Thank you, Dr. Whitacre. I am honored to be here with Governor Taft, Congresswoman Pryce, Senator Stivers, President Holbrook, trustees and Dean Sanfilippo. Thank you all so much for having me here today on this historic occasion to talk about the importance of research to Ohio and to our nation.

It’s a fact that research changes history, including the history of health and well-being. Many people alive today do not know what an iron lung is; many physicians have never seen a case of smallpox. Life saving and quality of life-enhancing aspects of daily living that we regard as common sense today were not always so: consider childhood vaccinations; screening for breast and prostate cancer; effective antihypertensive medications; the use of seat belts; putting babies on their backs to sleep; practicing safe sex; screening the blood supply for toxic agents, getting flu shots – the list goes on.

The fact is that today’s common sense is based on yesterday’s research. Research will lead us to tomorrow’s common sense, and will in the process help us save lives and save money as we advance toward the era of personalized medicine and put the products of research to work in evidence-based fashion.

Thinking back about things we didn’t used to take for granted is a useful way to capture the on-going progress of medical research. At Research!America we call this the “Then – Now – Imagine” framework – we think it is the perfect theme to capture the excitement and promise of
medical research. The accomplishments of medical research over the past 60 years have taught us to think big about what will come next— and then to take the “imagine” step aggressively.

For example and in keeping with some of the research that’s happening right here at Ohio State: Think back Then … to the 1970s, when only one child in 10 survived cancer. Now … seven out of 10 children who develop cancer are alive five years after diagnosis. Imagine … Eliminating suffering and death due to childhood cancer by the year 2015.

Then … Heart disease killed quickly and without warning. Now … Deaths from heart disease have dropped by 60% and heart disease is no longer the number one killer of Americans under the age of 85. Imagine … Eliminating preventable deaths due to heart disease.

“Then – Now – Imagine” has long been the driving spirit of science. This theme expresses a commitment to discovery and its translation to better health.

The United States, founded by leaders of the Enlightenment, has always had high aspirations realized through a commitment to science and innovation. Americans today – very much including the people of Ohio – continue to be intrigued by the challenge to innovate.

Several years ago we held focus group sessions here in Columbus, asking citizens what they thought about research. In response to a question about whether and why it is important to invest in basic research, the proprietor of a dry-cleaning establishment memorably said, “I’ll tell you why basic research is important to me – it’s because I believe in possibilities.”
“I believe in possibilities...” -- doesn’t that say it all about American values, the American spirit, American determination and accomplishment?

The possibilities offered by research have never been greater. We have literally never had as many researchers at work unraveling the mysteries of disease and disability, and their cure, treatment and prevention. This is an exciting moment of possibility – possibilities we are on the cusp of realizing – leading to lives that will be saved and enhanced because of research that will conducted here at OSU in this magnificent new building.

The contributions to research and health that those who will work here will make are worthy of our admiration. These are the people who will be making groundbreaking discoveries to fight cancer and to better understand neurological disorders, heart failure and heart imaging, pharmacogenomics, targeted molecular therapies, micropial pathogenesis and biodefense and tissue engineering. These scientists will deliver for you on your investment -- Ohio’s investment -- and these are the people who will be on the frontlines of realizing the aspirations of Americans to put research to work – FASTER – to produce new cures, treatments and preventions.

Public opinion data confirms the value citizens place on innovation, as does everyday experience. Research promises and research delivers - better products, better jobs, better health and better quality of life. As we’ve heard, this new building promises to bolster the state’s economy by creating 17,000 new jobs and bringing $3.7 billion to Ohio in the next 10 years. The combination of societal aspiration and the record of return on investment in science would seem to make investment in science almost irresistible.
Yet, there is surprising resistance to increased investment in research at the federal level to match the aspirations of the people of Ohio and all across the nation. You may be aware that funding for the National Institutes of Health, which not too long ago was doubled in anticipation of capturing the enormous promise of research at the beginning of this century, has now been cut for the first time in 30 years.

Ohio State University has earned double-digit percentage increases in support from the NIH in the past two years, and more than doubled its annual funding from the NIH over the past six years. Cuts and/or a flat-funded NIH budget does not bode well for sustained robust federal support for the cutting-edge science under way here at Ohio State. What can be done to address and redress the declining NIH budget?

Now, especially just a few days before the election, all of us who are committed to putting research to work must think and act politically. I don’t mean in a partisan manner. Research is not a partisan issue. There are and always have been champions for research on both sides of the aisle.

From public opinion polls we know that seven in ten potential voters say they would be more likely to vote for a candidate who is a strong supporter of federal spending for medical, health and scientific research; 55% say that investing more in medical research is important now even in the face of competing budget demands, and 67% of Americans say support for embryonic stem cell research is an important issue in deciding how they will vote in November.
These are potential voters’ views – but what about the positions of candidates running for office? Unless the people of Ohio are different from the rest of the nation, most of us don’t know the positions on medical research issues of most incumbents running for re-election, not to mention the positions of their challengers.

Research!America and the Albert and Mary Lasker Foundation have created a new voter guide, *Your Candidates–Your Health*, to provide stakeholders in research and the public at large with educational information on candidates’ positions. The novelty and value of this resource has earned attention from *PARADE* magazine, which has alerted its enormous national readership – 75 million strong -- to the importance of checking this guide before voting.

Let me challenge you to answer whether your federal representatives are strongly identified with medical research as a national priority? Congresswoman Deborah Pryce most certainly is; we salute you, Congresswoman, for your leadership on this issue so critical to us all.

Unfortunately, the vast majority of Ohio’s Congressional candidates have not said “yes” to making medical research a much higher national priority. YOU and people you know all over the state can change that!

If candidates for Congress heard from their constituents – voters like you – about the importance of spending more than one percent of the federal budget on medical research -- medical research that seeks to gain an understanding of and eventual conquest of every disease you can name – if they hear from YOU, then they will certainly take heed and act accordingly.
Our voter guide makes it easy not only for you to find out where your candidates stand but also provides links to contact your candidates and urge them to make medical research a higher priority in their campaigns and, for the winners, in their legislative work on the Hill. You can find our voter guide on the web at: Yourcandidatesyourhealth.org

While I am speaking of the importance of contacting elected officials, I want to applaud the leaders of Ohio State for the development of your Medical Advocacy Program with a stated goal to have at least one medical advocate representing each of the 88 counties in Ohio, as well as officials Ohio sends to Washington. These advocates are empowered to make contact with their elected representatives at the local, state and federal levels to make the case for improving the level of quality in health care and medical education and for growth in investment in medical and health research. To the best of my knowledge this is a unique program in the nation, and one I hope will soon be emulated from coast to coast!

I urge you to join me and Research!America in making the future a bright one for research and researchers, and the American public that wants research to succeed. We must elect candidates who will heed the call of Americans who not only IMAGINE a healthier future powered by research, but are increasingly demanding that their elected officials heed that clarion call.

IMAGINE a Congress that is composed of a strong majority who support investing more now in medical research, and will assure a policy environment that enhances, rather than inhibits, medical research. IMAGINE that research is given a chance to succeed at the rate of scientific opportunity, not stifled in short-sighted, ill-advised budget cutting; IMAGINE that significantly
enhanced support for research becomes the number one priority of a new Congress; and

IMAGINE that strengthened federal investment in research is the first step in assuring
nonpartisan commitment to addressing other ills facing our nation today.

Daring to imagine is the hallmark of great science, of great leadership, and of great
progress. As Ohio Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Rita Dove has said, “Without imagination we can
go nowhere.” Dove is, like you who will work in this research tower, unafraid to imagine the
possibilities. I salute her spirit, and I salute the spirit of the research community.

I am proud to be an advocate for medical research, and proud and privileged to be here
today on this historic occasion for the future of health, based on research. I wish all of those who
will be working in this glorious new home for research the greatest success. I look forward to
celebrating your accomplishments.

Thank you.