Thank you for joining us today.

My name is Jagjeet Singh Bindra. I graduated from IIT, Kanpur in 1969 with a Bachelors Degree in Chemical Engineering, and went to the University of Washington to pursue graduate studies. I retired from Chevron in July 2009, and recently took over as the Chairman of IIT, Kanpur Foundation Board of Directors. Joining me today are Abhay Bhushan, President of IIT Kanpur Foundation, as well as the Alumni Association; Rakesh Pandey, Treasurer of the Foundation, and Akshai Runchal, a member of the Board of the Foundation. Let me ask my colleagues to introduce themselves.

IITK education completely transformed who I am today, how I behave and how I conduct my job. The success that I have had, what little I have had, is a credit to this institution. Some of us as alumni got together and said, “Let’s take an account of where the institution is today and where the institution can be.” We still take a lot of pride in the institution and the graduates that come out of here. I, as a member of Chevron’s team, have been very closely associated with the department of chemical engineering. We have sponsored research at IITK, and the quality of work that has come out of the dept. of chemical engineering for Chevron, for HPCL & Grace Chemicals has been absolutely outstanding.

The faculty at this campus is world class; there is no question about it. There are lots of good things that have happened in a couple of decades. At the same time we started asking the question, “why is it that the institution is not competing with many other institutions around the globe now?” When you see many of the publications coming out, unfortunately IITK is not showing up amongst the top 10 or 20. So the purpose of our journey was not to dwell on what may not be working, but to take a lot of pride in the great work that is going on here on the campus, and try to figure out how can we bring together all the stakeholders to figure out what is the potential of the institution and what it can be. We have absolutely no pride of authorship on what we are going to present to you. This is only a document. What we have done is put together some thoughts, and we really need to engage key stakeholders to get their feedback, not only about the current state of affairs, but also about what you all would like this institution to be in the next 10-20 years. What would make you proud? As a faculty member, what would make you proud to go anywhere around the globe, and stand there with a smile on your face and pride that I am a professor at IITK. I want to do that, stand anywhere in the world and say that I graduated from IITK and do it with great pride. We want every student, every faculty member, every administrator, and every stakeholder, who is associated with this institute, to stand with the same level of pride.

So a group of alumni got together and started the process to determine the potential of this institute, and what needs to be done to achieve that ultimate potential. I want to make sure that there is no doubt in anybody’s mind about the pride that we have, about the contributions you make as faculty members. We want to take this institute from good to great, globally recognized amongst absolutely the top. We have no vested interest, I can guarantee you that none of us have any interest in an administrative position, anything of that sort. Our purpose solely is to partner with you, with the administration, partner with the Indian Government, with stakeholders to see how we can all collectively take this institute to the next level of greatness.

There is so much good work and so many good things that have happened on this campus. When I walk through the campus I take pride in the new facilities, the student hostels, the educational programs and the research done here. We as alumni can raise funds for the institute, but we hope the dialogue will lead to some action, actions that will make a difference in the next 10 – 20 years.
We want to make it very clear that IITK undergraduate teaching is one of the best in the world. However, when measured by a few other parameters, IIT Kanpur seems to have lost some ground. How can we help this institute once again attain a position that is recognized globally?

The purpose of these meetings is solely to facilitate dialogue with all the stakeholders, get all of us reasonably close to a common vision and engage all the stakeholders in developing action plans that can help achieve this vision. We have developed a vision that we want to share with you. We want you to tell us - does this vision resonate with you, can you support it, can you stand up and champion this vision, and feel good about it? We have developed some strategies. Do you find any fatal flaws with those strategies, do you find anything that is almost impossible to achieve, do you find anything that is missing that hasn’t been captured? We have been out of the institute for a long time, and we may not see the tree from the forest. You need to help us. Are we missing something? Tell us what kind of resources and other initiatives would be required. I will share with you the visions and strategies right now and we will open up for question and answers for about 45 minutes from now. Then we will break into 3-4 groups to different rooms in this complex. The purpose of this break out session is to have smaller group discussions and surface issues that may not come up in bigger groups here. Each of the groups would be assigned one of the strategies. Each group will discuss these strategies in greater detail. When we come back here we will try to distill all the ideas generated into key themes. This way we can all own it collectively and not by foundation or by alumni or by one group of stakeholders. We would also present this to IITK board of governors tomorrow, and they have so much influence on the changes and can champion the cause. So let me start by sharing with you what we have prepared as a draft. The agenda starts with the vision of the institute.

So here is the vision that we have created and this vision is very much in line with Dr. Narayan Murthy’s address at this campus during the inauguration of the golden jubilee celebrations. The vision basically says that we want to attain, and then to sustain, a position among the top 20 educational institutions globally. So it is a global vision. We not only want to get there, but to make sure that we do not fall back to the 45th position, but we want to stay in the top position for the future. The quality of any educational institution is measured by its products, and the products from this institute are the graduating students. The success will be measured by the quality of students that come out of this campus, the quality of faculty we attract, and the research that is produced. We need to put some metrics in place how to measure that. The quality of faculty – are we able to attract world class faculty to come to this campus? Do they feel good about being a member of this community of educators, researchers? Do they want to look at this as a destination? And finally about research – we talked about how this institute is well known for the quality of undergraduate students we produce, but that’s not the only product we should look for. Do we produce world class research in the areas where we can establish some cutting edge expertise? The vision is to be known amongst the top 20 globally, and stay there. What are the key things that need to be done?

We started putting some strategies together and we came up with 4 strategies. These may not be all comprehensive. That’s why we are here. We want to get your input to make sure we get it right.

First one is: What can we collectively do as stakeholders to transform IITK to become an admirable destination for faculty and students globally. We want to get to the point that IITK is seen as a destination for studies from, not only India, but a destination for people coming from all parts of the world - people from Africa, from former Soviet Union countries, etc. We want people to say, “I would like to go to IITK to do a Masters/PhD because IITK provides the kind of atmosphere and the kind of faculty that nurture the kind of research I want to do.” For that we need to attract, nurture and retain good faculty. It is not just enough to attract, but it is really important to make sure that people that come here feel fulfilled, valued, honored and have a feeling that I am here to stay. Otherwise we can attract people, but will they find the atmosphere
conducive enough for intellectual challenge and research, or will they contemplate going to some other place? We want to enhance the global diversity and quality of population at the graduate and undergraduate level. We are again talking about global diversity moving away from regional diversity. We want to make sure that we work with the government to facilitate greater autonomy in the operational and financial control of the institute because that would be essential to attract good quality faculty, and create an environment that would enable us to do the things we are talking about.

The second strategy is that if you want to be known globally you should not be a jack of all trades and master of none. You can be recognized only in certain areas of expertise where IITK is amongst the best. I don’t think we can be best in every curriculum that we offer. We need to create centers of excellence, and those centers of excellence should be recognized globally, and that requires a lot of resources, tremendous amount of high quality faculty, dollars, and collaborations with industries. All of those. We are not intelligent enough to tell you what those areas are. We would like your input in identifying areas where this institute can create centers of excellence. Once we establish them we need to bring them to world class levels.

The third strategy deals with the institute and industry partnerships. I am a very strong believer in that. I have done that throughout my career. I initiated the relationship between IITK dept. of chemical engineering some years ago, and brought HPCL here, and brought Grace Chemicals here. In the last few years collectively, these companies have put in tremendous amount of resources into IITK. They have sponsored research and the output has been outstanding. I can tell you that we are implementing today the research done at this institute in Chevron. It has been piloted by HPCL. I am absolutely convinced that the faculty is superb on this campus: We just need to engage them, nurture them, give them resources and autonomy so that they can do what they do best. And if we do that we can have more partnerships. It also helps the faculty as they have the opportunity to visit the industry and get to see what applications in real world look like. Dr. Kunzru and Dr. Khanna have been there in Chevron in California.

The fourth strategy deals with alumni engagement. We want to make sure that we, the alumni, engage in a constructive and collaborative manner. Not in an adversarial manner. We have no vested interest except we want to see our institute thrive and be recognized globally. We want to make sure to engage more alumni who not only bring resources, but also connections, collaborations and help in recruiting good quality faculty, improving industry relations. All those things alumni can do.

Those are the 4 strategies that we came up with. Let us talk about a few more details. First is to become an inspirational destination for students and faculty. This means to attract, nurture and retain world class faculty. We have put together a few ideas. They are not comprehensive, but these are some of our thoughts. We need to establish performance based compensation which is being offered in industries. I think it is a shame that across the globe (and it’s a global phenomenon) people who contribute to the future of the globe don’t get compensated for their performance. That happens in every country, but I think the gap in India is much larger than the gap in many other countries. We believe that if you don’t recognize and reward excellence you will breed mediocrity. Recognition is important. To do research in the area of your interest, autonomy on that piece of work, ability to travel and present your findings around the globe, all of that is at the heart of recognition and reward, and we need to make sure that we do that. We need to develop a professionally managed faculty hiring process and make sure that we are searching for the best talent. We want to make sure that we have some metrics. We want to get to full sanctioned faculty strength in the next 5 years. This institute has so many faculty positions unfilled. That means one of two things: First, many scholars do not want to come to teach here or we are not making enough effort to go out and search for talent, or we do not have enough resources. Each department should have 2 or 3 well defined focused areas for research. Faculty members should offer research level seminars and faculty member should have at least
Next strategy was to improve student quality, and in this we want to make sure we have flexible and forward looking curriculum. Earlier we were discussing how difficult it is to offer interdisciplinary courses to students. If the students do not like what we offer they will go to some other place. Some of these things are within the reach of the senate and some of them need to go to administration or the board of governors or the Indian Government. We want to work with you at all those levels to see what can be done. We need to create programs that students need, such as 5 year Engineering and Business degree. We need to make sure that there is a process for recognizing the teachers, the contributions made by faculty members, not only in teaching but also in research. In order to create excellence you need to make sure that you reward people for their contributions. Implement exchange programs with foreign universities. Some of the suggested metrics include together, % of students from outside the northern belt increased to 50%; 10% foreign students in each semester in 5 years. You can tell us if these targets are unattainable. Teachers’ satisfaction surveys need to show statistically significant improvement. I don’t believe that if we go from 59 to 61 that it is improvement. That could be noise in the system. We want 30% of the top JEE ranking students to choose IITK as their destination in the next 5 years. We think we have slipped off in the last few years. Some of these metrics may not be right. We need your input on that.

Next, we need to develop a new governance model. We need to make sure we have professionally managed infrastructure and system, which is really important to attract top quality faculty. We need to form metrics in terms of research, teaching, R&D and many issues which will contribute towards success of the institute.

Strategy no. 2 was to enhance industry-institute partnership, and here we must identify 5 core competencies where IITK and industry partnership can bring global recognition. 5 may be too many or may not be too many. Where we can collaborate with industry and do some unique things. Leverage alumni, accelerate the partnership and investment. We believe these kind of partnerships will help us attract top tier PhD students, help us in recruiting faculty. At the golden jubilee celebration in California and Washington DC we will showcase Chevron and IITK partnership because it is a great example of what can be accomplished and attract other industries to collaborate with IITK. There is one conference in July in California and one in Washington DC.

We have put together some metrics. There are very limited numbers of these industry partnerships. Can we increase them by 10 fold in the next 10 years? We believe it is an achievable goal, but we need to work hard on that. This will provide an opportunity for faculty to get recognition through their publications, conferences, awards and this kind of partnership will allow faculty to travel and present their findings.

Our 3rd strategy was to increase the alumni engagement with the institute and here what we have suggested is to create a new model for governance. There is an IITK alumni association in every place around the globe. We have tremendous quality alumni in the U.S., Europe, Korea, in Australia and other parts of the world, but there isn’t any way to get them all together. So we need to create a new governance model which establishes a global alumni council and this council will actually focus on not only raising funds, but also contributing to the development of programs at IIT. There will be foundation type of structure in North America, one in other European countries, there could be one in Asia. Global Council cannot be dominated by North American alumni. Majority members of global council should come from India because the largest population of alumni of IITK resides in India. This has to be a council that represents all of the alumni, not just a small section of the alumni population. So we want to make sure and we will have representation from North America, Europe and other parts of the world, and all the
details need to be worked out. As soon as a student graduates from here they are connected with
an alumnus of IITK from day 1, so that they can talk, discuss, seek guidance, see what kind of
lessons they have learnt in life. In other words establish a mentoring process. We need to
establish the Alumni Faculty research network. Funding should not be the sole purpose. It is not
only about raising money and sending it to the campus, and not knowing what’s going on. We
need to partner. When alumni come to campus we need to take advantage of that. Many times
we come here and have 1 hour meeting and disappear. We should arrange departmental
meetings. Deliver a lecture on a topic you are expert in, participate in research program where
you can provide input. We need to leverage that from every alumnus who comes to the campus.
We propose to raise 100 crores rupees by 2020, which is 25 million dollars and that’s a pretty
aggressive target.

Final strategy is to develop centers of excellence that are accepted globally and again we said
that may be 5 technology areas is a good place to start. I have also been told that these are very
resource intensive efforts, need a lot of funding, faculty and resource. So 5 may not be the right
number. It may be a different number, but the point is that we need to develop centers of
excellence which are recognized globally. Each center of excellence must have a clear vision;
make sure they have strategies, processes, practices, that are common across the institutions. We
think we need to make sure that we create good governance process, give the faculty lots of
authority and autonomy and leverage the alumni to fund the centers of excellence.

I am going to stop here. As I said the purpose is:

- Does this make sense to you?
- Do you see a showstopper?
- Is there anything missing here?
- Are these very aggressive and cannot be attained?
- Can you buy into these strategies and become a champion?

If not, what is holding you back? We have asked alumni to provide feedback, and we have
received a good number of responses electronically. We plan to distill them down along with
feedback from you, and the feedback from the board of governors. Then we want to form teams
of faculty, alumni and other stakeholders who can take this feedback and refine what we have
developed with more details on strategy and methods, so we can start implementing them. I am
a strong believer that we should celebrate success and measure progress. If we are going to
continue building momentum we need to assign responsibilities to people and time table. If we
don’t, nothing will be done. So we want to develop some metrics, we want to identify people
who are going to champion certain pieces of it and we want to monitor the progress. So that’s
the objective of this meeting. What I would like to do now is to stop for a few minutes and see if
you have questions in general, and then we will have some break out sessions and get deeper into
the discussions of these strategies.