>>Bob Ramirez: Well, welcome and thank you for being with us this morning.

My name is Bob Ramirez, and I'm President and CEO of Vantage West Credit Union here in Tucson, Arizona and also a member of the Pima Community College Foundation Board of Directors and I'm a proud alumnus of Pima Community College. We are here to learn from Chancellor Lambert about the progress that Pima has made in addressing the challenges of the Higher Learning Commission, the challenge of being on probation. As you all know, the Commission placed the College on probation April of 2013. It was done because of not complying for one or more of the Commission's criteria for accreditation.

In the past year all of Pima's operations have been under scrutiny and under a microscope. Problems found by the Commission have been addressed and other areas for improvement have been identified and are being worked on diligently. Over 300 people from within the College and from the community have been involved in this project.

The results of the work is an institutional self-study, a comprehensive self-examination of Pima's policies, procedures, and goals for continuous improvement. Chancellor Lambert will address and share highlights of the report with you in today's meeting. Next week the team from the Commission will visit Pima College to evaluate whether their concerns have been fully resolved and standards met. Today's meeting is an opportunity for you to hear directly from Chancellor Lambert about Pima's progress. Many of your questions may be answered through our dialogue, but if they are not, please write your questions on an index card on your table and hold it up for the volunteers to collect. We will address audience questions that have not been addressed
at the end of this session.

Also, a video of today's presentation will be available on Pima's website, as well as a complete schedule of the Commission's team visit.

Thank you, Chancellor Lambert, for your leadership and your transparency throughout this whole process. Let's begin, Chancellor, and start with a simple question. What is a community college and what are the characteristics of this college?

>>Lee Lambert: Well, good morning, everybody. And first before I answer the question you asked, Bob, I just want to thank you all for coming out to learn more about where the College is relative to our Higher Learning Commission requirements and meeting those requirements and for really demonstrating your support and care for the institution. So thank you for that.

And Bob, I want to thank you and the foundation board for hosting and supporting today's event as well, so thank you.

>> Bob Ramirez: My pleasure.

>> Lee Lambert: Some folks look at community colleges as democracy’s colleges and you start to think about it that way students like Ashley Rodriguez who is someone who grew up here locally, went to high school and then joined the service. She served a tour of duty in Iraq. And upon her return from military active duty, she was able to attend Pima Community College through our aviation technology program. And not only did she go through that aviation technology program, but she went on to excel in that program and is now employed by Bombardier who many of you know is a local -- who has an operation here in Tucson.

But the other thing you may not know about Ashley, she has become a key spokesperson for Pima Community College, and if you have seen some of our latest ads on television, you will see that she speaks highly of the institution. We’re also a place
where Jeannette Alcarez who is a student who also grew up here locally, she came to us and probably never would have discovered her voice of being a powerful leader. She is one of 85 individuals in the country to have received the Jack Kent Cook Scholarship. Now think about that in this way. There are over a million students studying every year to be one of 85 students to have received the Jack Kent Cook Scholarship. This is prestigious, by the way, and she came from Tucson, Arizona and attended Pima Community College.

That is what democracy’s colleges is all about, giving folks opportunities they may not otherwise have, whether it's your first chance, your second chance, or your last chance, we are where folks have opportunity and how democracy and our values as a country really come alive. And I’m proud to say that we have reinstated our commitment to open access so we can live those principles of a democracy and so many other points I will hopefully touch on as we move through the morning.

>> Bob Ramirez: Thank you, Chancellor. Chancellor, let's cut to the chase, why is Pima on probation?

>> Lee Lambert: To put it quite simply, I think Pima became complacent, and in becoming complacent from top to bottom, we were not paying attention to the things an institution of higher education should be focused on -- and that is student success -- and a lot of that really stemmed from the top. Whether it was through the governance and the overriding perspective of the Board as well as the leadership of the institution, and that leadership not providing the proper support to our outstanding faculty and staff who each and every day come here to make sure that our student are successful. So essentially what they said to us was: There are three core components that we were not in compliance with and there were two assumed practices that we were also not in compliance with.

I'm proud to say -- and we'll talk more about it later this morning -- some of the things we've done to make sure we are coming up to the appropriate standards related to those five key areas.
Bob Ramirez: Thank you, Chancellor. Can you talk about the approach Pima took to conduct its self-study program.

Lee Lambert: So Bob, any time an institution finds itself on probation, it should approach it in one of two ways. One way is to say, “You know what, we do not agree with the Commission and therefore we are not going to take it seriously.” Another approach is to say, “No – this is an opportunity. It’s an opportunity to look a really critical look at what we are doing well and not doing well and be responsive to what our peers are telling us we have to seriously address.” I have to say Pima really stepped up to address the gaps that were identified for the institution. So in doing that, we really saw it as an opportunity.

So we engaged in a comprehensive review of our policies and procedures, our systems, looking to see what we needed to put in place so that we were in compliance with the requirements. And I will say a little more later as we go through the morning.

Bob Ramirez: Thank you. Please describe for us the process that Pima employed to examine its operations.

Lee Lambert: First I would like to thank the over 300 individuals from the community and within the college who really stepped up to help us to start to identify the areas that we needed to work on to strengthen the institution. So I just want to say thank you to all of you who were directly involved and those of you who later became very engaged with us as we moved through the process.

So that sense of transparency and openness and involving the community in the process, I think that is a sign of a change in the approach at Pima Community College. So that is a critical component of this. But we also looked at this as an opportunity to start living the values that are important to an institutional of higher education, connected to, as I noted earlier, the openness, the transparency, the accountability and whether we call it shared governance or participatory governance it was a way for us to
live those values. I am proud of all of us who stepped up to live those values in addressing our process.

>> Bob Ramirez: Thank you. Let’s examine the areas in which Pima was not living up to the standards of the Commission. The audience is very familiar with some of these items that have been addressed in the media. Let's start with the area of awarding contracts. Tell us about that.

>> Lee Lambert: Well, as you all know, one of the core components spoke to integrity, and integrity in our processes et cetera, especially in our financial areas, our human resources areas. One area where they found that the college fell short was how we awarded contracts.

Fortunately for us we have gone in to review our processes and procedures for how we award contracts and really started to tighten up those pieces and make sure that when we award things on a noncompetitive basis that those are the exceptions and not the rule but also putting in safeguards so that our procedures are evaluated properly and we go through what we call a request for proposal and then when we look to do a sole source piece that we have strong justification for approaching it that way.

>> Bob Ramirez: Thank you. The Commission also found that Pima administrators had not acted with integrity and were being inconsistent in applying Pima policies. What has changed there, Chancellor?

>> Lee Lambert: I think one important piece about this is making sure that people understand what the policies and procedures are and as you understand what those are, make sure that we have a common application of what they are. With that said, I would say this is always a challenge for any large-scale organization to make sure that we not only understand our policies and procedures but that we are all applying it in a similar way. I don’t think that’s unique to Pima, but I think what’s different about Pima was you had that happening, and this churn of administrators and that leads to inconsistence in the application of rules. And then you had folks from the very highest
levels injecting themselves into processes well before they should be involving themselves. I think it created a lot of confusion.

And then, when you have too many policies, you start to develop inconsistency. So what we’ve done is, we started a major overhaul. We’re not done – there’s a lot of pieces here. What the Board has done is essentially started to redefine their bylaws and the Board Policies so we can then start to align the internal processes consistently with the direction of the Board Policies. That work is in play now, and we have made major progress in these areas and there were some critical areas they told us we needed to clean up and again I will touch on that here shortly.

>> Bob Ramirez: Thank you, Chancellor. Many of the Commission’s concerns centered on Pima’s policies and actions regarding sexual harassment. How has Pima addressed those concerns?

>> Lee Lambert: Before I respond to your question I first want to say to all of the women at Pima Community College who stepped up to report the way they were being treated by the former chancellor that they should be applauded --
[applause]
-- because you can only imagine, right? It takes a lot of courage to stand up to treatment of that nature of a sexual nature and really call it out, because you risk your career, you risk your livelihood. And for the women to have done that, they deserve a lot of credit. And we should not look down on them but really look to support their success overall. So I first want to make sure that folks understand the significance of that.

So what we have had to do was really go back in and look at what has been the college’s policies and procedures related to sexual harassment. And how does one go about filing a complaint - especially when that complaint involves the chancellor or some other high-level official which can quickly lead to conflicts of interest and so forth. So the Board has gone through and cleaned up the way that we approach responses that involve the chancellor directly or high-level senior folks to where we would employ an
outside investigator as part of that process. Things would go directly to the Board and work with the General Counsel unless the General Counsel, of course, is the one who is engaged in that at a minimum inappropriate behavior and then bring in that outside firm. This has all been tightened up to where I think we are going to be far more responsive going forward.

>> Bob Ramirez: Thank you, Chancellor. Sexual harassment is related to another finding by the Commission that a culture of fear and retribution existed at Pima. How have you addressed the problem that pervades many levels of an organization here at Pima?

>> Lee Lambert: The first step was really to understand that we had a problem, we had a problem in terms of how the college treated its employees, whether they be faculty or staff or administrators and our students. So the first is to accept that you have a problem, and the next piece was to say now that we accept that we have a problem, what are we going to do to go about addressing that? My focus was first to work directly with the senior leadership and set forth a set of expectations that I expect of all of us. And so we worked together and we defined some key expectations. Examples of that are open and honest communication, and applying policies and procedures in a fair and consistent manner, involving people who would be impacted by decisions, and really starting to hold ourselves accountable to higher standards. I worked with that team to start to put that in place so that we now bring a level of professionalism to the organization and start to return a focus on civility and respect.

Now as you can all imagine, that doesn't happen overnight. It gets addressed one interaction at a time over time. And I think we are making important progress but also we have had to start to look at what systems needed to be either put in place or retooled, so in many cases we had to set up new offices. So we created a Dispute Resolution Center at the college to help -- to allow a vehicle for our employees to bring concerns forward as they may arise.

We've had to -- as I mentioned earlier -- clarify some of our complaint processes and procedures. As I noted, setting up those leadership expectations and then ultimately
starting to move those down within the organization becomes important, and then building the systems that reinforce those commitments. I believe we have to model it at the top first before I can ask anybody else to live by a set of expectations, I have to live by those set of expectations and my team has to live by those set of expectations. So we've been work on that and then we've been putting in college-wide training programs. We are stepping up a lot of our training efforts.

Then really listen to our employees. Our employees before I arrived they had met and developed a blueprint for healing and some of the pieces that I mentioned were also contained within that blueprint for healing. And then we went out and did a climate survey of our employees and I think what is important in terms of what we're going do next among other things is we are going to develop a policy and procedure and training program in dealing with abrasive and bullying behavior. I think that will be one of the few colleges in the country who will demonstrate leadership on how we deal with incivility in the workplace because we should be focused on the Ashley Rodriguez's and their success and not on how we are mistreating one another. So that is where we are headed.

>> Bob Ramirez: Thank you, Chancellor -- [applause] The Commission also noted that Pima failed to properly investigation numerous allegations related to the former chancellor. Can you address those?

>> Lee Lambert: Yes, and this is in part where the board really dropped the ball. When any of us receives a complaint, anonymous or otherwise, we've really got to see it through. When one of our board members received a complaint -- a written complaint - - unfortunately it was not read to its entirety. If it had been read in its entirety it would have tipped off that there was a serious problem potentially with the chancellor around sexual misconduct. I think making sure that when concerns are brought forward that we read through and follow through whether they are anonymous or not. With an anonymous thing it may dead end but that is not the point. The point is you take it seriously and those of you who are attorneys in the audience you can appreciate this piece, that we have to take prompt and corrective action. That’s a requirement both
It's important that the board understand that, and the board does. The board has really stepped up to really shore up as I mentioned earlier the sexual harassment policy pieces, to understand that they have to also be as transparent and responsive when concerns are brought forward about myself or any other employee at the institution. We’ve done a lot to deal with it. They have helped construct, as I’ve mentioned earlier, a policy that allows for external investigations to occur now in a timely way. They eventually did respond, but part of it is just not doing it in that timely way and that prompt and corrective manner and also keep a professional distance between themselves and the chancellor. That is very important. We can't get to a point where the chancellor and the board are viewed as friends. We are professional friends, we are not friends in the sense of what a lot of us think of as friends because there may come a time when the interests of the college is different than the interests of the individual, such as myself as chancellor. I think those pieces are now being addressed.

>> Bob Ramirez: Many of the Commission's concerns clustered around governance and the board's role in oversight of the college. How has Pima responded to these allegations?

>> Lee Lambert: As I noted earlier, the board has really stepped up to really review their bylaws, to really review their policies and procedures and to build in a mechanism where that type of review will occur on a regular basis. So in many of our policies it says when the next review period is going to occur. Before this sanction being imposed on us, the college hasn't reviewed its policies in years - in some cases decades.

Now, with that said, this is not unique to Pima. Just keep that perspective, okay? I think the board has really taken that seriously and they have met frequently to shore up these pieces and I'm very proud of that in terms of what they've done, but they have also gone further than that in key areas like finance. They have set up a Finance and Audit Committee, an external committee made up of community members and some folks in the audience here I know are chairs of that committee, Nathaniel is in the audience, I
saw him earlier. They've been engaged and have met a few times. I believe met with the State Auditor General's Office as well. What we are finding is we are starting to tighten up the process and the board is more engaged in making sure that the college's finance and our auditing is in better compliance with state requirements.

Also, they have set up a Human Resources Advisory Team made up of two board members and some internal folks and we'll have to look at whether we make that an external group or not. They are now looking at how we go about, how we treat our employees, how we hire our employees and putting in a set of metrics so they can evaluate and assess our compliance as an institution against what other organizations do in that regard.

Also, we are going to build a calendar where we are going to map out all of the core areas of the institution and develop metrics against those core areas of the institution they can again provide that oversight that a Governing Board is supposed to provide to monitor institutional performance. That is going to take more time to put in place but that is already in play and so we are hopeful we'll get that in place -- and by the way, I come from two previous colleges where we had put many place a policy governance model. That is kind of what we are talking about here. As a part of the policy governance model it comes with this monitoring piece against core elements of the institution with metrics and we are putting that in place as we speak.

I think you will find that the board has really stepped up in a way to understand that the relationship to the chancellor, their relationship to the college, is to be a much more professional one with clear expectations defined, with core elements with metrics so they can properly exercise their oversight functions.

>> Bob Ramirez: The Commission also found that the college had not engaged in systematic and integrated planning. What have you done to remedy these challenges?

>> Lee Lambert: So earlier last year some of you may remember, I had asked our most immediate interim chancellor, Dr. Zelema Harris, to come back and work with the
college to deal with our planning efforts at the institution. She agreed to come on board and help us really to address this integrated planning and to think more strategically.

The results of that was a Futures Conference. Many of you in this room came that day, I believe it was February, and it was right here in this room, to ask all or you, your thoughts about the direction of the institution. And I believe that is a big sea change from how the college was engaging the community. As a result of that we developed a set of strategic directions and there are six of them and I will just highlight them really quick.

One was to reaffirm our commitment to the Higher Learning Commission and its guiding values. That’s what we are doing now but it's going to extend beyond that. We know it’s not enough to come back into compliance and then slip back into complacency. We have to constantly make sure that we are engaging and so we will have a new position that we are creating that is going to oversee our accreditation. We also have a lot of program specialty accreditation areas as well, and so this new position will make sure we are staying on top of what we need to do as an institution.

We also said that we're going to improve access and success for our students. In today's 21st century world it's no longer enough to provide access to students. It's got to be access and success. So we are going get better at both sides of that, the entry and the exit parts of the equation.

Also, what we are doing today: Starting to do a better job of fostering our partnerships and strengthening our relationships with the community and provide educational opportunities that meet the community's needs. Also, to be responsive to business and industry. In many cases we do it well but in other case we've kind of slipped and are not doing it at the high quality level that needs to happen in a 21st century context. That is another one of those directional areas.

Also, really putting an increased emphasis on diversity, inclusion and global education. Finally setting up and developing a culture of organizational learning, employee accountability and a commitment to employee development.
And I will extend beyond that just so folks know, as a part of my goal-setting process working with the board – and that is another change, the board is being is being clear with the chancellor to set goals and objectives -- and part of my goals for this upcoming year if the board approves them this evening is to really look at our financial health of the institution over the long term. And then really look at -- the final goal would be to look at the organizational structure, the facilities, et cetera for the long haul.

As Bill Ward can tell you sits up here in front of with us, he oversees our facilities department, we have deferred maintenance issues that run in excess of 7 figures. We have a lot of work to do to bring our facilities up to a 21st-century standard that will be necessary to create the dynamic learning environment for teaching and learning.

>> Bob Ramirez: While not grounds for probation, the Commission found that the college changed its admission policies without consulting faculty or the community. Could you talk a little bit about this issue.

>> Lee Lambert: It's a long-standing tradition in higher education that you engage your faculty in the oversight of the curriculum. In doing that, making sure that when you make decisions that impact students directly that they are a part of that process.

And what we've done is really to involve them more in critical decisions as we go forward, so we set up a Governance Council. The board actually set up a policy structure that allows for the creation of a Governance Council and as part of that Governance Council, now we have faculty and staff, both our nonexempt staff and our exempt staff, we have our students at the table talking about college-wide issues that would have serious impact on admissions, on our budgets, and you can think of all of the major issues we face. Those issues are going to start coming forward to that body of individuals. And they are there to advise me as the chancellor.

So I think you are going to see a big change so that we don't get into a situation where we are trying to change a major process like admissions, and do it in a way that
circumvents systems because that must flow through the system and now the board as it is building its accountability structure will be aware of that kind of change in a way that is understood. But here is another important piece that the board has done. On board night we have faculty sitting at the table, we have staff sitting at the table, both exempt and nonexempt, we have our adjunct faculty sitting at the table, we have our part-time employees sitting at the table and we also have our students. This accountability system is going to make it more difficult for this change of admissions policies to occur without the involvement of individuals. It's not that you can't change an admissions policy. But you have to follow a certain process to do it and then report it properly in this instance to the Commission.

If those things would have happened arguably the institution could have made a change, but if you don't have the other pieces I just described to assess whether it's prudent to do, that is a different matter and that is why we have that in place so it is going through a vetted process and so that we understand the implications of this very critical decision.

I'm pleased to say that we have restored our commitment to open admissions. The board has reaffirmed that very clearly. We are building back the infrastructure that would be necessary to support that as we go forward. We are involved in a developmental education redesign process as we speak and we have undertaken a student services review process. These are all important. These won't happen overnight but they take time and then we are aligning resources in many ways to be able to implement some of the recommendations that come out of this.

For example, on dev ed redesign we are in the process of hiring a high-level administrator to oversee our efforts who will have a background in developmental education to guide what we are doing there. We are going to add more faculty in that area as well and we have appropriated the money. Going back to the integrated planning issue, your planning should drive your resource allocation and it shouldn't be that your budget is driving your planning and that is why the strategic direction pieces were important and, oh by the way, all of the campuses were asked to start to develop
their own strategic plans in alignment with the strategic directions. They’ve been doing a lot of work in that regard. All of my direct administrators will now have goals and objectives they have to meet as well and they will be evaluated against that. So again we are bringing this level of professional and accountability back into the institution. 

[applause]

>> Bob Ramirez: Chancellor, let’s close with a look ahead and a key question. In your opinion what will be the Commission's response to their investigation?

>> Lee Lambert: Well, before I answer that question I want to make sure that I emphasize this point: We have been working with our K-12 partners in a way that I think the college has not been doing for a long time. We are listening to our K-12 partners. When they told us that we would like you to take the assessments out to us instead of making us come and bus our students out to you, we changed the assessment instrument from the Compass to the Accuplacer that allows that to happen. That is a big change and we are looking to strengthen our dual enrollment. I think if we leverage dual enrollment that we can get our youth to a finish line quicker with certifications that have real value and get them the competencies they need to navigate in the world we all know they are heading into. So we've really done a tremendous amount of work in that regard and there is more to do. We'll be reaching out to the charter schools and we'll reach out to the private schools in our community, so that it is really K-12 in its most holistic way that the college will strengthen those relationships.

We've been meeting with the University of Arizona and talking about how we can strengthen our ties. We have a lot of University of Arizona partners in the audience this morning and I think we are seeing good progress in that regard. And I know we have folks from ASU as well and we are looking at how we strengthen our relationship with Arizona State University and then I'm not sure if we have folks from NAU but we run some important programs with NAU as well. We are really focused on how do we make sure that we provide a comprehensive 21st century learning experience that spans really Pre-K, early learning all the way through to the university and we understand
where we fit in that continuum. I’m very proud that we are reengaging the community in a way that is very important.

So as we look ahead, Bob, as you all know, next week is a very important day for the college.

On Monday -- well, actually, the site visiting team will come into town over this weekend and then they will begin their visits on Monday and Tuesday of next week, wrapping up on the morning of the Wednesday of next week. I think that the college as I noted has taken this very seriously and we have addressed every single point they have asked us to address and we put in where needed policies and procedures or systems when necessary.

We have retooled some when necessary, so I think we are in the best position that we can be at for that visit to occur. And I believe in your handout there is a time slot that is noted there for any of you to come to the community forum and we would love for all of you to come and share your thoughts about Pima with the Commission. Just sorry that it couldn't be a longer period of time and more time slots. We just I believe finalized the schedule with the Commission. They set the meetings they wanted to have, the college did not. That is an important piece and they set the meetings and we had to figure out the logistics about the rooms and how to make it all happen. There are little finishing touches that have to be put on it, but for the most part it's set and we'll make it public in terms of our website but we've been least able to let you know about the public portion of that and where that's going be located.

Some of you will probably be asked if you're willing to come to some specialized meetings especially those of you involved in some of our program review processes or on our advisory committees and some of you were involved in some of our strategic plans efforts, and so to the degree that you can come and show your support, I would appreciate it. By the way, I have learned recently from the Commission that many of you have written in to the Commission showing your support for the college, and so thank you for that.
Again, I think --

[applause]

So again I think we are in the best position that we can be in going into that visit. And let me just say a couple of quick points that will happen after that. So they are really going to look for evidence that the things we said we did, that we actually did. They are not here to tell us how to do something. They are to look at how have we done related to the criterion and the core components. How we do it may look different than how the University of Arizona does or how Maricopa does it. They just want to know that we are doing it and that is a very important piece. They will be looking for that evidence.

After the two and a half day visit the site visit team will generate a report. That will probably come in four to six weeks’ time. They will send that draft to the college and then they’ll ask us to go through it and make corrections of fact. We don’t get to change their opinions, their perspectives, only corrections of fact. Once that is done that report will be presented to the full board of the commission which will meet in February of next year.

Another important piece that is going to happen is in December because we are on probation, I will take a small team to Chicago to make one last presentation on behalf of the institution. And by the time we go to do that we will know the areas that we still need to shore up. So even after the visit, we still have time to keep doing the necessary work to make sure we are shoring up the important pieces related to the criterion and the core components. So it's not over after the visit.

We get that one last piece and that will be to a different group of individuals. Their report will also go to the full commission in February when the decision will be made.

>> Bob Ramirez: Great, Chancellor. Now for some audience questions. Can you talk about the college and how it's been dealing with the issues related to the student veteran challenges that we've faced recently?
Lee Lambert: As many of you are aware, the College was not processing the veterans' benefits properly. When I first arrived, the college had essentially been audited before I had been at the institution and really wasn't responsive to the concerns that the Veterans Administration had pointed out. And then of course they came back out in -- I think it was December of last year, around that time frame -- and did a subsequent follow-up audit. At that point I got more engaged to understand what was going on or not going on. Our provost' office got more engaged to understand what was going on or not going on. And so I'm glad to say today that we took that seriously after that.

We stepped in and we've retooled what needed to be done to clean up files so we can be moving in the right direction consistent with what the Veterans Administration requires. They came back out in late spring to review the work we had done under the leadership of Karrie Mitchell and her team to see if we were doing it the right way, and guess what? We are doing it the right way now. So that is the good news and here is what we learned later on by the way.

We were only supposed to be on a 60-day suspension from being able to certify veterans. After that 60 days and we met the requirements, the VA did not turn on the system to allow us to certify and we didn't know that until about a month and a half later when a student contacted us and said: Hey, I can't get my benefits for Pima. And so we followed up and discovered that the Veterans Administration had not done their part to allow us to recertify. So now all of those pieces have been addressed.

Now here is another important piece in all of this. We still have a lot of clean-up work to do and we've been working on that, the old files have to be cleaned up and we are making good progress on that and we are hoping to have all of the files they've asked us to clean up, cleaned up by the end of the federal fiscal year, which I believe the end of September if memory serves. So we are on the right track with the veterans.

Bob Ramirez: Great. Perfect. Thank you. Chancellor, what are some of the biggest
issues facing the college over the next three to five years?

>> Lee Lambert: No surprise. Enrollment has been declining for Pima Community College over the last few years. Enrollments have been declining at a lot of colleges across the country over the last few years. The difference between us and a lot of our peers is ours have been steeper drops in enrollment.

My understanding from talking to our enrollment folks we are at the enrollment levels of pre-recessionary times so we are back to within 1 or 2 percentage points, if memory serves me correctly, of where we were before the recession. A lot of other colleges I have just mentioned are also back there at pre-recessionary levels. Here’s the danger about enrollment.

Our funding formula that the state has for its community colleges have a component that is tied to enrollment and so what we have to be worried about in the next three to five years is if we can’t stabilize enrollment and start to move that in a different trajectory, is that we would run up against the expenditure limitations which simply means is that although the college is receiving x revenues from public sources, primarily property tax and state aid, we cannot expend to that level in which we receive those resources. In effect, we would have to adjust and modify our budgets accordingly.

What that means is a like a lot of colleges and universities across the country we've got to become more sophisticated in how we manage our organizations. We have to start to diversify our revenue sources and we have to get leaner in terms of how we use our current resource and so it's a combination. I think the next three to five years you are going to see us take a greater focus around the financial health of the organization and how do we strengthen that. That is why, in part, that the board has asked me to set that as an important goal going forward.

The other thing we have to be mindful of is the landscape of higher education is going through massive change, brought on in part by technology or the changes in information communication technologies. Like many of you in your businesses are being disrupted
by the forces of 21st century technologies, the same is happening to higher education and we have to figure out what does that mean for us? We have new people moving into our space that are able to offer what we do, in some cases offering it more efficiently and effectively and at an affordable cost, and examples of that are the Western Governors University. You may have heard of WGU. I forget the actual tuition amount - it's around $6,000 a year. They are fully accredited -- this is very important, they are fully accredited by a regional accreditor, and for $6,000 a year a student can consume from their curriculum as much as they can in a one-year period of time. So what they're finding is students are finishing their bachelors' degrees in record time.

And they've been able to lower the cost of delivering education. How they've done that is they've broken up the education -- the teaching module -- modality into three key components.

We all in our world in traditional Higher ed, we have to learn from the WGU's and from the University of Phoenix's to figure out how we can do what we do better. If we don't do that, that is a threat -- that is going to affect what we do going forward.

I think another thing is we have to figure out a better way to work with business and industry. And I really believe that business and industry has to -- has to lead the transformation in terms of our career technical education programs. In this 21st century world, they know what their needs are, they know what their needs are going forward. The folks that we send and prepare for them have to be better trained to those -- to their requirements and so we've got to get into a tighter relationship. Fortunately I've been at another college where we did this very well and where the employer actually drove the curriculum. And that was a very important part of that.

Also we have to keep up with the equipment needs, if you just take the car or the airplane that technology is evolving very rapidly. So to train folks on how to work on and service those products, we have to be able to train them more rapidly and then understand what is happening between the intersection of different competencies and how we are crossing over in different sectors. I will use a simplistic case. If there is electricity flowing through any area of your work you need have people who know how
to use a multi-meter and that multi-meter competency transcends aviation and automotive to construction – it doesn’t really matter. So that’s also what’s happening. We have got to be able to adapt as an institution to those realities and I think if we do that, we will continue be an institution that continues to do a great job in serving our community.

>> Bob Ramirez: Chancellor, what do you believe is the biggest misconception of the people of Pima County about our Pima Community College?

>> Lee Lambert: That we have not been responsive to the community. We would not have an Ashley Rodriguez if we were not responsive to the community. We would not have a Jeannette Alcarez if we were not responsive to the community. It’s important not to lose sight of that, that we, through all of this, the quality of what we do is solid. And so we should not risk the heart of what we do because of the things that happened with governance, and the things that happened with the leadership of the institution, because that was broken while this stuff was going well. So let's not sacrifice the good things that happen at Pima because of the bad things that were happening at Pima. So not to lose sight of that I think is very critical.

And then I think the other thing -- I would say -- is I think Pima fully understand now what it's North Star is, and when I say "North Star" what I'm talking about is on the compass, what is true north, right? And so what is Pima’s true north? It is student success; it is community engagement; and, it is diversity. As long as we stay focused to that I think we’re going to be fine.

>> Bob Ramirez: Chancellor, what is the one thing that the audience should take away from today’s meeting?

>> Lee Lambert: That we are committed and we understand our role to the community. We exist because of all of you. We exist because of the community. We don’t exist in a vacuum, and I -- hopefully you all start to see that we are turning that corner to be more engaged with all of you in what we do.
Bob Ramirez: And chancellor, I want you to read this one. That is for you.

Lee Lambert: Oh!

[laughter]

Bob Ramirez: You may want to share it--

Lee Lambert: Yes, so if I’m reading this right, Jeannette, you’re in the audience? Could you stand up? This is from Jeannette.

[applause]

So in her note to me, she says: As a Jack Kent Cook Scholar, I want to share their motto which is “Think big, work hard and succeed.” And that is Jeanette, folks.

[applause]

In fact, Jeanette sent me a note before today saying, “Do you remember Lee, you and I had a conversation?” She has been a great spokesperson and she has done public speaking and I have told her how proud I was of her and I couldn't have done that at that same stage of my life. And she sent me a note to remind me I had said that to her because one day you are going to sit in this seat or maybe a bigger seat as the Governor of the great State of Arizona so please had keep pushing and thinking big.

Bob Ramirez: Do we have time for a few more? Okay, a few more. How does the Pima mission align with the national community college's mission or missions?

Lee Lambert: The mission of community colleges across the United States are really very similar in many ways and when I say that, you have to look at what we actually do, right? Whether we are serving adult education and the needs of our adult education population, whether we are serving the needs of the workforce or the needs for continuing education or for coming to us and doing the first two years of your university degree and then transferring to that university at a four-year college, we align with those pieces with all of the other community colleges in the county doing a very similar thing. The key part was access to those pathways in the broadest sense and that Pima was, in effect, limiting the pathway for some folks to access that, and so we have now recommitted to that open access that allows folks to have that opportunity. I always say
to folks -- you know, folks don't come to us for remedial education or developmental education, they come to us because they want to transfer to a university. They come to us because they want to go work for the Bombardiers. But unfortunately when they come to us, they discover there are some things they have to work on in order to get on those pathways. That is why remedial and developmental education is so important and why that has become an important part of our mission because without that we can't get the students to where they really want to be. I think you will find that at every community college and Pima has now recommitted to that and, as I noted earlier, is putting in place the infrastructure to help support that. I really believe -- and I had this experience as a college student myself -- the best faculty when I was at a university -- actually, it was a four-year college -- taught me -- taught the students who were first starting out. That college really believed that students should be exposed to its best faculty early on, and I really believe if we can build a college where our best faculty -- working with our most vulnerable students so we can do that success line, we will have done them a great service, but really more importantly we will have done the community a great service. I will be a little altruistic and selfish here, who is going to pay my social security and retirement benefits, it's the Jeanettes and so we have to responsibility to make sure they have what they need so they can support those of us who will need them later on. I never lose sight of that reality as well.

>> Bob Ramirez: Another question for you, Chancellor. Best case scenario, Pima is no longer on probation. What specific steps will be taken to avoid complacency?

>> Lee Lambert: I think a lot of what I just said is key to that and keeping engaged with the community. We are going to do Futures Conferences again in the future so we are constantly engaged. We'll continue to reach out to our business and industry partners and be more engaged in that front. We'll keep on working with our K-12 partners, our community-based organization, our neighborhood groups. We’re going to keep working with the universities. In essence if we stay true to the strategic directions of the institution we won't slip back into getting out of compliance. Then we have to do a better job of orienting our board members so they understand what their role is vis-a-vis the college, and building strong orientation programs for new board members.
and then the on-going board development becomes important. There is a reason there is an organization called the American Community College Trustees or the Association of Community College Trustees. They are there to support the success of our board. And it's important that our board go to their conferences, to their professional development opportunities. That means that our board can't just stay here, they have got to go to these places so they know and keep abreast of what is happening in terms of higher education and community colleges specifically. We have built those systems now. The current board is committed to that level of professional development and that we have built that into our orientations so new and future board members continue to do that. Then we put a monitoring system in place so the board can know what is happening. They put in an evaluation system for the chancellor that is patterned after a national instrument. That may evolve over time but we keep to the spirit of what that is about, that is about accountability and providing direction for the chancellor and then the chancellor, in term, does that for the folks who report to me and then cascade that down through the organization.

As we build those accountability systems I think we are going to be in a better place, going forward, so that we don't end up here. That is my legacy for this college is to make sure we have a system in place so that Pima doesn't end up where it found itself and so that whoever comes into this seat will move into a system that is in place and the board is going to hold that person to that system. So that person can't come in and change the system. They can add value to it but they can't change it. If I can do that as the chancellor, I think I will have done my piece so that we can continue to educate the Jeannettes of the world.

[applause]

>>Bob Ramirez: Chancellor, a question about affordability and student debt that has become a national issue and problem. What can Pima do to respond to the issues around student debt and affordability for school?

>> Lee Lambert: Keep things in context. In the State of Arizona, Pima is one of the lower charging tuition institutions. So that is an important piece. And the second piece is that
Arizona overall is among the lowest charging tuition states in the country. So you keep that perspective, right? Now we have to counterbalance that against being able to deliver a quality educational experience. There is a cost to delivering a quality educational experience, and so we're going have to figure out where is that balance so that we keep the cost affordable to the student but also we can continue to deliver quality.

I think some of the ways we do that is to look at how we can strengthen financial supports to the student, whether it's continuing to raise scholarships through the foundation, whether it's working with our business and industry partners so that they will contribute and donate equipment so that we don't have to -- out of our own budgets make those purchases so then we can keep the cost affordable to the student, and continuing to diversify how we bring resources into the institution to keep that cost level.

It's not that tuition is not going to go up, it's just how much can we offset when it does goes up in terms of the students. I think the universities can tell you far better than I can - they've been devastated by the cuts by the state and they've unfortunately had to raise tuition significantly because in order for them to deliver the quality that they do, there is a cost and even with that I think our universities, the affordability is a lot better than what you find in a lot of other states.

But there is a cost and we just have to figure out how we manage that and we have to work with the community in which to do that, and things like dual enrollment become important. We have more students getting credits before they leave the K-12 system that helps to bring that cost down and I would really love to get for a point like we had in the state of Washington where students can leave high school with both their high school diploma and their A.A. degree.

That can be done. We've got to figure out a way as Arizonans to get there, and that would bring down costs of that student’s education. At least they only have to do two year at university instead of two years with us and two years with the university eating
into the financial aid they get from the federal government. I also think we have to figure out how the state can provide aid. We are one of the few states which does not provide state aid for students, and coming from a state that provided state aid for students it makes a huge difference. And so we've got to figure out a way to work with the legislature to find solutions like that. So there are multiple things and we can only do that by working together with our K-12 partners and our university partners to find common solutions to common problems.

>> Bob Ramirez: Along the same lines of finance, this is about the college being top-heavy with administrators. What are you doing to right-size the college?

>> Lee Lambert: It goes back to this question about why did we get into the troubles we got into with probation? I think in part because we don't have the right administrative structure, and when I look at the IPEDS data, this is the national data that we all report into, both the universities and us, we actually have less administrators at Pima than our peers do. So now I'm not saying that we should add more administrators, but what that does is it puts it in perspective.

You need administrators in order to make sure that the college is in compliance with the Higher Learning Commission and with the federal government and the Department of Education and all of that. So there are a number of folks you have to have and then folks who are coordinating and facilitating what we do, so you have to understand why we have administrators and based on that then appropriately scale it to our size. So what we have found, for example, for a college that is supposed to be serving its business and industry community, we don't have a true point person to do that. Well, that is not going to be a faculty person. That has to be done at a level that is commensurate with who you are working with. We don't have that position. So we're going to add that position and so unfortunately I have to add an administrator because we don't have that in place, and as I mentioned earlier we have to add someone who is making sure we are staying on top of accreditation, and so we have to add that. I think as we do that we have to think about as we start to strengthen our curriculum that we add faculty appropriately as well. So it's not one over the other; it's the proper balance of
administrators to faculty to staff, and that is why you can't put a number on it. One of our peer institutions in another state, one of the criticisms that they ran into is they didn't have enough administrators to run the college. So there is a need, it's just finding the proper balance.

>> Bob Ramirez: There is a question about disconnect with dual enrollment relative to Latino students - that there is a challenge of availability of classes. Can you address that?

>> Lee Lambert: We have to work with our faculty to work better with our K-12 partners to look at how we can grow and strengthen our dual enrollment options and we need to be able to do that throughout the county and not have it concentrated in certain districts of pockets within a district. We are going to launch a dual enrollment task force and a part of that is to really study all of this so we are providing that access in a fair way and making sure we are not asking one district to do more in terms of what their teachers have to meet in order to satisfy the requirements to teach dual enrollment verses another district. These are all things we'll be focused on and we move forward and we will involve our community partners, our K-12 partners on the dual enrollment task force so they have a voice at table as we work through the process. That's going to be important.

>> Bob Ramirez: Thank you, because of time limitations I will just ask one more question, chancellor. If you were to have a conversation with the community a year from now, what would you hope to hear from the community?

>> Lee Lambert: That is a great question, right? I hope the community will say, you know, we have great ideas that can help grow the enrollment at Pima Community College. We have great ideas about how we can better support our disadvantaged students and that the community is saying to us, Pima, you're important to helping to turn around the fact that one in four Tucsonans live below the poverty line. That folks are coming to us with ideas because they know we are open to their ideas and we are going to take those ideas and integrate it into what we do to solve the larger challenges
within the community.

When I say that happening I think we will have turned an important corner because now people will feel they can approach us and, in approaching us, we will take seriously the things they are sharing us but it’s things that help move the needle to move Pima -- sorry Tucson and the greater Pima County from a place of distinction of being one of the poorest communities to one of the most vibrant communities. That is what I’m going to look at when I get that input. Is it going to help move that needle. When we get that input we'll be open to that. That is going to be in conjunction with working with the United Way and other community-based organizations as part of that effort. That is what we'll be looking for.

>>Bob Ramirez: Well, chancellor, your final thoughts.

>> Lee Lambert: Again, I'm just proud and honored to be your chancellor and I just want you all to know that we understand that we are here for the community. We don't operate in a vacuum, and I just so appreciate the support that I've received from all of you. As I've said to some folks, when I first interviewed as a final candidate here from the airplane out of Phoenix to here, through to this day, overwhelmingly I've been received in a positive way. I've never been to a community that has been so warm and welcoming as the community here in Tucson and Pima County. So I just want to thank you for that, and if we continue to bring that level of love and care to our community, to our students and to the people who are in the part of the education of them then we are going to become a Seattle, we're going to become a Denver, we're going to become an Austin. There is no reason that we can't turn around together and I just want you to know that I appreciate you have me in this seat and I won't lose sight of why I'm here. Thank you.

[applause]