Remarks by Sally Mason, University of Iowa, Iowa City, Thursday, June 21, 2007

Thank you very much for the warm welcome. I already feel that I am a part of this University of Iowa community, having visited here just one week ago today.

I have worked collegially with University of Iowa faculty, staff and administrators for many years. So it was an extraordinary experience to be invited here last week to speak to you, listen to you and explore this beautiful campus.

I had a wonderful visit and so did my husband, Ken. We left feeling energized, excited and positively “wowed” by everyone we met and everything we saw.

It is always an honor to be invited someplace. But it’s even more of an honor to be invited back. And as much as I enjoyed myself last week, this return visit here today is the invitation I have really been looking forward to!

It is difficult for me to describe my excitement, my enthusiasm for the University of Iowa and for all of you. But I think I can perhaps sum up all my deepest feelings in two heartfelt words I intend to shout loud and often in the years ahead: --

• GO HAWKS!!!

You have selected a president who comes well prepared. I already have a complete black and gold wardrobe. But today and forever after — it takes on a whole new meaning for me.

Thanks to Michael Gartner and all members of the Board of Regents for the confidence they have expressed in me. Thanks to David Johnsen and all the members of the search committee who have worked so hard and who have been so generous with their friendship and support.

Thanks to the faculty, staff and especially the students I enjoyed meeting here last week. Thanks to all of you for taking part in this
event today as we begin a new page in the continuing, great history of the University of Iowa.

And finally, thanks for all the help I receive from that other new Hawkeye fan — my husband Ken — who is looking forward to joining you on this campus as much as I am.

We have a wonderful opportunity to fulfill the Iowa Promise, the title of your Strategic Plans. We will do it working together as a partnership between this state, the university, its friends, its alumni and the private sector.

What is the Iowa Promise?

The Iowa Promise is a university that not only educates, but also inspires.

The Iowa Promise is a university where excellence in learning includes not only transferring information, but also teaching how to think, how to question, how to research and how to change.

The Iowa Promise is a university where leading research extends off the campus, impacting life across the nation and around the world.

The Iowa Promise is a university playing a leadership role in powering a vibrant 21st century economy for the people of this state.

The Iowa Promise is a university where diversity is celebrated as a source of strength that enriches the learning environment and prepares students for the global community in which they will live and work.

The Iowa Promise is high-quality, affordable undergraduate education that prepares students to compete for jobs anywhere in the world and to contribute through civic engagement to the community they call home.

The Iowa Promise is high-quality professional and graduate education that prepares students to produce new knowledge, innovations and creative works that improve our lives and society.
The Iowa Promise is our promise to the people of this state.

It is a promise of vision, leadership and excellence.

It is a promise that this university will fulfill its incredible potential for the future of Iowa.

Our university connects Iowa to the world and the world to Iowa.

This is one of the world’s great universities. You can all be justifiably proud about everything you have accomplished.

The health sciences complex here in Iowa City is among the best in the nation. It is a crown jewel exemplifying how investments in higher education and health care pay back many times over in the lives of people.

University of Iowa health sciences excel in research focusing on diseases of the eye, cancer, muscular dystrophy, cystic fibrosis and much more.

The University of Iowa is a university of hope. It is university with a heart and soul.

The University of Iowa is a writing university. Forty Pulitzer Prize winners have ties to this university.

They have helped to craft Iowa’s internationally celebrated reputation as the home of the greatest writers of yesterday, today — and tomorrow.

This is a university that excels in the liberal arts and sciences, the college where I was dean at the University of Kansas. There are many points of pride at Iowa.

But we can be even more. No matter how good we are, we can always do better. We can build higher.

The University of Iowa’s own space pioneer James
Van Allen said: --

• “. . . One of the most enthralling things about human life is the recognition that we live in . . . a universe without bounds.”

The possibilities for our university are also without bounds.

We can take our university as far as our passion, our energy, our imagination and our determination allow. The only limitations we face are those we place on ourselves. If we dream together and work together, we will succeed together.

In the months ahead, I will be meeting with you. I will be listening. I have heard it said that the next president of the University of Iowa will be on a steep learning curve. I agree.

But I am not afraid of heights.

And having spent my entire career in higher education, I know how to learn.

I will meet with students, faculty, staff and administrators. And in fact, I have already begun. I will meet with alumni, friends of this university, state and community leaders. I will travel throughout our state to learn what the University of Iowa can do for our rural towns and major cities.

It will be an exciting time for me to hear your ideas and your dreams, to learn your vision for this university and its place in our state and in the world. It will be a time for me to share my passion for the job that is ahead.

I have an understanding of the importance of education in society and in the lives of people. You would expect that from a university president. But my understanding goes far beyond any intellectual perception.

My understanding of the power of education is very personal.
My father was an immigrant from Czechoslovakia who came to this nation as a child and never had the opportunity even to finish grade school.

My mother barely finished high school.

I am the first person in my family to receive a university degree. And now I am the president of one of the world’s great universities.

Standing here before you today, I can’t help but wonder what my parents would think if they could see me now. I think they would be very proud. Very amazed. But also very proud.

I am proud. Education has changed my life. It has changed your lives. It will change the lives of countless more in the years ahead.

It will change the future of our state.

In 1907, seven years before James Van Allen was born in Mt. Pleasant, Iowa, rocket pioneer Robert Goddard was experimenting with his science.

At the time Goddard started his rocket research, many people were still saying flight was impossible, rocketry or otherwise.

Goddard later said: --

- “It is difficult to say what is impossible, for the dreams of yesterday are the hopes of today, and the realities of tomorrow.”

Iowa has the dreams.

We have the hope and the passion.

We have the tools we need to succeed.

Our job now is to create and build the realities of tomorrow and fulfill the Iowa Promise for our students and state.
Go Hawks!!!

Thank you.