I want to express my gratitude for the tremendous welcome I have received since coming to the University of Denver. Doug Scrivner, Chair of the Board of Trustees, has been an engaged partner and a thoughtful leader. Special thanks to the members of the Board, our faculty, our staff, our students and alumni, who have built this great institution and are eager to move DU upward, forward and outward. I am honored to have with us Chancellors Emeriti Ritchie and Coombe, who laid our foundation and imagined our future in ways I will do my best to realize. And I want to thank Governor Hickenlooper, Mayor Hancock and all my colleagues who participated in today’s panels on the importance of higher education in the state of Colorado. Thank you, President Jill Tiefenthaler and President Bruce Benson, for your keynote contributions.

I also want to thank my family—especially my beloved husband, Fred, as well as Kathy, Bob, Nate and Lisa—who support me in so many ways, including my incessant desire to hike these beautiful mountains. I want to thank my friends and colleagues whose daily work brings such joy to this collaborative enterprise. Higher education isn’t just a job to us: it is an adventure, a mission and a launching pad for the transformation of lives and society.

Today we have discussed how, together, higher education institutions can strengthen Colorado through the creation of knowledge across all sectors and in our communities. We have asked how each institution, in our own distinct way, can recruit and shape future leaders who will imagine new possibilities for themselves and their families—and for our communities, our state and our nation.

Our rigorous discussions highlight the unique partnership between higher education and democracy in the United States. Democracy and education in this country share common values—a commitment to equal opportunity, our wariness of the inertia of tradition, a restlessness with the status quo and our quest always to make society better. We are a people who believe passionately in the rights of the individual and the importance of the common good—as well as an obligation to work toward a better world. Our democratic ideals make our unique and diverse system of higher education the engine for the future of our society.
When people ask me what I do for a living, I like to say that I help create future makers. But let us also tell the truth: Our nation and our institutions of higher education often fall short of our aspirations. Unfortunately, we share tragic histories of injustice, including the denial of freedoms and the intrinsic and legal rights of Native American peoples, specifically with respect to the Arapahoe and Cheyenne tribes who once lived and thrived on this very land. The events of Sand Creek, and the suffering experienced there, bear stark witness to injustice, injustice that we now aspire to make right. Even as such events from our past remind us of our failures, our renewed ideals and aspirations provoke us to strive for justice and fuel our impatience to do even better for all people.

In the nearly 400 years since the founding of Harvard University, American higher education has changed dramatically—time and time again—to help our democracy address new needs and to propel us into the future.

- In 1862, when the country wanted to improve the economic drivers of the day—agriculture and industry—Abraham Lincoln signed the Morrill Act to establish land-grant institutions in each state “in order to promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes in the several pursuits and professions in life.”
- When our nation and universities proudly welcomed our GIs home after World War II, Quonset huts were quickly built to accommodate the needs for housing and classrooms, and faculties across the nation adapted their pedagogy and curriculum to educate a student body that by 1948 was 50 percent veterans.
- In the 1950s and 1960s, when our economy needed new workers, people of color and increased numbers of women entered our colleges and universities. The 1960s saw a doubling of college enrollments. Universities hired more faculty than they had in the prior 325 years.
- When the Soviet Union launched Sputnik in 1957, the United States accelerated research by turning to the academic community for help. Historians refer to the 1960s through the 1980s as a “golden age” for higher education. Federal and state governments poured in funds for research and student support, while enrollments boomed.

Our society has supported higher education time and again, and, in response, higher education has met the demands of changing times.

Our democracy and increasingly the world have sent us more and more students of differing abilities, ages and cultural backgrounds. In 1900, just under 240,000 people in this country attended college—a mere 3 to 4 percent of the population. Today we have over 20 million students who study at over 4,700 institutions. “Education and work are the levers to lift up a people,” said W.E.B. DuBois, and that has been, and should be, our educational gospel at home and abroad.

To this government of the people, by the people and for the people, higher education is such a vital public good that our essential activities are exempt from taxation. Subsidies for financial aid, though they are dramatically less than 20 years ago, have allowed us to open our doors ever more widely. Federal, state and local
investment has fueled scholarly and professional research to improve society in both the present moment and in the long run.

And, perhaps most important of all, our friends, alumni and parents have invested in us in ways small and large. Without financial aid, I would have never been able to earn any of my degrees. On this campus, I am awed by the philanthropic generosity that fuels our excellence. Look around at DU’s buildings, and you will see names of Reed and Ritchie, Sturm and Sie, Anderson and Newman, Nagel and Burns, Morgridge and Daniels. And each year tens of thousands of alumni and friends support the University with gifts of all sizes. You will hear about pioneering programs to serve veterans, diagnose autism, study healthy aging or bridge the study of religion and international relations. Thank goodness that philanthropists continue to believe, to quote Ben Franklin, that “an investment in knowledge pays the best interest.”

Of course, good and productive partners can also disagree from time to time. Rigorous debate is a hallmark of both effective education and democracy. With freedom and our collective future on the line, higher education is a critic who is also a lover of this democracy: protesting McCarthyism, defending free speech and intellectual freedom, demanding immigration reform in the 19th, 20th and yes, again, in the 21st centuries and debating still today, expanded opportunities for women, people of color and others in this country.

Democracy, our good partner, has often turned the tables of critique on us. Great debates have ensued: science versus religion in the 1860s, or the recurring debates regarding whether higher education should be classical or utilitarian in its approach. Indeed, from the Morrill Act in 1862 to the Golden Age of Research starting in the 1960s, each transformative period for higher education was born out of great criticism within our democracy.

We are again at such a juncture, and we must consider carefully the challenges and critiques we are called upon to address. Tuition is too high, student loans are too onerous and the pricing model has become too confusing. Technology is not used enough, is too expensive or is damaging the cultural fabric because we use it too much. Millennials are too entitled. We are not reaching the underprivileged. Athletics are too professionalized. Greek life is too infused with hazing and violence. Political correctness hampers free speech. Students are not being challenged enough academically. The needs of employers are not being met. Education is bloated, ineffective, unaccountable and entirely out of touch with the times. New, nimble, entrepreneurial communities and organizations are leaving models of education founded in the 19th century in the dust.

Times are unsettled—we live in a vortex of complexity, pressure and swirling winds of disruption.

And yet, this kind of vortex is precisely where transformation can occur. As the poet Audre Lorde observed, “Out of chaos, creation is born.” And I believe that DU is ready to be a crucible: we are ready to lead positive change.

The University of Denver is stepping forward. Over the last year, we have spoken with over 2,500 people: students, faculty, staff, friends and critics in Denver and the surrounding region; alumni; parents; and partners throughout the state and around the country. We have done our research and interviewed numerous experts.
Most importantly, we have worked closely with our Board of Trustees to craft a direction forward that allows us to seize the moment for our own transformation.

Our plan, which we are calling DU IMPACT 2025, presents a new model of higher education that is designed to move our high-engagement, high-value university forward over the next decade. Guiding this plan are four transformative directions united by common themes that reflect our history, strength and values: (1) using traditional and experiential learning to equip students with the knowledge, skills and competencies they need to succeed and thrive in 21st-century careers, organizations and communities; (2) expanding teaching, research and scholarship to serve as knowledge bridges across schools, institutes and centers, focusing on contemporary problems and opportunities, and supporting our faculty in their teaching, scholarship and service; (3) engaging more closely with neighbors and partners in Denver, the region and the world in order to serve the public good; and (4) developing a connected, intentional, united community (One DU) that supports our alumni as key collaborators in our mission and as global ambassadors while providing life-long engagement in learning and career networking. Underlying these efforts is a commitment to financial health, shared governance, continuous strategic planning, measurement and accountability. The following graphic represents our ideas:

**FOUR TRANSFORMATIVE DIRECTIONS MAKE UP DU IMPACT 2025**

- **EDUCATE & EMPOWER**
  Students to chart their future, work in teams and build diverse communities.

- **CREATE ONE DU**
  An inclusive, engaging environment to support our aspirations.

- **DESIGN knowledge & COLLABORATE**
  To create, preserve, transmit and apply knowledge.

- **IMPACT Denver**
  By using our capacities and engaging with others to serve the public good.
DU IMPACT 2025 outlines a vision of a modern urban global university dedicated to the public good—an institution that cultivates an inclusive community to prepare students to lead lives of impact and benefits Denver and society through its research, teaching and service. To conclude the plan, we share what we believe our vision promises to our students—for their lives, careers and civic engagement and what we, in turn, believe the University requires of them. Everything we do depends on our ability to offer an accessible, transformative education for our students. As they engage fully with DU, we want them to know what they will receive.

Let me preview some images of our future by looking back 10 years from today, on September 18, 2025:

**Snapshot #1: Students Striving for Success.**
It is 2025, and the University has pioneered a new conception of education to ensure that students flourish in the complex, creative and rapidly changing work and living environments of a globalized 21st century. DU transforms how students learn to think critically and lead intentionally—using new pedagogies, hands-on internships and career development that help students actively engage with the world while reflecting on the self. Our classrooms and laboratories eliminate barriers and merge the spaces of the campus, the city, the region, the state and the world. In addition to an academic transcript, our students create portfolios to track and show—visually—their skills, passions and accomplishments in and out of the classroom. Back in 2016, we replaced the old residential hall model with new interactive neighborhoods where students eagerly take on the responsibility to lead their communities. And a decade later, because our alumni, friends and parents serve as mentors, our graduates succeed as they live with confidence and purpose in new careers, engage in new cultures and create new ways of being and doing in their communities.

**Snapshot #2: Designing Knowledge.**
In 2025, our Center for Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Technology serves the Rocky Mountain West as a catalyst for industry-education partnerships, something Colorado has come to be known for, along with Stanford on the West Coast and MIT in the East. What is distinct about our Center is that artists, psychologists and lawyers work side-by-side with engineers, mathematicians and anthropologists in DU Design Studios across our state to learn from and help improve underprivileged and underrepresented communities. DU’s Knowledge Bridges—cross-school initiatives at the frontiers of knowledge and practice—attract faculty from around the world who are eager to address problems and design knowledge collaboratively with some of the most focused and most gifted students in the country. Over 10 years, we have developed global partnerships with universities here and around the world that allow faculty, civic leaders and students to engage with problems and issues together.

**Snapshot # 3: Impact Denver and the Rocky Mountain West.**
In 2025, what Union Station is for transportation, the University of Denver has become for connecting problem solvers and opportunity builders in the Rocky Mountain West. One year, for example, our Rocky
Mountain Challenges—a joint university-community effort—focused 20 percent of academic courses taught that year on water, and the Institute for Social Policy Research convened national discussions to raise consciousness about water and develop real-world policy recommendations. Working together nationally and locally, we now have a plan for water management in the Western states for the next 50 years. We now use our campus as a sophisticated base camp, constantly exploring and being active in Denver and the Rocky Mountain West, serving on boards, working in schools and establishing innovation hubs and cultural events. By 2025, our wide-open campus is the go-to place for problem solving, playing with ideas, promoting cultural events and maintaining wellness in our arboretum and at the Ritchie Center.

**Snapshot #4: One DU.**

In 2025, the University of Denver is a place of belonging, engagement and meaning in a world with too few enduring communities. Alumni and friends say that belonging to DU is one of the most important values and best resources in their lives. Back in 2016, DU introduced a new standard for research universities: an intentional community that is anchored in values, flexible in structures and aspirational in its pursuit of the intertwined goals of excellence, inclusivity and innovation—all dedicated to improving the world. We started with new traditions to link our schools; a renovated Community Commons to provide spaces for students, faculty, staff and friends to gather; more housing around campus; and even greater excellence in lacrosse, hockey, gymnastics and other sports—all leading to a wonderful spirit of unity.

I am honored to be your chancellor at this pivotal moment in the University’s history and in the history of our city, our state, our region and our nation. What a privilege it is for Fred and me to be here in this beautiful, vibrant, thriving, growing, exciting place!

Just as this city and region work hard to transform themselves, DU and all our sister institutions of higher education must also work hard to transform ourselves.

There is a thrilling and deeply fulfilling future ahead of us—if we only create it.

I’m all in! I hope all of you will join me.