Welcome, Buckeyes! Several thousand first- and second-year Ohio State students ringed the Schottenstein Center for the first in-person convocation event since 2019. Convocation is typically the only time prior to graduation that the entire class is gathered. President Kristina M. Johnson said the university’s top priority is making sure students are safe. She directed students to take advantage of the Ohio State Wellness app, the Peer Access Line and the university’s Counseling and Consultation Service.

Inclusive excellence. The College of Optometry’s Improving Diversity in Optometric Careers (I-DOC) program received the 2021 Inspiring Programs in STEM Award from INSIGHT Into Diversity, the largest and oldest diversity and inclusion publication in higher education. The award honors colleges and universities that encourage and assist students from underrepresented groups to enter STEM fields.

Sustainability goals. Ohio State will embark on more than $44 million in energy system improvements, upgrading 40 academic, administration, medical, athletic and student residence buildings in the next phase of the Ohio State Energy Partners (OSEP) program. These projects help advance Ohio State and OSEP sustainability goals, which include improving energy efficiency by at least 25% within 10 years.

National recognition. The Wexner Medical Center is recognized as a national leader in 10 specialties, according to the “Best Hospitals” rankings. It’s Ohio State’s 29th consecutive year with ranked specialties, which are among the top 50 programs in the nation. When it comes to common adult procedures and conditions, the medical center is recognized as high performing in 13 out of 17 that are scored.

Advancing research and discovery. Ohio State is the home base of two new institutes dedicated to artificial intelligence research. The National Science Foundation announced the establishment of 11 National Artificial Intelligence Research Institutes, including the AI Institute for Intelligent Cyberinfrastructure with Computational Learning in the Environment (ICICLE) and AI Institute for Future Edge Networks and Distributed Intelligence (AI-EDGE), both led by Ohio State teams.