

DOCUMENTS OF THE GENERAL FACULTY

**THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN
STATE OF THE UNIVERSITY ADDRESS***Gregory L. Fenves, President*

Bass Concert Hall

September 17, 2015

As I begin, I want to thank the College of Fine Arts students and faculty who created this amazing presentation, the Butler School of Music students in the orchestra and choir, and the young students from across Austin Independent School District joining us today with their moving choral performance.

Vice Chairman Hicks, members of the Board of Regents, Chancellor McRaven, Chair Gore, fellow faculty, students, staff, alumni, benefactors, representatives of other universities and friends watching us in Texas and around the world, thank you all for joining me on this special occasion for our university.

I am humbled to have been chosen by The University of Texas System Board of Regents to serve as the 29th president of The University of Texas at Austin, and I am honored to have this opportunity to speak to you in my inaugural State of the University Address.

Reporting on the strong state of our university is the task for me today. But making the state of the university even stronger is the work for all of us.

And as we embark on this journey, I pledge to all of you here today that I will be a president who listens.

I will be a partner in seeking our full potential.

And I will be your ally who never forgets that the greatness of The University of Texas is found not in the president's office, but in our community.

The illustrious history of the university has been written by many over six generations, guided by outstanding leadership. And I have been privileged to work with two of those remarkable leaders.

My career began at UT as an assistant professor when Peter Flawn was president. President Flawn shepherded the university onto the global stage.

Twenty years later I was recruited back to UT by Bill Powers. To Bill, I salute you for nearly four decades of service to The University of Texas and especially for your nine years as president.

Thank you, Bill.

And, I want to recognize my family.

Behind every successful person is a partner who inspires. And that is my wife, Carmel. Thank you for 34 years of support, friendship and love. And to our beautiful daughters, Hannah and Emily, and our new son-in-law Mack, you three make Carmel and me very proud.

Finally, my parents, Norma and Steve, are here today.

My father's entire career was as a professor. He still can't understand where I went wrong.

My parents' life stories, their belief in education and their examples of doing the right thing set a standard that I strive to reach every day.

❧FIRST CLASS❧

Now, at the beginning of my presidency, it is a time for new ideas anchored in Texans' ambitions for the university.

The 1876 Texas Constitution called for a "university of the first class" to promote literature, arts and sciences. The idea was that a university of the "first class" was essential to expand the state's social and economic opportunities.

Being first class means realizing that what we do here matters not only to our students but to everyone in Texas.

Being first class means educating students to become leaders.

Being first class means creating the knowledge that will fuel the economic engine for Texas and the nation.

And being first class means recognizing UT's unique responsibility in the educational ecosystem of Texas.

How important is UT to Texas?

One way to describe our impact is by what happens at commencement when 13,000 students walk across the stages to pursue their futures. If we add up the lifetime earning power of our graduates, because of their education at UT, it totals more than \$3 billion. UT does this every year for each graduating class.

A degree from UT has enormous value, and it is accessible by students of all backgrounds. As an example, in fall 2014 one-quarter of our undergraduate students were the first in their families to go to college. For many of these students, their earnings will exceed those of their parents on the day of graduation.

That is the opportunity The University of Texas provides.

The light generated by our research and education helps illuminate the work being done at universities across the state. Our partnerships with UT System institutions and with other universities, community colleges and school districts, ensure that all Texans benefit from UT's scholarship, discovery and a rich variety of educational opportunities.

These first months as president have been memorable, especially for the great working relationship and friendship I have developed with Chancellor McRaven. The chancellor's support of UT, along with that of the Regents, has brought great energy to the campus and to our alumni.

And, I am also grateful for being in a state that values higher education. I commend Gov. Greg Abbott and the Texas Legislature for believing in the people of our great state by devoting precious funds to higher education, research and university facilities.

❧KNOWLEDGE❧

Reflecting on the beginning of another UT presidency in 1960 and the university's aspirations for greatness, Harry Ransom presented a plan to the Board of Regents that was designed to quote: "place The University of Texas in the company of the best institutions in the nation."

In the half-century since President Ransom spoke those words, The University of Texas has become one of the 30 best research universities in the world, as cited in international rankings.

And now, there has not been a more crucial time for us to be a global leader. Despite the recent market turmoil, Asia will become the largest economic region, surpassing the United States and Europe. And we are more connected than ever before by information, trade, financial markets and migration. Texas, as one of the largest and fastest growing states, has a key role in the world, and the world looks to Texas.

What will be the differentiator between the stagnant economies and the competitive ones? It is knowledge.

The peaks in the global economy will arise in regions that invest in knowledge.

Fifty years ago, educational visionary Clark Kerr recognized the significance of universities after World War II.

Kerr said: “We are just now perceiving that the university’s invisible product, knowledge, may be the most powerful single element in our future, affecting the rise and fall of professions and even of social classes, of regions and nations.”

That is even truer today. Look at where the top 30 universities are located: Boston, San Francisco, Los Angeles, London, Zurich and Austin. In only decades from now, expect to see Shanghai, Singapore and Beijing.

The challenges facing our world are large. The issues confronting society are complex. And the stakes are high.

And where will we find answers? At places like The University of Texas at Austin. Universities are the incubators where we assemble the most talented people to solve the biggest problems.

Bob Mansfield, a 1982 UT graduate, oversaw the design of the iPhone and iPad at Apple. And he has described the university as the place where people work on the frontier of what is known and what is unknown.

It is where faculty and students together seek tomorrow's answers to questions that didn't exist yesterday.

❧VISION❧

For these reasons, higher education has never been more valuable and the expectations have never been greater. But this is a time of debate about universities among policymakers, employers and the public. I believe now, with the eyes of Texas and the nation on the value of education, we must lead in defining the vision for the American public research university.

In the 100 days since becoming president, I have been listening to you and thinking about that vision.

From my office next to the majestic Tower, I have a panoramic view of our campus. And each day, I see a strong and proud university.

But I see something else too – an even more promising tomorrow.

For the next few minutes, I want to share with you my aspirations for where The University of Texas will be ten years from now.

In reaching for our aspirations, we will be guided by three principles:

Our goal must be excellence.

Our results must be effective.

And our methods must be efficient.

Texas needs a research university that pursues excellence in everything it does. Our students need an education that effectively prepares them for life and for careers that may not even exist today. And the taxpayers need to know that we efficiently translate their dollars into value.

While efficiency and effectiveness refine our mission, pursuing excellence defines it.

Above all, excellence is based on the preeminence of the faculty. Our faculty define the frontier of understanding; reflecting who we are as humans, challenging assumptions, and deepening knowledge.

Our faculty have discovered the most distant galaxy ever found and they have developed technologies to assist countries as they write constitutions and protect human rights. Others on our faculty have designed tiny motors that could power miniature machines to travel within the body to treat diabetes and cancer.

UT faculty create and inspire through the visual and the performing arts as they interpret and reimagine ourselves and our world.

These are just a few examples of discovery and creativity that happen every day throughout the campus.

We must continue to make strategic investments in recruiting, developing and retaining outstanding, diverse faculty. On this point, let me be clear that I am fully committed to excellence and diversity as being mutually reinforcing, and we will look to new processes to advance both. We can only be among the best universities if faculty support is competitive, even with tight budgets.

Excellence depends not only on talented faculty, but also on our ability to attract the best graduate students. We will continue to improve the quality of graduate programs, including increasing funding for graduate education, training the next generation of scholars and innovating how graduate students are prepared for careers outside academia.

But we also must be creative in fostering excellence, and that means pursuing scholarship that crosses disciplines. The toughest questions are at the boundaries of existing knowledge. Sponsors of research, including federal agencies, philanthropic foundations and the private sector, have looked to address critical challenges through university-wide centers. While UT has a good track record, we can do much better. In building research preeminence, we know that some of the most significant advances will come from linking ideas from multiple perspectives.

So I will launch a faculty-driven process to assess the emerging landscape of state, national and global drivers, and identify strategic research priorities for the next generation of insights, breakthroughs and creations. The task force will be charged to consider the strengths and ambitions of our programs in pursuing emerging research opportunities, including in the Humanities and Social Sciences. We will seek opportunities to apply interdisciplinary research to answer the hardest questions facing humanity and society today.

It is a big task, but we are up for the challenge at this great university.

❧ EXCELLENCE ❧

Research is where discovery begins, and it is also the basis of our educational mission. At UT, education is founded upon our dedication to scholarship.

Students don't come to UT to check off course requirements or fill information gaps. They come to be transformed through engagements with faculty and with each other, and for the learning experiences that prepare committed, creative and ethical professionals, artists, entrepreneurs and citizens.

Students come to UT to become leaders.

The University of Texas has made major leaps in undergraduate education. Educational change has been powered for more than a decade by our faculty, deans, provosts and presidents.

Today, all first-year students take Signature Courses with renowned faculty. Thousands of students participate in the Freshman Research Initiative, in service opportunities and in internships. The stage has also been set by many faculty pioneers in the use of new technologies to improve student learning and success. And the recent Campus Conversation about the fusion of teaching and research has fostered valuable dialogue among hundreds of faculty and students and galvanized support for change.

With this cornerstone, the time has come for UT to define a new level of excellence and effectiveness in

undergraduate education.

To prepare for tomorrow, today's students must not just know what to think, but how to think.

They will need to find the right answers in a world that offers abundant access to information yet poses increasingly complex questions, some of which we cannot fathom today.

The purpose of a UT education should be to learn how to use knowledge and skills for developing sophisticated understanding and wisdom. To be creative. To be ethical. To communicate. And to lead. Students must be motivated for learning their entire lives no matter where their career paths take them.

Think about these goals for education: understanding, creativity, innovation, communication, lifelong learning and leadership.

Those are the same goals for our other mission: research.

For this reason, the next chapter of undergraduate education at UT will embrace the integration of research and education even more closely. From freshman orientation to graduation four years later, all of our undergraduates will have opportunities to experience discovery and creativity. We will do this on- and off-campus, through participation in projects, fieldwork, internships, service and our many student success initiatives.

Colleges and departments are already engaged in thoughtful discussions about the value of education at a research university and what it means for their degree plans. We see this in the departments of Government and Economics, and English in the College of Liberal Arts. The College of Fine Arts has created a Bachelor of Science in Arts and Entertainment Technologies. And we see this in the new Bachelor of Science and Arts degree in the College of Natural Sciences.

Faculty are asking what are the needs of students and society? What distinguishes graduates from their programs, and how might they leverage new approaches to pedagogy, technology and experiential learning? I applaud these faculty-led efforts to develop next-generation degree programs.

Our new instructional budget system will help support these ideas. In addition, we will launch a Faculty Innovation Center. Working closely with the Provost's Office, Learning Sciences, the colleges and the Academy of Distinguished Teachers we will accelerate even more the transformation in teaching, curriculum design and educational technology. The Faculty Innovation Center will foster connections among faculty at UT, and with the best ideas across the nation. Above all, the center will advance the fusion of learning and discovery that distinguishes a UT Austin education.

Simply put, more than ever before, what is taught in the classroom will be linked to what is researched in the lab and created in the studio; and undergraduate students won't just study the research, they will experience what it means to explore and create.

This type of learning is essential for developing leadership skills that can only be realized at a research university. Some may argue that only small private universities can afford to provide these experiences, but who better to train the next generation of leaders than a public research university with our breadth and scale? And I am convinced we can do this cost-effectively, as we steadily improve our four-year graduation rates.

In addition to our residential undergraduate education, we will accelerate the Extended Campus that will expand access to UT. The Extended Campus already includes dozens of online, hybrid and other learning experiences that enable high school, college, professional and lifelong learners to benefit from this great university. Many more are under development, including high school courses that will enable new mechanisms for recruiting high potential students. Through the Extended Campus, we are cultivating relationships with students before they step on campus, continuing through their undergraduate education, and extending decades after commencement.

❧ DELL MEDICAL SCHOOL ❧

The future of UT will be distinguished by innovation. But we don't have to look far to see this in action. Many of these ideas have been built into the design of the Dell Medical School.

One of the great privileges I've had at UT has been to help launch the first new medical school at an AAU university in nearly 50 years. And ladies and gentlemen, Dell Medical School is getting ready to welcome the first class of medical students this coming summer.

Think about it. Health care affects every single person in this audience. It affects you. It affects your families. And it affects your businesses. Even in this vibrant city, Austin, access to health care and outcomes are not what they should be for the capital of the second most-populous state in the nation.

Rethinking health care is the mission of not only the Dell Medical School, but the entire university. And this new medical school represents a great opportunity for us and for our community partners. From new research on how communities view and access health care to science and technology. To the business models and incentives systems to physicians working on teams with other health care professionals. The role of information and technology to improve health and health care will ultimately improve the health of individuals and nurture communities. It is a new kind of medical school.

To achieve this vision for quality and better value in health care, Dell Medical students will experience a curriculum that incorporates many of the innovations at UT, such as flipped classes, team-based learning and experiential clinical learning, as well as entirely new approaches to prepare physician leaders. The education of physicians will be based on research, clinical experience, evidence and recognizing that medical knowledge is constantly changing.

The design of the medical school's curriculum provides a powerful example of what is possible.

Yes, the Dell Medical School classes will start small, but the lessons are large for educational innovation and for building on the assets of a leading research university.

❧ EFFICIENCY ❧

I have talked about excellence and effectiveness.

I want to say a few things about efficiency.

UT is recognized for turning the resources we receive from students and their families, taxpayers, research sponsors and philanthropy into tremendous value. We know that our students and families are counting their dollars. It is up to us to make their dollars count by ensuring that the return on their investment is substantial.

We must be efficient, especially in administration and campus operations. Our staff are assets, and are the ones who assure this campus community runs smoothly and safely every day. Through systematic review, planning and prioritization, we will make sure resources are going into our core mission and UT is a destination employer for talented and dedicated staff.

We must be good stewards of the trust that has been placed in us, and we must be efficient in everything we do.

I know we are up to the challenge.

❧ ATHLETICS ❧

At this time I would like to say a few words about our tremendous Longhorn athletics programs.

For many, athletics is the front door of The University of Texas. I want everyone here and everyone watching to know that it is my goal to make it a more welcoming front door. Our athletics programs represent the values of

the university as our student-athletes inspire and excite fans across Texas and around the world.

I am committed to ensuring that Longhorn athletics reaches even greater heights.

❧ WHAT'S NEXT? ❧

So in conclusion, I ask you to envision a brighter, bolder and bigger future for The University of Texas.

It will be a future where our faculty are leading us into a new chapter that revolutionizes how we educate and how we discover.

If today's teaching and research is who we are and what we do, integrating them more closely is how we will do both even better.

And why does it matter?

By embracing this vision, we can increase the value of research universities not only to Texas but also to the nation that leads in higher education.

And, what's next for UT?

I see a future where we are unafraid to ask tough questions and unyielding in our desire to follow wherever the challenges lead us.

Questions like how we understand income and wealth inequality. How to address global conflict? And what can be done to promote security in a complex world?

Problems like supplying energy, managing water, adapting to changes in climate, creating economic competitiveness, educating and providing opportunities for a diverse society.

Challenges like making a population healthy.

Each one requires ideas founded on knowledge and intellectual approaches from multiple disciplines. It is that diversity of thought that makes a university exciting, and it is that shared commitment to discovery that makes a university unique and essential.

I see a future where the people of Texas are more connected to this university.

There may be someone here today listening, or someone watching online, who wonders: what does this mean for me? For my family? For my work? For my future?

You don't have to attend UT to believe in the power of UT. All Texans benefit from The University of Texas.

Some may question the cost of higher education, but no one should question its benefits. A public research university can't only be calculated in dollars. Its costs need to be measured yes, but its impact is also evident in lives transformed, ideas developed and new discoveries made.

As we plan for the future of the university, we do so mindful not only of where we are going, but of who we are. We are a diverse community that is able to address the challenges facing the world in part because our student body looks like the world.

And a large part of who are is our alumni – the Longhorn Nation – more than 450,000 strong.

UT alumni love this university in an exceptionally special way. I know that from meeting thousands of you from El Paso to Tyler, from Amarillo to Brownsville, from Los Angeles to New York, from London to Tokyo and from Mexico City to Santiago. I have had so many meaningful conversations with you at Longhorn games,

alumni events and dinners in your homes.

I know from listening to you that your lives were forever changed by The University of Texas, and I see that you want UT to be among the best in the world.

Working together, we can do just that.

Can we educate the leaders we need for the future? We are and we will.

Can we perform world-class research? We do and we will do it even more.

Can we change the way a research university educates its undergraduates? We must and we will accelerate our efforts starting today.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are proud of the history of The University of Texas at Austin and we are poised for the next era of our great university.

We will lead in defining the role of the public research university, based on excellence, effectiveness and efficiency.

After all, we are “the university of what's next.” And what’s next for us is a brighter future that will be created by an even stronger commitment to being a university of the first class.

That is my pledge and this is our purpose.

Thank you all very much for being with me here today.

And, Hook ‘em Horns!