Hello and welcome back!

I hope you each had an opportunity last week for some rest, renewal and time to do whatever you most enjoy! The reopening of the ice rink brought excitement to campus over break. It was a big success for both students and the community, and it was great to see some of you out on the ice! Thank you to the staff on campus who worked to make this happen.

As we begin this new year and new semester, it also is a good time to remind ourselves of our core commitments as an institution. We remain steadfastly committed to improving retention and graduation rates; continued investment in faculty lines, development and research; and strategic investments in financial aid. We will continue to look for ways to align resources in ways that support the academic core priorities and student success.

We are committed to increasing transparency in the budget process. We will hold town hall budget meetings for each division to present its budget and budget requests. If you are interested in budget issues, I encourage you to attend these sessions. The budget process also has included space requests, and the Deans have been working with their faculty and staff to ascertain and prioritize space needs. We will be reviewing these needs throughout the spring as Provost Knerr continues developing an academic plan along with the Deans and appropriate governance groups.

This spring we will determine the type of strategic planning process we want to use for the next round of institutional planning. Several conversations this fall have included themes of health and wellness. We anticipate a more thorough conversation about these issues on campus while continuing our focus on the following campus priorities:
• Enhancing academic excellence through focus on faculty research and support as well as increasing student achievement

• Improving affordability and completion for UM-Flint students

• Building an increasingly diverse and inclusive academic community

• Increasing UM-Flint’s reputation statewide and regionally as a leading regional university

• Enhancing community engagement

• Developing educational programs that serve the community/region to enhance quality of life

Another strategic priority, now and in the future, is securing necessary resources to achieve our goals. Private contributions are critical to expand, to innovate, and to provide essential student support. You’ll be seeing lots more about the Capital Campaign in the months ahead. Our community is very excited about the news on Riverfront Center — and even before that donation is counted, we are at $17 million towards our goal of $40 million. Public dollars are equally critical. State support of our general fund has dwindled over the years to just 16.8 percent. The next few months are important as we make the case to state legislators and the governor about the importance of investing in state universities—and UM-Flint in particular.

There are a host of activities on campus this spring showcasing the talent of our students and faculty that you won’t want to miss. Up first is the campus-wide Day of Service and remembrance of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., on January 18 — featuring multiple volunteer opportunities across the community, an opening breakfast, and a keynote speech by Naomi Tutu, the daughter of Archbishop Desmond Tutu who, like her father, is a leader for equality and human dignity around the world. There are many ways to participate in this wonderful celebration. Please take a moment to check out this website for
volunteer opportunities and, if your schedule permits, sign up today. There are two additional Critical Issues Forums scheduled that I hope you will attend, John Quinones on March 23 and Matt Taibbi on April 4, as well as the Winegarden Visiting Professor events the week of March 20, featuring Angela Davis.

I am proud of all that this university has been able to accomplish in this last semester, including the new Merit Scholarship program as well as the investments we have made in research and faculty support. I’m proud of the 667 former students who as of Dec. 20 are alumni. I look forward to another semester and another year of achievement—and, yes, challenges that we work together to overcome.

Thank you again for all that you’ve done to make the University of Michigan-Flint the special place that it is.

Go Blue!

Susan Borrego, PhD.
Chancellor