Dear Colleagues and Students,

Thank you to those of you who have written to me today! Reading your kind and encouraging words reinforces my love for this community and my excitement to be your 21st president. Although I began the work of president many months ago, I look forward to getting my Bobcat ID Monday morning and becoming an official member of the Bobcat Family.

The other day, Ruthie and I completed the 20-hour drive from Lubbock, TX, and are now quickly settling into our new home here in Athens. Being surrounded by these ancient hills and lush green trees is a very comforting feeling. We are excited to return to Appalachia. While there is so much that feels familiar, Athens is obviously a unique place, filled with kind, smart, hardworking, and talented people who love to give back to the community. From Kids on Campus to Honey for the Heart, to the thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem, to the restoration of streams and forests, this little city seems to be the very definition of what is possible when people stay curious and passionate about the world.

Ruthie and I have been doing a lot of research about Ohio University so that we can fully understand the “spirit of a singular place.” That’s right, Betty Hollow’s book about the history of Ohio University is on the nightstand, as is Thomas Nathanael Hoover’s book on the same subject! Clearly, there is a lot of information to absorb, and, as with any great education, each new fact we learn inspires us to ask more questions, and to seek new answers. Who better to teach us about the university than the man who seems to know every person in the county, and every corner of the campus?

The Board of Trustees certainly knew what they were doing when they recruited David Descutner for the role of Interim President! The institutional knowledge he possesses has proven to be invaluable these last few months and I cannot thank him enough for his assistance during this transitional phase. He truly knows the heartbeat of this university, and I feel fortunate that he is helping me to also identify its pulse. Thank you, David, for being such an enthusiastic, learned, and tireless ambassador of Ohio University!

I take great delight in hearing about the successes at all corners of our university community: the fantastic research, the commitment to public service, and the incredible things that we do to change the world. You all give me so many reasons to be proud to be your next president. I am eager to find new ways to shine a spotlight on our University, and to show the entire nation what this passionate community is doing to shape a very bright future.

Enjoy your weekend. See you Monday!

Kind regards,

M. Duane Nellis

21st President of Ohio University