Good morning and welcome to the Forum. I do appreciate your taking time out of your very full schedules to attend this meeting today. We have not done this nearly enough this year, and you have all made that perfectly clear. Communication is a big deal for all of us and, and we are talking about ways to do it more effectively and far more frequently.

Today’s purpose is to unveil Phase I of the HR restructuring and through that unveiling accomplish three things: provide information, answer questions, and request your assistance. I know that you are not use to a prepared speech from me during this Forum, but I think it is important to do that today. I want to be sure that each of you hears the same message and that I actually say all that I intend to convey.

If you are ready, let’s begin.

I believe we are in a difficult place – we as an institution, as a culture, and as a people in the world. And, while no one has ever accused me of being a drama queen, I appreciate that this may seem a bit dramatic; nevertheless I believe it is true. My belief is based on a variety of observations of reality.

1. While this organizational change is not driven by financial necessity, we are being asked, no it is being demanded of us, that we do more with less. The demands (regulatory and otherwise) are increasing, but our budgets are not getting any bigger and under some circumstances are reduced. We cannot ignore the reality of reductions in the number and amount of federal grants, given the federal government’s difficult financial realities. Nor can we ignore
the pressures placed on us by the public’s demand that we gain control over the cost of tuition. Families cannot afford a continuing rise in tuition at the rate we have seen it over the last several decades. I received an Ivy League education at Cornell for less than $5,000 per year just a few decades ago. My degree would cost me more than 10 times that today. That’s staggering—a trend that is unsustainable.

2. We are being forced to change with lightning speed, often abandoning goals and plans before fruition because of shifting priorities. Agility is a requirement.

3. We have more means and methods of communication at our disposal – telephones (cell and yes even landlines), Internet access, and computers, we are Linked In, we can tweet, blog, blast, leave voicemails, send e-mails, and text each other – and yet, we have forgotten how to speak to one another.

So yes, I believe we are in a difficult place. However, I take comfort in several facts. One, it is not an impossible place. Two, I am not in this place alone; I am here with you. Three, I have been in difficult places before, and I always come out stronger.

As strange as it might seem, this change reminds me of a moment in my personal history—one that demonstrates just how difficult change is.

I grew up in Mississippi – Holly Springs, Mississippi to be specific. I lived a life of segregation: earlier by law and later by “common” behavior. In thinking of today’s presentation, a life event stood out for me that parallels our current situation. It was an experience I had with my mother in our family doctor’s waiting room. It was a doctor with whom I had a special relationship. He delivered me, and well into my young adulthood, he told me on every single visit to his office that I was
absolutely the prettiest baby he had ever delivered. Now, I know what you’re thinking: he said that to every baby he delivered. Well, I believed him. I just knew that I in fact had been the prettiest baby he’d ever delivered. Besides, he never told my sisters that.

As a young adult in College, on a visit home, I went with my mother to our doctor’s office for an appointment. It was in the mid-70s. All my life there had been two waiting rooms – White and Colored with separate doors into a single examining room. As you might imagine, the White waiting room was nicely furnished, attractive pictures on the wall, newer magazines. I could see it immediately upon entering the building, but it was beyond my reach. In the Colored waiting room, the furniture was old and shabby, the walls in need of paint, and the tables cluttered with old dog-eared magazines.

On the day I went to this appointment with my mother, “integration” by law had happened; nevertheless, there were two waiting rooms. When we entered the office, my mother naturally headed toward the Colored waiting room and took a seat. I said “Let’s go sit over there,” pointing to the White waiting room. And, my mother emphatically said, “No.” I – clearly the budding lawyer-to-be – said “Why not? We are allowed to sit in there now. Let’s go.” And my mother repeated, “No.” And, I said “But it is much nicer over there.” She was unwavering, “No.”

So I left my mother, whom I loved dearly, sitting in the Colored waiting room in Holly Springs – alone. And I sat in the White waiting room – in the comfortable chairs, with the clean walls, and the new magazines – a young, black woman, alone even though there were white patients waiting in the same room. When I sat down, they reminded me that I did not belong, that I was not welcome. They stared as they moved away from the seat I had chosen, creating greater distance between us. As an adult, I realized that it was not the law that fettered my mother but her paradigm.
The paradigm – not of her choice, the paradigm imposed upon her – the paradigm of racism, and White privilege, and Southern culture. Change is difficult. The normal routine is comfortable. It’s difficult to make a paradigm shift. After having lived in segregation for nearly 70 years, she simply could not make that shift.

The difficult issues facing us as an institution – doing more with less, reduced resources, change with lightning speed – all those issues are our current paradigm. We as an institution and more specifically as an HR department are standing now – as my mother and I stood – in the Colored waiting room, complete with the paradox of the “comforts” of the known and its limitations, seeing what has – before now – been off limits, and facing the choice my mother and I faced. Do we stay with the known? Or do we shift our paradigms – push ourselves out of our comfort zones, make others uncomfortable – and thereby, change the game?

The word paradigm is from the Greek word paradigm. It means a pattern or map for understanding and explaining certain aspects of reality. Dramatic transformation in thoughts and great leaps in understanding are called paradigm shifts. One of my favorite leadership books is by the late Stephen Covey, Principle-Centered Leadership. Covey outlines in the book several key concepts about paradigms. I want to share three of them with you today.

1. If you want to make incremental improvements change your attitude or behavior. If you want to make major, dramatic shifts change your paradigm. (p. 173)

2. We cannot embrace a new paradigm until we let go of the old one. (p. 67)

3. Lastly, the great break-throughs are break-withs old ways of thinking. (p. 173)
It has become clear that we, as an HR organization, must make major, dramatic shifts and to make those shifts we must break-with the old ways of thinking, let go of the old paradigms, and embrace the new paradigm. And, we must shift now.

What data forms the basis for my opinion that we need to shift our paradigms now? Unlike the Civil Rights movement there was no clamoring for change – maybe a little murmuring in the halls of JHU – but no clamoring. So, why is it clear that we need to shift now? The data came from you. We asked you to provide us with your thoughts and ideas. We asked you to tell us what was working and what wasn’t working. We asked you to tell us what you would change. And you did. Almost 90 people provided e-mails, one-on-one interviews, and comments answering our questions. We heard some good things – not enough but there were some. We heard lots of “what is not working.” And, I have to tell you it was hard to hear.

The “what is not working” data fell into four major issues:

1. Lack of communication,
2. Lack of leadership,
3. Poor internal HR structure, and
4. Lack of professional development opportunities for HR staff.

These data – your data – have informed the HR re-structuring work. And your comments, ideas, and suggestions will continue to inform the HR restructuring process as you continue to provide feedback through the next phase of the restructuring. Your comments and e-mails, your patience and support during this process have all led me – for at least the second time in my life – to stand in the Colored waiting room, see the option for change before me, and elect to move toward the new.
As many of you know, the HR Strategies Group has been my leadership team since I accepted the VP position. And, for the most part, with few exceptions, they have done what I asked of them. It is their work, over the years, which has led us to the place where we can now consider a paradigm shift. It is the work of this leadership team which has led us to the place of outstanding services and shared services in the areas of compensation, benefits, work life integration, and community engagement. We made some changes with our reorganization of 2008, making incremental improvements by changing the way we work. You have heard me say how proud I am that we welcomed a new president with our focus on the things he soon made clear priorities for the university—talent management, community engagement, the cost of benefits, and metrics for HR. We were aligned perfectly, and, as a result, we have been able to respond quickly to requests for contributions to the university’s priorities. What we did in 2008 was significant. I don’t want to minimize it. We had employees who lost jobs, and we turned some folks’ work worlds upside down. Many look back on it now and can clearly see the benefit, but it was a painful process to go through.

As significant as that change was, the structural change that I am offering now is much more of a paradigm shift. Over the past few months, I have built on our strengths and pushed myself and members of the HR Strategies Group to step up our game, to shift our paradigms, to leave the old waiting room behind. Not necessarily to do more with less but to do things differently, more efficiently – to think outside the box. And, I have watched members of this leadership team set aside their own personal agendas, make decisions based on what was best for the group, have uncomfortable conversations, hold others and each other accountable, and examine what unique strengths and talents they bring to the table.
This restructure is not just about new and re-used boxes on a page, it is not about new and old titles, and it is definitely not about same old-same old. This restructure is about a deep paradigm shift; nevertheless, how does the restructure look on the surface?

The first of the different looks is in the number of my direct reports. I need more time to spend on the larger strategic issues associated with the university’s people agenda in the 10x20 Framework. This new structure reduces my direct reports by more than 50%. Key to the new organization is the creation of a new Chief Operations Officer (COO) to handle operations. Frankly, the reactions so far have been mixed. What does a COO mean in the context of HR and higher education? Interestingly enough, according to an article that Heidi found from Deloitte and Touche just a few days ago, the trend is toward Chief Operations Officers in HR to drive process improvement across the HR suite. This is without a doubt in-line with the President’s 10x20 Framework for the future, which includes institution-building. It is also aligned with the spirit of our administrative excellence initiatives, our attempts to find cost savings in our daily administrative processes and expenditures.

With respect to the position of COO for HR, I could think of no one better to fill that position than Heidi Conway. All of you know Heidi; she has helped us to gain a great deal of efficiency in our benefits programs and operations, influencing positively, the bottom line for the faculty and leaders of the university, and I believe she will move operations as a whole in that same direction. Michelle Carlstrom – head of Work, Life, & Engagement – will continue to report directly to me. Michelle and her group are the faces of JHU in the community and the faces for individual faculty, staff and students needing assistance and support. My third direct report as an interim leader for the HR Strategy & Policy area is Kim
Meadowcroft. Kim has been on my staff for 6 years and at JHU for almost 20. I have the utmost confidence in Kim and am convinced that she is the best person to lead a new group with a focus on HR policy and strategy during this transition.

Kim has lived this work in some capacity in her role as Deputy to the Vice President over the last six years. Kim has stepped in to help in a number of areas to cover leaves of absence or otherwise vacated positions. And, as most of you know, she has been the point person for most of the strategic initiatives we’ve led or collaborated on over the last six years. Ultimately, we will conduct a national search for someone to fill the position as head of HR Strategy & Policy on a permanent basis, but as we prepare for that search, Kim will do as she has on many occasions before: help to move the agenda forward until the position is filled.

Finally, I am introducing a new concept: a senior director for Health Sciences. Many of you have heard that Gloria Bryan is retiring from the School of Medicine at the end of the calendar year. Gloria has served Johns Hopkins well over a period of nearly four decades. With her retirement, we have the opportunity to really think out of the box. I see the potential for greater efficiency in our HR operations for our own staff and those who seek employment in the School of Medicine, the School of Nursing, or the Bloomberg School of Public Health—the Health Sciences. Today, an applicant seeking a research (or other) position might visit two different offices to meet with two or three different recruiters about two or three different positions that are essentially the same. We have two positions designed to manage compensation in East Baltimore and one in the central HR organization. Two of the three positions are vacant. Compensation Managers are highly paid and difficult to find in today’s
market. We can no longer afford these inefficiencies. We have an opportunity here, and I’m hoping that we can seize it.

The creation of a new position titled Senior Director for Health Sciences would also give us the opportunity to streamline the employment process; ensure equity in compensation decisions for employees in positions that are essentially the same just in different schools; provide development opportunities that take advantage of the parallels among and between the schools; and, improve the management of our labor unions and administration of the collective bargaining agreement. I am certain that there are other efficiencies to be gained. We just need the structural and leadership support to pursue them.

We must think differently about the way we provide HR services to our clients in an environment that is focused on “One Institution.” The changing times demand it, but Health Sciences represents a major paradigm shift which requires the support of our leaders in East Baltimore, including Pamela Paulk and the JHM leadership. I have begun making the rounds to gain that support. We are not there yet; but, I will continue to work through the concept. I will keep you posted.*

Lastly – I imagine it goes without saying – Lisa Moreland will stay as my Executive Assistant and primary gate-keeper. Over the years, Lisa and I have worked together I have come to trust her knowledge, her skills, her intuition, and her ability to manage me. This is the new HR Leadership Team, and I am counting on this team to work with me to lead HR in the direction we need to go.

* Update as of June 16, 2014: I have now received the support of Deans Rothman, Klag and Davidson to develop an East Baltimore based shared service center for university human resource services. We will be working over the next several months to move this concept to reality with a target of completing the design and implementation by January 2015. Cherita Hobbs, Senior Director for Human Resources for the Bloomberg School of Public Health and the School of Nursing, will lead this new service center.
At this point, the remaining Senior Directors will report as follows: Belinda Crough will continue as senior director for compensation and Louis Biggie, who is acting as interim director for TMOD, both will report to Heidi. Art McCombs will report to Kim as she develops the HR Strategy & Policy area, pending the conclusion of the search.

That is the Phase I structure for the HR leadership group. The next phase – what a surprise we are calling it Phase II – will consist of the reorganization of the areas under each of the four senior leaders. In addition to reorganizing, there may also be the re-naming of positions; nevertheless, the important developments and changes are those necessary to respond to the four “what’s not working” issues mentioned earlier. During the next six months, we will be looking to create where absent and enhance where nominally present, communication. And, I am personally committed to being more visible as a leader and to “over-communicate” my vision and goals. We will continue to work on the HR structure to reduce redundancy and overlap. And, we are looking to identify growth opportunities for our HR staff. These growth opportunities are not just opportunities for our HR leaders to expand their roles; although I certainly hope they will continue to push themselves and their staff to think outside the box and confront new paradigms. These growth opportunities should be available to HR staff at all levels. I heard loudly the cry that we need to clarify the professional development opportunities of our own HR staff, and we will be working with you to do just that. This new structure – Phase I if you will – becomes effective July 1. Phase II is targeted for completion by the end of the 2014 calendar year. So, that is what the new structure “looks” like.

The next question is what is your part in this re-structure? For some of you the impact of the restructure should be nominal. For example, the folks who currently report to Michelle will probably not see much of a
change. Staff who currently report to Art, Cherita, and Gloria will see more of a change as positions shift, but as I have said before – and let me repeat it here – this restructure was not commenced as a cost-cutting measure. We are going to realign, and we are going to maximize our use of resources. We do not expect or anticipate any staff or positions to be lost as a result of this reorganization.

The last question then is what part do you play in this paradigm shift – what is your role? I see three possible roles – only you will know which one fits your circumstances and situation. One, are you going to help to pave the way for change? Are you an early adopter, someone with insight and vision? Are you frustrated at our lack of progress or slow-paced movement? Perhaps you have quit and stayed? If so, I thank you for caring and I beg all of you in this category to re-engage. I urge you to visit with the HR leadership and share your ideas and concerns. Remember this first phase of the re-structure is based on the comments of almost 90 people. The next phase should not be based on less.

Category two consists of the people standing in the Colored waiting room who now choose to move with me, with us, to the nicer waiting room. There may be uncertainty in that decision, there may be hesitation; such a move certainly requires courage. We can see the possibility. We need only to make the decision to seize the moment, put in the hard work necessary, and move forward. Those of you in this category – please choose to move with me, chose to shift your paradigms. We desperately need you.

Lastly, category three is made up of those like my mother in the story who cannot make a paradigm shift right now. For those of you in this category I ask that you stay engaged, that you continue considering new options, that you work to increase your trust in your leadership, and that when you are ready you join us in the “new” waiting room. In that new waiting
room all ideas are valued, everyone has an opportunity to offer thoughts and recommendations, every mind is needed, and courage is abundant.

Thank you all for your time, your attention, your thoughts, ideas, and good wishes. As we move into Phase II, stay engaged. If something is not working, let me or a member of the leadership team know.

I welcome all of you to the new HR department – the new waiting room, where there are plenty of opportunities. Just remember that the vision has not changed: _HR is an organization that collaborates actively with university leaders to maximize organizational performance and engage world class faculty and staff_. This new structure is designed to help us realize that vision.

Thank you for your indulgence.

Questions?