

S. JACK HU INAUGURATION SPEECH

2:00pm, Feb. 5, 2026

Good afternoon.

Dear Chair Reilly, President Milliken, Regents, fellow chancellors, UC leaders, university delegates, family, friends, and distinguished guests—

Welcome to University of California, Riverside, and thank you for being here today.

Your presence honors this occasion, and I am deeply grateful for the welcome you have extended to me and my family.

To our students, faculty, staff, alumni, Chancellor Emeritus Kim Wilcox, UCR Foundation Trustees, elected officials, and community leaders: thank you for your partnership and for welcoming us so generously into this community.

(Pause)

This is a moment of joy, reflection, and shared commitment.

On a day like this, I am reminded of the words of Charles Vest, former president of MIT and provost at the University of Michigan. As he stepped down from his presidency, he wrote:

“Serving as president of a major research university is not a sandbox ambition for any child. I remain frankly astonished at the road that led me here.

But looking back at that road—the bends and dips, the forks and unintended shortcuts—I’m struck by how little one can predict at the journey’s outset ...”

(Pause)

Those words resonate deeply with me.

My journey **to** Riverside was long but profoundly enriching. At every fork in the road, I was supported by

mentors, colleagues, friends, and family who believed in me, and who **chose to stand by me.**

I grew up in rural China and was the first in my family to attend college. After completing my undergraduate education at Tianjin University, I arrived in Ann Arbor in December of 1984 to begin graduate study.

I packed my only suitcase with a winter coat, and carried with me a great deal of anxiety about the unknown journey ahead.

What I encountered instead was generosity, opportunity, and community. At every step, people took the time to guide, support, and encourage me. **I never had to walk this path alone.**

At the University of Michigan, I was fortunate to learn from extraordinary mentors, including Professors Galip Ulsoy, Yoram Koren, and the late Sam Wu, who helped shape my aspirations in academia.

My leadership journey began under Engineering Dean David Munson by serving as associate dean for research and graduate education, and later as associate dean for academic affairs.

From him, I learned the importance of faculty affairs, resource management, and shared governance.

I had the privilege of working alongside UM President Emerita Mary Sue Coleman for the Obama Administration's Advanced Manufacturing Partnership and later, serving as vice president for research at Michigan.

Those experiences deepened my understanding of how universities shape national priorities and global partnerships.

I am grateful to President Jere Morehead for the opportunity to serve as senior vice president for academic affairs and provost at the University of Georgia.

He entrusted me with the freedom to work collaboratively with faculty and academic leaders to define faculty hires and research priorities, and he encouraged me to pursue broader leadership.

From him, I learned what it truly means to lead a student-centered university.

Every step along my leadership journey, I was supported by teams of talented individuals. Many of them have since advanced professionally—a source of great pride for me.

Several of them are with us today, including Jon Kinsey, now Vice President and University Secretary at Michigan, and Daryl Weinert, Vice President for Operations at Carnegie Mellon University.

Marisa Pagnattaro, Meg Amstutz, and Michelle Cook worked closely with me during my first three years as

provost at UGA, including throughout the most challenging years of the COVID pandemic.

Our daily 5 p.m. huddles kept us focused, steady, and grounded in our shared purpose. Today, all three continue to serve in important leadership roles at UGA. Marisa is here with us today.

I also want to acknowledge the contributions of my students and collaborators. Their creativity, curiosity, and perseverance helped advance my scholarship in advanced manufacturing and **enriched** my experience as a teacher and researcher.

And to my family—my wife Jun, my children Anna and Albert, my parents, and our extended family—thank you. You supported me always, through every transition and challenge, and you made me a better human being.

Finally, I want to thank the UCR Chancellor search advisory committee, Dr. Michael Drake, President

Milliken, and the Regents of the University of California for their confidence and for entrusting me with this extraordinary responsibility.

(Pause)

It is a tremendous honor to stand before you today as we imagine—together—the next chapter of UC Riverside.

Before we look ahead, we must honor the remarkable history that brought us here.

As you heard, UC Riverside's story began in 1907, not as a college, but as a bold scientific experiment. The University of California established the Citrus Experiment Station in Riverside to support a growing agricultural region. Those early scientists were innovators, problem solvers, and public servants.

They did not work alone.

Local growers, civic leaders, and families across Inland Southern California partnered with the university from the very beginning. Together, they built a culture of collaboration that still defines UCR today.

When UCR became a UC campus in 1954, it was initially envisioned as a liberal arts college. But the aspirations of this region were far greater. Through the advocacy of educators, community leaders, and elected officials, UCR quickly became a comprehensive research university—one committed to excellence, access, and service.

And when UC Riverside opened the School of Medicine in 2013, it did so because the region demanded it. Hospitals, physicians, donors, and public leaders came together to address a critical shortage of healthcare providers and to build a medical school dedicated to serving the people of Inland Southern California.

This is the legacy we inherit:

A university rooted in scientific discovery, shaped by community partnership, and driven by a belief that education and opportunity should lift every student and the entire region.

I want to thank the faculty, staff, the University of California, campus and community leaders who built this special institution and positioned it for the future we now share.

(pause)

Today, **UC Riverside stands at a defining moment.**

We are a globally recognized research university.

We are a national leader in social mobility.

And we are the anchor institution of one of the fastest growing and most diverse regions in the nation.

Our task now is to carry forward the spirit that built this university—with clarity, courage, and purpose,

a spirit that says every student, every family, every community in Inland Southern California has a stake in our success.

(pause)

Our vision is this:

UC Riverside will be the nation's model for an inclusive, innovation-driven public research university—

where excellence and social mobility advance together, and where discoveries, talent, and opportunity transform Inland Southern California and the world.

(pause)

This opportunity, this future belongs to all of us.

This vision is bold. But it is also grounded in who we already are.

It comes to life through five commitments.

(pause)

First, we will deepen our commitment to student success and social mobility.

Students, you are the heart of this university.

You bring talent, ambition, resilience, and experiences that matter.

Our responsibility is to ensure that every student has access to the full power of a world-class research university.

We will expand experiential learning opportunities—including undergraduate research, entrepreneurship, internships, community engagement, and international study—with the goal that every undergraduate has at least one such transformative experience before they embark on their impactful careers or advanced studies.

We will expand opportunities for graduate students, including professional development and financial support through teaching assistantships, research

assistantships, and fellowships. Excellence in graduate education is a defining hallmark of a top research university.

We will strengthen advising and mental health support for all.

Through bold philanthropy, we will raise significant support for our students, including basic needs.

(pause)

Our second commitment is to accelerate mission-driven research and innovation.

Faculty scholarship is the engine of UCR's impact and reputation.

We will invest in faculty excellence across the disciplines of arts, humanities, sciences, engineering, and medicine. We will invest in interdisciplinary

research and the infrastructure and support systems needed to compete at the highest levels.

We will strengthen partnerships with federal agencies, industry, and foundations, and we will grow our already strong innovation ecosystem that helps ideas move from laboratories to the marketplace.

We will elevate faculty recognition by doubling the number of named professorships and chairs through philanthropy —investments that signal our commitment to academic excellence.

(pause)

Our third commitment is to **expand UCR Health**.

Health equity is one of the defining challenges of our time—and one of the most urgent needs in Inland Southern California.

We will expand UCR Health by strengthening education, research, and clinical operations through partnerships and expanding our own facilities that train the next generation of health professionals and improve access to care.

Our medical school and health enterprise will continue to serve not only as centers of excellence, but as engines of opportunity and well-being.

(pause)

Our fourth commitment is to power the economic and cultural future of Inland Southern California through partnership.

To our elected officials, business and community leaders: UC Riverside is your partner.

We will work together to drive workforce development, attract investment, and expand opportunity. We will deepen our role as a cultural hub—a place where the

arts, athletic events, ideas, and community come together.

To strengthen these efforts, I am establishing three councils to advise me and the University leadership on our engagement: Business Engagement, K–16 Education Engagement, and Community Engagement.

Through collaborative efforts, we will strengthen partnerships with companies in the region and around the world —to create opportunities for research, student internships, and career pathways.

And we will deepen our partnerships with K–12 schools, community colleges, and universities across Inland Southern California so that students from every background see UCR as a place where they belong and where they can thrive.

(pause)

Our fifth and final commitment is to build a shared future.

Our people are our greatest strength. We will invest in professional development, recognition, collaboration, and campus spaces that support our collective efforts.

A great university is measured not only by its intellectual leadership, but also by the well-being, dignity, and success of its people.

UC Riverside will be celebrated as a university that **stands by** its students, faculty, and staff, and its community.

These are the five commitments we must keep.

(Pause)

UC Riverside has always been a place where potential becomes **possibility**—where students discover their power, where faculty push the boundaries of knowledge, and where a region finds its future.

And none of this has ever happened alone.

Now, we have the opportunity—and a shared responsibility—to shape the future together.

To our supporters and donors, your generosity has defined every chapter of UCR's story. The next decade will require even bolder philanthropy and creative partnerships, and together we will rise to that challenge.

I want to use this opportunity to highlight several recent examples:

The first is William Carter. Dr. Carter is a Research Chemist Emeritus at UC Riverside's Center for Environmental Research and Technology. He not only contributed to the University through his decades of pioneering research in atmospheric chemistry and in developing models for air pollution, but his recent major gift will continue to advance both science and student opportunity.

Dr. Carter is with us today.

(Applause)

And then, there's **Randall Lewis**. Randall is a visionary Entrepreneur and Philanthropist who has supported entrepreneurship programs at several local institutions. Through a "co-design" process, Randall and I quickly developed a shared vision for entrepreneurship and how a similar program at UCR can create impact for Inland Southern California and beyond.

A Randall Lewis Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation will be established with a major gift from the Lewis family.

(Applause)

Then we have **Charlie and Ling Zhang**. Charlie is a celebrated entrepreneur and philanthropist in Orange

County. Charlie's story is a classic embodiment of the American dream, and an inspiration for me and many.

Thank you both for your warm welcome, friendship, and support for me and UC Riverside College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences. Charlie and Ling are also with us today.

(Applause)

Finally, I am also honored to announce a transformative gift of \$5.5 million dollars, secured from a proud UC Riverside graduate, to advance the expansion of UCR Health. While the donor has chosen to remain anonymous, their generosity is intended to lead by example—encouraging fellow alumni and friends to invest in UCR's mission and to join us in **mitigating health disparity and improving lives** throughout our community.”

Thank you to these and other generous donors for supporting the UCR mission.

(Pause for applause)

To our alumni, friends, and future supporters: UC Riverside needs you. We need your support that goes beyond financial resources, your mentorship, your advocacy, your ability to open doors for our students and faculty.

To our UC colleagues and leaders: UC Riverside stands ready to help define the future of the world's greatest public research university—demonstrating that excellence and access advance together.

To our community partners: you have been with us from the beginning, and you continue to inspire our work every day.

Together, we will write the next chapter of UC Riverside's story.

Together, we will show **what a public research university can achieve** when it is driven by purpose,

grounded in community, and united by a belief in the transformative power of education.

And together, we will continue to show that the University of California, Riverside is not only a place of growth—**It is a place of greatness.**

Thank you.