**Charter Day Keynote Address – Chancellor Carol Christ**

**Thank you for all of those wonderful birthday wishes! Thank you all for joining us today – and let me give a special thanks to the alumni who have returned here to be with us, representing classes as far back as the Class of 1945. Thanks also to so many who have publicly commended us on this milestone – Congresswoman Barbara Lee, who issued a statement in the Congressional Record celebrating UC’s 150th anniversary; Governor Brown; those in the California State Senate and State Assembly, which passed resolutions celebrating this occasion; Alameda County Supervisor Keith Carson, and many others.**

**Now it is my honor, as Berkeley’s eleventh chancellor, to give today’s keynote address.**

**Today, March 23rd, is our Charter Day.**

**150 years ago, Governor Henry Haight signed an act envisioning a great public university for the state of California – one that would provide the children of farmers and factory workers with a stellar education**

**Thus, with the stroke of a pen, Haight brought into being one of the most extraordinary universities that the world has ever known – a place where we would discover new chemical elements, where we would develop cures for disease, where social movements would begin, and where we would ask, and answer, questions fundamental to our understanding of the world.**

**In the years since 1868, our institution has grown from 40 students on a small campus in Oakland to 10 university campuses educating nearly 300,000 students – not to mention five medical centers, three national labs, and an extensive network of educational, health, and agricultural resource centers serving Californians across the state. Today, the University of California is the envy of every other system of public higher education in the world. Through its tripartite mission of teaching, research, and public service, it has given great strength to California, its economy, and its people.**

**At the heart of today’s system, of course, is Berkeley--UC’s founding campus, its flagship, and its shining jewel – a place that rivals in quality *any* institution in the Ivy League, all the while educating as many low-income students as *every* institution in the Ivy League--put together.**

**Because we’re celebrating our institution’s 150th anniversary today, I will begin with the story of our origins. It’s a story that begins well before 1868. The University of California was originally imagined during the Gold Rush, with the very first California state legislature envisioning a university that “would contribute even more than gold to the glory and happiness of advancing generations.”**

**“It would be the Great Light of the Pacific,” they wrote, and yet without any allocation of funding or of land, there was no way to realize that vision.**

**But circumstances changed with the passage of the Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862, legislation that provided a grant of federal land to every state in the union to establish a public university. California embraced this opportunity, moving to establish a College of Agricultural, Mining, and Mechanical Arts—essentially a polytechnic institution. Reverend Henry Durant, after whom Durant Hall is named, had the vision of joining this college, which still existed only on paper, with the financially struggling College of California—a liberal arts institution in Oakland. With this merger, the University of California was born, on Charter Day, March 23rd, 1868. While classes began on the College of California’s existing Oakland campus, the university soon moved to a new location in Strawberry Canyon, overlooking the Golden Gate…which Durant named Berkeley, after the eighteenth century Irish philosopher. Durant saw the place as deeply symbolic; as a newspaper editorial said at the time, “Many nations a few years hence, as their fleets with the wealth of commerce seek these golden shores, will see the University before they see the metropolis.”**

**The land on which the new campus sat was also known as Huichin, home to the Chochenyo Ohlone people. In telling the story of this great university, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge our deep and complex history with Native peoples as a critical part of our institution’s past and legacy. We stand with privilege in a place that remains vitally important to today’s Chochenyo Ohlone, stewards of their ancestral lands.**

**The year that the first buildings on the new Berkeley campus were completed was also the year that the university’s first class graduated: twelve young men, called the twelve apostles (women had not initially been admitted). They went on to illustrious careers; that class of 1873 included a U.S. congressman, a California governor, a mayor, a bank president, two UC regents, a businessman, an attorney, an engineer, a math professor, a clergyman, and a rancher.**

**Berkeley graduates set off to shape the world from the very start, and the growing university quickly became the eminent academic institution in the west, but the road was never easy. We’re used to a triumphal history of the University of California, but our story is more profoundly one of resilience in face of challenge. Let me give some examples.**

**Very soon after its founding, UC’s commitment to a broad, liberal education came under attack. Agricultural interests in the state felt the new university was not focusing sufficiently on the needs of farmers, giving too much attention to subjects like ancient languages and philosophy. UC nearly lost its autonomy in this conflict, but a coalition revised the state constitution in ways that protected the university’s independence yet still allowed it to meet more of the farming industry’s needs.**

**Berkeley’s budget was an early issue as well. Throughout the 19th and into the 20th century, the campus was subject to chronic underfunding by the state. During the Great Depression, about 25% of UC’s state allocation was withdrawn — and the university had no substantial private gifts or student fees to fill the gap. Yet during this time, through creativity and grit, its academic departments still managed to grow in size and stature.**

**Catastrophes occasionally befell the campus, too. In 1923, the first major urban wildfire in American history destroyed 600 buildings in the city and burned to the edge of campus, causing a quarter of the faculty to lose their homes and their research materials. But collections were rebuilt, and the community banded together to support those who lost houses.**

**More recently, in the middle of the 20th century, Berkeley was at the center of several political firestorms--the Loyalty Oath controversy of the late 1940s and the political protests of the 1960s. Ronald Reagan, running as Governor of California, condemned Berkeley as emblematic of all that was wrong with academia and with young people. Berkeley nonetheless sustained its academic reputation, and after the events of the 1960s, issues of social equity and justice became more deeply embedded into the campus’ institutional DNA.**

**These examples from history offer lessons for today. Our campus is in the midst of as challenging and important a time as any it has seen before, one that will require our creativity and determination.**

**Today’s challenges are many: most pressingly, we must create a new financial model for a public institution that is no longer supported by the state as generously as it once was. We must become more decisive and transparent in our governance and administration, in order to have the agility to adapt and evolve. We must become more diverse – more representative of the population of California – in order to serve our mission, retain public trust, and be a “people’s college” for the 21st century.**

**Then there is the challenge of the student experience. We have become a much bigger university than was ever imagined even twenty years ago – how can we ensure that, at this scale, students thrive? Some of the issues here are fundamental: Unless we greatly expand our housing stock, and assure it is affordable, how can we ensure that our students will thrive?**

**To address a number of the concerns I’ve just raised, I recently inaugurated a strategic planning process that will examine what our university should look like in ten years and the course that will take us there. Guided by commitments to diversity, excellence, innovation, our public mission, and to accountability and transparency, several committees of faculty, staff, students, and administrators are now examining four strategic questions. They are:**

* **What are the critical issues—the grand challenges--facing our state, our nation, and our world that Berkeley is uniquely suited to address and solve?   Where are we best positioned to be a global leader, and what investments do we need to make it become so?**
* **How can we optimize the student experience? What investments and changes in our instructional and co-curricular programs and our housing and dining options would have the most impact on the quality of our students’ experience?**
* **What is Berkeley’s optimal size? We have come a long way from those first twelve graduates to today’s campus population of 40,000 students. Accepting that enrollment growth is not entirely within the campus’s control, what do we see as the preferred enrollment level for Berkeley and how should this enrollment be distributed among undergraduate and graduate students, masters and doctoral students?  Should the size of our colleges and schools stay roughly proportional or should we grow selectively? What role should alternative education delivery models play in accommodating increased demand and reaching out to new populations?**
* **And finally: How can Berkeley foster a sustainable financial model in an environment in which it does not control either state funding allocations or tuition levels and must develop an evolving diversity of revenue sources?   Importantly, in such a mixed funding environment, how do we best sustain our mission and identity as a public institution?**

**In my time as chancellor, I’ve been thinking a lot about the qualities that define our particular character and history. Intellectual courage is one of the most important—whether in the free speech movement, the loyalty oath controversy, or the quest to discover new scientific paradigms. We strive to foster that courage--that constant questioning of the status quo--in our students, empowering and educating them to change the world, as we have been changing it since 1868.**

**Now, we must have the courage to make changes here, changes that will assure that Berkeley’s future is as distinguished as its past. We are on the right track: We are making excellent progress in reducing our deficit, we have committed to doubling our housing capacity in the next decade, we are seeking to add a capstone discovery experience to every student’s education, we are hiring immensely talented faculty, who lead the way in research in subjects from physics to philosophy.**

**I ask you to join me on this journey, which is not for the fainthearted. Only by working together, by looking to the future as our forebears looked through the Golden Gate, by committing to our core values of comprehensive excellence and access for all, will we maintain the brilliance of Berkeley. I end by quoting President Benjamin Ide Wheeler: “And so I say cheer for her. It will do your lungs good. Love her. It will do your heart and your life good.”**

**Thank you, and here is to the next 150 years. Fiat lux and Go Bears.**