The challenge we face in higher education is to foster, among all, a willingness and an aptitude to evolve to a rapidly shifting landscape, while holding firm to our core values. The outstanding academic and administrative leaders sharing the stage and in the audience today know the delicate balance we walk. I thank you for the deep knowledge you bring, for your dedication, and for your endurance—qualities that matter more than you know, and that will move this university to even greater success.

The future of Central rests in the hands of our faculty and our staff, represented by the leaders present on stage. You fulfill our commitment to our mission—to teach, to create, to conduct research, and to serve. Your passion for learning, and your commitment to the success of every student is exceptional. You are what makes Central an outstanding place to work, live and learn. Your great contributions are seen in the life of every student.

General James Mattis, an alumnus, remarked during his commencement address here in 2011 that a combination of humility, drive, creativity, and a lingering pioneer spirit distinguishes our students from those at the other universities he visits. I agree, and am pleased that the president of our Student Government is on stage today. Yosef, thank you. And we thank your colleagues as well for placing your trust in us. You couldn’t make us more proud.

The students that President Gamble represents are the embodiment of my remarks today. Like all generations of students, they differ in many significant ways from the faculty who teach them and the staff who support them. That has always been the case, but these students live in a world far different from the one most of us find comfortable. Their success and the future of this university, rest in our ability to adapt to them—rather than the reverse.
The fundamental challenge we face is to boldly change, while staying true to what is Central—a term I use intentionally for its double meaning. Advancing the social and economic health of the region by providing access to a rigorous educational experience has been at the heart of our mission for almost 125 years. That will not change.

Access to higher education has been a fundamental goal for our nation for at least a century, as evidenced by landmark policies such as:

• The Morrill Act, which created state, land-grant universities
• Two GI Bills, which have provided college education to hundreds of thousands of veterans, and
• The Pell Grant, which provides financial support for college education for students with financial need.

Despite these efforts, only about 25 percent of our country’s residents have earned a bachelor’s degree. The best predictor of educational achievement is still family income. And, too often, it seems that for-profit institutions are more interested in access to baccalaureate education than are public universities.

Even with such a low benchmark, Washington State performs poorly in the percent of 18-24 year olds who are enrolled in universities. We also rank below all but one state in per-student funding of its universities. That simply won’t do.

The economic affects of this failure will be long lasting. Economic and labor studies repeatedly show an increasing demand for an educated workforce, particularly in our state. And its negative impacts extend well beyond the job market. Education is a potent
Inoculation against some of society’s most intractable ills, such as crime, poor health, racism, civic apathy, and cynicism.

I am certain that Washington’s high-tech industries will find the labor they require, because they will continue to recruit educated employees from outside our state.

What I worry about is what will be left for Washington residents?

This trend also concerns leaders within both the private and public sectors. Often, they express their frustration with our higher education system. They see universities as slow to change and unable—or unwilling—to address the obvious need to serve more students, to adopt new technologies, and generally to increase efficiency and effectiveness.

There are elements of truth in their criticism. As described by Andrew Rosen in his book, Harvard Envy, some within the academy and in society in general, cling to elitist aspirations. In many ways, the academy remains a system of guilds that holds strongly to tradition, self-set standards, in-house assessment, and long apprenticeships.

Our critics question the wisdom of that model, because, as higher education journalist, Goldie Blumenstyk, asserts, we face revolutionary rather than evolutionary forces. In her new book, American Higher Education in Crisis?, she discusses the dizzying pace, number, complexity, and inter-dependence of transformations in 21st Century education.

Among the many factors described, Blumenstyk includes the technological innovations and disruptive market
forces that are, “buffeting colleges and universities at the very time their financial structure grows increasingly fragile.” Sadly, she also makes it clear that higher education is reacting to, rather than leading, broad social, demographic, economic, technological, and political trends.

In every major address I have delivered at Central, I have voiced the refrain that we need to seize control of our future. I now believe we are finding our voice and our pathway. We are developing new means to reach the ends we value. And, most important, we are changing, and I am proud of the bold steps we have taken that are now starting to pay dividends.

Provost Marilyn Levine has been leading change in the academic life of our faculty and students. Several years ago, we reorganized student activities from a stand-alone division headed by a vice president to a component of an expanded division of Academic and Student Life. Dean Sarah Swager heads the new unit and works with the other deans charged with our educational programs. That change was intended to emphasize the essential linkages between a student’s life inside and outside the classroom.

While the model has strong historical roots, it was seen as trend-setting and controversial when we implemented it. It has taken a while for the seeds of cooperation to germinate, but a number of sprouts are now showing.

For example, under the leadership of Sharynn Walker and renewed engagement by faculty members, our Academic Service Learning program is growing in size and quality. Professors Eric Cheney and Michele Reilly are developing robust opportunities for faculty engagement and development.
Under the leadership of Dean Swager and Associate Dean Jesse Nelson, a new system of professional advising is being built that allows our faculty to spend less time counseling students on specific course requirements and more time on their roles as teachers and mentors.

Our faculty are reaching across traditional organizational lines to create new programs. For example, faculty within the College of Business are working with Manuel Rodriguez and the staff of the Center for Excellence in Leadership to develop a program based jointly on classroom activities and community-based experiences.

Dr. Elvin Delgado earned start-up funding from Central’s innovation fund to develop an Institute for Integrated Energy Management within the College of the Sciences. The program will foster interdisciplinary instruction, research, and service related to conventional and renewable energy resources.

With the counsel of Vice President Scott Wade and the support of a private foundation, Dr. Ken Cohen established the International Sustainable Development Institute. This student-centered initiative delivers international experiential learning and provides students opportunities to develop social entrepreneurial enterprises.

Professor Kandee Cleary, in her role as Diversity and Inclusivity Officer, reorganized the centers under her supervision and engaged the Human Resources Division to better serve students, faculty, and staff. The positive results of these efforts have earned Central the prestigious Higher Education Excellence in Diversity Award. CWU is one of only 83 institutions nationwide, and the only four-year institution in Washington State, to be honored by INSIGHT Into Diversity magazine. Similar recognition was given to Central by Campus Pride, which selected Central as one of the top 50 LGBT-
Friendly schools in the nation (and one of just two in the state). The recognition highlights the positive efforts to improve safety and academic life for LGBTQ students.

Reaching out to under-represented students is deeply rooted in everything we do. For example, Professor Wendy Bohrson has recently completed the successful, final year of an NSF STEP grant for that purpose. Audrey Huerta and Alison Scoville are on a first year of a multi-year cycle in the STEM-SOLVER grant with cohorts of Native American and Hispanic students.

Just as we did decades ago with our distributed learning centers, we continue to reach out to place-bound students. Today, Central offers more online degrees than any of the other five public four-year institutions. We also have more students participating in those programs. Only last week, the not-for-profit organization, Affordable Colleges Online, listed our online Psychology Degree on its list of top programs for 2015. The selection was based on a combination of online program quality, affordability and student support.

We are responding to calls for change, and, more important, doing it in ways that meet our mission and our core values. We are embracing the goal of access while assuring a quality education. And, we continue to embrace the dual traditions of liberal and professional education.

The recent efforts of our Faculty Senate to articulate specific learning outcomes for our general education sequence, and our successes in achieving accreditation of our professional programs, are testimonies to our success in balancing the two traditions. I applaud our faculty, and particularly our Senate, for these achievements.
Change is also taking place within our Operations Division, led by Vice President Stevan DeSoer. The most visible to most of us is the construction of the facility we refer to as “Science Phase II.” Bill Yarwood reports with a smile that his teams are on budget and on schedule for an opening in the fall of 2016. Plans are now underway to repurpose and renovate Lind Hall as soon as the Departments of Physics and Geology have moved into their new home in Science II.

Renovation of the now-vacant Samuelson Student Union Building is our top-priority large capital project. If funded by the legislature, the building will host the departments of Computer Science, Mathematics, and Information Technology Administrative Management, and will provide modern facilities for the development of online learning curricula. I was delighted to learn in December that the governor has proposed to fully fund this facility. In addition, nine of our smaller projects were among the top 15 of his priorities.

These projects will add to what is clearly a strength of Central—its outstanding physical plant. While we have been fortunate to have received funding to build new structures, even more important are the outstanding crews that maintain 97 buildings on more than 430 acres. Those spaces total 3.3 million square feet, are from 2 to 120 years old, and contain every imaginable technology, system, and finish. Our staff not only safeguards our capital investment, they make this a beautiful and functional place to work, and they make our campus one of our top new-student recruiting tools.

Less visible than our physical plant is the outstanding work of the iCAT project teams. iCAT is an acronym for “Improving Central’s Applications and Technology.” At its core is the transfer of outdated paper processes to faster, more efficient, and transparent digital systems. Perhaps the biggest “lift” for this huge undertaking has been the full adoption of PeopleSoft, the massive software program we use to manage the administrative
systems that touch just about every single employee and every student.

For most of us, MyCWU represents the most visible iCAT change. This service gives each of us windows to key functions, from our leave balances to our purchases and travel authorizations. But behind the scenes is a new system that records and tracks employees from hire, to promotion, to retirement. iCAT also improves the “campus solutions” package that facilitates the work of faculty, records grades, and allows students to register for classes. It also tracks financial aid awards from the beginning to the end of students’ academic careers.

A new financial services module processes purchasing, travel, and all of the nuts and bolts of our accounting systems. As the project draws to completion, we’re able to document cost savings. For example, the conversion to cloud-based systems and to Microsoft products such as Outlook and Active Directory, have allowed us to eliminate 90 servers from our data center. We are also reducing the number and amount of licensing fees, and fewer people are required to maintain the new system.

We also discovered that past practices sometimes omitted a consideration of the overall effect of system decisions. The iCAT project has heightened our awareness of the need to view our systems on a “enterprise” basis. We’ve also developed processes and procedures to establish project priorities, true cost of operation, and potential sharing of resources.

The project also enabled the development of a data warehouse—a single collection place for the data that describe our work and the analysis that informs it. It’s illuminating new possibilities for better advising, smarter recruiting, and faster reporting. Now we can tie our work more precisely to indicators in our strategic plan, and we are gaining insights into what works and what doesn’t. Best of all, the Office of Organizational
Effectiveness is making this information available in real-time to anyone with a MyCWU password and the curiosity to know more.

Under the leadership of Vice President George Clark, budget and finance staff also have assumed leadership of two critical change-based projects. The last stages of the iCAT project involve creating new budgeting and reporting systems and a more streamlined way of monitoring our revenue and expenses.

At the heart of the change is a new approach that drives more decision-making to our academic colleges. This model, often called “responsibility-center management,” is helping deans and department chairs gain a more detailed understanding of their units.

The leadership of Vice President Clark’s and long hours spend by our Provost and deans are combining to create a new way of managing our resources and making decisions. Academic leaders now can understand in detail the implications of the decisions they make, and we’re already seeing innovative new ideas for both revenue growth and cost reduction. In fact the proposed budget I presented to the Board of Trustees last month assumes more than $2 million dollars of new tuition revenue that the deans and Provost Levine believe will be generated by new academic programs next year.

The second project being led by Vice President Clark is studying the overhead costs for administrative system. His work, supported by our division leadership, is trimming more than $3 million dollars from our base admin expenses. Vice President Clark also commissioned a benchmarking study by a national management firm. They have compared our costs to national and regional norms, and they’re finding that, in most instances, our overhead costs are below average. When the study is completed and fully analyzed, we hope to have additional ideas for reducing overhead costs so we can
continue to direct support for student success.

The self-confidence you show in taking these and other projects is inspiring. I know that it results from the pride you have in the quality of the education we give our students, and the value we add to their lives, irrespective of their academic background, their race or ethnicity, or their financial status. I’m proud of your work, and you should be proud as well—proud of what you do, and proud of the way you do it.

It is true that the traditions of the academy do not always give credit to what we do. Although we love to top the charts when it happens, we have intentionally chosen not to chase the traditional ranking systems that clearly undervalue schools with an access mission and with strong professional programs. Increasingly, however, new systems of assessment are being developed that include metrics that we believe to be important. In those systems, CWU is recognized nationally for being a welcoming and effective university for students from all walks of life.

• For example, we are number one in the state in the “Educate to Career” College Ranking - in other words, no other school in Washington does a better job to improve earnings and ensure employability of graduates.

• Washington Monthly put CWU in the Top 100 “Best Bang-for-the-Buck” Schools in the Nation. Those are schools that focus on value by offering high quality at a lower price.

• The Affordable Colleges Foundation ranked CWU among the 46 best institutions in the nation who offer high quality, affordable online programs. The ranking focuses on six key metrics that illustrate online program affordability, academic strength and dedication to
STUDENT SUCCESS.

· The Education Trust Foundation ranks CWU second nationally for graduation rates for under-represented minority students

· CWU’s success in outreach to under-served communities was recognized with an $18-million grant to expand the GEAR UP program. Central was the only university in Washington State to receive a GEAR UP award.

· Our Department of Geological Sciences is ranked in the top 100 departments nationwide for research grant funding in Earth Sciences from the National Science Foundation.

· The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards placed CWU among the top 20 institutions in the United States that awarded degrees to teachers who became National Board Certified Teachers. Half of all state educators of the year for the past ten years have been CWU grads. The 2014 national teacher of the year and the 2014 national principal of the year are CWU alumni.

These successes are the result of your work. You are the essence of the university and collectively you are what make Central distinct. You too are being recognized for your excellence.

· Dr. Dominic Klyve earned the national Henry L. Alder Award for Distinguished Teaching from the Mathematics Association of America. He is the first winner from Washington State in the 18-year history of the award. The Alder Award goes to individuals whose teaching has been extraordinarily successful and who have had influence beyond their own classrooms.
• Student advisor Sharon Rosell and Professor Mike Jackson each were named the top educators in their areas in 2013. The American Institute of Physics named Ms. Rosell the nation’s top student physics club Advisor; the American Association of Physics Teachers awarded Professor Jackson the top collegiate physics teacher.

• Ken Munsell earned recognition for his teaching excellence from the National Resident Hall Honorary, which awarded him the H.O.P.E. award - Honoring Our Professor’s Excellence.

• Professor Jeffrey Snedeker was selected as the 2014-2016 Artist by The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi—the nation’s oldest and most selective all-discipline honor society. He is the first person from CWU to be awarded the national Phi Kappa Phi Artist Award.

• Professor Robert Holtfreter, professor of accounting and research, received the national research award from the Institute of Management Accountants for an outstanding contribution to accounting literature with his article, “Will the Hackers Win the Battle?” Adrian Harrington, a former student of Holtfreter’s, co-authored the article.

• Bill Thelen received the 2014 National College Testing Association Service Recognition award.

• Jason White, director of Academic Advising, received the 2014 National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) Region 8 Advising Administrator of the Year award.

• Police Chief Michael Luvera was named Administrator of the Year by the Western Association of Campus Law
Enforcement Administrators, which represents higher-education campuses in Alaska, Washington, Oregon, California, Idaho and British Columbia.

It’s no wonder that, in spite of a never-ending stream of new challenges, I don’t lose faith in CWU. The exceptional quality of our faculty and our staff enables us to meet every challenge head-on -- and we are succeeding beyond all expectations. While we can be rightfully proud of these accomplishments, we cannot rest on our successes because we are still in a transforming world.

We are still moving from the personalized, analog world to a convergent, digital environment that moves with terrifying speed and encompasses overwhelming dimension. It’s a metamorphosis that is redefining everything around us. And it delivers us students who take it as a given.

About 30 years ago, a student told me that she thought I had a particularly difficult job because, she said, (and I remember her words exactly), “While you get older, I stay the same age.” In reaction to my puzzled look, she added that, as I aged, the students in my classes be always be her age. I hadn’t thought of it in those terms, probably because I didn’t think of myself as old then. I still don’t. She obviously did. Yosef probably does now.

The Beloit Mindset List annually catalogs the changing characteristics and orientation of entering college classes and compares their mindset to ours. Most of the list is a bit glib for my taste—though it does support my former student’s assertion that I am terribly out of date.

One feature of the report that goes beyond the faddish is our students’ acceptance of a digital environment that has transformed place, social networks, and access to
information. The Beloit report puts it this way: “They were born into cyberspace and have measured their output in the fundamental particles of life: bits, bytes, and bauds.”

- They have never needed a paper airline “ticket” or a set of bound encyclopedias
- They prefer to watch television everywhere except on a television
- Their backpacks are lighter because often they can carry their school books on the e-Readers and iPads, or access them online
- They have spent much of their lives helping their parents understand that you don’t take pictures on ‘film’ and that CDs and DVDs are not ‘tapes.”

The digital age is not a fad, and we ignore it at our own peril. The question is not if, but how we will manage these on-going changes. How do we maintain the values we hold dear while also embracing new technologies? This is a question of balance, and one that requires the full attention of all of us.

The answers reside in our collective wisdom and continued self-confidence. Universities are complex organizations comprised of diverse groups of people from varying professional backgrounds and personal experiences. The principles and policies defining shared governance and collective labor agreements are designed to address these complicated issues by giving voice to and to empowering differing points of view. Our structure of senates, councils, committees and task forces is designed to define issues and to shape proposals. The various governing bodies have the right, even the obligation, to voice support or opposition to the resulting plans.

Six years ago, I reported to you that I did not see the collective spirit or the collaborative systems of governance necessary to take advantage of the
IMPORTANT DIFFERENCES OF PERSPECTIVE WE ENJOY AT THIS UNIVERSITY. EVEN THOUGH WE NEEDED THEN TO WORK TOGETHER TO ADDRESS THE BUDGET AND PLANNING CHALLENGES WE FACED, WE TENDED TO APPROACH ONE ANOTHER WITH SUSPICION RATHER THAN TRUST, WITH SELF-INTEREST RATHER THAN MUTUAL BENEFIT AS OUR GOALS.

I have also reported each year since I have seen an increased willingness to not only speak out, but to actively engage in the governance systems. We are gaining confidence that recognizes that differences are valued and that diverse voices are desired. The next step we need to take is to engage in these systems early and actively.

That is why, for example, I eagerly approved the Faculty Senate’s request to increase the number of faculty representatives on the Budget and Finance Committee. It is far more effective to influence the construction of a budget than to oppose it after the detailed work is completed. That is also why I asked the Senate to consider changes to the Faculty Code that would require a system of consultative input on department and college financial plans. I am pleased that Senate Chair, Professor Katharine Whitcomb, agrees and that she is leading the review.

We must continue to engage and to strengthen our systems of shared governance because the only element with greater force and inevitability than the Ellensburg wind is the demand for change. As a public institution, we must respond to new technological, social, political, and economic realities. As an academic institution, we must protect the long-held values and practices that make Central distinctive and successful.

As we perform our daily tasks, it is easy to lose sight of what makes Central distinctive. Occasionally, we all need to take a moment to step back and reflect on ourselves. We need to listen to our students and alumni,
WHO SEE US THROUGH DIFFERENT, BUT IMPORTANT, EYES.

WHEN WE STRIP AWAY OUR CONCERNS ABOUT BUDGETS, ABOUT BUILDINGS, ABOUT COMPUTER SYSTEMS, ABOUT CURRICULUM, WE ARE LEFT WITH AN ESSENCE THAT OUR TRUSTEES SEE, THAT OUR STUDENTS AND THEIR PARENTS FEEL, AND THAT OUR ALUMNI REMEMBER AND CELEBRATE.

Therein rests our formula for success. It is the alchemy of students, faculty, and staff that produces a purity of purpose. That purpose is our commitment to, our passion for, perhaps even our obsession with, the success of each and every one of our students. Not our students, but each and every student. That is an important difference and a distinguishing characteristic of Central.

The Philosopher’s Stone in this alchemy, the quality that turns the typical into the remarkable is compassion—the care we show one another, and especially to our students.

One of my favorite CWU advertising campaigns is the “My Professor Knows My Name.” I thought Chris Smart was brilliant when he devised these ads—I still do. But imagine my surprise when I ran across this “Knows-My-Name” theme in a CWU yearbook from 1916. It was in a poem called “Why,” by a student who is only remembered by the initials M.H. It reads, in part, like this

One day they asked me
Why I came here to Normal.
I didn’t really know
Until I thought awhile.
I wished they’d asked me
Why I stay, instead:
That would be easy.

For instance
There is Dr. Harris, who
Knew my name the second day I was here.
It made me feel awfully
Important, until
I noticed she knew
Everybody else’s
Just as well.

And there’s Miss Rankin,
Who’s a regular fellow,
Even if she does rival
The Encyclopedia Britannica
When it comes to fact.
I don’t know Mr. Stephens,
But they say
He’s very modern – that is – he
Understands slang.

I don’t know yet why
I came – but
I know why I’d come back.

That text, written almost 100 years ago, still fits because
the caring for—and the belief in—the power of the
INDIVIDUAL STUDENT BINDS US AND DRIVES US FORWARD. I SEE IT EVERYWHERE I GO.

THE COMPASSION SHOWS WHEN JUDY BACKLUND WELCOMES STUDENT TEACHERS RETURNING TO CAMPUS FROM A LIFE-CHANGING EXPERIENCE IN MACAU. I SEE IT IN THE FACES OF OUR FACULTY AND STUDENTS WHO SHARE THE WONDER OF DISCOVERY DURING SOURCE. I CAN SEE IT WHEN THE ENTHUSIASM AND EXPERIENCE SCOTT DRUMMOND SHARES WITH STUDENTS TRANSLATES INTO AN EXCITING EVENT IN THE SURC. OR WHEN JENNA HYATT ENGAGES RESIDENCE HALL ADVISORS IN INNOVATIVE EVENTS AND EXPERIENCES THAT ENRICH LIVES AND GUARANTEE THE SAFETY OF OUR STUDENTS.

I CAN SEE THAT CARING IN THE WORK OF DRS. BOBBY CUMMINGS AND KEITH CHAMPAGNE WITH STUDENTS FOR THE DREAM — AND THE THANKS THAT RETURNS TO THEM FROM THE STUDENTS OF EMPIRE. I SEE IT IN THE FACES OF PEGGY EATON AND MARY MAKINS WHEN THEIR PERSONAL CONNECTION AND COMPASSION SETTLE UPSET STUDENTS AND SETS THEM BACK ON THE PATH TO SUCCESS. OR WHEN ADRIAN NARANJO FINDS A WAY TO PROVIDE FINANCIAL AID TO ONE OF OUR STUDENTS WHO GOES ON TO GRADUATE WITH HONORS.

IT’S IN THE AWARDS THAT MIRIAM BOCCHETTI PRESENTS TO STUDENTS IN OUR CAMP PROGRAM, LIGHTING UP THEIR FACES AND BRINGING TEARS TO THE EYES OF THEIR PARENTS. I CAN SEE IT THE PRIDE DON SODERGREN TAKES IN BRINGING BARGE HALL TO LIFE EACH DAY AND THE HANDSHAKE AND KNOWING SMILE HE OFFERS WHEN HE SENSES THAT I’M HAVING A BAD DAY.

THESE AND MANY OTHER DAILY ACTS OF CARING SUGGEST TO ME THAT OUR MOTTO OF “BY TEACHING WE LEARN” ONLY PARTIALLY CAPTURES THE GREAT SPIRIT OF CENTRAL. IT SHOULD ALSO INCLUDE THE PHRASE, “AND THROUGH CARING WE TEACH.”

GEOLOGISTS TELL US THAT THE GROUND WE STAND ON IS CONTINUALLY DRIFTING. EVERY SO OFTEN, IT SHIFTS SO
SUDDENLY THAT WE LOSE OUR BALANCE UNLESS WE HOLD FIRMLY TO SOLID PILLARS. AS WE OUR FIND BALANCE IN THIS RAPIDLY SHIFTING LANDSCAPE, WE MUST HOLD TO THAT WHICH MAKES CENTRAL A WORLD-CLASS UNIVERSITY.

Our caring drives us to engage our students in active learning. Our challenge is to make our core values work in a virtual space as well as they do in the face-to-face classroom we have always known. I know we can do it.

If people of all ages and backgrounds can develop lasting friendships, and even fall in love, in virtual environments, then we can communicate empathy and caring in it. If students can gather internationally in a digital space to create and enjoy the arts, we can join them there to inspire and innovate, and to perform for a global audience. If international scholars can collaborate in virtual labs and studios, we can do the same with our students.

As we adapt again to the brilliant and formidable opportunities the digital environment offers, I cannot find a single CWU value that cannot be served by the enthusiastic embrace of modern tools at our fingertips:

- Creating an engaging learning environment.
- Engaging in discovery and creative expression.
- Empowering individuals with the freedom to explore, to evaluate, and to learn.

Many of you are already doing this. And for those of us who are not as comfortable in that environment, maybe you will take the care to help us get there. I know we can do it, because true caring is transcendent, and that is the essence of Central.