Hi, Michael Crow here.

I want to welcome everybody back for the start of the 2014-2015 academic year. Of course, these days at ASU that’s kind of a misnomer because the beginning of our academic year is really a mystery. We’re always going, so when do we start and when do we end?

Let me start by thanking and congratulating all of you for ASU’s most significant year to date. I was looking in the last few days at how we came out in terms of all of the things we’re working toward. To rattle a few off:

- Record freshmen retention, particularly for in-state students;
- Largest number of graduates;
- Record 4-year and 6-year graduation rates;
- Fantastic achievement in research with what we believe will be a $425 million year for our expenditures. That’s more non-medical research than Stanford, Harvard, Columbia or Princeton;
- Eight thousand incoming international students, which puts us in the top ten of universities:
- National record-setting in enrollment and retention in our online programs;
- Numerous, prestigious faculty recognitions, including Ariel Anbar winning a Howard Hughes Medical Institute Professorship and Sethuraman “Panch” Panchanathan being appointed to the National Science Board. There have been fantastic achievements throughout our faculty and staff.
- Significant gains in fundraising;
- Significant increases in state investment; and
- Record enrollment and academic quality in our incoming class

I don’t know how to express in appropriate words what you, as faculty and staff, have done for Arizona and what you’re doing for our students and for ASU, other than to say thank you and congratulations. It really has been a fantastic year.

One thing you will see in the next few weeks is our move, as allowed by the Arizona Board of Regents, from our vision statement to our charter as a New American University. You’re going to receive some hard copy materials and we’re going to make a big deal out of this because ASU is one of these universities that – as we evolved from a teacher’s college to a state teacher’s college to a state college to a state university – we didn’t get assigned to another university and we didn’t absorb the charter of another university. We had a purpose, but not a charter. So we now have defined charter, one that says we will advance as the New American University, measuring our success on our inclusion and the success of our students; the impact of our research on the public good; and taking some responsibility for our overall community.

Now, we have 80,000-plus students showing up for classes, both immersion and online, and all of us should have one objective: the success of each and every one of those students. I really want all of us this year to try to find a way to engage with the students, not just in the classroom and in advising
sessions, but walking, eating, playing tennis, whatever is going on. Find a way to engage our students, whether you are a faculty or a staff member, so we can find out how they are doing, where they need help, and how we can support their success.

Going forward, we’re feeling good trade winds for the university and feeling very positive for the university. The Starbucks initiative, which we announced back in June, is off to a good start. We don’t know how many students from Starbucks we’ll have, but that program is about college completion. More than half of all students who start college in the United States don’t finish, including community colleges. Starbucks has devised a plan where there is no cost to the student if they complete college. That plan is with us and we hope to have a few thousand students in that program. We’re excited that it’s up and running and it will be underway at the beginning of the fall “B” semester.

One of the things that I’m always looking for are new ideas of what we should and shouldn’t be doing, and I want you to write to me directly at michael.crow@asu.edu.

I want everyone is paying close attention to what we are attempting to achieve. We are attempting to outperform other universities in our ability to offer a world-class, discovery-grade, highly creative educational experience to students from families of every background that exists. That is a very significant challenge, but I think we’re up to it and I think we’re making good progress.

I want to thank you for all that you’ve done to make ASU the great university that we are. Hopefully, I’ll see you around as I move around campuses or on the Internet somewhere.

Let’s have a great academic year and thanks a lot.