

President's Staff Sack Lunch Q&A Oct. 8, 2019

Questions were answered by UNT President Neal Smatresk unless otherwise noted.

1. What are the continuing plans for existing Frisco facilities, and how do they transition to the new campus? Hall Park and Inspire Park?

We have Hall Park, which is a leased space, that we're currently conducting classes in. Last year, we also got Inspire Park, which was a tech incubator, and is serving now some tech incubation functions and commercialization functions, but also has some teaching capabilities and new wet labs built into it, so it's a great facility.

Hall Park is located across the street from The Star, where the Cowboys are. The Inspire Park facility is located up near Panther Creek and El Dorado. It's probably half a mile to two thirds of a mile away from where the new campus site will be. As we open up the new campus building, if we hit our enrollment marks, it may be a little challenging for us to accommodate all the students that we have just at the new campus. We'll certainly need Inspire Park to help. We may need to continue our lease facilities in Hall Park for some of our programs, and so I guess the good news is, if enrollment continues to climb the way it has, in Collin County, through both the CHEC activities, that is the Collin Higher Education Center, as well as through our activities at UNT, we anticipate fairly heavy usage in all three of those facilities for a while to come.

It's our hope that we would ultimately get rid of the lease space, but again, the lease space is a good buffer against the eventuality that we'll be growing, so we probably can't bond as many buildings as we need to fast enough to keep up with growth, if the growth continues at this rate. By the way, we were at just under 2,000 students total headcount for Collin County. That's not bad, given that it's about three years old now, so we'll continue to look for growth. I've got some staff that said we're at about 60 percent growth, year over year, which is pretty robust.

2. Why are some of our past HR trainings not going to transfer to the new Bridge system?

They will transition over to the new Bridge training system. We just had a talk cabinet today, and there's a lot of people who feel the new Bridge system is going to be very productive, easier to use and access. We hope all of our trainings could be on one central location, so they're real easy to find in the future.

3. How is the new Division of Digital Strategies going to assist and train staff members to keep up with growing technology and sharpening our skillsets?

Adam Fein is our VP for digital strategy and innovation and his first focus when he got here was to help us make sure our online programming was up to snuff. He's been working really hard, and there's a lot to do. Some of our inventory had been a little dated. Some was noncompliant. The mission wasn't to just do an OK job. The mission, for the online part, was to figure out what it meant to build next generation online programming, and then move it out into the world around us. Adam's been doing a terrific job with that.

The other piece of that is we are going to catalog and categorize different levels of classroom technology/accessibility to create new and more innovative classroom spaces, classroom spaces where you can work in teams and groups, where you can have higher levels or lower levels of tech, as needed by a specific classroom. Trainings will occur for each of five different classifications classrooms, as we develop the CLAW systems. CLAW stands for Collaborative Learning and Active Workspace. It's very clever, CLAW. You can look forward to being trained in the use of technology for the classroom spaces, but you just asked me something that I think is even more interesting and more entertaining, which is how, as staff members and faculty members, do we up our skills in some of the new digital innovations that we're working on?

I'll say, while that's not entirely Adam's job, I believe that between folks like Adam, Shannon Goodman, and the new CIO that we just hired, Chris McCoy, that we will be talking much more about trainings. We've heard these comments, when we were doing the staff listening tour this summer. By the way, thank you so much for all of you who came out to the staff listening tours. It's the first time we've ever done it. We learned, really, a lot.

Additional information provided by Adam Fein, vice president for digital strategy and innovation: In the meantime, training and a host of services are available through our Center for Learning, Experimentation, Application and Research (CLEAR) at <https://clear.unt.edu/>.

4. How close is UNT to being classified as a minority-serving/Hispanic-Serving Institution?

We've got more than enough students of Hispanic origin to be classified, but we don't have enough who are Pell eligible, or who qualify for certain levels of financial aid. We're still a high Pell institution, but part of the HSI definition has to do with financial need.

Additional information provided by Joanne Woodard, vice president for institutional equity and diversity: Hispanic-Serving Institutions are institutions that serve an undergraduate population that is both low income (at least 50% receiving Title IV needs-based assistance) and in which Hispanic students constitute at least 25% of the student body, according to the federal definition.

Smatresk resumes: I suspect we're going to get there really soon. Jim Berscheidt has been working hard on developing advertisements around supporting enrollment, and the attention of the various communities around us, including the Hispanic community. We now have billboards in Spanish, and they're attracting a whole bunch of attention. We expect to hit the Pell mark in the near future.

There is a new state law that will require every student to fill out a FAFSA. As that happens, it may be that we fall into that higher Pell eligibility in the next round of applications or shortly thereafter, so that's good news. We're all excited about it. Again, we'll be launching a Latinx set of planning activities and initiatives in this year and the years to come.

5. Given the record-breaking enrollment growth we saw this fall and the infrastructure issues that it raised around parking, beds, full orientations, will there be a shift in focus to retention? If not, what are fall 2020 enrollment goals?

There's always an emphasis on retention. I don't think it's fair to say there's a shift. Last year, we shifted into high gear. We're not shifting out of high gear. We're going to stay focused on retention, because I believe it's the strongest way for us to actually grow headcount, and to promote student success.

I mean, on the one hand, you produce more revenue, but the real reason to do it is because you want students to be able to graduate in a timely fashion, minimize their debt, and go out and get great jobs, and make us proud. We're going to continue to focus on retention. In fact, you're going to see our... Last year's efforts, I almost want to categorize as great efforts by colleges and departments to begin focusing on their indigenous issues, but also strong individual efforts by a caring community to try to really save every single student that they could.

This year, we will start to transition into more systemic approaches, approaches using technology, approaches using the EAB student retention system, from the Student Success Collaborative. Those kinds of things are going to be rolling out. They won't roll... You won't see any results this year. We're putting these things into order, and they're very foundational at this time. A lot of organizational change will have to occur, and we hope you'll help, because it's really going to matter. Where other people have done this, retention rates have gone up, in some cases quite dramatically.

I mean, there's some little institution that's seen 20 percent changes in retention. Of course, that meant they were pretty bad to begin with. We're pretty good to begin with, so we don't expect that kind of gain. In fact, 20 percent gain would mean 100 percent retention of freshmen. Yeah, that's a great target, but retention will continue to drive us.

Now, having said that, boy, this year's enrollment, when we hit 39,330 students, 1,200 students more than last year, huge increase, 15 percent increase in our freshman class, year over year. I'd like to see that again. Redistributing financial aid probably had a big piece to do with that, but I also think the fact that we're a really great institution that shows well, that offers an incredible campus experience, and that we're caring... I think all that's getting through to people, and so the combination of things... Plus, we need to win some more football games, and then we'll really be in good shape. The combination of these activities, I think, is going to continue to drive at least modest enrollment growth.

I don't anticipate that we're going to grow forever, though, and one of the big conversations this year around master planning will be, so how big will we be? How big should we be? What will demographics do to us? What is our role to play, in a state that says we want more people to be educated and have some kind of a college degree to meet the job demands of a future that we don't quite understand. These are really important conversation pieces, so as we get engaged in master planning, one of the first things that comes up is, so how big will we be, and where will that growth occur?

6. Why do we not see an itemized statement of the work done when Facilities completes an internal construction project? The work orders only list a lump sum. It seems as if the people who control the money are not being transparent about how they spend it.

I encourage you to speak directly with David Reynolds, associate vice president for facilities, as he can provide you with the information you need. I know that on large projects, we track all the costs, and Bob and the facilities folks get regular feedback on them.

7. If annual job reclassifications can be done to increase titles, salary, and job duties, what is in place when someone's job scope is decreased, and responsibilities are taken away, due to poor job performance? Shouldn't the salary or title be reduced also, or at least addressed during an annual evaluation?

It's not fair to say that every year people should expect some kind of a promotion or reclassification in order to gain more salary. People get merit raises and we have a merit raise exercise this year -- it'll be 2 percent. That's a good number, but I don't know if we can maintain it next year. We'll have to see.

What I'm going to tell you is that we reward people who do well and move up, and they can be reclassified. If people are doing poorly, the first response might be to coach them. It might be to explain their job duties very, very clearly, and ask them to step up to perform at a higher level, or at least at a level that gets the job done. The first response isn't we're going to cut your salary. I think the first response is we have to have a discussion about what our expectations are and how you're doing. We want you to do better, and we'll give you a chance to improve. We'll coach you. We'll provide you with skills or training if you need it, and let's see where that goes.

If it still doesn't work, then I don't know if a demotion's in store or cutting salary is in store. It might be if you can't perform in the position, perhaps we should find someone who can. So, training first. Give people a chance, because that's what you do in a caring community, and you follow that up with whatever else has to happen, because at the end of the day, we all have to work to a high standard to achieve our goals.

8. What is the process for establishing working titles or receiving a title change? *Question answered by Katy McDaniel, director of human resources*

UNT's current pay plan implementation expanded the number of job titles to provide a more accurate representation of the job functions. However, in some circumstances, a working title may be approved for use. A request for use of a working title requires approval through the employee's supervisor/department head and Human Resources, and may not be the same/similar to another classification title in the pay plan.

9. Does the university track information about turnover – how it happens, why people leave, and if anything is done to keep topnotch staff members?

We are tracking turnover. I just had a long talk with Barbara Abercrombie this morning, and I know Katy McDaniel and others are on it. Turnover concerns us. When we see excess turnover in a specific area, we have to ask a question. What's that due to? Is it due to dissatisfaction? Is it due to lack of appropriate supervision? Is it due to a competitive marketplace that's draining the tank for us? Those all suggest that we need to take some form of corrective strategy, or

corrective action, or apply a different strategy for how we manage and maintain those jobs and those positions.

If any of you were to leave, we would love to know the reason, and so we have voluntary exit interviews with HR. Those are all things that we gather and try to look at, and there's times when we've made systemic change, as a result. We also have offered, in cases where highly regarded, high-performing staff members are going to go, there have been times when we have offered adjustments around that, to retain them. Sometimes you can; sometimes you can't, but there are many different reasons why people move along. Our goal is to have a great workplace, where people feel valued, they perform at a high level, and they're rewarded for their high levels of performance.

10. As a caring community, why do we not allow use of sick leave pool for maternity leave? You could consider it as an early scholarship. Question answered by Katy McDaniel, director of human resources

Maternity leave is not a qualifying illness, per state law. Sick pool's defined for a catastrophic injury or illness, so the sick pool is for a catastrophic injury or illness. It's something that would be generally life-threatening in nature. That's the purpose of the pool. While there can be medical complications with maternity leave that might be eligible for sick leave, the baby bonding and other portion of leave would not be considered a catastrophic health condition.

11. Why doesn't UNT live stream the football games, rather than pay ESPN or someone else to do it? Question answered by Wren Baker, vice president and director of athletics

Athletic conferences control broadcast rights for member institutions. In our case, coverage of games is part of our Conference USA contracts. We actually earn revenue, several hundred thousand dollars, from our inventory. The conference sells inventory in tiers and those rights are bid on. In some cases media outlets may go together to bid on a tier. The way we distribute TV across the conference is actually pretty complicated.

The good news is at this point every football game is available as are most basketball games for both teams and many other contests. Many of conference USA's games are purchased by ESPN. They distribute some on their linear network and put others on their two streaming platforms. Games streamed on outlets like ESPN (both the ESPN3 and ESPN+ platforms) generally get better viewership than those on the Conference USA network. We produce many games here at UNT as required by some of our TV contracts. We utilize student labor for learning opportunities whenever possible.

12. Whatever happened to our relationships with Toyota and NetDragon?

We're still working with Toyota and the Toyota Process Improvement System, through the Division of Finance and Administration. We've taken it and internalized it a little bit more.

We're also still working with NetDragon. The one product that we were going to do with them has not panned out as well as we'd like it to. We feel that there's too many competitive products,

and so we have one area of the relationship that has gone a little bit cold. On the other hand, other parts, as now managed by Adam Fein and his group, around classroom technologies and virtualization and some augmented reality kind of stuff are still occurring, and we continue to work with them. I will say, generally, there's a little bit of tension between China-U.S. relations, but I don't feel that there has been between NetDragon and the University of North Texas.

13. What are the future plans for the buildings that are scheduled to be demolished—IHOP, the east classroom building, etc.?

We've made it clear that we would ultimately like to acquire all of the properties that are on the west side of Avenue C, going between Avenue C and North Texas Boulevard, which moves us through Mozart. At the point where we've acquired those properties, we will begin master planning that area. It's likely that we'll be doing it in collaboration with a public party. What we do have, though, is we have the Sack 'N Save, and we have the police station there, which are expensive facilities. At some point, it's likely that we will demolish that entire area, and then rebuild around it, to create a gateway for the university that you can all be proud of, that's an amenity that people would love, a place for tailgating, a place... As you all know, we're short in residence halls.

Elizabeth With knows this acutely. Over the past year, we ran out of space, just about. We had to turn sophomores away, who might have wanted to accommodate on our campus. Between residence halls and some mixed retail, we hope to create something that people really enjoy and makes you proud, as you drive by on Interstate 35, to take a look at the university, and invites you into our community, and also creates bridges to our community through some of the things that we co-locate there. Those are the plans. It's going to take a while.

The formal processes that we're using would still involve discussions with individual property owners there, and what accommodations we can seek with them are ongoing. That's about all I can say about it right now. It's just, the wheels grind slowly on this one. OK.

The questions below were submitted but not answered during Staff Sack Lunch due to time limits.

14. What are you most proud of at UNT Denton?

Our caring spirit and the feeling of inclusion that we get on our beautiful campus.

15. What is the most visible project UNT will take on during the next three years?

Building out the UNT at Frisco campus.

16. I work at a building on the far outskirts of campus and frequently have meetings on the center of campus. Is it possible to have some parking spaces near the administration building reserved for staff who would need to drive in for meetings? *Question answered by Chris Phelps, senior director of transportation services*

There are four designated spots in Lot 2 next to the Hurley Administration Building. Two are designated for occupants of the Support and Services Building. Two are Service Vehicle for groups on campus who have service vehicles, including golf carts. Faculty and staff may also park on the top two floors of the Union Circle garage or the top floor of the Highland Street Garage with their F/S or A permits.

17. I noticed there are spaces marked as SSB behind the guard booth at the administration building. What does SSB mean? And why are there spaces available for that? *Question answered by Chris Phelps, senior director of transportation services*

SSB is the Support and Services Building, which opened in April 2019 at 1500 E. I-30-N. The building houses several important departments, such as Budget, Human Resources, CLEAR, DAIR, Enrollment Management and Administrative Services – about 75 staff members. Staff members in the SSB who have “A” or “F/S” permits are allowed to park in the two spaces behind the guard booth when they have meetings that require them to be on the main campus.

18. Can we set up bus runs to outlying offices to transport employees to Union held affairs? *Question answered by Chris Phelps, senior director of transportation services*

The buses that serve campus are run by DCTA and they do provide a circulator route and a circulator that goes in the opposite direction. The Mean Green route is the main circulator and can be picked up at Fouts/Lot 20, Pohl Recreation Center, EESAT, GAB, UNT Union, Kerr Hall, Maple Hall and Honors Hall. The route runs Monday through Friday roughly 7:30 am to 5:30 pm. The circulator in the other direction is the Mean Green Contra route and it hits all those same stops except for EESAT – if you were to pick it up from Fouts/Lot 20, then rather than Pohl Rec being the first stop, Honors Hall would be the first stop and it would work backward to the UNT Union.

Discovery Park also has a bus that runs to the UNT Union roughly every 20-30 minutes.

19. Why is Lot 50 by the CVAD building an A lot when only 20 cars park there? *Question answered by Chris Phelps, senior director of transportation services*

That lot was used as a staging area for last minute construction during the start of the school year; however, changes will be coming soon to that lot! Plans are in the works to move the 119 F/S spaces from the lots across the street to Lot 50 where there are 120 open spaces. This will allow Eagle commuter students to have full access to the lots across the street (Lots 54 and 55). Messaging will be going out soon to various colleges and departments in that area, followed by campus-wide messaging and messaging to students.

20. Does the President have any pets?

He has a dog named Riley.

21. Why don't vice presidents show up for these anymore?

A number of our VPs have local, state and national commitments that require them to be away from campus.