The theme for Homecoming is “Pass the Torch” -- a reference to the Olympics and its
great torch tradition -- and a reference to the
arrival of a new president. Some cynics
might say that when it comes to university
presidents, the theme should be “pass the
buck” or “pass the hat.” But I take seriously
the notion of passing the torch.

There are some things that are so important
that we simply must pass them along:
• our institutional values,
• our distinguished past,
• the legacy we inherit from each of you.

I congratulate the class of 1958 on your
anniversary. Many events and activities of
your era are familiar to us – even in the
headlines -- today. In 1958, Paul Newman
starred in Cat on a Hot Tin Roof. Alaska’s
statehood bill was signed by Eisenhower.
The cars of that era were fantastic – huge cars
with big fins -- but, gas guzzlers were an issue
then, as now. In 1958, Nash came out with
the Rambler, a compact car. Gas was – listen
to this – 24 cents a gallon. “Tales of Wells Fargo” was a popular TV Show. Now, we are hearing
plenty of stories about banks. Then it was “Father Knows Best,” and now it’s “How I Met Your
Mother.” Then it was “hi-fi.” Now it’s “wi-fi.” Then it was “The $64,000 Question.” Now it’s
“Are You Smarter Than a Fifth Grader?” Then it was “Who Do You Trust?” Now, it’s – who can
you trust?

Around the campus, many things are new -- like the fantastic Recreational Sports Center and the
beautiful dining hall. And, in important ways, some things have not changed at all. Students still
hunt for the silver bugle and Snake Dance through campus. They still elect a Homecoming Queen,
gather for the bonfire, and, of course, bang that drum. Be assured that today’s students are talented,
motivated, and preparing for the future. They are making memories. And, they are making a
difference on the campus and in the community.

This is a remarkable university. And it is made more so because of your continued connection to it.
When I saw the words over the door of the new Alumni House, I was inspired. It says: “The gates
are always open.” I told our graduates at commencement that the gates are, indeed, always open to
them. I told our entering freshmen in convocation that the gates are open to opportunity and new
ideas. I assure you that the gates will always be open to each of you. Thank you.