I am pleased to welcome you to the 2008 Academic Affairs Faculty Symposium. Good morning, my name is Joe Broder and I have the pleasure of serving as Co-Chair of the Symposium Planning Committee and Executive Committee Chair of the UGA Teaching Academy. Today’s symposium is the 18th in a series of symposiums that were initiated in 1991. I invite you to review the topics of past symposiums. Many significant academic initiatives at the University have been explored and developed at these symposiums. Often, the impacts of these symposium are not immediate but new ideas are certainly set in motion for future opportunities.

Before we begin this morning, let me take a moment to thank those who made this symposium possible. First, I want to thank the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost, Dr. Arnott Mace, for his financial support and for his participation in our program. Provost Mace, we greatly appreciate your generous support for these symposiums and for the teaching and learning enterprise. Next, I want to thank President Adams for his continued support of the symposium series. I am pleased that Dr. Adams will join the symposium this afternoon.

At this time, I would like to thank the members of the Planning and Coordinating Committee, their names can be found on the back of the program. I especially want to thank Marcus Fechheimer who served as co-chair. I would ask the members of the committee to please stand and be recognized. I want to express a sincere thanks to Stefani Hilley, my administrative associate, for her dedicated assistance in planning the symposium. Finally, I would like to recognize the members of the UGA Teaching Academy for their support and participation in the symposium. Could I ask the Teaching Academy members to please stand and be recognized. Let’s give them a round of applause. A brief description of the UGA Teaching Academy can be found on the back of the program.

Over the past several years, the faculty symposiums have addressed (and rightfully so) topics of student learning and engagement. Much of the last SACS reaccreditation examined the undergraduate experience. In many of those discussions, faculty were assumed to play a critical role in the quality of the educational experience, although, conversations on faculty engagement and renewal have been largely absent. Likewise, the University is in the midst of conducting the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE). In the FSSE, faculty are asked of their perceptions of student engagement. We have learned from these surveys that students and faculty do not always agree about levels of engagement. Likewise, levels of student engagement alone may not give us an understanding of
faculty engagement. With this gap in our collective wisdom, the Planning Committee designed this faculty symposium to address the issue of faculty engagement and renewal.

The UGA Teaching Academy has been invited to plan and coordinate these symposiums since 2004. These symposiums have become an integral part of the University’s conversation on teaching and learning. At this particular symposium, we will explore and develop the question “what makes faculty tick?” That is, we will look critically at the concept of faculty engagement and ask to what extent are faculty engaged in respective fields of study. Our premise is that an engaged faculty is associated with faculty well-being and fulfilment.

Many of the conversations will take place in our breakout groups. Here, participants will be asked to examine faculty engagement in the traditional areas of teaching, research and outreach, but also faculty engagement in issues of faculty governance and student life. Many of us feel that an engaged faculty is essential to the maintaining quality educational programs. Likewise, when faculty become disengaged and no longer share in the larger mission of the University, educational programs are likely to suffer. As faculty are asked to teach more courses, conduct and publish more research and pursue more extramural funding, How do faculty respond to these increased pressures and are their programs in place to support faculty development and renewal?

These symposiums are aptly labeled “Academic Affairs Faculty Symposium.” Our students may come and go, while many of our faculty are here for the duration of their careers. We don’t graduate per se, we continue to be good (or bad) teachers, researchers, etc. Today and tomorrow, we have a unique opportunity to discuss a topic of importance to faculty and the larger university. While the University has some of the best faculty in their respective fields, we should be concerned about how we support faculty to enable them to maintain their impact and productivity.

As a University, we’ve been fortunate in receiving state support in salaries, faculty positions and infrastructure. In recent years, the University has made a deliberate effort to address issues of faculty retention and salary compression. We applaud these efforts to support and reward faculty. At the same time, we believe there are many programmatic opportunities to support and promote faculty engagement and renewal. Our charge to the breakout groups will be to critically examine current programs that support and promote faculty engagement and renewal. The conversations we have here today will not only engage those in attendance but will be carried to the larger University Community. This is designed to give us time to reflect on the status and well-being of our changing professoriate. Our task today is not so much to find solutions to our problems but to ask relevant and pressing questions about our University.

In preparation for this symposium, we asked you to complete an on-line survey. The results of that survey can be found in your registrations packets. I want to thank each of you for completing the survey and invite you to review the survey results as you examine the topics in your breakout groups. While this group may not be completely representative of the larger university, the survey can, no doubt, confirm or dispel our beliefs on faculty engagement and renewal.