I want to take the occasion today to share with you what one might consider valedictory or farewell remarks as I contemplate the end of my tenure as Dean of the College of Education and Human Services. As you know, I will continue in this role through June, 2014; however, today is the final opportunity I will have to share with you, the faculty, and selected staff, during an actual Faculty Assembly meeting. The customary format of my Dean’s Report during these meetings has been to provide updates of University decisions and priorities impacting the College, to advise faculty on current events in the College, and to identify events in the community and within the policy arena that affect our work. I will vary from that format today to offer some reflections about the 14 years I have been in leadership at UNF and to project some of the important things we might consider in the future as I look to serving the College in a different role.

I first visited the University of North Florida in the Spring of 2000 when interviewing for the position of Associate Dean of the College of Education and Human Services. At the time, I knew relatively little about Jacksonville or UNF even though I had lived within three hours of Jacksonville at an earlier time in my life. I was impressed by the attractive, serene campus and the friendly, optimistic spirit of the fine group of professionals I met during my visit. Several weeks later I received a call from then Dean Katherine Kasten offering me the position. I was excited about the possibilities I saw at UNF and accepted that offer enthusiastically. Professional moves often lead to major life changes, and such was the case with my coming to UNF. I moved my wife and two of my four children—one in elementary and one in high school—and left my older son in college in Texas to fend for himself without his immediate family nearby.
I quickly learned that UNF faculty and staff wanted to work collaboratively together and valued the contributions that everyone offered to the University community. Early faculty in the College of Education who made a major positive impact on my transition to UNF included Dean Kasten, John Venn—one of the most genuine and reliable professionals with whom I have ever worked; Charles Galloway—who was the first person I met at UNF; Paul Eggen, Ellie Scheirer, and Jim Mittelstadt—each of whom, in his or her own unique way served as elder statespersons among the faculty; Cathy O’Farrell and John Kemppainen, who have exemplified a commitment to service and collaboration that is second to none; and Bernadine Bolden and Otilia Salmon, who early in my tenure here showed me excellent examples of what commitment to diversity looked like at UNF.

As time progressed, I learned in 2003 that Dean Kasten was desiring to return to the faculty. The Dean position would be opened to a national search. I placed my name for consideration with the search committee, participated in an interview, and during a Spring 2004 Academic Affairs retreat, Dr. David Kline called me aside to let me know that an offer was forthcoming. I assumed the Dean position in the late summer of 2004. This position has been the most rewarding of my entire career, and now, 10 years later, I am as equally excited about assuming my new role in the College as I was about assuming the Deanship back then.

Many changes have occurred during my tenure as Dean:

- The face of the College is truly different—I have had some involvement in the hiring of almost 90% of the faculty and staff currently serving the College. We have hired some of the brightest new talent that I have seen in all my years in higher education. We are new people with new ideas about what our College and the University should and will become.
- Many of our former colleagues have retired or moved on to other professional opportunities.
- Three of our colleagues—Sebastian Foti, Sharian Deering, and Cassie Etgeton—unexpectedly passed away with little warning to any of us that these too-young-to-die colleagues would be leaving us, and reminding us
that every moment of our lives, personally and professionally, is to be savored and appreciated.

- We now occupy a state-of-the-art facility that is suited so well to the needs of our College, its people, and our programs. Those of you who made the transition from the old facilities in Schultz Hall can remember the former challenges we had with facilities! The reorganized units we created early in my tenure as Dean truly came to life when we moved into Petway Hall with its physical setup ready for those units and other growth and change we were to experience.

- We have seen changes in the schools and agencies that we serve. We have strengthened existing partnerships and initiated new ones. Our work in urban schools continues to be our calling card and signature identity. We have received multiple recognitions and awards for our work in the Urban Professional Development Schools, we have forged new partnerships in urban schools via our Counselor Education and Secondary Education programs, and we have now initiated special district cohort programs for school leadership. We have embraced a host of new community leaders and agencies that have enriched our college and will serve as a platform for our external work in years to come.

- We have set up important partnerships with other parts of the University, most notably Student Affairs, and we have evidence of those partnerships in the neighbors who occupy Petway Hall along with the College.

- Our departments have embraced University initiatives relative to community engagement and international education, and we have developed some of the most outstanding work in these areas throughout the University.

- We have begun new academic programs, and these programs, in many cases have broadened who we are as a college. Sport management, which began as a fledgling program track in Physical Education, has now become our largest College program and is on the verge of obtaining national accreditation. Likewise, our programs in American Sign Language Interpreting have more recently moved from an idea in the mind of a
couple of faculty to thriving programs that are attracting students nationwide. We have initiated and brought to maturity a thriving Educator Preparation Institute allowing us to get fully into an emerging alternative certification market that could have—but did not—pass us up. Further, our new track in Higher Education Leadership is quickly growing into a premier program in that area.

None of us is successful in leadership without a tremendous support network around us. Indeed, we stand tallest when we stand on the shoulders of strong people. I cannot express thanks enough to Associate Dean Marsha Lupi who has been a true friend, professional confidante, and full administrative partner in the leadership of our wonderful College. I could not have done this job effectively without the continual support and friendship of Dr. Lupi. As well, I express my thanks to Linda Sciarratta who is, hands down, the most outstanding staff person I have been privileged to have work for me, and one of the most creative problem solvers I have ever known. Pat Hanford, a development officer extraordinaire, has been a true community collaborator in the best sense of the word, and has done much to advance the reputation of our College and profession. I also must extend praise to the fine staff who have served the Dean’s Office during my tenure. We have developed a “family” atmosphere among our folks, and Tiffany King, Patti Robbins, and Deirdre Meehan, have been valuable members of our support network. I have also been privileged to serve alongside many fine chairs and directors who have led our departments and College offices—Janice Seabrooks-Blackmore, Ken Wilburn, Sandra Gupton, Joyce Jones, Jennifer Kane, John Venn, Nile Stanley, Len Roberson, Karen Patterson, Otilia Salmon, Newton Jackson, Jeff Cornett, John Ouyang, John Kemppainen, Cathy O’Farrell, Claribel Torres-Lugo, Betty Bennett, and Mary Rose—and I think that is a complete list!

As we look to the future of the College, I will reflect, first, upon what my own role and contribution will be. Three things have fueled me professionally throughout my career—working with students, being involved in meaningful research and scholarship, and making a difference in the community and for our profession. My new role in the College will allow me to maximize efforts in all of these areas.
I will assume the position of Full Professor in Educational Leadership within the LSCSM department. I will have the privilege of working with our outstanding graduate students, teaching courses in research methods and leadership, and assisting students in developing their doctoral dissertations. I will also be serving as Executive Director of our Center for Urban Education and Policy. In this role, I will have occasion to engage with our wonderful community with the important goal of advancing opportunities for urban teachers and students. The Center will be an important arm of the College focused on improving educational policy for our College, the profession, schools, teachers, and children. I will also be able to devote enhanced effort to research and writing—and this is a part of the work about which I am especially excited. There are many ideas I have developed and germinated upon over the years I have been an educational leader, and I can’t wait to share more of them with our field via professional scholarship.

I also want to project on the future of the College generally. As I transition over the next months from faculty administrator to informal faculty leader and group participant, I offer the following seven things for our College to think about.

1. We will get to where we are going most effectively if we do it cooperatively. The new communication and collaboration initiative being embraced by the Faculty Assembly has promise for advancing a way to work that will make sense for everyone and value the contribution of each member of our College community. As my late father often advised me, “Do the right thing.” Doing the right thing means taking good action in such a way that we also respect and maximize the contribution of each person around us. Openness and transparency always win out over underhandedness and one-upsmanship.

2. We will accomplish most when we embrace the community around us. That means that we must think broadly and creatively about the audiences and potential partners that we work with. We must view education the way our community sees it and work to reshape perspectives and build new initiatives with a full understanding of the ideas and viewpoints of others.
We will be most effective when we appreciate multiple viewpoints and when we lead by modeling exceptional collaboration.

3. We must continue to expand the excellent partnership work that we do so well. Work in the PDSs and other quality partnerships should continue to be our calling card. Likewise, the excellent community partnerships we have developed in Sport Management, and the national partnerships with the video relay industry we have done in ASL Interpreting should also be well funded and expanded. Our new Jacksonville Teacher Residency Program has potential to put UNF and Jacksonville on the proverbial professional map in a whole new way. JTR and other new partnerships are clearly in the cards as we plan our future as a College.

4. We must continue to think internationally, to build and seek funding for more international experiences for our students, and to think of other ways to explore making our curriculum as globally focused as possible.

5. We must continue to build our reputation as a scholarly college. It is incumbent upon us to go after more external dollars, to plan and execute grant-funded initiatives, and to increase the number of refereed published works coming out of the College annually. UNF has struggled to determine what part that research plays in its mission, and the COEHS has an excellent opportunity to demonstrate excellent models of what scholarship should be at UNF. We especially can showcase the importance of community based scholarship in the work we do.

6. In that vein, we must continue to find ways to invest in our own people. We have maintained University and College commitments to travel funding and reassigned research time to junior colleagues, and it is important that we continue to explore ways to help faculty be productive. We also do not want to forget about our professional and support staff. These talented women and men serve our unit effectively at a much smaller level of remuneration than the actual compensation their quality of work would demand. Any reasonable thing we can do to maximize their recognition and work environment is worth the effort.
7. We must continue to seek out funding to market ourselves better. UNF has long been among the best kept secrets in higher education. We no longer want to be a secret. We offer some of the best programs in education and related disciplines anywhere, and we need to market what we do to students both inside and outside Florida.

In closing, I remind you that you work at a very special place. Higher education provides us with unique opportunities and privileges that many other workplaces cannot offer. More particularly, UNF is a growing institution that needs the best that every one of us can offer. We are not so young that we don’t have traditions and not so old that new ideas can’t be considered. I look forward to working with you and our new College leadership to make the COEHS the best unit on the UNF campus. I trust that we all regularly practice valuing people over initiatives and that we continue to strive for excellence in all that we do. An old maxim states:

Good, better, best.
Never let it rest
Till the good is the better,
And the better is the best.

Thank you, and congratulations to all for your part in what we have achieved and will continue to achieve in the College of Education and Human Services.