Welcome and thank you for being here! Our meeting today has a dual purpose: to offer our sincere thanks to the members of the Task Force on the Status of Women and to pass the torch to those who now will carry on their work through the Commission on Women and Gender Equity.

We all know too well that the climate for women at Colorado State University is not all it ought to be - there is much work ahead if we hope to make progress toward gender equity. Still, we are further along that road than we were in fall 1994, when the Task Force on the Status of Women first began its work to “define the issues and determine the priorities for women at Colorado State University and make recommendations to address these priorities.”

The Task Force has done its work well. The groundwork has been done to set the stage for change--to improve the climate for women on our campus. The final Task Force report offers many thoughtful recommendations that will form the basis of much of the work ahead. All the members of the Task Force have earned our gratitude and respect for their work in raising our awareness to the concerns of women and making today possible. Still, we must remain aware of the importance and difficulty of the road ahead.
Many of us, myself included, have grown fond of asserting that Colorado State is a warm, friendly and inviting place--a statement that rings true for many in our community. But for many others, women and people of color, it can be cold and unfeeling, indifferent and isolating.

I am not a person easily given to frustration or overwhelmed by the odds. But we should not underestimate the magnitude of the task we face. It should be a simple matter to create an environment where all people can live and work and study in a community free of the distraction, often inadvertent, of prejudice and abuse. It should be a simple matter to require that all people are treated with respect and allowed to live with dignity. But not so. Ours is a community that seems to find comfort in the status quo: “How can I give you more space without losing some of my own?” we ask.

I’ve grown tired of my feelings of embarrassment, even shame when asked to explain our last place finish among our peers in the numbers of women and ethnic minority faculty. And I’ve grown weary of the excuses too many of us give to justify our lack of success--where there is no commitment, there can be no success. A few weeks ago I told the vice presidents we had run out of excuses. We can no longer delay an all-out assault on the forces that would deny our dream of a better place and a true community.

A few weeks ago I spoke to one of few women full professors on campus. We talked about tenure and she told me about the importance of tenure in affording some measure of
protection to women faculty from routine discrimination. She also described her early years at CSU as an untenured faculty member, recalling her isolation, harassment and, perhaps most heartfelt, her insignificance. And when she finished her recounting of events of twenty-five years ago, she concluded by saying, “not much has changed.”

The story of this faculty member defines the charge to the Commission on Women and Gender Equity. But if there is any doubt, I’ll make it more formal by asking you:

- “to assist the University in designing strategies to implement the Task Force recommendations and evaluate progress toward gender equity;
- to provide information about resources such as seminars, training sessions, and discussions that will help develop viable plans for gender equity in departments and units;
- to make information available about resources related to advocacy, conflict resolution, grievance procedures, and legal recourse;
- to produce progress reports on the status of women at CSU;
- to coordinate with the Commission on Ethnic Diversity Issues, the Fort Collins Commission on the Status of Women, the Diversity Advisory Committee, the Institute for Women and Leadership, and other groups focused on gender and diversity;
- to communicate with (various campus leadership bodies);
- to interface with the University Strategic Planning Effort;
- and to promote activities that enhance gender equity and address women's issues."

- Much work and many hours have been given by the Task Force to bring us to this point. But it is now that the real work of change begins. Please know that we understand and appreciate the importance of the Commission's work and the demands that will be placed upon your time and energy. Know as well that your success--our success--is critical to how we define our future.

- The challenges ahead are many, the passionate voices far too few. Thanks once again to all of you for your work, for your time, but most important, for your faith that we can make things better. Colorado State University is in your debt!