Let me begin by drawing your attention to the iconic images of Suffolk University that are decorating the ballroom this evening - from President Calvin Coolidge laying the cornerstone of the Archer building, to celebrating the opening of Suffolk’s Modern Theatre in 2010. I encourage you to spend a few minutes this evening enjoying some important moments in our collective history.

Also, as you arrived tonight, you were met by the sounds of the Guzheng played by An Wang who is an Entrepreneurship major in Suffolk’s Class of 2016.

Earlier today in the ceremonies for the Sawyer Business School and the College of Arts and Sciences, I told graduating students that they had a great deal to be proud of. That they have accomplished wonderful things here, and will accomplish so much more in the years to come.

But tonight I have the privilege of talking to you about Suffolk University itself and about how proud we are of all that we have accomplished as a University community. Many of you have known us since you were students here yourselves. And others here tonight are still getting acquainted with us. So I want to share with you just a few examples of things that make me proud of Suffolk, so that you might get a little better sense of who we are as a University today.

As some of you know, a number of Suffolk students serve in the military. Some who have returned home from Iraq and Afghanistan wanted to share their stories, in hopes of bridging the significant gulf between their experience and those of other college students. So they teamed up with student actors in our Theatre Department in the College of Arts & Sciences, and after hours and hours of interviews, created a theatrical production called At Ease, which portrays the lives of seven military veterans who return to civilian life at Suffolk University. The play has helped Suffolk students understand the experience of military veterans and was incredibly powerful. In fact, the Boston Globe called At Ease “an intensely personal collaboration between two groups of students who might otherwise have little to do with one another.” At Ease will have an encore performance this July at the Out of the Box arts festival in Boston.

Here’s another example. Law Students in our new Intellectual Property clinic are helping small companies and entrepreneurs fight back against big companies that use aggressive, even bullying trademark protection tactics. The students are offering a legal lifeline to dance companies, filmmakers, start-up app developers and others who otherwise could not afford the legal bills. Students are drafting trademark filings and licensing contracts, and informing clients of their rights, all while learning how to practice law in the real world. In fact, Suffolk Law is gaining a reputation for preparing its graduates to compete and succeed in a legal landscape that is undergoing seismic changes because of technological innovations. A recent National Law Journal article noted that Suffolk Law is “serious about technology.”

The Sawyer Business School has been leading a conversation about the future of Boston in a series of forums. Sawyer students have offered well-researched recommendations for the ongoing revitalization of Boston’s Downtown Crossing. They recently examined the community
benefits of various casino proposals in Eastern Massachusetts. And they have been leading a
discussion about the newest housing trend in Boston: microhousing -- tiny apartment units
designed to be functional, but affordable enough to attract young professionals who like living in
the city. In a unique collaboration, our business school teamed up with students in our New
England School of Art & Design, who created interior design concepts for the micro-units.

As these examples show, we like to roll up our sleeves at Suffolk University and get it done. We
have a longstanding reputation for being the kind of people who jump in and try to solve
problems. Indeed, we think it’s vitally important to blend theory and practice. It’s an educational
approach that ensures our students have the opportunity to learn both in the classroom and in the
real world, and that they learn how to be innovative and flexible enough to adapt to a rapidly
changing work world throughout their careers.

I am particularly excited about the 20 Somerset Street academic building that Drew mentioned.
When 20 Somerset Street opens at the start of the 2015 academic year, I believe it will be
transformative for this University, in part because it gathers all of the academic programs of our
Sawyer Business School and College of Arts and Sciences in one visible area. But also because
the design of the building will move us decades ahead in the quality of our teaching facilities.
Our students will benefit from science and other classrooms with active and interactive teaching
capabilities that will foster collaboration and hands-on learning. It’s going to be an exciting
change for us, one that I hope you will be part of.

In closing, I will say what I said at both commencement ceremonies today: Suffolk is an
incredible place, one that we are proud to be associated with. I want to thank you for all you do
for Suffolk—and all you will do as we move forward. Thank you.