3rd ANNUAL EMERGING LEADER LUNCHEON
February 2
By Timothy P. White, Chancellor

This annual event brings together more than 100 students who have been recommended by their instructors and peers as having leadership potential. The chancellor talks to them about leadership, its opportunities and rewards.

Emerging leaders. Just right. You never stop emerging, a point I’ll come back to that point.

And thank you to those of you who have brought together this group of 130 UCR community leaders.

As I look out at you today, I see so much promise. I see a group of people who in five years, ten years, twenty years will be putting their stamp on the world and making it a better place. Perhaps you can’t quite believe that right now. But look around you. Remember those faces. Because you’ll be seeing them at alumni events. Perhaps seeing them on the television or the Internet as their impact on the world makes its mark.

You may not quite be able to believe that yet, but I can. Because during my career, and during my time as chancellor of UC Riverside, I have seen it happen again and again. I’ve seen students seize the opportunities in their path and use them to help others. I’ve seen those same people graduate and continue to help, to lead, to change. I’ve seen them come back as alumni, to share their wealth.

That’s what we mean when we talk about Living the Promise. Most of you come to us as a promise as yet unfulfilled. And during your time with us, you waken up to your potential. Your potential in the classroom, certainly. But learning alone does not make a leader.

You waken up to your power, your ability to make a difference.— not only in your own lives, and those of your families . . . But in your community, in your country, and often beyond.

What is leadership?

Leadership, living the promise, is about grasping those opportunities and, in so doing, being an example and an inspiration to others.

It’s about shining a light on the opportunities available to all of us – to make a difference, to make change.

It’s about demonstrating that problems are just stepping stones to a goal, not an excuse to give up.

When someone makes a choice to do something for others, to go beyond self, how inspiring that is! And the benefit goes not only to the person themselves, but to their peers, to the campus and to the community. And everyone who is touched by such examples of leadership, of altruism, and accomplishment, touches others in turn.

Leaders come in all sizes, shapes and ethnicities and gender, and from backgrounds that range from privileged to impoverished. For example, I hope you’ve had the chance to meet senior psychology major Serkadis Krohm. Her life here at UCR may seem similar to that of many you here. Set to graduate this spring, she is carrying 12 units, working a part-time job, and volunteering in the community with the Child Leader Project.
That’s where the similarities end, however. Serkadis is also working to get her injured older sister Selam from their native Ethiopia to the United States for treatment of injuries suffered in a bus accident in Turkey.

By mobilizing her network of contacts - including UCR Psychology Professor and Guardian Scholars founder Tuppett Yates, Child Leader Program director Samantha Wilson, and her former High School Principal in Moreno Valley -- and by telling her story to a variety of audiences, Serkadis has raised more than $8,000 for the “Selam Fund.”

Sharing the story has been challenging for Serkadis, who calls herself a very private person. “This is my first time ever going out and talking like this,” she says. “I am doing it for my sister.”

This challenge is just the latest in a life-long series of events that Krohm has overcome. One of five sisters, she was orphaned at the age of 9. Serkadis and youngest sister Samrawit were adopted by an Inland Empire family when Serkadis was 11. The adoptive family was abusive, leading to the sisters’ removal into the foster care system. Undaunted by these challenges, or the fact that she spoke no English upon arriving in the U.S., Serkadis excelled both academically and athletically at her high school, earning student of the year and athlete of the year honors.

Serkadis came to UC Riverside and became a part of the Guardian Scholars Program, which provides financial aid and resources to young people who have been emancipated from the foster care system. Interested in a career in social work, she became involved with the Child Leadership Project at UCR. When funds were needed to help take eight students from Norte Vista High School to India, Serkadis pulled together a 5K run fundraiser in just over a month, raising $4,000. For her efforts, she was honored in late September by the Citizens’ University Committee, where many in the crowd were moved to tears by the story of her and her family’s hardships.

Serkadis is already a leader, and I believe she’s only getting started!

Some of the leaders you’ll see here are using well-established on-campus organizations to face new challenges. This past fall, the Alpha Pi Sigma sorority teamed up with Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) for Riverside County to collect teddy bears for kids in the foster care system.

CASA recruits, trains and supports community volunteers who assist the courts in representing the best interests of abused and neglected children in the courtroom and other settings, including helping them find safe and permanent homes. Every Wednesday throughout the month of November, sorority members could be found near the Bell Tower, collecting bears of all shapes and sizes.

Katie Cueva is a fourth-year psychology and women’s studies major.

“When we heard about CASA, we were really interested in it because one of our purposes is to give back to the Latino community; Cueva says. “We thought it would be a great opportunity for us to collect an item that is easy for anyone to bring, and also for us to give back to the community at large.”

In all, the drive collected 313 bears, well in excess of the goal of 200.

One of the students involved in the drive, Daylisi Talavera said it gave her a great feeling to give something to children in need: “A present during the holidays, a teddy bear, might make a big difference to someone who does not have many things.”

A big difference, in words – and in deed.
Another example, this one from a group of seniors at the UCR Bourns College of Engineering:

Together, James Gutierrez, Andrew Mikkelson, Cindy Brito, Alfred Liu and Caleb Stanton created an innovative new proposal for wastewater treatment—and they placed first last spring at an international environmental design competition. The team’s cumulative score was the highest ever in the 21-year history of the Waste-Management Education & Research Consortium contest in Las Cruces, New Mexico. Past participants in the competition have included the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Stanford University and Cornell University.

In addition, one team member, James Gutierrez, received the Terry McManus Outstanding student award at UCR. Gutierrez, a graduate of Rancho Verde High School in Moreno Valley, served in the Army Reserves for six years before enrolling at UC Riverside. James is now pursuing his Ph.D. at Yale University.

Nineteen teams from 14 universities competed at the contest hosted by New Mexico State University’s Institute for Energy and the Environment. The UC Riverside team, which was sponsored by the Western Municipal Water District, took home a first place trophy and received a $2,500 prize. Judges told the team, which called itself “Waterwerx,” that the system they created had the real potential to be adopted by municipal water districts.

The team’s challenge was to study the efficiency and economics of magnetic treatment on brackish water in a reverse osmosis treatment plant. Cleaning brackish water is a huge industry because of the high concentration of it throughout the world and U.S., especially in the Southwest, Midwest and Southern California.

Reverse osmosis uses high pressure to drive water through a semi-permeable membrane, creating a purified stream of water and a waste stream of the concentrated brackish water. In the last decade, reverse osmosis has become the world’s leading desalination technology. In the U.S., most reverse osmosis plants are concentrated on the coasts because they can inexpensively dispose of the waste stream in the ocean. At inland reverse osmosis plants, waste disposal is more expensive and water supply is often limited.

The students found that costs can be cut and water saved by using magnetic treatment in tandem with a chemical precipitation process, a method already used industrially that involves adding chemicals to cut the amount of salt collecting on the membrane. This method increases water recovery from 80 percent to 96 percent, they found.

These students are making a difference—and Living the Promise.

A fourth example of leadership at UCR is our African Student Programs (ASP), which is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year. Born from the historic struggles against oppression in all forms, African Student Programs was created in 1972 to sustain a socially just and inclusive campus community. ASP is a leadership training effort, as it recognizes the connection between individual academic success, social responsibility and community success.

Their leadership extends also to the entire community. For example, the campus celebration of Black History Month is underway, and offers events for everyone to see history through the lens of Black people, and learn about the many contributions they have made throughout history.

As you continue on here at UCR, I hope that each of you can begin to find a way to become a leader. It may be based on your own personal journey. Or it might be as part of a group such as the Alpha Pi
Sigma sorority. Or as part of an extracurricular academic challenge, such as the one our engineering students faced and surpassed.

And finally, leadership can have an impact you may never know about – something that happens in your wake. One example that I learned about happened because of Undercover Boss, the CBS television program that featured our campus in 2011. A teacher in S Carolina noticed that our Professor Catharine Larson used clickers in the class to assess learning in real time. The teacher, Darrell Walker, purchased similar clickers for his STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) class, because he didn’t want these poor African American students to have to self-identify that they were having trouble with the course material, and then be ridiculed by peers.

**A Few Final Thoughts on Leadership**

Briefly, leadership is not your title, but rather what you do.

Leadership is going beyond self, to help others have an opportunity to overcome and succeed.

Leadership is about the vision you can share – but it’s also about what you do when no one is watching. It’s what you do when no one else understands. It’s taking an action, and being accountable.

I believe in the need to lead from a moral compass, based on the values and culture of the institution and community, as well as personal values of integrity. I believe in inclusiveness as well as diversity of people, ideas and programs – it can only make things better.

I believe leadership requires listening, to understand issues from another person’s viewpoint.

I believe that it’s possible and important to lead not just from the top, but from the middle and the bottom of any group or organization.

I believe in being compassionate and acknowledging the contributions of others.

Seek knowledge. Have opinions and test theories; ask questions, and then listen carefully to the answers. The more minds that touch an idea can only make it better.

Leadership is doing everything in your power to live your promise.

**Your leadership**

So as you prepare to go out and be leaders on this campus and beyond, remember:

Advocate.

Become involved. In the community, school, churches, government.

Be aware and do well.

And Do good.

As Mahatma Gandhi said, “Be the change that you seek.”

Live your promise. Aspire to great heights and then do the groundwork to make it happen. You have more power than you know. So use it.

And let me finish where I started: Emerging leaders. Just the right adjective. You never stop emerging. If you do, you become static, an impediment. You don’t adapt to change, nor lead the changes needed. You become an impediment. It’s time to retire when you stop emerging.