Thank you Drew, not only for those very kind words and this very impressive medallion, but also for the trust that you and the Suffolk Board of Trustees have placed in me by appointing me as Suffolk’s ninth president. I pledge my full energy and effort to fulfilling that trust and to serving the students, faculty, staff, and graduates of this wonderful University.

I also want to extend my sincere thanks to all who are here today to join in the celebration, both in person and watching online, and to those who brought greetings—Senator Murray and Speaker DeLeo for welcoming me to the Commonwealth, both today in this formal setting but also at the State House soon after I joined Suffolk. Peter Meade, thank you for your greetings on behalf of Mayor Menino. I’m sure I speak for all here today and all of Boston’s residents in wishing the mayor a speedy and successful rehabilitation. We all look forward to having him out and about in our beloved city very soon.

Thanks to President Caret, not only one of Suffolk’s most accomplished alumni but an outstanding president of the University of Massachusetts. Bob has been so helpful to me in my transition to Suffolk.

To Sheila Webber and Nick Curley for their greetings from the talented, dedicated faculty and staff of Suffolk University—the women and men who teach Suffolk’s students, conduct valuable research, and make this great institution run.

And to Sami, Josh and Juliana—for the welcome and for all you do to advance the interests of Suffolk’s students. You and your fellow students are the reason we are all here.

A special thanks to Bob Allison for his fascinating and moving introduction to this very special place, and to Grand Marshal Victoria Dodd—and the entire staff involved in planning and carrying out today’s event.

Jane Menken, I’ve saved you for last. I have to thank you not only for welcoming me today on behalf of the assembled delegates from colleges and universities, but, much more importantly, I have to thank you for watching out for me—in more ways than I could recount—since practically my first day as a doctoral student; for showing me how to carry out scientific analysis and for being a true role model. Most importantly, I think, you taught me by example how to be a great mentor. Thank you so much for everything.
INTRODUCTION

It is an honor to be standing here today. Not just because of this ceremony and what it means. I mean it’s an honor to stand here. In this building. On this spot.

When Suffolk University needs a space to hold an event like this, we can look out the window and choose from a dozen wonderful historic sites. Each September, we hold our convocation in the Tremont Temple, a site where Dickens once recited *A Christmas Carol*, and where the Emancipation Proclamation was read in Boston for the first time. One of our next-door neighbors is the Massachusetts State House, where president-elect Kennedy gave his “City on a Hill” speech, and where last spring we held our annual dinner for alumni of the Sawyer Business School and the College of Arts and Sciences. For our recent Law School alumni dinner, we ventured a little farther: to the Kennedy Library overlooking Boston Harbor.

Then there’s the Old State House just down the street from us, the place where the Declaration of Independence was first read to the people of Boston, and still is every July 4th from the balcony overlooking State Street. So to be standing in this historic space, about which Professor Allison spoke so wonderfully, is an honor.

As the “cradle of liberty,” Faneuil Hall is known as the locus of a new beginning for our country. And I hope to speak today about what is, in some ways, a new beginning for Suffolk University. Or, perhaps, a return to the beginning—and the values that we had when we started.

There is one goal I have as president that stands above all others. It is to reenergize the principles upon which this University was built. To take the legacy of Gleason Archer and recalibrate it for the University we are today.

Many of you know the story by now: In 1906 Gleason Archer began offering law classes in his Roxbury living room to young men, many of them immigrants, who knew that education was a way to get a better job and start a better life. With these individuals, Archer didn’t care who their parents were or if they had gone to boarding school. He believed in potential over pedigree. And he had a simple mission: give these young men—and starting with the Class of 1937, these young women—the tools they needed to improve their lives and succeed at whatever they chose to do.

It is that extraordinary legacy of believing in the promise of students from all backgrounds—and helping them to develop their potential—that forms the foundation of Suffolk University. Today, we recommit ourselves to that mission: to nurture the capacity for growth in each of our students and empower them to be successful.

But how will we accomplish that? How are we going to come together and reenergize ourselves? That is what I am going to talk about this morning...about some of the areas around which we will concentrate our efforts and focus ourselves even more than we
already do. By understanding where our strengths are, we can better accomplish our ambitious goals.

PLACE

Let me start with the concept of place, something I’ve already alluded to. Suffolk University is especially well situated to give our students incredible opportunities for learning. Our location in Boston is vital to our identity and our success. We are a place where place matters. If the Boston Common is our college green, then Boston is our classroom. And the opportunities for exploration within our urban campus offer not only real-world learning opportunities but also allow Suffolk University students to learn and serve at the same time. We are entwined within the fabric of this city, and we make a real difference in our community.

For example, this past spring, undergraduate students in the Sawyer Business School, supervised by Executive-in-Residence Richard Taylor, submitted ideas on how to continue the ongoing revitalization of Downtown Crossing. It was part of the Business School’s focus on the future of Boston. Students took a look at the needs of the historic downtown shopping district through a new lens and brought a fresh perspective as they made recommendations about new retailers, services, storefronts, and open spaces.

Students in our Law School’s Housing Clinic, directed by Professor William Berman, currently practice in the housing courts in Boston, representing indigent tenants in evictions and cases of housing discrimination. Most recently the Law School has partnered with the Boston Fair Housing Commission and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to combat housing discrimination in Greater Boston.

And our keynote speaker, Professor Allison, not only teaches a course every year on the history of Boston, but he also has written a gem of a book—A Short History of Boston—that we gave to every new Suffolk student this year to orient them to the city in which they will learn, and from which they will learn.

Bob’s class on the history of Boston is one of many that use the city as a case study for learning in a variety of disciplines. In the College of Arts and Sciences, students study Boston in Literature, History, and Film. They study art in the city’s museums. They study the abolitionist movement where it happened, and they study the nation’s history along the Freedom Trail. And some of these courses are not ones you would expect. For example, a Biology 101 course, offered by Professor Henry Mulcahy, has students conduct an environmental history of the Boston Common.

These are just a few examples of the manner in which our place in Boston shapes our academic work and allows Suffolk students to learn from their environment. We pledge to continue and to expand this focus on Boston as a case study for learning throughout the University. We will honor our commitment to the value of this place to Suffolk students.

CAREERS
Our Boston location also plays a key role in providing the experiential learning that prepares our students for successful careers. That’s because our students can tap into the huge knowledge base that Massachusetts has, in technology, government, media, the sciences, and more. For example, we are partnering with leaders in the local biotech and life sciences industries to ensure that our science students are prepared to step into jobs and succeed in those growing fields.

From our beginnings, we were unabashedly career-focused, and this is the second concept on which I’d like to focus. After all, Gleason Archer was teaching those first students how to be lawyers. It was an early and successful experiment in the democratization of access to a professional school. Career-building is why we started a school of management in 1937. And one reason that our College of Arts and Sciences is so important today.

Indeed, I believe that these days a liberal arts degree is a cornerstone in the building of a strong career. In today’s work force, very few people will start and finish their working lives with one employer. Most people won’t even have the same career their entire lives, let alone the same job.

So a liberal arts degree provides that foundation, that analytical ability that allows people to succeed in a world where jobs, careers, and the skills required to be successful in them change almost as often as the weather in New England. We need to prepare our students not just to get started in their careers, but to constantly learn, innovate, and adapt, so that they can be successful throughout their working lives.

With that in mind, the University will undertake several new initiatives to better prepare all Suffolk students to transition into good jobs and meaningful careers.

- We will seek more partnerships, locally and globally, with organizations that can provide mentorship, internships and career opportunities for Suffolk students;
- We will expand and enhance our career services to assist students in securing and succeeding in these opportunities;
- We will develop a curriculum that will prepare all undergraduate students—from their first year at Suffolk through graduation—for an effective transition from student to entry-level position.

To succeed in these endeavors, we need more support from our friends in the public and private sectors alike. I urge all of you here today representing those sectors to connect our capable, talented young women and men to the work you do—to make internships, practica and clinical experiences available to them, and then to recruit Suffolk graduates. I promise you will not be sorry when you do.

**COSTS**

So I have talked about the importance of Place. And the importance of Careers. Now I’d like to talk to something that’s on the minds of everyone involved in higher education: Costs.
Another part of the Gleason Archer story is why he started teaching law in the first place. Turns out, he was an early practitioner of the concept of “paying it forward.” He met a man on the train one day. And this man—who became Archer’s benefactor—loaned him the money to pursue the study of law. He didn’t want Archer to pay him back. He asked only that Archer pass along the favor when he could.

That one-to-one approach is more difficult to pull off for each of our students today. But we can recommit to this core value: to providing an exceptional student experience at a reasonable cost. As is highlighted in our new strategic plan, our students are at the center of everything we do. They and their families also pay the bills. We need to remind ourselves of that with every decision we make that involves finances or resources.

Suffolk University was founded to provide opportunity to those who were denied access to higher education. Today, the relentless rise in the cost of higher education, and the student debt that accompanies it, are denying growing numbers of students that access to a life-changing education. We will not allow that to happen at Suffolk University. We will keep an eye on costs. We will manage our operations with fiscal prudence while providing educational excellence. And we will strive to remain one of the more affordable four-year universities in Boston.

Our alumni will be an increasingly important partner in accomplishing those goals. One of the great pleasures I have had in my first year at Suffolk has been getting to know some of the more than 70,000 Suffolk University alumni. You are proud of this institution; you are committed to its success; and you believe in its students. Many of you have shared your thoughts with me on how we can improve.

A top priority moving forward will be to greatly ramp up outreach to our alumni and to boost fundraising, starting with a focus on raising more money for student scholarships. The implementation plan for our strategic plan establishes ambitious goals, including increasing the percentage of alumni making contributions from about 5 percent each year to 15 percent each year. Meeting these and other fundraising goals will allow us to reduce the net cost of attendance for all Suffolk students. So to all alumni sitting here or watching, I have three words for you: Please give now. Every dollar you designate for our scholarship fund goes directly and entirely to our students. It is an investment absolutely worth making.

TECHNOLOGY

A particularly promising way of cutting costs and also improving access is to embrace the transformative power of technology.

Research, including some that I have been involved with, shows that courses that include a combination of online and face-to-face learning—what are now known as “hybrid courses”—can be very successful. Rigorous studies, especially one led by William Bowen, former president of Princeton and of the Mellon Foundation, have demonstrated
that students can learn equally effectively in hybrid or traditional courses. That is why we commit to greatly expanding the number of Suffolk courses that are offered in hybrid formats.

As a matter of fact, that process is already under way. This year, we have begun to develop and implement a series of these courses for undergraduates. This spring we are starting with an experimental, hybrid version of the introductory statistics course taught to more than 400 students per year. Our goal is to expand hybrid education in this area to most or all students. Our Physics Department has already embraced hybrid education in its introductory courses, and in lab sections. This semester, almost 20 percent of the sections of Physics courses are being taught in hybrid modes. This format provides students not only with flexibility but also with the opportunity to learn how to learn online, something that will be a critical tool throughout their academic and professional careers.

This approach also will allow the University to be more flexible and efficient in its operations. We will better be able to offer courses year round. The cost of instruction will be lower. And we will be able to increase the proportion of classes taught by full-time faculty.

At the same time, our emphasis on hybrid instruction will allow us to preserve the low student-faculty ratios for those parts of each hybrid that are taught face-to-face. We will insist on quality and preserve the best parts of traditional higher education: the opportunity to learn from and learn with other talented people. Frankly, we seek to have the best of both worlds through hybrid courses—the efficiency and financial advantages of the online components along with the indisputable value of what Bill Bowen, in his recent Tanner Lectures at Stanford, describes as “minds rubbing against minds.” Bowen says it best: “There are central aspects of life on our traditional campuses that must not only be retained, but even strengthened. . . . those of us who have benefited from personal interactions with brilliant teachers . . . can testify to the inspirational, life-changing aspects of such experiences . . . great teachers change the way students see the world (and themselves) long after the students have forgotten formulas, theorems, and even engaging illustrations of this or that proposition.” (Tanner lectures, page 36.)

The speed with which technological change is taking place in higher education right now is astonishing. When our Strategic Planning Committee was deliberating a few months ago, the world of higher education technology was different than it is even today. Some Universities have recently announced that they would explore giving credit for MOOCs, those Massive Open Online Courses that are offered for free and are expanding across the Internet and the globe at a dizzying pace. A few months ago, I thought it would be several years before MOOCs would lend themselves to being awarded college credit. Who would certify that students had learned the material? Would MOOCs be able to overcome their very low completion rates? I've always believed these challenges would be surmounted, but “not for a while.”
The world has changed in just three months. The Gates Foundation has awarded EdEx a grant to develop modules that could be used in hybrid versions of common introductory courses. The American Council on Education, the nation’s leading assembly of college and university presidents, is exploring how college credit could be given to MOOCs. With ACE and the Gates Foundation involved, the pace of change will be greatly speeded up.

At Suffolk University, we will be watching these developments very closely. But I can also promise you, we will not be sitting on the sidelines. We have already committed ourselves, as part of our strategic plan, to have 20 percent of our undergraduate instruction provided in hybrid formats within five years. Guided by the outcomes of work under way by foundations and national groups, Suffolk will be ready to embrace the potential value of MOOCs as well. We will strive to be a leader in the implementation of technologies that will allow our students to succeed, to graduate in a more timely manner, and to advance to more productive careers.

BUILDING

So we are building on our history of access to opportunity. We are building curriculum around our place in Boston. We are building on our heritage as a career-focused institution. We are building alumni engagement. We are building on our ability to use technology.

We are also building. Literally. With unanimous support last month from our Board of Trustees, we are moving forward with the planning for a 112,000-square-foot academic building at 20 Somerset Street. The new facility is scheduled to open at the start of the 2015 academic year and will be a tremendous addition to our academic footprint.

The long-vacant building that now sits on the site will be replaced with a state-of-the-art academic building that will contain more than a thousand general use and science classroom seats. The building will have a new cafeteria for our students that also will serve as much-needed function space for the University. And we will create a vibrant new outdoor public space for use by our students and our neighbors on the adjacent Roemer Plaza.

Significantly, this new building will allow us to move all of our 1,200 classroom seats out of buildings on Temple Street and out of that residential part of Beacon Hill, which will fulfill a commitment in our Institutional Master Plan.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I would give you one important point to summarize everything I’ve talked about. We are an institution that has always been focused on the success of our students, and we will become even more so in the months and years to come.
We have gone from the consummate local institution—Archer’s Roxbury living room—to one that has a student population that’s 14 percent international, with students from 106 countries. We have a vibrant campus in Madrid—yet another way we are now able to give our students a truly global experience. And while our breadth is truly international, we have never lost that sense of place that starts in the heart of downtown Boston. We are more entwined with the fabric of this city than ever before.

There seems to be a renewed optimism in the Suffolk community these days. We are more diverse than ever before, and yet we are more unified. There is an understanding that the strength of our three schools and many centers and institutes grows greater through a stronger sense of university. In short, Suffolk University is coming together with a new sense of purpose.

We are reinvigorating what we started 106 years ago. By refocusing in a strategic, deliberate way—and by investing in areas of traditional strength, emerging growth, and interdisciplinary opportunity—we will make ourselves stronger. We realize that we cannot do everything, so we are focusing on that which we can do very well. And we are using resources wisely, to be certain we can give students our absolute best. I am certain we can do it together.

I started by saying what an honor it is to be speaking to you in this incredible space. Now I want to conclude by saying what an honor it is to speak to you as the ninth president of Suffolk. Since February, I have met so many amazing people—students, faculty, staff, alumni. I am continually impressed by your accomplishments and your commitment. Suffolk has welcomed me into this community, and you have energized and excited me more than I can say. From where I stand, our future looks exceptionally bright. And I am confident that we are poised on the edge of a most exciting new era.

Thank you.