• Good afternoon

• When Walt Disney began building the original Disneyland on what had been an orange grove in Annaheim California he built Sleeping Beauty’s Castle first.

• There it stood at the entrance to Fantasyland for all the workers to see what it was they were working on, to see the future they were striving for.

• The entire Disneyland construction – Main Street, Adventureland, Frontierland, Fantasyland and Tomorrowland took one year and one day to complete and cost a total of $17 million back in 1955 dollars.

• That’s still only about $120 million in today’s dollars so he got something of a bargain as well.
• I tell you this story, not to evoke memories of Sunday nights in front of the TV but to show that Walt Disney was an early exponent of the art of motivation.

• What he knew back then was that if people know what you’re striving for, if they can picture a result, and if they’re brought into the process of making it happen, it will happen.

• I joined UniSA about 18 months ago. I uprooted my young family and came halfway across the world because I was impressed with what I saw.

• The institution I joined was young and familiar to me; it was much like the institution where I studied for my undergraduate degree, Dublin City University.

• Both institutions have a focus on the professions. Both institutions aim to prepare work-ready professional graduates.
• But, when I looked at the positive energy that surged through UniSA, I thought it was possible to do more.

• Let me add here that in my first eight months what I had seen was complicated by having five different Education Ministers and with State and Federal elections as well came the possibility of having even more.

• So, in the midst of the uncertainty of the political environment, I thought UniSA was doing very well in the two things universities deliver to society.

• We deliver knowledge and we deliver graduates.

• In the knowledge that UniSA delivered, there was an opportunity for our research to become more relevant and useful to industry, to translate fundamental and curiosity-driven research into practice by providing new solutions for problems and new ideas for industry and society.
• There was also a need to ensure critical mass, scale and impact from our research institutes and to provide greater connection between our research and education agendas.

• In producing graduates we also do very well – we still get the lion’s share of first-preferences in the state but we felt we could really improve in delivering a fuller university experience for students.

• The student experience has to be one of community, of networks of friends and peers, of engagement in clubs and societies. We wanted to create a university community where these aspects are vibrant on campus it will give our students the rich, memorable and fulfilling university experience they deserve.

• But, they also have to learn and the shape of universities has changed so that now any definition of a learning environment involves personal learning environments
and is one in which e-content is pervasive across all courses.

- So, the vision of what UniSA could become was there. What we needed was to hear more ideas from all sectors of the university and get their buy-in.

- Now this would normally be the time to order in pads of butcher’s paper, pallet loads of sticky notes and great fat marking pens.

- Get senior management around a table to workshop, then present and defend your plans to people who have had no input into them.

- Not us. We had a party. We threw the doors open – figuratively - and asked the world what they thought we should do to bring about the changes we wanted.

- Unijam was a crowd-sourced social media brainstorm that involved the entire university, its students, staff,
alumni and stakeholders as well as our government and industry partners, plus some VIPs for added variety and, maybe, some new thinking.

- We used IBM’s Collaborative Innovation platform. Globally, over 80 businesses, not-for-profits and government bodies have successfully used this technology for organisational conversations. However, we were the first university in the world to use it.

- In 38 hours almost 8000 people scattered across our city and suburban and regional campuses, along with people in 50 countries gave us their ideas on how to bring about the changes we needed.

- Let me stress here that this was an open communication and it remained that way. Although the conversation was led from the top, it didn’t stay there and some really interesting ideas spilled out.
• Ideas we hadn’t yet thought of, like building a Great Hall as a place that can be our heart, our gathering space and be a resource for the wider community;

• We’d never discussed it before, never even thought of it, and just a couple of weeks ago we advertised for the design tender.

• Another grand idea was saving Magill which had been slated for closure. Now, thanks to Unijam, we’re turning it into a learning laboratory for teachers, a focal point for education and enterprise.

• Between us all we co-created a planning conversation about the university’s future all of which went into producing our strategic action plan, *Crossing the Horizon*. That action plan has 50 discrete actions for the years ahead that can be traced back to Unijam.
• And, of course, since students, staff and alumni suggested most of the changes, they were happy to help bring them about.

• Almost as soon as the action plan was published I did a series of town hall meetings on each of our metropolitan campuses with video links to our regional colleagues.

• We shared the plans and opened ourselves to questions and comments.

• I don’t need to remind you that we were dealing with the same people that you deal with: academics and professional staff with very strong views on how and why institutions, like universities and schools do what they do.

• That was when I knew that we got the buy-in we were hoping for. Across all four campus meetings there was
nothing but reinforcement that we were on the right path and that people were happy to walk on it with us.

• In fact, there was only one negative comment and that turned out to be someone who’d slipped in from another institution!

• And the conversation continues.

• We’re making some major changes on an institutional level to make ourselves leaner and more adaptable to changing circumstances.

• We’ve conducted a major curriculum review which told us that we have too many program offerings and an overly complex presentation of choices to incoming students.

• Now our Schools are reorganising their offerings and will embed a future of blended learning to give students greater flexibility in how and when they learn.
• In research we are developing critical mass, scale and impact from our research institutes and providing a greater connection between our research and education agendas.

• We’re developing interdisciplinary research themes and strengthening our investment in them to strengthen and redefine those areas in which we excel.

• We’re also focused on developing a culture of service excellence and end-user awareness in our governance and administration.

• And, so far, our plans are working. I believe they are working not just because they’re good plans but because we keep the communication going and we’re getting good feedback.

• We’re constantly updating our people on where we are going and what we are doing, and asking for their input.
I have a blog and it offers anyone in the university – academics and professional staff alike – to comment on the changes we’re making.

Here are just a few of the comments:

- Regardless of the external pressures, UniSA can’t go wrong with a model based on the student as a customer;
- There is an almost tangible energy at the university this year. It is exciting to be part of;
- You can feel a difference in the atmosphere. Much more positive and energised for the challenges ahead.

I repeat: these are the same types of people that you deal with. Academics and professional staff - all of whom have invested time and energy into building the institutions you all represent.
• It was American scientist, academic and author Peter Senge who famously noted that ‘people don’t resist change – they resist being changed’.

• So while we are in the process of changing the way the university operates and engages with its communities to better meet the demands of the 21st century higher education landscape,

• We’re not changing the people.

• We don’t want to alter the depth of the commitment and the quality of the people who make the UniSA community a great place to work and to study and to collaborate with.

• I hope you get the same results with any changes you’re planning.

• Thank you.