The faculty members of the academic programs have approved this weekend’s graduates, having assured completion of all academic requirements for the respective degree. The number of graduates will be about 1,300.

The Retention Steering Committee continues its work to improve retention and persistence and thereby completion of University of Akron students. Such diligence over the past year resulted in the 9% increase in retention of last fall’s entering class. We remain focused on persistence of students from this fall semester to the upcoming spring semester. You have in your materials the version of the Completion and Retention Plan that specifies responsible parties for this student success agenda.

As you know, the Higher Learning Commission focused visit is scheduled for mid-February. The campus community has provided comments on the draft narrative created by the University Council and Faculty Senate Steering committees related to shared governance and by the Learning Assessment Committee related on this topic-continuous improvement of teaching to enhance learning. We thank you for your comments. The narrative will be finalized for President Scarborough’s transmittal to the Higher Learning Commission. The Board should anticipate more information about the next steps of the process in the coming months.

Also in your materials is information related to the Akron Metropolitan Statistical (MSA) area having received the CEOsforCities $1million Talent Dividend Prize, funded by the Lumina and Kresgee Foundations. The higher education institutions participating in the work of the Steering Committee included UA, Kent State University, Northeast Ohio Medical University and Hiram College. Our community partners included Akron Public Schools, Akron Chamber, Summit Education Initiative, Summit County, and the Portage County Educational Services Center. As this was a component of the Northeast Ohio Talent Dividend initiative that was started in 2009, prior to the “ideation” of the Prize, the Northeast Council on Higher Education was the interface with the CEOsforCities.

The Akron MSA increased associates and bachelor’s degree completion by 20% across 2009-10 as the base year and 2012-13 as the final year, using IPEDS data. While this 20% increase does not directly relate to the Talent Dividend for the Akron MSA, we know that ~58% of a city’s success, as measured by per capita income, can be explained by the percentage of the adult population with a college degree. It is also known that increasing the percentage of individuals with a four-year degree or higher by 1% for NE-Ohio and for the Akron MSA has an economic impact of $2.8 billion and $506 million, respectively. This work put us in the national spotlight and garnered mention in the Wall Street journal. Thanks to Eileen Korey and Wayne Hill for helping assure we maximized our market exposure for such an outstanding university and regional accomplishment.
We are asking you today to endorse a resolution and rule related to The University of Akron’s services to our Veterans. Dr. Karla Mugler will review very briefly those services and will introduce you to an individual who will describe how he has been affected by what has led to our having been identified for the 6th year in a row as a Veteran’s Friendly campus.

Now it is the privilege of the Office of Academic Affairs to present our featured faculty member, Professor Nicole Zacharia. Dr. Zacharia started at The University of Akron in fall 2013 having been recruited from Texas A&M University. She did postdoctoral work at the University of Toronto, and received her doctorate, masters and bachelors from the Massachusetts Institution of Technology (MIT).

Dr. Zacharia describes her research in the following manner, “Our group uses the directed assembly of polyelectrolytes and colloids via the Layer-by-Layer (LbL) method of film deposition to create films and coatings with novel properties and responsiveness.” Most of us probably have no a clue what that means…but simply put and with some degree of license-verified by Dr. Zacharia, it means the possibility exists for a film to be applied to a surface and that surface might never get dirty or have dirt adhere to it….imagine a day with wash-less cars.