Major changes are underway in the State of Ohio’s approach to higher education. Gov. Ted Strickland recently authorized the creation of The University System of Ohio. His vision to redefine higher education not only in Ohio, but as a model for the entire nation, is a wonderful and important opportunity for Ohioans.

This fall, Ohio Board of Regents Chancellor Eric Fingerhut was on our campus to share his vision. The creation of the first-ever system of higher education in Ohio marks an historic shift in strategy at a time when Ohio’s future demands a renewed commitment to public higher education.

Now is the time for all of us to determine how we can leverage our public institutions’ history, strengths, and prominence to benefit Ohioans, our graduates, our state, and our nation. This means providing educational opportunities to young people and adult learners from urban centers and rural corners of our state alike, offering our best and brightest students and researchers new possibilities to pursue excellence in our classrooms, laboratories, and communities. It also means serving Ohio’s future educationally, as we support the needs of our small towns, big cities, and our nation.

The presidents of Ohio’s higher education institutions have been invited to play a key role in determining this new direction. Governor Strickland has said the system will not be modeled after the public university systems of other states, but rather serve as a model for how to approach public higher education in the 21st century. Our campus community is embracing this opportunity to once again shape another new frontier.

In fact, faculty, staff, students, alumni, and even prospective students and their parents played a significant role in opening new territory for Ohio University this fall. Through our new marketing campaign, “The Promise,” we hope Ohio University will be a household word rather than perceived as a “best kept secret.” This campaign showcases some of our best and brightest students through television, billboard, and print advertisements.

There are many people on our campus who illustrate the promise of our great University, including Russ College Associate Professor of Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering Gerardine Botte. Dr. Botte earned a $600,000 sponsored research contract from American Hydrogen to support the research and development of a new fuel technology application. She developed the patent-pending ammonia catalytic electrolyzer technology, which efficiently converts ammonia into hydrogen to produce inexpensive fuel. It was the technology’s application in clean-energy fuel-cell generators that drew American Hydrogen to this groundbreaking research.

This academic year, we have marked new beginnings and reaffirmed long-lasting ties. As we inaugurate what promises to be a year of continued institutional progress and accomplishments, I invite you to take a moment to remember the promise of Ohio University—what it has meant in your life, and what it means to today’s students.

President McDavis catches up with Jim Abraham, B.S.E.E. ’43, B.S.I.E. ’48, at the Russ College’s annual awards celebration in May.