Fall is always an exceptionally active time of year at Ohio State and this one has been no different.

There are two recent events I wanted to spotlight because I felt they represent the challenges and promise that are in front of Ohio State and its accomplished alumni.

The first event was our Alumni Leaders Conference, which we hosted at the new Ohio Union in early October. The conference is one of our signature events because it gives us a chance to recognize the important grassroots efforts that alumni groups lead around the country. It is so important for us to show our appreciation for our volunteers. They carry the ball for the Alumni Association and do it with an admirable level of Buckeye spirit and enthusiasm.

I had a chance to talk with many of our club and society leaders at ALC and I came away encouraged by the level of commitment they have to helping their university. My staff and I have a great deal of appreciation for the work that happens in the name of Ohio State, but in my mind ALC provided us with an important reminder of the key role these folks play and will continue to play.

Another event worth mentioned was the first-ever meeting of the all-Advancement team in September. This meeting was noteworthy because it was the first assembly of all key staff members involved in Advancement. We had more than 375 staff members from the Alumni Association, University Development, University Communications, and other units within the Ohio State community, including many reps from our regional campuses.

The meeting did a wonderful job of illustrating the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead, and the response we received from those in attendance was overwhelmingly positive. Our team members clearly recognize that a more cohesive approach is going to be good for Ohio State and its broad base of constituents.

In regards to the work being done, much of it is still of an internal nature. To be successful in this endeavor we must work from a solid foundation and that base is being constructed now. Our four action teams reported to the Board of Trustees Advancement Committee in early September, and those teams are now working on concrete plans that will form the foundation of our efforts.

What is clear to all of us is that this effort will require a concerted approach that involves people both within the university and around the country. At our Alumni Leaders Conference I issued a challenge to our leaders regarding advancement and told them that, “It starts with you.”

Now, sitting here today I cannot issue a list of tasks and goals for our groups to tackle. But I do know that success will be defined not only by internal accomplishment, but also in the way that our alumni groups interact with each other and their own specific constituencies.

There is no question that the work of Advancement is going to be challenging. But as I saw at ALC in October, we have some great people out there making great things happen. I know that is going to continue.