models, and guides through the journey of intellectual discovery. Our fundamental Butler values and characteristics will not change. However, the new world in which we live compels us to think differently about how we educate.

Third, we will work aggressively to deliver against the value proposition expected by our students in all that we do. Butler has defined itself as particularly focused on a quality, student experience – and an education that ultimately leads to a fulfilling life and career. Our approach is why many are willing to pay to attend this university. It is important that we stay focused on this mission, and assure a strong, quality experience both inside and outside the classroom.

Fourth, we must engage our alumni in the success of our University even more proactively. The extent to which our alumni increasingly provide their time, talent, support, and loyalty to Butler University will be crucial to the outcome of all our efforts moving forward. The good news is that the passion for Butler among our alumni is extraordinarily high. By and large, our alumni are motivated and interested in helping Butler – we just need to be more proactive in engaging them in the future success of their university.

Fifth, we must improve our financial position. Our endowment is relatively low, and we are too dependent on tuition revenues. While we must enhance our fundraising efforts, we must also consider ways to grow our revenues through new educational initiatives.

Finally, we need to invest in ideas. Yes—we have capital needs, personnel needs, salary needs—but ideas are the lifeblood of any great university. Ideas will provide opportunities for our future.
I have heard many wonderful, creative ideas from Butler community members over the past 100 days; and it is this creativity that makes me confident about our future. We must invest in those ideas.

As such, I am pleased to announce the establishment of a new $5 million Butler Innovation Fund. With similarities to a venture capital fund, this Fund will enable us to invest in the ideas that emerge from this great University—recognizing that while not all ideas will be successful, enough of them will be successful to help advance our institution to national prominence and to improve the education we provide to our students.

Through the Fund, financial support will be allocated to projects and programs developed by our faculty, staff, and students. The most deserving ideas—selected by a diverse group of Butler community members—will be placed on a “funding fast track” through a streamlined approval process.

Bethanie and I have personally invested in the Fund and—thanks to the generosity of our Board of Trustee members and other donors—in just the past two weeks, we have raised over $1 million for the Fund. I greatly appreciate such strong and immediate support, especially from our generous Trustees.

By inviting me to serve as president of Butler University, you have given me your own Presumption of Yes, and for that, I am deeply grateful. You have entrusted me with the stewardship of this exceptional institution—where Bethanie and I already feel so welcome—and I commit myself fully to its success. Our University can—and will—realize the great possibilities we imagine today.

Thank you.