CONSISTENT WITH THE “CHANGING DIRECTIONS” policy directive of the Arizona Board of Regents, Arizona State University has embarked on a path of building an institution that I would term a “comprehensive metropolitan research university.” The concept designates a particular institutional form—other types of universities include land grant universities, state colleges, and, in a narrower sense, polytechnics. Here at ASU we are building a comprehensive metropolitan research university, hopefully with some of the intellectual and spiritual dimension that I have outlined in the New American University policy paper. Such an institution has the potential, I think, to encompass the aspirations of our academic community. But at the end of the day, what does that make us?

The term “comprehensive” refers to the fact that we are free to engage all subjects that we deem appropriate—meaning we are not a narrowly focused institution. “Comprehensive” means we build from a core in the liberal arts and sciences, a core of traditional linkages with traditional academic programs. We cover a broad spectrum of human knowledge, and we, the members of the faculty, determine what we deem “comprehensive.”

“Metropolitan” refers to the fact that we are focused in the heart of an emerging city. As a function of being located at the heart of that emerging city, the success of the metropolitan area and, subsequently, the entire region is tied to our success. It means that we have a metropolitan focus, and that as great cities around the world have great universities, let this university be the great university for this city as it emerges.

“Research” refers to just that—we are a band of teachers who are also discoverers and creators. We distinguish ourselves from the thousands and thousands of academic institutions that do not have the capacity or the privilege to do research and scholarship. As it happens, just last week ASU appeared in a study coming out of China ranking the top 500 institutions of higher education worldwide, and we ended up ranking 150th on that list of 500. Now, we do not know what criteria were used to determine their ranking, but if someone had asked me where we would be on a list of the 500 leading universities in the world, I would have placed us somewhere around 200. But in any case we are one of the very limited number of institutions on the planet with the capacity not just to teach, but to create and to discover, and that research component of our institutional design is absolutely essential.

Lastly, the final term in the concept “comprehensive metropolitan research university” is “university” itself. At the end of the day, in spite of the forces that surround us—some of whom believe that ASU should be little more than a college—we are a university, and a university has a
comprehensive mission. We will teach at all levels, and we will teach at the levels that we deem to be important. And we will produce graduates at all levels of academic accomplishment.

From a practical perspective, I believe we can fill an important niche as a comprehensive metropolitan research university. The University of Arizona occupies the niche of traditional land grant research university, with all that is implied in that tradition. And NAU is an institution with a focus on undergraduate programs, with limited graduate programs. The articulation, then, of these three distinct pathways within the system gives us immense opportunity. We have an opportunity, I think, for the first time in this university's history to break free of the perception that the system still comprises one university and two state colleges. It will now emerge as three universities—each distinct, and each on a different trajectory.

Why are we building this comprehensive metropolitan research university? There are already peer institutions, such as UCLA, the University of London, and others that embrace their metropolitan areas. Then why are we building this? Whether we like it or not, metropolitan Phoenix is continuing to grow, and it will continue to grow by every outside indication. Phoenix itself is now the fifth largest city in the United States, having surpassed Philadelphia. In the next eight to ten years it will surpass Houston to become the fourth largest city in the United States. And this metropolitan area is already among the 20 largest metropolitan areas in the nation, and will soon be among the eight largest. That will make this place one of the largest cities in North America, and one of the key cities on the planet.

I cannot imagine a major metropolitan region without a competitive, world-class, comprehensive university focused on teaching and research. I can name cities that have such an institution and others that do not, and there is a vast difference between them. So it is our responsibility to build this university as this city emerges, and to use this university to help the city emerge as successfully as possible. I consider the emergence of the university on the correct path—subject to definition, subject to interpretation, subject to engagement—an essential ingredient to the ultimate success of this region. If you look around the planet you will see that urban success is seldom achieved. There are very few large cities that one would call successful at the moment. So there is much to be done and much to be learned, and we have an important role.

A SCHOOL-CENTRIC MODEL

HOW ARE WE GOING TO MOVE FROM HERE TO THERE? You may have heard me use the phrase “one university in many places.” This has become something of a mantra for me, but what do I mean by it? At the end of the day, if at all possible, we must structure the university without hierarchy—that is, we must have overall excellence in our academic units regardless of campus. In order to achieve our objectives we must have a university that is structured around outstanding schools. And we need a university in which each school stands on its own. I am using the term “schools” to designate academic units—there can be colleges with schools, schools with schools, schools on their own. A school is a unit of intellectual connectivity between faculty and students organized around a theme or objective. And I am proposing a school-centric model for the university.

Our schools will be spread out on a range of campuses and each school will compete for status, not with other schools within the university, but with other schools like it around the country and around the world. Each school will have an opportunity to gain its own competitive status within its own sphere. And schools within the university will have the opportunity to complement each other, and work with each other, and leverage from each other, and build from each other. The School of Technology at Arizona State University on the East Campus, for example, will be a great school of technology, linked to a great school of engineering on the main campus, and will have programs with students appropriately placed ensuring mechanisms for maximum success.

The key here is devolving intellectual authority and entrepreneurialism to the level of the school. You cannot drive the university from where I sit. What I can do is help create the environment, help acquire the resources, help to protect and defend the university from its most strategic empowered enemies or ally with our most strategic empowered friends. But the university really has to advance through small groups of faculty working with students to advance their intellectual agenda and to become competitive in those areas that they feel is the right intellectual space for them to move in. And so each school in this school-centric model for the university becomes driven by its own intrinsic requirements, and each school is uniquely designed, with the caveat that it must cooperate and link with other elements within the university.

Another thing we need to do at this university is move past the campus-based model. This is not a university where
the main campus is the flagship and the other campuses are marginal set-asides or castoffs, or whatever the pathway has been in the past. At the end of the day, we must build one university where academic quality is uniformly high, and faculty, staff, and students are all treated fairly, equally, and justly. And people are free to advance their creativity, and the merit associated with their work is recognized. We need to get over this notion of campuses and focus on schools.

Where are we on this path of building a school-centric model for the university? We are making progress but there is still much to do. I think we have a very solid organizational and academic foundation, an excellent faculty and staff becoming stronger each year, and I think we have good students. I also think we have the capacity to attract and retain even better students. But we have to focus on the design of our schools. If the schools become the fighting units by which the university advances, each school advancing on its own, we need the dreams and aspirations and hopes of each of those schools to be articulated. We need those designs and conceptualizations. Each of those schools, and each of those deans, and each of those faculties, need to embrace the enterprise model.

**WE ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR OUR OWN DESTINY**

It is essential that we embrace the enterprise model in order for this university to be successful. We are responsible for our own destiny. I will say this over and over again until the day they drag me out of here. No legislature, no body, no external group can make this university successful. That fundamental fact, in my opinion, is what separates good universities from great universities. The great universities are in charge of their own destinies and they know it. And they advance their ideas to everyone who will listen to them to acquire the resources necessary to implement their ideas.

And that, by the way, is not the corporate model of the university. The enterprise model means that each school, each department, each program asserts, “This is what we want to be, this is our aspiration, and this is what we need to do to get there.” The trajectory for success may require more students, it may mean charging more tuition, writing more proposals, bringing in more donors, building alliances with other universities. Any school that is stuck in the mud is stuck in the mud because it got itself stuck in the mud. But if one focuses on the enterprise conceptualization, there is always opportunity to move past that status.

We need to understand that, as a university, our work is far from accomplished. For whatever set of reasons, there is a high level of comfort at this institution. I think one can only feel comfortable after one has achieved immense amounts of greatness—for periods not to exceed two or three days. We have not yet achieved those periods of greatness that give us those two or three days of rest. We have much to do, and much ground to cover. And then, upon realizing our achievements, we have much responsibility. This notion of feeling comfortable, or feeling relaxed, or feeling good about where we are—I can explain this to you in terms of the laws of social inertia: everything returns to a state of things that is not very good without as much forward momentum as possible. We need more forward momentum. But more than anything we need to understand that we are still building a university from the ground up.

I do not deny that we are making significant progress. Through an expansion of the commitment of our primary investor, the state of Arizona, we have expanded our budget, albeit on a limited basis. That is to say, we are not being cut at the moment; we are receiving slight additional investment from the state. We are expanding our private investment, and student investment through tuition. And, while our appetite for additional resources for new accomplishments is considerable, we have secured sufficient new resources to be able to offer salary adjustments for meritorious employees this year. That did not happen at NAU, the University of Arizona, the University of California, or Cal State or Stanford or MIT. But it happened here because we have been navigating this period in the university's history by acquiring resources to help us advance our agenda. Now, it is still tight and it is still complicated, but we have good academic and financial leadership in place, and we are working our way through this process to help the university acquire the resources that it needs.

We have initiated a dramatic expansion of our planning. We are expanding the ability to run the university as a university, rather than as an amalgamation of fiefdoms with separate rules and procedures, all of which consume immense amounts of unnecessary time and energy. We have expanded our research enterprise, and it is continuing to grow quite well. We are reaffirming the conception that this is a national public university, and making certain that our promotion and tenure requirements match those of peer institutions. There is no change in our standards, only the effort to ensure that they are implemented according to our objectives.

Unlike our peer institutions, we remain overly dependent on the people of the state of Arizona for our funding. Of the highest performing public universities in the United States, there is not one of them that receives more than 20 percent of its funding from their state. We remain in excess of 30
percent. Now, that does not mean we are not going to be fighting for more money from the state—we have been and will continue to do so. I believe that we are underfunded from the state by approximately $150 million per year, and we are working on strategies to bring about a correction of that underinvestment. But even with an additional $150 million in core support, it would be insufficient to project the university to the scale and scope and level of performance necessary to impact this metropolitan area. That level of additional support would help us to make appropriate faculty salary adjustments, to expand the faculty, and to improve the front line activities related to teaching.

But our mission goes beyond that. One of the things we all need to do—faculty, chairs, deans, provosts, everyone associated with ASU—is think through how we’re going to empower and incentivize the faculty and staff and others to work at these high levels of performance. That is not to suggest that people are not already working at 110 percent of maximum effort. But our objective is to find a way to continue to advance the university from its successful attainment of the status of “good” to the yet to be attained status of “great.” And you will see me focus as much energy as I can bring to bear—my time, my energy, my spirit, and my intellect—to that task. What drives me is the notion that metropolitan Phoenix and, ultimately, Arizona can, as a result of what we do, end up being better than Cleveland or Pittsburgh or Chicago, or other cities, all of which are great cities in their own right, but none of which have really achieved a linkage with the intellectual heart that the university represents.

INVESTING IN THE FUTURE

BEFORE I CLOSE, LET ME SAY SOMETHING ABOUT a few more practical matters. As we discussed at our meeting in the fall, we are in the thick of Campaign ’05. Unlike universities in Texas, California, Oregon, Washington, Utah, Colorado—all the states west of the Mississippi—we secured no budget cuts from the governor. In fact, we secured two very important commitments from the governor in her budget recommendation: a $23 million increase to our base funding, and a commitment to fully fund our enrollment growth each subsequent fiscal year following the current year. This is disappointing in some ways, because it is slightly less than half of what we had requested. But we are developing a strong base of support for this institution. We are making progress at getting people to understand that this university is a meritorious investment, and that investing in it will net returns for the economy and social infrastructure of Arizona.

Last year, as you may recall, the Board of Regents passed a policy to raise tuition and fees for in-state undergraduates to a level that places us 33rd among state universities. Prior to this increase our tuition level was close to 50th nationally. Our tuition was increased 40 percent last year and that took us from close to 50th to 42nd. We need the resources to accomplish our mission, and our mission includes open, accessible, university schools with financial aid for as many students as we can possibly put on the table. With revenue from last year’s tuition increase, we increased our share of financial aid by 140 percent in a single year. And we will continue to increase financial aid. We will continue to advance the institution by securing the resources we need to be able to make the kinds of investments that we need to maintain access to the university and to maintain its quality.

We are in the early stages of launching a development campaign with the objective of raising more than $1 billion for the university. We have launched six or seven experimental proposals within the last 18 months, and several of these have already been funded. Several more are presently under consideration by donors. And, in the last few weeks, we have been organizing approximately thirty additional proposals, and some of you have been invited to an upcoming meeting to launch those proposals. But these do not comprise the entire campaign. Those thirty proposals are mechanisms to learn how to write idea-driven proposals for major private sector investment in the university. And following that process, we will launch the campaign from the bottom up with the deans and chairs, according to the needs and interests and desires and ideas of the faculty themselves. So, we are undertaking a three-stage process: learning through experiments, launching prototype proposals, and, ultimately, launching the overall campaign. Launching the campaign is not easy because the university is not organized to fund a campaign. If you want to raise a billion or a billion and a half dollars, it costs between $160 and $200 million to raise that much money. And we do not happen to have that $160 to $200 million. So we have to think seriously about how to raise that money.

All in all, we start this semester, I believe, moving forward. Our resources are expanding and our political support is expanding. Good faculty and good students are joining us. I think the university is moving in a positive direction, and I believe that this semester has every likelihood of being one in which continuing good things will happen for the university.