



# INVESTITURE OF HARRISON KELLER, PH.D.

17TH PRESIDENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS



The investiture of Harrison Keller, Ph.D., as the 17<sup>th</sup> president of the University of North Texas Nov. 13 brought nearly 1,000 community members to the Murchison Performing Arts Center to mark the beginning of a new era in the university's 134-year history.

*The following is a transcript from the event.*

**Voice from above:** Distinguished guests, thank you for joining us today for the investiture of the 17th president of the University of North Texas, Dr. Harrison Keller. Please take this opportunity to silence all cell phones and other electronic devices.

As you are able, please stand and remain standing for the processional followed by the singing of the National Anthem.

Our processional will now begin.

You may be seated.

Now, please welcome Dr. Albert Bimper, a member of the President's Cabinet and executive dean of the UNT College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences.

**Dean Bimper:** Good afternoon! It's my distinct honor to welcome you to the investiture of Dr. Harrison Keller as the 17th president of the University of North Texas.

Before we begin, I want to thank our very own Air Force ROTC Honor Guard who presented the colors, the many UNT community members who led our processional, and our talented faculty and students from UNT's College of Music who performed *Corridor Fanfare*, a specially commissioned piece composed for today's ceremony by UNT alumnus Rob Halpner.

Let me take this moment to introduce you to some special guests here on the stage. Joining me on the stage today are our leadership from UNT Student Government Association, Graduate Student Council, Staff Senate, and Faculty Senate; our UNT deans; vice presidents and executive leadership who serve on the President's Cabinet; Dr. Michael R. Williams, Chancellor of the UNT System; and members of the UNT System Board of Regents, including UNT alumna and Board Chair Laura Wright.

I'd also like to welcome and acknowledge some very special guests who have traveled here today to join us for this momentous occasion, including: State Senator Tan Parker; State Representative Richard Hayes; Denton County Judge Andy Eads; delegates of U.S. Congressman Michael Burgess and Senator Ted Cruz; former State Representative and longtime friend of the University, Myra Crownover; Gerard Hudspeth, our mayor of this great city of Denton, and several members of the Denton County City Council. Our chancellors, presidents, and delegates from schools and universities across the state of Texas and our nation; Chancellor Emeritus of UNT system, Lee Jackson; former student regent Rudy Reynoso, and former chairs of the UNT System Board of Regents, G. Brint Ryan, C. Dan Smith, and Gayle Strange; chair of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, Fred Farias, and interim Commissioner for Higher Education Sara Keyton, as well as members of the board's leadership; Bryan Daniel, chairman of the Texas Workforce Commission; dedicated partners from the Dallas Cowboys, DATCU, and Frisco's Chamber of Commerce; members of the President's Student Advisory Committee; and, of course, the Keller family.

Welcome to UNT.

On behalf of the Mean Green Family, thank you all for being here. We're honored by your presence.

The installation of a new president is an important occasion in higher education, ceremoniously marking the change in an institution's leadership and welcoming not only a new president, but a new era of growth and opportunity for the institution and its community.

It's now time to begin bestowing the symbols of the office upon our new leader, and we will begin with the presentation of regalia. Regalia traditions are beloved and timeless. Our academic tradition of recognizing the accomplishments of scholars through distinctive dress, color, and the ceremony began in the Middle Ages and has been adopted by institutions across the globe. Donning regalia reflects the dedication and mastery of each individual has shown to their field and the love they have for their alma mater.

Up on the stage and in the audience, you will see faculty members wearing colors that represent many different institutions. Note that our university and the System leadership proudly don regalia specific to that of UNT. In just a moment, Dr. Keller will be ceremonially dressed or "vested" in the robes of the Office of the President.

The regalia being presented to Dr. Keller today represents not only our great university, but the distinct honors afforded of the presidency. The robe itself is a rich green chromespun fabric, mirroring the fabric used by UNT's doctoral gowns, and the doctoral degree is the

highest degree awarded at our institution. The white piping that borders the rich, black velvet panels and the fourth black chevron on each sleeve are reserved only for the chief executive role. His hood is lined with Kelly green and in white, reflecting the proud, Mean Green spirit of this university.

Presenting Dr. Keller with his new regalia today are four esteemed leaders within the UNT community. On behalf of each that they respective campus constituents, they will together present the regalia to Dr. Keller.

Please welcome: Alfred Dozier, the Fourth, President of Student Government Association; Bala Sanka Kilaru, President of Graduate Student Council; Alex Ames, Chair-Elect of Staff Senate; and Coby Condrey, Chair of Faculty Senate.

Dr. Keller, will you please stand and step forward to formally receive your regalia?

Please join me again in thanking Alfred, Bala, Alex, and Coby.

Now, the UNT community has cloaked you in the colors that have represented the university for more than 100 years.

I must say that I know you've been on campus for a little while, but you polish up pretty good! That green looks pretty good on you now! Congratulations.

It is now time for the installation ceremony when Dr. Keller is ceremonially endowed with the powers and responsibilities of the office of the university president.

Dr. Michael R. Williams, Chancellor of the University of North Texas System, will begin our installation ceremony. Dr. Williams is the fifth chancellor of the University of North Texas System, where he aims to foster a collaborative and values-driven culture with a background in anesthesiology and critical care, Dr. Williams has held key leadership roles, including a decade served as president of the UNT Health Science Center. An accomplished entrepreneur, he has also earned advanced degrees from Duke and Harvard and has led initiatives across health care, business, and academia.

Please join me in welcoming Chancellor Williams.

**Chancellor Williams:** Good afternoon. It's an honor to be a part of this historic and important ceremony today. Dr. Keller is perfectly equipped for setting a successful path into the future for UNT. He has a unique set of leadership, organizational, and policy skills in higher education that truly informed his vision. I'm very excited to hear more about that with you all today. By presenting Dr. Keller with the Chain of Office, I will bestow upon him the history of the powerful role he now holds. The medallion on the UNT Chain of Office is a

replica of the official UNT seal, which serves as a reminder of all of our responsibilities to higher education. The chain's silver links are engraved with the names and dates of offices for each of the UNT presidents. This is an incredible symbol, representing the 134 years of university leadership that will accompany you in the official ceremonies. As the Chain of Office is placed around President Keller's neck, he becomes part of UNT's long legacy of excellence – a legacy he will build upon as he leads our university to greater heights.

Dr. Keller, will you please stand and step forward to receive the Chain of Office?

By virtue of the authority of the University of North Texas and the UNT System, I commit to you the UNT Chain of Office and will place over your shoulders the seal of the university, the symbol of the high office which you now hold.

**Dean Bimper:** Thank you, Chancellor Williams.

Now it is time for the vesting ceremony and the presentation of the University of North Texas Mace.

The use of the mace dates also back to the Middle Ages, when the mace was first used as a symbol of authority and served as an appeal to unity. The first record of the ceremonial academic mace is found in 1385 at the University of Vienna in Austria. In academia, the mace represents the worthiness of the president – and the university itself. With its history as a protector, the mace helps stress the authority of the president. This UNT Mace was designed by Professor Emeritus Harlan Butt, who taught from 1976 to 2017 in the College of Visual Arts and Design. And it was made by four of his graduate students. The head of the mace contains a silver-plated bronze medallion replica of the official seal of the university. Atop the mace is a silver eagle representing UNT's mascot. The rounded foot of the mace, composed of green-enameled silver and copper, is inset with the star representing the state of Texas.

Here, to present a Dr. Keller with this important symbol of his office is Laura Wright, Chair of UNT System Board of Regents. Chair Wright earned her bachelor's and master's degrees in accounting from UNT and retired after 25 years with Southwest Airlines, the last eight of which she served as Chief Financial Officer and the Senior Vice President of Finance.

Please join me in welcoming Chair Wright.

**Chair Wright:** Well, thank you all for being here. I am so excited to join in this celebration, and I'm honored to participate in the official bestowing of presidential powers upon Dr. Keller. As a proud alumna and as co-chair of the UNT System committee charged with the search for UNT's 17th president, I can tell you that when we first talked to Dr. Keller about

stepping into the UNT presidency, I knew we had found just the right person. He shares a deep caring for students and is committed to helping them succeed by challenging them and expecting them to soar to greater heights than they ever thought possible.

He holds the officers of the institution, and the faculty and staff, to those same high standards because he sees how truly impactful UNT can be – shaping a stronger community, economy, and future for Texas and our nation.

So, Dr. Keller, will you please stand and step forward to accept the University of Texas Mace?

By virtue of the authority of the University of North Texas and the UNT System Board of Regents, I present to you the University of North Texas Mace, the symbol of your newly acquired authority over the university in the high office which you now hold.

Congratulations.

**Dr. Bimper:** Thank you, Chair Wright. Congratulations again, President Keller. Now, I invite you all to enjoy the performance of, "Fanfare of an Uncommon Man," a piece composed by Richard DeRosa, professor of jazz composition and arrangement. It will be performed today by a world-renowned One O'Clock Lab Band and directed by alumnus and Associate Professor of Jazz Studies, Alan Baylock.

What an incredible performance. Let's give them another round of applause.

Now it is my distinct honor to introduce Dr. Keller, the 17th president of the University of North Texas. Dr. Keller joined UNT in August and has shown an incredibly deep commitment to advancing student success in elevating UNT's rich tradition of academic and research excellence. I've been honored to join him on his Cabinet and hear his enthusiasm for several important initiatives he's launched, such as those surrounding strategic budgeting, research and innovation, and student success.

It's clear to anyone who engages with him, if even for a short period of time, that he's passionate about giving students more opportunities.

Before coming to UNT, President Keller had already built a reputation as an innovator and leader with extensive experience in state educational leadership. Dr. Keller previously served as Commissioner of Higher Education, providing statewide leadership and coordination of higher education budget and policy. Under his visionary leadership, the Coordinating Board advanced policy and programs to improve college readiness and student success – especially for low-income and first-generation college students.

So, without any further ado, please welcome our 17th UNT president, Dr. Harrison Keller.

**President Keller:** Thank you.

I want to say thank you, Dean Bimper, and thank you to my friend Chancellor Williams, Chair Wright and our Board of Regents for their strong support and the opportunity to lead our great university.

Now, we have several state and local officials and senior staff are here today. And, I know some of you delayed your post-election vacations to be here, so I want to say thank you, for being here to celebrate with us. Also, thank you for your willingness to serve our communities and our great state.

I have many of my family, and my friends, and my colleagues, and my mentors here today. I'm grateful to my wife, Gena, and my children, William and Elizabeth, and Emily, my sister, my mother, and my aunts and uncle, friends from high school, college, higher education, state government. And I want to thank each of you all for your love, for your encouragement, and for your patience. Especially your patience.

I'd also like to acknowledge our UNT team who helped plan and produce this week's events, including today's beautiful ceremony. So, without their commitment and attention to detail over the last several weeks, today would not have been possible. So, thank you.

From the day I arrived, this community has embraced me with a warm and generous welcome. And across our UNT community, I'm so inspired by the dedication and talent of our faculty, our staff, and our incredible students, including the members of my Student Advisory Committee who are here today.

I'm also grateful for the meetings that I've had with our Denton and Frisco mayors and with city leaders, with regional employers, higher education leaders, alumni, donors, and our fans.

So today, I'd like to share some insights from those conversations, tell you about some of the things we're already working on, and propose a new vision for our work together at UNT.

But before I do, I'd like to share just a few things that aren't in my official bio but give you a sense of how I approach this work.

As you may have heard, I'm a proud sixth-generation Texan from a West Texas farming community called Plainview. One of my grandfathers was a cotton farmer, and the other one was a jazz pianist and a career Army band director. My parents were both public school teachers. Now, my dad was an elementary teacher up until the day he died. And he taught

gifted and talented students, but he was the sort of teacher who believed all his students were gifted and talented.

And I still get emails from his students about how important his influence was. My mother became a public school administrator, and she founded an international nonprofit called the Military Child Education Coalition that supports the children of our U.S. military service members around the world.

Now, Plainview School District was what the state of Texas calls "property poor," and that just means that we didn't have the same kinds of resources that some of the other schools had. So I had excellent band directors, I had excellent individual teachers, but I ran out of advanced math classes to take after my junior year of high school. And that made my own transition into the honors program at Notre Dame very difficult.

So I took the train up from Texas to South Bend, Indiana, and when I arrived, I was sitting next to some students from some of the very best high schools in America. And it took me about three very challenging semesters to recalibrate. Now, fortunately, it's Notre Dame, so you get purgatory time off for your suffering, right?

But that experience stuck with me.

And since then, improving our students transitions from high school into college has become an area of passion for me, even a personal obsession, as I've founded dual-enrollment and college advising initiatives, I've designed new state policies and financial aid programs, and developed new partnerships across the state of Texas.

And over the last 25 years, I've had opportunities to work on almost every aspect of Texas public and a higher education, finance, and policy, and that culminated in nearly five years Serving as Commissioner of Higher Education. And that career path gave me unique opportunities to get to know colleges and universities across Texas and across our nation. So, when this opportunity came up for me to come to the University of North Texas, I knew it was a once in a lifetime opportunity, because what we have here is special.

Now, I know there are a lot of you all here are from out of town, so for some of you, this may be your first introduction to UNT. So, let me tell you about the University of North Texas.

We were founded in 1890 as the Texas Normal College and Teacher Training Institute, with 70 students meeting over the hardware store in the Denton Town Square. So, in the words of our founding president, Joshua C. Chilton, whose name is the first on the Chain of Office that I'm wearing now,

*"It will be our aim to become leaders in the education of the young men and women of Texas, fitting them to creditably fill the most important positions in business and professional circles. We desire the cooperation of all who believe in higher education and who want to see our state in the very front of intellectual as well as material progress."*

These words, which you'll see in our Student Union today are profound, they're audacious, and they're part of our DNA.

UNT was founded just before the dawn of the 20th century, with a bold vision to transform the Texas frontier through higher education and a public commitment to educate both men and women as the professionals that Texas would need to be a leader at the forefront of intellectual and material progress. Now today, both the state of Texas and the University of North Texas are fundamentally different and far beyond what our founders could possibly have imagined. But so are the public expectations, needs, and responsibilities for UNT.

Today, UNT's grown to serve nearly 47,000 students, and unlike most American research universities, our students look like our state. We're recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as a Hispanic-Serving and Minority-Serving Institution. About 40 percent of our undergraduates are eligible for Pell Grants. More than 40 percent of our students are the first in their families to attend college.

We have about 480,000 alumni and nearly 70 percent of them are right here in the North Texas region. We're also more than a billion dollar-a-year university and a Carnegie R1 institution, which means we're counted among the nation's 146 leading research universities and one of only about 100 public universities that are organized to advance knowledge, creativity and innovation at scale.

We're working with industry to develop and test new materials that can withstand the most extreme environments. We're innovating the future of logistics for our region and beyond, using artificial intelligence and autonomous vehicles. Our faculty are earning national recognition in physics, chemistry, business, and design. And of course, we have one of the finest colleges of music in the world with nine Grammy nominations this year, so far.

So this is who we are.

We are the largest university in the region, leading the way for the most dynamic state economy in the strongest national economy in the world. We are tens of thousands of first generation students blazing trails to opportunities for themselves and their families. We are an army of Texas educators, innovators, scientists, entrepreneurs, artists, and creative problem solvers.



We lead with our values, we take insights and inspiration from what's already been accomplished, and we improvise and innovate towards a better future. We're strong, we're scrappy, and we're just getting started!

[APPLAUSE]

Now, it's important for us to honor the progress we've made, from our humble beginnings to becoming a great Texas public research university, both to remind us of our audacious founding vision and the hard work that set the stage, and because the next challenges we face will test our ingenuity, our resources, and the depth of our commitments to our founding vision. Now of course, UNT is a large institution, so the issues we encounter on any given day are legions.

But today, I'd like to focus on a complex set of challenges that are already reshaping American higher education. The accelerating pace of change in technology and information dissemination is driving enormous economic, cultural, social, scientific, and political changes across our region and beyond. Over these past three months, I've met with dozens of North Texas employers, donors, and community and state leaders, and what I've heard from them is strikingly consistent. Our workforce needs are expanding rapidly in directions that require education and training beyond high school. The pace of change has accelerated faster than anyone expected – and in some cases, faster than we understand – especially because of rapid advances in AI. A growing number of the job functions and processes are being automated, including many functions that have been the mainstay of entry-level professional jobs from communication specialist to bank tellers to financial analysts. And the rapid pace of these changes is in deep tension, with two traits of most American research universities.

First, the traditional institutional and regulatory structures – including curriculum committees, support structures for teaching and learning, criteria for promotion, academic calendars, and institutional accreditation standards – are not organized to facilitate the rapid experimentation, innovation, and feedback we need to meet the needs of today's students, employers, and our communities.

And second, there is significant misalignment between the conventional strategy's for pursuing excellence at most research universities and the scale of the challenges we face. See, the traditional orientation of great American universities emphasizes selectivity to drive quality, but at the expense of access and scale. And this approach has been incredibly effective for advancing discoveries within academic disciplines and for selecting and nurturing elite talent in science, philosophy, and the arts, and athletics. In fact, one of the standard measures of research university's strength and reputation has become how

selective they are. So, great American research universities produce amazing advances in research and discovery and incredible educational opportunities for the students who are selected to attend. No other nation rivals the United States in our ability to work at the frontiers of knowledge and information through our research universities, although it's worth noting that other countries – particularly China – have been investing heavily in the education of their top scholars and in their own research universities to advance economic competitiveness and their national security.

Yet, even as our economy is racing forward in directions that require more people to be educated to higher standards than ever before, some of our great universities issue press releases boasting about the tens of thousands of students they turn away.

Now, to be clear, these great universities serve an essential purpose, but we're not going to exclude our way to the highly educated workforce that Texas needs. Now, those more traditional universities need to be complemented by a new class of universities with capabilities and a commitment to provide excellent educational opportunities, solutions and impact at scale.

The state policymakers and the people of Texas understand the importance of strong research universities to our state's future. That was the major factor that led to the creation of the Texas University Fund.

So, as we consider our history and the challenges we face, what are our primary responsibilities as we build the next era of UNT? How should we expand opportunities and bolster public trust? For us, a conventional orientation towards an exclusive pursuit of excellence won't be sufficient, given our values and given our founding vision.

So how might we pursue excellence in an inclusive way, with a bold vision to advance UNT as a new kind of great American public research university?

Now, designing the future of UNT will require deep reflection on who we are, the changing needs of our state, who we should serve, and the capabilities that we need to develop. So, this year, we will launch a university strategic planning process engaging our entire UNT community, alumni, employers, policymakers, and the public, inviting all of them to contribute their insights to the design of the next iteration of the University of North Texas. And as we begin this work, I'd like to lay out a vision for how we proceed, not as a finished blueprint, but as five design principles to guide our plans, our decisions, and our investments. And I'll go through each of these quickly.

First, embrace our public responsibilities with Courageous Integrity to understand and address the needs of our of our region, our state, and our nation.

Second, create transformative value for students through educational experiences and programs that demonstrate our genuine care by equipping all of our UNT students for productive and purposeful lives.

Third, unlock individual potential across our community through a commitment to high standards and high support for every student, faculty, and staff member. So, our UNT community will serve as the platform that allows every individual to unlock their potential and truly be Better Together.

Fourth, transcend the traditional academic boundaries to accelerate the pace of innovation, so UNT will be a preferred destination for individuals to Show Their Fire through their scholarship, their discoveries, their entrepreneurship, and their creative contributions.

And five, prioritize partnerships for the public good through close collaboration with K-12 schools, community colleges, universities, employers, and governments, all working together in a spirit of genuine curiosity and mutual respect to improve lives across our region and beyond.

And together, these principles will guide us towards a fundamentally different orientation than the traditional model, as a public research university determined to put our Core Values into practice in ways that serve the public interest.

Our new model will build on our founding vision of 1890 and establish UNT as a public research university committed to advance both excellence and access, to serve the people and the public interest of the North Texas region, across our state, and beyond.

Now, the formal work of strategic planning will unfold over the next few months, including a specific planning effort focused on our Frisco campus, but foundational work is already underway across three major fronts.

Earlier this year, we launched an initiative to develop a new strategic budgeting process so we can have a university budget that provides a clear line of sight between our priorities and our resources. This is a whole community effort, and I appreciate the leadership of our CFO, Clayton Gibson, Dean Bimper, Kassie Grubbs, and all the members of our steering committee and our technical committee.

Now, most universities spend a year or more thinking about this sort of project before they start to move. But that's not how we roll at UNT.

So, we're going to start to implement changes in the next cycle, starting in January, and we'll continue to iterate on and improve our model. We're working together, we're taking inspiration from other universities, we're putting our best ideas on the table, and we're moving forward.

We're also laying groundwork for new investments in research excellence. Now these investments start with the new funding distributions from the Texas University Fund, about \$60 million over the next three years. We'll accelerate our work in specific areas where the legislature and the people of Texas have set priorities and established major research funds: cancer, semiconductors, and space and aerospace technologies.

And we'll also build on our established strengths in other fields, including a new interdisciplinary institute for data science and artificial intelligence that will support UNT researchers and innovators across our UNT campuses and beyond.

Together, these strategic investments will allow us to draw down more sponsored research funding, but more importantly, they will allow us to make even greater contributions as a public R1 university working for the public good, especially in areas critical for public health, national security, and economic competitiveness.

In developing our strategies across all these thematic research priorities, I appreciate the leadership of Vice President Pam Padilla.

And finally, and closest to my heart, I'd like to discuss our work to advance UNT student success. Now, since I arrived on August 1st, my main focus has just been getting to know this great university, meeting with faculty and staff, and alumni, and donors and of course, our inspiring students.

Now, one of my favorite moments was our Freshman Convocation during the First Flight Week. So, our freshmen filled more than half the Super Pit and they were all wearing the t-shirts from their dorms, and you could feel the energy and their excitement. And so, as part of my welcome, I asked students who are the first in their families to attend college to stand and be recognized. And thousands of first-generation students stood up. That was nearly half that audience.

And that moment was incredibly powerful.

Throughout our work to redesign the future of the university, we must embrace our fundamental responsibility to advance the success of every student we enroll. Many of our young students come from low-income backgrounds. They're the first in their families to attend college. They might not have had an experienced or even a certified high school

math or science teacher. Their adolescence included profound learning losses, emotional distress, and even losing loved ones.

Across our region and across our state, we have a crisis in college readiness. This year, about 20 percent of our incoming UNT students did not meet the state's basic criteria for college readiness – which unfortunately, is not equivalent to the kind of academic preparation you need for a competitive degree program at a major research university.

Before the pandemic, we had about five sections of developmental reading and writing classes. Today, we have about forty.

All these things are true. It's also true that our UNT students bring amazing talent, resilience, and grit, not despite, but because of the challenges that they and their families have navigated.

When UNT students have opportunities to engage with our talented faculty, connect with their fellow students, and push beyond what they thought was possible and unlock their potential, what can happen at scale is like what you've seen here on the stage today with our College of Music students and with the One O'Clock Lab Band.

True, inspiring excellence.

It's no wonder that employers all over this region love their UNT interns, and they love to hire our graduates. They'll all tell you, UNT students are smart, they work hard, they're not entitled, and they are excellent.

Now, over the last few years, we've made some progress to improve student success at UNT, but still, more than one out of five first year students does not persist into the second year.

Now, for each one who takes the risk to enroll with us and leaves with no degree, especially if they have debt, they can leave worse off than when they arrived.

If we're truly committed to our Core Values, we can't accept this outcome, and we can't lower the bar. Instead, we have to reimagine how we provide our students with high support to meet high standards, where our calendars, our curriculum, teaching, advising, and support structures all work together in new and more effective ways. We need to focus our resources on what works, be willing to stop doing things that are less effective, keep driving improvement, and commit to providing the transformative 21<sup>st</sup> century higher education that every UNT student deserves.

Now, across the country, many universities have been working to improve student success, and there are powerful lessons we can learn from them. So, we're sending out teams to

engage with leading institutions, and we're bringing notable innovators here to work with us. And I am especially grateful to our friends from Georgetown University, from Arizona State, from UT Austin, and from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

At most universities, student success just means keeping students enrolled and on track to graduate on time. And those are important measures, and to be clear, at UNT, we must improve our students' persistence and four-year graduation rates. At a minimum, UNT's graduation rates should be on par with graduation rates of similar students at the leading public universities.

But by themselves, those targets won't be sufficient to realize UNT's responsibilities to our students. Our Core Values imply a much broader duty to care for our students by advancing their success. We must consider not only how to streamline their pathways to graduation, but also what kinds of courses, mentoring, internships, and short-term credentials expand their professional opportunities and boost the value of their UNT degrees.

At UNT, we should hold ourselves accountable for a broader conception of student success. From our first contact with students, through their time enrolled with us, and into their early careers, we should equip all UNT students with the knowledge, skills, experiences, and credentials they need to take their talents as far as they want to take them.

Empower them to lead healthy and productive lives of meaning and purpose. Unlock their potential to build a better future – as the men and women, Texas needs to be in the forefront of intellectual as well as material progress.

This is a bold vision, so we're engaging our whole UNT community. We're taking inspiration from our best current work and academic and career support and Mean Green Athletics, our Emerald Eagle Scholars program, from the First-Generation Success Center and other initiatives.

And we've already received thousands of suggestions from across our UNT community, from specific ideas about course scheduling to broad insights about the importance of supporting our students' mental health.

We're mapping a new analytic strategy to make sure we're using all the available data to serve students and drive continuous improvement. As part of that work, our college and university leaders are already accessing new tools to analyze data about graduates' earnings and debt by program.

We're also learning from and partnering with other like-minded universities to help us move faster. And all of this work will help us develop a UNT model for student success that leverages innovations in teaching, data, analytics, and technology, and supports excellence at scale.

There's so much to do, but we're underway.

And in this work, I appreciate Vice Provost Lisa McIntyre's leadership, and the close collaborations with our CIO, James Garrison, Vice President Shannon Goodman, and Senior Vice President Elizabeth With.

Now this is a celebration today, so before we continue our celebration and as I formally continue my service, I'd like to conclude my remarks by emphasizing my commitments as your UNT president.

To our UNT students: I commit to work with you, and with our faculty, staff, alumni, employers, and partners to provide you with world class, transformative educational experiences.

Your UNT education should be distinguished by high expectations worthy of your talents, coupled with high support to help you unlock your full potential.

Also, let me say to any prospective UNT student, if you're a creative problem solver who thrives on thinking outside the box, and you want to unleash your talents to make a difference for your family and build a better future, we want to be your university of choice.

To our staff: I commit to work with you to make UNT a university that not only honors your dedication and your love for a great university, but also gives you opportunities to develop and use your talents to do your best work. Your insights and your creativity are essential in our work to build the future of UNT.

To our faculty: I commit to work with you, to make UNT a leader and supporting your work at the frontiers of knowledge and the translation of your insights and discoveries into scholarship, creative production solutions, startups, and innovations in teaching and learning that will transform lives and expand opportunities for our UNT community across our state and beyond.

To our alumni and donors: I commit to work in partnership with you to build the future of UNT. Your accomplishments, your generous support, and your networks of UNT alumni and leaders from every sector will help us move faster, be bolder, and increase our impact.

To our employers, community leaders, and our policymakers: I commit to work together with you to take responsibility for the talent, the innovation, and the cultural opportunities that our companies, our communities, our state, and our nation require to prosper.

We will not be satisfied with incremental progress.

As the pace of change accelerates, we'll work across disciplinary and institutional boundaries to build new strategic partnerships, organizational structures, and innovative solutions for a better future.

As other great universities close their doors to qualified students at UNT, we will measure ourselves by how well we serve any qualified student who commits to learn with us as the platform that allows them to take their talent as far as they want to go.

As families, employers, policymakers, and the public ask, who in higher education will hear and respond to our needs, the University of North Texas is here to be your partner, and we are ready to serve in the vanguard of a new generation of great American universities.

My new Mean Green Family, there is no place I would rather be than UNT, and I am all in.

Thank you and Go Mean Green!

[APPLAUSE]

**Dean Bimper:** Thank you, President Keller, and congratulations again.

The challenges and opportunities embedded in our communities, near and far, are vast and increasingly complex, here in Denton, across the state of Texas, and all around the globe.

UNT is uniquely positioned to answer the calls of those in need, the calls for strategic leadership and transformation, the call to serve and build partnerships.

UNT is uniquely positioned to welcome and prepare the talented and the determined, to embrace our public responsibility with courage, transform lives with purpose, discover truth and possibility with integrity and a committed spirit to innovation, to think and act boldly, to inspire an improved human experience for all.

It's my honor to serve the University of North Texas, and it's my privilege to now do so with you, Dr. Keller.

I have no doubt that our Mean Green will embrace the challenge and opportunities of your vision.



It is now up to all of us to do our part to continue to strive for excellence in this next area, led by President Keller – for we know our university is striving for the right.

May we continue to soar higher together.

As we conclude today's ceremony, I'm delighted to invite back to the stage Rebecca Mugnolo, a graduate student in voice, and Chiao-Ju Hung, a doctoral student in collaborative piano.

Now, they did a phenomenal job with the National Anthem earlier, and now they will lead us in singing the North Texas alma mater, "Glory to the Green and White."

Please stand if you are able, then remain standing until the platform party and participating faculty have exited the hall. We then invite you to join us for a reception in the lobby.

Thank you again for celebrating this historic day with. Go Mean Green, and Godspeed.

[PIANO PLAYING]

Singing glory to the green,  
singing glory to the white,  
For we know our university  
is striving for the right;  
Down the corridor of years,  
we'll forget the joys and tears,  
But North Texas,  
North Texas, we love!

[APPLAUSE]

[MUSIC PLAYING]