Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Bill Downs, and it is my privilege to serve as Dean of the Thomas Harriot College of Arts and Sciences at East Carolina University. Harriot College is proud to be home to the Department of English, which in turn is home to many of the folks who provide the vision and leadership that make NCLR a reality.

I’d like to say just a few words as we wrap up this afternoon’s program.

Let me echo and underscore all of the thanks that have already been expressed...to Flyleaf for hosting us...to Charles, Jennifer, and Christina, for engaging us so effectively for the past hour. Thanks to Margaret and her team for delivering 25 years of excellence in the North Carolina Literary Review. Thanks to the UNC Press for partnering with us. I am really, really happy to have that new collaboration. Thank all of you for being here on a Saturday afternoon to learn more about the Review.

I hope we can take a moment to consider ways that you might join us as we move ambitiously into the next 25 years.

When we’re on our campus back in Greenville, we like to say that NCLR is a College of Arts and Sciences treasure...as Dean of the College, I am cheerleader-in-chief, so I will gladly and unapologetically claim it as a College treasure.

But we also know that NCLR is an East Carolina University treasure. And there is admiration for the Review at every level of our institution, from the students to the Chancellor’s office.

Perhaps most importantly, I want to emphasize that NCLR is a North Carolina treasure. From the counties east of I-95, to the western foothills, to the Piedmont, the Triad, the Triangle, and all points in between...everywhere from Murphy to Manteo, as they say.

At ECU we’re Pirates...and, friends, what do Pirates typically do with treasure? They bury it...they hide it, they claim just for themselves. So, I want you to recognize that by simple virtue of us being here today we are resisting our inner Pirate...because our mission today is to share this treasure as broadly as possible. We want to expand our subscription base and spread this treasure as widely as possible across the state and as expansively as possible across the southeast.

Folks, I’m a native North Carolinian. I grew up in Raleigh, and there were two major influences in our home—literature and history. Both parents were professors. I suppose I was a bit of a black sheep, as I didn’t turn to literature or history; instead, I became a Political Scientist and then left NC for 26 years. As a student and scholar of Political
Science, however, I have focused throughout my career on politics of place...on the politics of identity...and on the politics of preserving and defending culture.

So, I can appreciate NCLR on each of those levels. In showcasing North Carolina authors, we are showcasing this place, this state, our identity, and we are preserving and enhancing our literary culture...and that, in my view, is a wonderful thing and it produces a lasting and important legacy.

By being here today, you have each expressed an interest in learning more about and supporting the Review. I'm grateful for that. I can assure you that NCLR is in good hands. We're building a business plan to sustain it for many years to come. We're taking NCLR around the state, just as we have done today, to showcase it. And we're allowing ourselves to dream a bit about what NCLR might become in the next quarter century. [When Pirates aren't pillaging, we tend to dream.]

I hope you will each consider becoming a friend of the Review...that friendship, that support can take any number of forms. Financial contributions can, of course, be transformative, and we welcome conversations with anyone who feels moved to invest in the future of NCLR.

NCLR is one of the top fundraising priorities of our College. We know that the generosity of NCLR's supporters will be an investment in growth, it will be an investment in elevating North Carolina's literary and arts reputation, and it will be an investment in expanding that reputation's reach across the country.

Investment in NCLR is an investment in the opportunities available for students to participate in the production of a literary journal.

Investment in NCLR enables the naming of awards for top submissions, awards that attract the state's most promising authors.

Jessica Nottingham is our director of outreach, and she'll be happy to supply you with a business card and talk to you about the benefits of supporting NCLR.

But I would ask everyone here today to consider becoming ambassadors of sorts for the NCLR. You each have your networks, you each have your connections, and you each have your own spheres of influence. We would be grateful...we would be very grateful...if you would help us spread the good word about NCLR. We would be grateful if you would help connect us to others in the Raleigh, Durham, Chapel Hill area (and beyond) who may want to become friends and supporters of NCLR. If you are inspired to do that, then our time here together today will have been time very well spent.

Thank you all, again. Thank you for spending a portion of your weekend with us. And thank you for considering how you might be a part of the next 25 years of the North Carolina Literary Review.