

STATE OF THE UNIVERSITY, 2002

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Good morning and welcome to the 132nd year in the life of Ohio Northern University. Toby and I are extremely pleased to have all of you with us this morning and we will look forward to working with you on all sorts of projects during the course of the forthcoming year.

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I don't know about you, but I always look forward to the beginning of school each year. Electricity is always in the air, and it's always contagious! This year is no exception. Again, there's excitement, anticipation, the promise of good--even great--things to come. And, there's good reason for these feelings. After all, we're anticipating our largest and best qualified enrollment ever, the beginning of a new era in the history of the University with the start of our Master's degree in teaching, and the additional of major new facilities to our living-learning environment. Most importantly, though, our new students and colleagues, representing a myriad of interests, needs, motivations, desires, hopes and aspirations, have come together with us at this university this year to enrich one another's lives. I think that's pretty neat.

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Yet, we enter this new year confident that the foundation we and many others before us have established at Ohio Northern is strong and fully capable of meeting the challenges it will face this year and in the years to come. We can and should take great pride in this. The community we are today a part of has deep roots, rich traditions, treasured symbols and heroes, extraordinary accomplishments, exceptional supporters and advocates, and, above all else, graduates who have helped make the world in which we live the very best it can be. I think that's pretty neat, too!

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Today, therefore, is a celebration, a celebration, to be sure, of the promise of what is to come, but a celebration, as well, of what has been.

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Of course, as all of us know, the beginning of our 2001-02 year was anything but a celebration. At 8:48 AM on September 11, one week after classes began at Northern last year, all of our lives were forever changed by a despicable act of terrorism. Almost

instantly, though, the character, patriotism, and courage of our campus community brightened the darkness that fell on an entire country. Faculty and staff counseled students in a wide variety of different ways, and reminded them that people who are different are not our enemies. Student leaders reached out to their peers, doing everything they could to ensure calm and prevent inappropriate verbal or physical actions or statements. And, our entire community came together in two magnificent gatherings, one in the Chapel on September 14, and the second on the Tundra on September 18, to celebrate our unity and commitment. Tolerance, patience, thinking and learning characterized everything we did following this extraordinarily tragic event. I was never more proud of our community.

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There was, without question, despair, anger, and fear in our community on those difficult days following September 11. Quickly, though, these emotions were transformed into a very special spirit that focused on ways in which we could support the families of the victims of this national tragedy and contribute to their welfare. In the Help From the Heartland campaign, students and others were invited to contribute to the American Red Cross Disaster Relief Fund by purchasing a ticket to the Otterbein football game on October 10. Of course, students, ordinarily, do not have to buy tickets to athletic contests at ONU. Nevertheless, many, many did, including the entire football team that was to play in the game and the entire coaching staff. This truly extraordinary gesture was reported nationally in the *NCAA News* and *Athletics Administration*. What an incredible statement about our football team, our students, and our campus. And, what an incredibly successful event. Altogether, we raised \$4,192 for the Red Cross.

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Our football team, of course, won the game with Otterbein and went on to post an 8-2 record. Equally important, it won the Special Olympics Volunteer Group of the Year award for its outstanding work with special students in Allen and surrounding counties. Although we, regrettably and surprisingly, did not make the NCAA playoffs, Coach Kaz returns the vast majority of his starters and is, I'm sure, pointing toward the playoffs this year--after, that is, he beats Mount Union on November 9 here in Ada.

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While our football team was enjoying success outside, our volleyball team was doing the same inside. Ultimately, it took the OAC crown last year and went on to the quarter-final round of the NCAA playoffs. Although our ladies played their hearts out, they lost to quarter-final winner Mount Saint Joseph in a game I recall periodically checking on while attending a performance in Presser Hall. Dennis Kratzer was kind enough to make his office radio available to me for this purpose.

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Our men's and women's soccer and cross-country teams continued their winning ways last fall as did our men's basketball and wrestling teams and our men's and women's swimming and diving and indoor-track and field teams. With new coach Michele Durand at the helm, our women's basketball team was in every game at the beginning of the season and came on strong at the end to earn a lot of respect in the OAC. Our softball

team turned its program around last year finishing fifth in the OAC. Our baseball team had a good year as well, matching the softball team's fifth place OAC finish, despite the tragic loss of its coach, Herb Strayer. Our golf teams had respectable finishes in the OAC championships last year as did several members of the men's track and field team.

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Jackie Dight and Jackie Kaup led our strong women's track and field team last year with OAC championships and strong performances in the Division III NCAA Championships, which, I'm sure most of you know, were held at ONU on March 8 and 9 of this year. Thousands of guests and athletes visited our campus for these championships, and were, I can tell you from numerous personal conversations, very impressed with our facilities and the hundreds of campus and community volunteers who turned out to help with this two-day event. Brian Cole, our track and field and cross country coach, led this effort and did a super job for us. Thanks, Brian.

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In addition to the NCAA championships and the celebration of the anniversary of the historic golf match between Wilberforce University and ONU in 1937, the other important athletic highlight of the spring was the extraordinary performance of our tennis teams. The men were regular season co-champions in the OAC and the women won their first ever OAC tournament. In addition, they established a school record with 21 victories and finished the season 21-2.

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Not only, though, did our tennis teams do well on the court last year. They also placed three individuals on the OAC All Academic First Team. Members of other teams achieved this distinction as well. In fact, the volleyball, wrestling, and women's tennis teams received Academic Team awards last year for their outstanding performances in the classroom. Altogether, the 577 ONU students who participated in athletics last year compiled a GPA of 3.04. Moreover, 62 of them had GPA's of at least 3.8. Our athletes' commitment to their studies, in other words, is just as strong as their commitment to their sport.

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Our 577 athletes, though, account for less than 20% of the students that attend ONU. What about the rest of them? What distinctions did they garner last year? The answer here is real simple: PLENTY! Ashley Carter, Amber Gilbert, and Tracy Mallard presented papers at the Society for the Advancement of Management in Washington, D.C. in April and Traci Ebskorn, and Tara Gallo presented a paper that won first place at the Undergraduate Economic Research Competition in Bowling Green. Subsequently, it was accepted for presentation at the Academy of Business and Administrative Services International Conference in Costa Rica in July. Three Electrical and Computer Engineering and Computer Science students, Thomas Jonnell, Matt Valerio, and Nicholas Vidovich, made presentations on a variety of topics at the Mathematical Association of America Ohio Section meeting at Xavier University and Michael Schuette presented a

paper on Visualization, Imaging, and Image Processing at an international conference in Spain. English major Lindsay Wade presented a paper on Frankenstein at the Sigma Tau Delta National Convention in Boise, Idaho, while Mechanical Engineering major, Miranda Shaw, spent the summer on an undergraduate research fellowship at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. Pharmacy, Mike Leifheit, Nancy Walters (both P5s), and Amanda Preston (P6), received summer fellowships from Pfizer, the American Society for Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics, the Foundation for Pharmaceutical Education, and the American Federation for Aging to work with Dr. Jon Sprague on his path breaking and nationally acclaimed research on ecstasy. Abby Marvin, a religion major, received one of only six student citizen fellowship grants from Ohio Campus Compact for her Ada Friends program. She was also selected as a Charles J. Ping Student Service Award recipient.

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Our law school Environmental Moot Court team distinguished itself this year as well. Coached by Sean Kidd, an L3, and Professor David Raack, this group of aspiring attorneys, consisting of Theresa Elliot, Phil Fraley, and John Krotz, turned in an outstanding performance at the 2001 national competition, advancing all the way to the semi-finals and winning the Best Appellant's Brief Award. The team lost to the eventual national champion, the Lewis and Clark School of Law, and, during the competition defeated or finished ahead of teams from Boston College, Georgetown, Ohio State, Stanford, the University of California-Berkeley, the University of Illinois and the University of Michigan. Not bad!! Not bad at all!! Our business students also distinguished themselves in competition with students from other colleges and universities this year. They scored in the 94th percentile on the Education Testing Services (ETS) Major Field Tests which examine business course knowledge in 8 areas and are taken at almost 400 schools by more than 64,000 students. In addition, 13 ONU students, almost 30% of the 49 students taking the exam, scored at the 90th percentile or better. Quite an accomplishment!

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And, who will forget this virtuoso performance?.....That, ladies and gentlemen, was Michael Hanna, technology major and trumpeter extraordinaire, playing the Carnival of Venice with the ONU Wind Ensemble at the Ohio Music Educators Conference in Cincinnati in February. He received a standing ovation from this very critical audience.

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Whether on the field, court, mat, or track, or in the classroom, professional conference, research laboratory or professional competition, then, our students made us proud last year just as they have for so many years in the past. When one realizes, though, the kind of example that is set for them and the kind of environment in which their education takes place, there is no reason to be surprised at their accomplishments. Listen, for a moment, to some of the things YOU did last year. Vic Streib, a faculty member in the Law College, received the American Bar Association's 17th annual Livingston Hall Juvenile Justice Award. This very special recognition is given annually to the unsung heroes of the juvenile court and honors those who have devoted a significant portion of their

professional activity to advocacy on behalf of children, including working with the delinquency system. Prof. Streib is a national authority on juvenile justice and has worked throughout his career to abolish the juvenile death penalty. Scott Wills, the individual responsible for the Northern Fund in the development office, accepted additional responsibility last year as our head women's tennis coach and led our team, as noted earlier, to the OAC Tournament Championship. In June, he was designated OAC Coach of the Year. Speaking of the Northern Fund, the campus campaign last year generated \$59,000, a 64% increase over the amount contributed by campus personnel the year before. Indeed, 53% of our full-time faculty and staff contributed last year to the Northern Fund, a 50% increase over the year before. For this extraordinary accomplishment, all we can say is Thank you to everyone sitting in this room and the many others across campus this morning.

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Bud Smith, a professor in English, wrote a play entitled, The Hermeneutics of Deuteronomy, which was presented in Lima this summer, and Steve Iseman, a faculty member in Communication Arts, continued to edit the delightful and lively Journal of Personal Letter Writing that he created a couple of years ago. [I know Steve would be happy to talk to anyone interested in contributing.] Jonathan Sprague, in Pharmacy, continued to get national attention for his exciting research on ecstasy and Jonathan Pitts, in English, won the 2002 Missouri Review Editor's prize for non-fiction for his essay, entitled A Little People that describes his experience teaching in a half-Indian, half-white high school near the Crow reservation in Montana. This prize, by the way, is one of the most prestigious in magazine literature and has been won in the past by a number of well-known contemporary writers. Bruce Berdanier, Lee Grismore, Jed Marquart, and Srinivasa Vemuru, all of the College of Engineering, received external funding for projects they are involved in, and Patricia Freeman, in Education, and Carl Hoagstrom, in Biological Sciences, offered their Summer Adventure program again this year with support from the Martha Holden Jennings Foundation. Wendell Schick, in our financial aid office, was elected President Elect of the Ohio Financial Aid Administrators Association, and Richanne Mankey, in Student Affairs, was elected President-Elect of the Ohio Association of Student Personnel Administrators. Bob Smith, Vice Chair of our Board of Trustees, was elected Chairman of the Board of the Greater Cleveland Growth Association, the Cleveland Area Chamber of Commerce, and the largest Chamber association in the United States. And, Ron Weber, development consultant extraordinaire and campus treasure, was surprised by our Trustees in May with a resolution that named our admissions building in his honor.

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We must pause for a moment as we recognize the many individual accomplishments of last year to remember one of the saddest events, namely the tragic and sudden loss of our long-time baseball coach and Hall of Fame member, Herb Strayer. He was a very special teacher and coach who prepared innumerable young men for successful lives and careers, and he will be very sorely missed. It is fitting that his jersey number has been retired, the street off Lincoln Avenue to the baseball field renamed Strayer Drive, and a baseball with the number 20 on it hung on the left field fence. Very worthy tributes to an extraordinary man. But, if Herb were here, he would be telling me to stop making such a fuss about him and start welcoming his successor. So, Milan, we welcome you, wish you the very best,

and look forward to working with you to build on the magnificent baseball tradition that exists at ONU.

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Now, in addition to all these individual achievements, we need to remember, this morning, the things we accomplished together as a University community last year. Reorganization was certainly one of these. As you will recall, we pulled all of our technology operations together into one unit, appointed a director, George Gulbis, moved the new unit to Academic Affairs, pledged additional resources, asked for a draft strategic plan for technology at ONU by the beginning of this summer, and, as a byproduct of the reorganization, transformed our part time purchasing slot into a full time position. I'm pleased to tell you that this transition has gone exceptionally well and that George and his colleagues are currently recruiting for two new employees and finalizing the draft plan we reviewed in June. Vicki Molgaard, as many of you probably already know, has been appointed as our purchasing director. In short, this reorganization appears to have been well received and to be moving forward very effectively.

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We expect the same outcome for the recent changes that have been made in Student Affairs. Adriane Thompson Bradshaw has taken over responsibility for multi-cultural and intercultural affairs at the University; Mark Light has become the Director of the McIntosh Center and extended his work to include technology and other facilities in Student Affairs; and Julia Andrews has been named Director of Residence Life. In addition, we've worked out an arrangement with Bowling Green State University to make a graduate assistant available to student affairs this year, and asked Alice-Kay Hilderbrand to work with our sororities and Brian Cochran with our fraternities in 2002-03. It has been gratifying to work with Dean Mankey on these changes and I am confident that they will make an important contribution to ensuring that students have a first-rate, quality experience at ONU.

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Another important area of community accomplishment last year was in the kinds of services and support we provide for the people who contribute to and participate in the mission of the University everyday. As I think all of you know, for example, we expanded the chapel and built a magnificent addition to it that will house the Philosophy and Religion Department and provide a couple of neat new classrooms. This project was only possible, of course, because of the generosity of the Burgett and English families, and we're looking forward to thanking these wonderful people at the formal dedication of the facility at Homecoming on October 19.

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In addition, we renovated the first and second floor landings in Lehr; created a lounge and reception area on the second floor of Weber Hall where admissions folks and others can visit with prospective students and families; fixed the swimming pool, the electrical systems in Stambaugh and Northern House, and the bathrooms in the Pharmacy building; and painted walls across the campus. We also created a APaws for Thanks@program that

has, to date, generated 169 thank-you's to University employees for work well done. There have been many fabulous comments over the six months of the existence of this program. But, let me read you just one:.....

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In addition to the APaws for Thanks program, we sponsored the first ever Employee Benefits Fair in December, served as the host for the Office Support Staff Spring Conference which brought 175 individuals from Bluffton and Defiance Colleges and the University of Findlay to campus in April, and welcomed a record 948 students and their friends and relatives to campus during Scholarship Days in January. What phenomenal events, thanks to you, all of these gatherings were! And, December, 2001 saw the inauguration of the Polar Bear Express, an on-line newsletter that is currently being sent to 5700 alumni households.

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Finally, with reference to campus-wide accomplishments, let's talk about money. We reduced costs across the University last year by aggressively seeking out lower price options and bidding out services. We carried over \$750,000 from last year to this year that can be used to address capital and operating needs. And, very importantly, we maintained the positive relationship between the amount of increase in our average financial aid package and the amount of increase in our tuition that is so vital to the financial health of the University. We have now been able to do this, on average, for three years.

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Overall, then, there is strong evidence that we are managing the resources made available to the University very effectively. Equally important, our fund raising efforts are enjoying some success. I mentioned earlier that the campus component of the Northern Fund was up very significantly last year. Well, altogether the Northern Fund attracted \$1,153,495 in 2001-02, up 21% over 2000-01 and up 15% over the average amount of money raised by the Northern Fund in the 5-year time period between 1997-98 and 2001-02. Moreover, overall fund raising in 2001 was the second best in the history of the University. A total of \$7,549,577 was contributed by 7,283 alumni, friends, and supporters in 2001. The only year in which our total was higher was in 1999, when we raised almost \$8.3 million.

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Overall, therefore, we are making progress in increasing the amount of non-tuition based revenue available to the University and finding creative ways to manage the resources we have so they will have the greatest possible impact and effect. This challenge remains a very significant one for us. Nevertheless, we can and should take pride in what we have collectively accomplished so far.

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OK. Now, what about this year? What kinds of plans do we have and what can we expect

to occur at ONU in 2002-03? Well, as everyone here knows very well, it's practically impossible to predict the future. A lot of things happened last year that I wasn't able to talk to you about when I gave this State of the University speech last fall. And, the same will be true this year. Indeed, things like change, development, renewal and innovation rarely occur in accordance with a clock or the specifics of a program. Rather, as I read recently, change is created through a unique, almost magical, outside-the-box thinking process that coalesces history, strengths, core values, and opportunities into specific initiatives that lead to distinctions and competitive advantage.

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I don't know, therefore, precisely what challenges, issues, dilemmas, opportunities and possibilities are likely to emerge for ONU in the months to come. There are, though, some relatively obvious things that will be part of our lives as we move through the forthcoming academic year. Let's talk about a few of them.

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First, we know we will be entering this year with a strategic plan, *ONU Charts Its Future*, that was approved by the Board of Trustees in May. Developed at the request of the Board last October, this plan was discussed with faculty and staff and revised on the basis of their suggestions. In my view, it sets a clear vision for ONU. It challenges us to be a leading, private, student-centered institution of increasing regional and national prominence [and] a diverse, dynamic and unique learning community offering vigorous professional programs in partnership with the arts and the sciences [that will] prepare individuals for lifelong challenges in the 21st century. It also, I think, provides clear goals and directions for us. It urges us to:

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- undertake a balanced growth
- offer traditional and non-traditional programs at the undergraduate and graduate level that respond to the challenges of the 21st century
- emphasize respect for diversity in all of its forms and build programming and a faculty, staff and student body that provides experiences in diversity that will properly prepare students to thrive and succeed in the world of the 21st century.
- generate and manage the resources sufficient to advance [our] educational ambitions

- have a positive, differentiated public image as a leading institution of higher education
- have advanced services and facilities to support [our] mission
- have an on-going planning process that includes the assessment and evaluation of performance and goals
- promote a user friendly environment that emphasizes communication, celebrates individual initiative and teamwork, and fosters timely and effective responses to University priorities.

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In addition to providing a vision for our future and goals for us to achieve, AONU Charts Its Future establishes planning as an on-going process and our plan as a living document. Hence, we can expect that our plan can and will change as new circumstances, conditions, and opportunities emerge, mature, and, perhaps, disappear. It provides a broad road map for our future, but it recognizes that change requires, as I've already said, an almost magical, out-of-the-box thinking process that is sensitive to traditions, opportunities, and values if it is to succeed. We can, therefore, look to our plan for guidance with the choices we must make and the dilemmas we must address.

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A second certainty of the next 12 months is that there will be a lot of construction. As of today, projects budgeted at close to \$20 million are or shortly will be underway. The foundation for Dicke Hall, for example, is almost complete. Last week, Corna-Kokosing started removing the top soil for the new apartment complexes that will be put in place across Loop Road from the existing apartments at the east end of the Green Monster. Altogether more than 300 beds in 2 bedroom configurations will be added. Three buildings will be located in the open space off of Lima Avenue and one will be placed to the north of the current apartment complex behind Maglott and Founders Halls. Finally, we are going to put an addition on Dukes to accommodate the needs and the growth in our English, Modern Language, and Education programs. It will extend west from the Gilbert Street entrance and be in line with the back of Lehr. Our contracts specify that all three of these projects will be completed and available for use in the fall of 2003.

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Thirdly, we know we will be inaugurating a new era in the history of ONU in 2002-03 because, unless there is some presently unexpected difficulty in the final approval process, we will launch the University's first Master's degree next summer. Already, moreover, there is conversation on campus about additional graduate degrees. This is marvelous and welcome. I hope, though, that we will avoid the temptation to simply recreate at ONU what exists at other institutions as we think about programs we could develop. Although I have no doubt about our ability to offer top quality programs in most areas, this region probably doesn't need another MBA program or another Master's degree in Biological Science, Political Science or any number of other traditional areas. Instead of offering the kind of graduate programming that is already available at a number of local institutions, let us create cross-disciplinary programs that take advantage of the unique strengths ONU has in professional and liberal education and that respond to identified educational needs in our country. We must remember that no other private university in our region has the particular configuration of programs we have. Let us, therefore, think about cutting-edge programming that will equip graduates with unique perspectives and a commitment to learning that will be invaluable in the rapidly changing world in which we live. Let us, as well, think of ways to deliver our programs that take advantage of the best current thinking and recognize that electronic options and facilitation will only increase and mature in the years ahead. Because we have not previously offered graduate programs, we will be able to create our own conventions, quality standards, and expectations. Let us seize this very unique opportunity in the history of our University and develop programs that will lead the way in higher education at this point in its evolution in this country.

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Fourthly, we know we will host major accreditation visits this year. Our engineering programs will be reviewed by ABET in October and our business college will be visited by AACSB for the second time in November. We have every reason to believe that both visits will result in positive recommendations. The engineering process, of course, is for renewal of the college's existing accreditation, while the business visit represents, we hope, completion of the effort launched last year to obtain initial accreditation.

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In addition to these program based accreditation efforts, we must begin serious preparation this year for the University wide accreditation review that the Higher Learning Commission will undertake in 2004-05. In fact, this summer, I sent letters to a number of you asking you to serve on one of the six committees we need to establish in order to prepare the materials that will go into our self-study. Most of you accepted my invitation and I know that Anne Lippert is looking forward to working with you on the development of a self-study that will emphasize and highlight the extraordinary quality of the educational experience that is available at ONU.

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As we prepare our self-study and think about the questions the Higher Learning Commission will require us to answer, I hope we will carefully review what we are learning about our students through the assessment procedures our accreditors have

required us to put in place. Last year, for example, ONU participated in the entering freshman survey conducted annually since 1966 by the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies at UCLA. Literally hundreds of thousands of American college students are interviewed through this program every year. This is the second consecutive year ONU has participated in this study after a 20 year hiatus.

Some of what we learned from this survey simply confirmed what we already knew. For instance, it made clear that we have very good students at ONU with almost two-thirds noting that their GPA in high school was at least an A- and almost 60% responding that they had taken at least one advanced placement class in high school. Indeed, more than 10% of our entering freshmen last year responded that they had taken 4 to 6 AP classes in high school. The survey also emphasized the strong career orientations of a typical ONU student. Almost three-quarters said they were in college to be able to get a better job; about eighty percent said they were attending to get training for a specific career; and almost 70% said they were here so they could make more money. We also learned that ONU was the first choice for almost 90% of our entering students; that the vast majority of them had applied to multiple schools; that their political views are, for the most part, middle of the road; that almost two-thirds expect institutional aid or loans in the amount of \$10,000 or more in order to attend ONU; and that a third of the parents of our students did not go to college.

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I doubt that much of this would surprise many of you. It fits pretty well with what most of us think our students are like. When we compare them to others, though, some rather interesting findings emerge. For this purpose, we identified three groups: Private four year colleges with high selectivity; private universities with medium selectivity; and public universities with high selectivity. There were 51 institutions in the first group with more than 18,000 students responding to the survey. In the second group, there were 13 institutions with more than 14,000 respondents, and in group 3, there were another 13 institutions with 38,825 respondents. Representative institutions for each group are shown on the slide that is now on the screen.

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Now what did this comparison tell us? Well, we learned that our students are more likely than others to rate themselves as below average in artistic ability, creativity, social self-confidence, popularity, self-understanding, and understanding of others. We also found that smaller percentages of ONU freshmen, while in high school, participated in discussions concerning politics, voted in student elections, visited an art gallery or museum, or spent more than one hour per week reading for pleasure. Moreover, freshmen attending Ohio Northern spent significantly less time socializing with someone from another racial/ethnic group. Finally, ONU students, for the most part, rated the importance of dealing with social, civic and political issues, promoting racial understanding, developing a meaningful philosophy of life, attending college to gain a general education and appreciation of ideas, and attending college to learn more about things that interest them lower than the comparison groups. (Christy Cole)

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I'm not suggesting, of course, that the difference between our students and the others are, in all cases, huge or even consequential. I'm also not saying that they are, necessarily, good or bad or right or wrong, though, I must admit, that I find some of them a bit troublesome. I'm simply suggesting that this assessment instrument suggests some interesting things about our students that I think we should think about and address as we think necessary and appropriate. This is particularly true when we realize that some of the patterns we see in the CIRP Study are repeated in other assessment projects the University has recently done.

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This year, for example, we participated in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) sponsored by the Pew Forum on Undergraduate Learning and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. The sample for this study included more than 71,000 students located at 371 four year colleges and universities. It focused on five dimensions of the contemporary college experience: 1) the level of the academic challenge; 2) active and collaborative learning; 3) student-faculty interaction; 4) enriching educational experiences; and 5) supportive campus environments (news releases).

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The results from the NSSE study were surprising and even a bit disappointing. We are very proud of our students at ONU and believe we offer them an excellent education. Hence, I think we thought the responses to the survey would demonstrate that we are considerably above the national averages in all five areas. This proved not to be the case. Our seniors' responses placed them slightly above the national averages on 3 dimensions, right at the national average on 1, and below the average on the fifth. For our freshman students, the results were a bit more problematic: They were above the national average on 2 dimensions, below on 2 dimensions, and right at the average on one. Our review of the data, therefore, left us with the impression that, on these dimensions, we were basically an average University when compared to the 371 other institutions included in this study.

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This was obviously a conclusion that we were neither happy nor comfortable with. Hence, we decided to look more closely at the questions that were used to define each dimension and to see how we looked when we compared our students to those at institutions we knew were our competitors. When we did this, some interesting patterns emerged. We found that we were still more in the middle than we, perhaps, wanted to be, but that we were stronger in the comparison to the schools we actually compete with, that is, schools like Ohio State, Toledo, Miami, Bowling Green, Mount Union, Case, and Butler, than in the comparison to prestige, primarily liberal arts colleges like Bucknell, Alfred, or Elon. The most important finding, though, was that the principal problem in

ONU's program, at least in comparison to these other institutions, was in the quality of the educational experience it was offering its freshmen. Almost regardless of the question, we found that our freshmen answered in ways that suggested that their first year in college was not as successful as students at other institutions reported. For example, ONU freshmen were 14% less likely to have asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions, 11% less likely to have made a class presentation, 12% less likely to have worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources, and 14% less likely to have worked with other students on projects during class. The NSSE study also highlighted the challenge we have at Northern in providing our students with opportunities to interact with individuals from different social, economic, racial and ethnic backgrounds, and to wrestle with concepts, values and beliefs that are different from those they are presently comfortable with. For example, our students were 23% less likely than the national sample as a whole to have had conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity in their freshman year and 6% less likely to have had conversations with others of differing religious, political or personal backgrounds, values, or beliefs.

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The national surveys we have administered on our campus in the past year, then, have yielded important information about the student experience at ONU. They have also provided us with data from other schools which enable us to compare the ONU experience to what is happening at other institutions. What we must now do is not simply report these findings in the Self Study we are required to prepare for the Higher Learning Commission and our accreditation visit. Rather, we must accept them as assessments, from one perspective, of our programs and develop constructive responses to the issues that have been identified so ONU students will continue to get the highest quality education possible. I am pleased to tell you this morning that this process has already begun. Dr. Lippert has already created a working group on the First-Year Experience that will meet, for the first time, on September 13. And, we have already asked Adriane Thompson Bradshaw to provide leadership for us in multi-cultural and inter-cultural matters and in ways in which we can offer our students experiences that will prepare them to live in a highly and increasingly diverse world. Moreover, she, in conjunction with Dean Mankey and others, has already put together the first preliminary draft of a plan for diversity at ONU that I know will be elaborated and enriched in the months to come.

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Well, even without knowing all the unpredictable things we will need to address, it should be clear that we have a heavy and heady agenda for 2002-03. I hope you will embrace this agenda and make the 2002-03 school year everything we want it to be. Our students and this is what everything at ONU is all about will be the ones who will benefit from our efforts.

As I end this State of the University talk this morning, Toby and I want to express a very personal and very heartfelt thank-you for all the notes, cards, phone calls, contributions, flowers and plants that we received following the death of my father in July and Toby's grandmother less than a month later. It has been a very emotional summer for us because, in addition to these two events, it has also included the death of the 26 year old son of a very dear friend and the joyful marriage of one of our sons. Family has been at the heart of the 10,000 miles we have driven since we officially saw you last at commencement in

May. But, the response from our ONU family has ben extraordinary and overwhelming. The comfort and support you have provided for us have been indescribable. We shall be forever grateful.

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Well, thank you for listening to me this morning, and, most importantly, for all the SUPER contributions you make to ONU every day!

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