Good afternoon and welcome to Ferris State University on this spectacular day. I am so very pleased you could join us and help celebrate this very special day in our history. This wonderful new building represents a commitment on so very many levels:

- A commitment to educational excellence for our students, faculty and staff in optometry, both those here today and for generations to follow in the future.
- An extraordinary example of our strong commitment to the optometric profession, both here in Michigan and across the country.
- An example of the strong commitment of Ferris State University to economic development here in Big Rapids, Mecosta County and all of west Michigan.
- A commitment to the best in vision care for citizens here and throughout Michigan.

For many people at Ferris State University and in the optometric association, today is a long awaited day. In reflecting on this I am reminded of:

- Generations of faculty, staff and students who have looked forward to this day.
- Members of our Board of Trustees and leaders for our University both present and past who remained committed to this project.
- Leaders in the optometric profession who have pushed for this project on many occasions.

This project has required strong, committed efforts over many, many years. As we celebrate, I also want to thank everyone who has worked for this day. The list is long and distinguished. You will hear from some of those people today, but in doing so please understand that there are many, many more who have helped over the years. In many ways this building is a symbol to the tenacity of our University and its people, who refuse to be discouraged and continue to work until dreams are transformed into reality.
At the head of the list of people who have worked for this day are the members of our Board of Trustees. It is my pleasure to introduce to you the chairperson of our Board, Mr. Ron Snead.

I want to publicly thank our faculty for their efforts for this facility. Later today as you tour this beautiful building you will see firsthand the extraordinary results of their leadership for this project. I am told by our architects that they have never worked with a better group of faculty on a building. At the same time I want to thank Kevin Alexander for his leadership for this project. Kevin, I can remember well when we visited Memphis, Houston, and Fullerton, California touring facilities and planning for this day.

As we gather today I am reminded of a good friend and a great president of Ferris State University, Bob Ewigleben. It was his vision, leadership and strength of conviction that created this program and we are especially grateful to him today.
Today would not have happened without the leadership and support of many in our legislature. I want to take a moment for all of our elected officials in the audience to stand. Please join me in expressing our thanks to them.

Key to the final success and passage of the capital outlay bill in the Michigan legislature were Senator Michelle McManus and then Representative Darwin Booher. Without them we would not have received over $20 million in state support for this $26.9 million project. Our University could not have had two stronger, more committed advocates in Lansing than Michelle and Darwin.

This past November Darwin was elected to his first term as our senator, where he has again positioned himself to help our University. Our sincere thanks to Senator Darwin Booher.
It is wonderful to have leaders from the optometric profession and the Michigan Optometric Association with us. They have been our partners and advocates throughout. I remember MOA executive director’s Cindy Schnitzel’s strong help on this bill, the efforts of the entire MOA Executive Board and the encouragement we received over the years from Bill Dansby, their executive director for over 40 years. We are so very pleased to have one of our graduates, Dr. Kalaczinski, head of the MOA. Dr. Ellis you honor our school and University by being with us here today. Thank you.

A building results from the talents of many in the construction profession – architects, contractors, skilled workers. In thanking them for their efforts I also want to include the strong efforts of Mike Hughes and the men and women of our physical plant.

Lead architect for this project was Joel Smith of Neumann Smith Architecture. Neumann Smith has been a part of Ferris for many years and instrumental in the development of our beautiful campus.

After Joel we will ask Ken Lawless, Vice President and Chief Operating Officer from Clark Construction, to offer remarks. It is a special pleasure to have Ken with us today as he has a degree from that great midwestern university - Ferris State University - where he has been recognized as a distinguished alumnus. In introducing Joel and Ken, I am reminded that this project was completed in 14 months and brought in on-time and under budget. Two great friends and wonderful partners of our University – first Joel Smith and then Ken Lawless.
A great building results from the talents, energy and commitment of many, many people. Today I am especially thankful for the contributions of wonderful donors and supporters of this project. At the head of this is the Herbert H. and Grace A. Dow Foundation who made the lead gift of $1 million to help us begin the fundraising campaign for the university portion of this project. The chair of their board, Mrs. Ranny Riecker has been an advocate for this project and for Ferris State University. The very unique and special third floor facility where students learn and perfect their examination skills is named in their honor. As you enter this beautiful building you will see the donor wall which commemorates and thanks the many donors to this project.

In conclusion I want to thank everyone who helped plan and execute today’s special celebration. I invite you to join us inside to enjoy a strolling dinner and tours of this wonderful facility.

Thank you again for joining us today for this historic and special day for Ferris State University, our College of Optometry and the optometric profession.