Dear Alumni, Family, and Friends,

As I start my second year as president, I am thoroughly energized by the enthusiasm and exciting work that is visible around campus, and by the enormous potential of Clark University to meet the educational challenges of this new century. This past April the Board of Trustees approved a new strategic plan for Clark. Our plan lays out the steps we will take to elevate the reputation of Clark University as one of this country’s finest liberal arts universities and to enhance the resources available to Clark to realize this goal. The work we commit to together in this plan will propel Clark forward, unambiguously increasing the visibility and reputation of the University as a place of consequence in the world.

The cornerstone of our plan is Liberal Education and Effective Practice (LEEP™), a set of initiatives that will establish Clark as the destination of choice for many highly talented and engaged undergraduate students. LEEP builds on the historic and distinctive strengths of Clark to offer a new model of liberal education for the 21st century, one in which our students will develop innovative, new approaches to tough problems; cultivate the wisdom and judgment to make good decisions; and build the resilience and creativity to translate ideas into action (to view a summary of the strategic plan visit clarku.edu/afplan; for more on LEEP, visit clarku.edu/leep).

Graduates of Clark whom I speak with across the country, both recent alumni and those from earlier decades, praise the quality of the educational experience at Clark and strongly believe that their liberal education has provided an excellent foundation for their lives, careers, and citizenship. Clark has always been firmly centered on the opportunities afforded to students by a high-quality liberal education delivered in the context of a small research university. Over the past decade we have invested in these core strengths, hiring a new generation of accomplished faculty, upgrading technology and facilities, and strengthening the campus life experience. With this strong foundation in place, it is time for us to act boldly and with urgency to advance liberal education. Our focus is on enhancing student learning. As in past decades, graduates will leave Clark with the knowledge, skills, habits of mind, and character needed to ensure their professional, personal, and civic accomplishments. LEEP will advance these skills and capabilities for the new opportunities and challenges facing our graduates in the workforce, in their communities, and in the world.

It is abundantly clear to me that the reputation of American universities in the new millennium will turn on our capacity to deliver enhanced learning outcomes for students. Colleges and universities that approach student learning with greater intentionality, rigor, and accountability will be well positioned to thrive in the coming decade. You and I know that we need graduates who are team-based problem solvers with imagination — leaders who can analyze risk and make thoughtful, confident, timely decisions in a fiercely competitive and demanding climate. Clark, through LEEP, will lead the way.

Great strides have been made in recent years analyzing and documenting the types of experiences that best promote student learning. At Clark we are extending this commitment to rigorous analysis to all stages of the educational process, from how we admit students to the University, to assessment of student learning, through to how we can best support alumni in their critical years following graduation. You will read in the interview with Don Honeman, dean of admissions and financial aid (pg. 58), that Clark University has made the decision to become standardized-test optional in undergraduate admissions. We are doing so in large part because research has indicated that standardized admissions tests do not assess effectively and may overshadow in the admission process other capabilities that are critical to success in college, including such qualities as student engagement, work ethic, and individual responsibility.

Lastly, our focus in LEEP on learning outcomes reflects a commitment to documentation and accountability. In recent years a great deal of information has become available regarding what colleges and students actually do to accomplish educational goals. Using data from the National Survey of Student Engagement,