



**2018 State of the University Address  
Sept. 13, 2018**

**Sheri Broyles**

Good afternoon. Thank you all for coming. I am Sheri Broyles, chair of the Faculty Senate. On behalf of the Faculty Senate leadership, which includes Denise Catalano, our vice chair; Kevin Yanowski, secretary; and the rest of the executive leadership committee. We're excited to welcome you to the 2018 State of the University.

We're joined today by distinguished guests and members of the UNT System and UNT leadership. Please hold your applause until all individuals have been recognized.

Joining us today are:

- Eric With, here on behalf of U.S. Congressmen and UNT alumnus, Michael Burgess
- Lyle Drescher, on behalf of State Representative Lynn Stucky
- Officials from the Denton County Commissioners Court
- Members of the Denton City Council – Keely Briggs and Paul Meltzer
- Representatives from the Denton and Frisco Chambers of Commerce
- Our partners from the City of Frisco, including:
  - Mayor Jeff Cheney
  - Chief of Staff Lorie Medina
  - Deputy City Manager Henry Hill
- And also Denton ISD School Board President Mia Price

Our distinguished guests include some of our biggest supporters and proud partners:

- Members of the President's Leadership Board, including:
  - Don Potts, former member of the UNT System Board of Regents
  - C. Dan Smith, who is a former chair of the UNT System Board of Regents and is current secretary of the UNT Foundation Board
- Members of the McConnell, Matthews, Kendall & Chilton societies

- Members of the UNT Foundation Board of Directors
- Members of the UNT Alumni Association Board of Directors.

Now, please welcome our UNT System representatives:

- Former members of the Board of Regents in attendance today are R.L. Crawford, Jr., Rudy Reynoso and Gayle Strange.
- UNT System Chancellor Lesa Roe and several vice chancellors
- To represent Michael Williams, president of the UNT Health Science Center, we welcome Anuja Ghorpade, vice president for research and innovation
- And, we welcome other members of the UNT System Administration and representatives from our sister institutions who here with us today.

I'd also like to acknowledge members of UNT's Leadership who are here in attendance. If you are a member of these groups, please stand when called.

- President's Council
- Deans
- My fellow members of the Faculty Senate
- Staff Senate chair Katie McCoy and members of the Staff Senate leadership
- Student Government Association President Muhammad Kara, as well as other members of the SGA Leadership
- Graduate Student Council President, Giselle Greenidge and her peers, who represent our master's and doctoral students.

Thank you all for coming.

We also are very pleased to welcome Dr. Richard A. Dixon, a UNT Distinguished Research Professor, who recently was elected as a fellow of The Royal Society. Many of his close friends and colleagues are here today to honor his accomplishments, his really big accomplishments.

*(Applause)*

Thank you all for joining us.

Today we celebrate our 2018 State of the University. We've accomplished so much since President Smatresk joined the UNT family in February 2014. Under his leadership, UNT has grown enrollment to serve more than 38,000 students. This includes 76 National Merit finalists – up from a class of four – and has seen 72 of its 227 academic programs ranked among the nation's Top 100. Our designation as a Tier One research university by Carnegie Classification highlights the quality of our institution, the efforts of the individuals who work here, the quality of our teaching, scholarly and creative activity, and service.

President Smatresk also has created new public/private partnerships with businesses including Toyota, the Dallas Cowboys, and Net Dragon, a Chinese technology conglomerate. Most

recently, UNT has continued to expand its service in Collin County with the announcement of a UNT Frisco branch campus. In celebrating our accomplishments, however, we know we must continue to work to best support our students, retain them and help them achieve their dreams and their hopes.

You will hear President Smatresk talk about the UNT's unique identity as a creative and caring university that fosters to student growth. He believes that in an age of disruption, UNT has an opportunity to become central to the creative economy. As you will hear, UNT is a place where creativity and technology unite to drive innovation in our digital age. As Faculty Senate Chair, I look forward to doing my part through shared governance with my colleagues to advance this mission and ensure every change that takes place here at UNT puts student success first. That is the most important work that we do as faculty, staff, student leaders, administrators, and supporters. That is why we are here.

At UNT we celebrate the achievement of our students, staff and our faculty. This year, Dr. Dixon, UNT Distinguished Research Professor of Biological Sciences and Founding Director of the BioDiscovery Institute, is celebrated for his membership in The Royal Society, the world's oldest organization dedicated to understanding the advancement of science. This prestigious accolade accompanies his membership in the U.S. National Academy of Sciences, and fellow designations with The American Association for the Advancement of Science, The National Academy of Inventors and The American Society of Plant Biologists.

Dr. Dixon is a world leader in the field plant specialized metabolism and is creating innovative bio-based solutions. Only 14 Texans – just 14 – are fellows of The Royal Society. At this time, I invite President Smatresk and Dr. Dixon to the stage for a special recognition.

## President Neal Smatresk

Well, Dr. Dixon. Richard. It's been a great run, and you have done a remarkable job for us, and as we spread the good news of your election to The Royal Society far and wide, we even got a response from our Governor. While I won't read the citation, I'll simply say, I haven't received one yet.

It gives me great pleasure to give you this recognition from our Governor on this singular accomplishment for our university as a member of The Royal Society. With that, I know that everyone will want to congratulate you as we go to the reception that will shortly follow this over in the Gateway Center, and I invite all you to join us and figure out what the heck it is he actually does. So, thank you so much, Richard. A pleasure.

It's funny, normally you get the exclamation point at the end of the sentence, but today we're starting with at the beginning. And now, I want to thank you for being here and show you a quick video.

**Note: President Smatresk gave his address in conjunction with a PowerPoint presentation. [Download the PowerPoint presentation from the 2018 State of the University address.](#)**

## UNT Soars Higher video plays

(Applause)

Well thank you all again for coming, and it has been a record setting year as you saw in that video. We have so many wonderful things to brag about. But, there were some errors in the video I'm afraid. First, we didn't graduate 9,345 students. We graduated 9,465 students last year. And this is phenomenal because, as we graduate students. We not only serve our students by making sure they get out in a timely fashion, minimize debt and enter the workforce. But we also support the growth of the economy around us. It is in fact, our primary mission to drive student success.

This year, we became a minority majority institution. And this is a wonderful accomplishment because, there won't be a wonderful workforce future for our states unless, we embrace the diversity of our state and work hard to make sure that our students achieve at the highest levels. We're applying for Minority Serving Institution or MSI status. And we'll see if the numbers get us through this year with the federal government.

The other area that I'm so happy with is, our research expenditures. Now, I won't lie, about two months ago I was a little nervous as we went into summer and as the numbers moved up and down and began to settle. I began to get hopeful. And this year, under the leadership of Narendra Dahotre our interim vice president for research and great folks like Andrey Voevodin who is hiding back there with the rest of the science and engineering nerds. Hi guys. It's my people. We have made some signal strides in building multi-institutional, multi-PI funding that resulted in a \$6 million increase. And as I'm calling Brint Ryan – all of you know him as the chairman of the Board. Yesterday he said, "Hm." And I was little worried what was going to come next. And he goes, "A 20 percent increase year-over-year. I'll take it." And I will too. This is a great achievement and it sets a high watermark for research productivity in our university. Trust me, we're not done yet.

David Wolf and his team, and so many others, and Wren Baker, have done a phenomenal job raising money last year. Athletics had its best record-setting year in fundraising, and we broke another record. And we have every year we've been here, over the last four years. This is my fifth state of the university talk, producing \$36 million. Again, a high watermark for gifting.

You've seen the programs in the top 100, and athletics. What can I say about last year, Wren? It was a knockout year. The best year ever for student academic performance for our athletes. We graduated more students than we've ever graduated in the past. The best fundraising year, and the best winning percentage in 40 years. You know, didn't we have a game a couple weeks ago against SMU? We kinda crushed the Ponies. Some great coaching, some wonderful things to look forward to, we haven't started a season with two wins since – I'm looking over at Ren. '94 maybe? And now we're going to Arkansas to face the Hogs, and let's see if we can bring home a third win. It should be a great weekend.

We also have been ranked ... one of the things that is characteristic of the university, that is doing well, is that it's a great community, and that the family feel is wonderful. And *Forbes* agrees with us. They rank us the best university employer in the state and they rank us the best

place to work for women. And this is another great accomplishment. While we continue to want to build that community spirit and drive the caring feel that makes us great, I think we can celebrate a little with this achievement.

We've also made great strides with our UNT System Shared Services. Lesa and her leadership in this first year have produced some signal changes, and we look forward to more to come. Our financial transformation's getting there, and that's a big effort. We have made major changes with our CFO hires, with our HR hires, and we look forward to years of good partnership, building further efficiencies and better partnerships to serve all of our students in the years to come.

And finally, as you saw, we partnered with the city of Frisco. And I see Jeff and his folks out there. Thanks for coming, guys. That was one of the things we kept talking about and hinting at last year. You were here, and I smiled and said, big news is coming. And then it happened. 100 acres on the Brinkmann Ranch property, and an option on 50 more. This is the first time the University of North Texas has committed to putting up a bricks and mortar campus, as a branch campus in any other part of the country. And what a part of the country to do it in. Frisco, fastest growing city in the country, amazing economic environment, and a place that just feels like it was custom-made for the skills and talents that this university has. We look forward to years of great partnership with our city friends.

Now, I expect you to all read this and quickly memorize it. Because it was in fact an amazing year for faculty and staff achievements, and they came in so many different flavors. You've already seen Richard, who is not only a member of the national academy, but is also now a member of The Royal Society, we're gonna brag about that for a while. Narendra Dahotre won the Eli Whitney Productivity Award, the best award you can get in the United States for invention. We have John Ishiyama, who won the top honors in political science, and this list goes on and on, Tech Titans and so forth.

But our staff members achieved at a high level too. Ed Reynolds named campus safety officer of the year, and it's a pleasure to work with someone who is so dedicated and understands the campus environment as Ed and his team do. Guido, licensing a new drug detection technology, and something that continues to drive our interest and news coverage. I won't go on through all of these, I'll simply say that we have had a phenomenal year. But there's a little note at the bottom, that Bob Brown and I talked about. In the past years, we've waited for merit raises until well into the spring semester, sometimes as late as March. And we heard you when you said, "Could we have our raises a little faster?" So in honor of a great year, a record-setting year across many different boundaries, what we are doing this year, is we're moving the merit raise exercise up, to be effective November 1 so that it's in your paychecks December 1.

I had to put that in there, because I needed applause sooner or later. Now, because our faculty and staff are so strong, and so amazing, our students had an amazing year as well. I believe that this was the most celebrated year our students have ever had. More awards won in prominent national competitions and prominent meetings than I've ever seen in the past.

As you heard, we welcomed 32 new National Merit scholars this year, for a total of 76, or 75, I lose count. 76. But you know what we're not counting there? The fact that the top high school in

Texas is located here. It's TAMS. And this year, 75 of our TAMS scholars won National Merit Scholars, for a total of 151 National Merit Scholars on our campus. These are high watermarks, we're very proud of them. They demonstrate conclusively that this is a first-choice institution.

Now, we had some other amazing awards, things you couldn't even imagine. Ciara Boniface, you saw her picture in there, won the Next Visionary Filmmaker award from Disney. Along with that, \$100,000, a new car, she's making movies with Oprah, she's making movies with Disney. Does it get better than that? And why? Because our media faculty had so much to give, and supported, and helped develop the talents of a student. That's why we're here. To see our stars shine.

We perennially win the Masters of the Mainframe competition. And those of you who think everything's gone to small computers, you'd be wrong. Big business still runs off mainframe, or what we call heavy steel. The Master of the Mainframe competition was won by one of ours last year. But this year, the first woman ever, Anna McKee, won it from our College of Business. And we're really proud of her accomplishments. And it just shows again, that we really allow our students to advance by giving them the tools that they need.

So many other awards were won this year. I won't list them all. Not to diminish any of them. But we had a great year, and I will say there was something fun that happened. When my wife and I got here four years ago, we met a group of students. Five, to be exact, called the Diaz quintuplets. Now, quints aren't something you see every day. Having five enroll at your institution all at once was pretty cool. And last year, they all graduated at once from different majors. So we got a lot of press out of that, it's a lot of fun. And again, just shows some of the great atmosphere that we have here, that attracts students, graduates them in a timely fashion, and moves them along to career success.

In order for our campus to continue to serve the educational needs of our students, and the research and scholarly needs of our faculty, it's important that we continuously drive and build our infrastructure, working with our system colleagues, with Bob Brown's group and the physical facilities group. We have more building projects going on now than we ever have in the past. And I know you know it, because you all complain to me that parking's going away. Now, these projects range from the one you saw in Frisco, which will begin in a few years, to the acquisition of Inspire Park, the former incubator known as NTECH, which will now be Inspire coming October 1.

Oh. There's a number of people in this audience who are very special. If you're a Diamond Eagle raise your hand. You see a lot of hands going up. The Diamond Eagles started last year, and they formed a terrific organization. Cathy Bryce and Debbie Smatresk started it and began to solicit the best plan ever. You can join an organization, you don't have to have service hours, you don't have to volunteer, all you have to do is you pay \$1,000 and then you vote on stuff you want to build or do. And as a result, we built the Diamond Eagle Pavilion at the Family Patio that was dedicated at that SMU game, where we probably had about 500 of our alum and fans in the alumni center. It's just a wonderful sign of a project, it's happening this year. Last year we had 82 members, this year I think we're at about 106. So we hope that that keeps growing. If any of you

are so moved in the audience, please go up and see these good folks, and David Wolf, after this talk.

What else has happened? Joe Greene Hall. About time we named something after arguably one of the greatest football players in history, certainly one of the greatest in our history. And I think our students are going to be thrilled to move to the Mean Green campus and move into Green Hall. We have a tour center. And if you've been by Avenue A and Eagle, you'll see it. It's looking amazing. The exterior shell is almost done. And this is a great way to put our best foot forward when we bring students into our campus, to help them celebrate how wonderful and engaging we are. I think this tour center will be a real shot in the arm for our recruiting.

We also have our Academic Success Center in Sage Hall nearing completion. We're working on a number of other projects, but I'm going to skip down just a little bit and mention that we've opened up a new building, our CVAD building, the College of Visual Arts and Design. Now, when everyone else turned right, and built a science and engineering building, what our campus said is, "We need to expand the arts, because who else will serve them if we don't, in this state?" And this building is a technological masterpiece. It is beautiful. If you walk into it, you may become convinced that it's an engineering building. It is full of very high-tech equipment. You can cut three-quarter inch steel on a plasma cutter, or you can etch on a feather. There's a new media center, and it's really amazing. In fact, it made me want to go back to school and be an art major. I was a failed art minor, but I think with all this equipment, I might be in the game. It's going to be a phenomenal facility. It's being moved into right now. The old wing is being renovated. And I will tell you, it's something that I really, really look forward to, because it's such an abiding part of our image as a creative campus. You should go visit this, I think you'll really love it.

Now, before I move on to the deep beliefs that we call guiding principles, that move us, I have to talk about a couple more of the little honors that we've had, just because they're fun. We were talking about the building projects that we just did. One of those is a new dining hall. And we need a new dining hall, because some of our old halls have to be taken out of service. We were voted by *Delish.com* the No. 2 campus in the country for quality of food in dining. I mean, anybody here who wants a great meal, just come to one of our dining halls. Kerr Hall, Bruce Hall, or Mean Greens, perennially voted the best vegan food in probably the county, it's an amazing facility. So there's one of our buildings that was done.

The other thing I have to mention, and this is just fun. About two weeks ago, right before the beginning of school, we had a lecture. And it was delivered by one of our great historians, Andrew Torget. And that lecture was to raise funds for our Texas Portal to History, which is a great digital collection used by researchers across the country. And Andrew's goal was to set a Guinness World Record. Now, he was going to set a Guinness world record by delivering the longest lecture ever. Now, my students in my classes felt like they'd lived through the longest lectures ever. But he really did it. He lectured for 26 solid hours, without sleep, and kept a class engaged during that time. Some of us went, I know Jennifer Cowley, our provost, and I, attended early on. And the lecture was absolutely fascinating. I would say, I would take a class from him in a heartbeat, showing that we have world-class engaging faculty. But it was so much fun. And he set the world record. Now, the Guinness Book is still looking it over. But I'm pretty sure,

when all is said and done, we're going to be the proud holder of the world's longest lecture here at the University of North Texas, thanks to Andrew and his efforts.

Well, there was a lot going on last year, and it's wonderful to celebrate all the good things that happened. But one of the things that I need to do is to begin to talk about how we move forward. How we move forward together, and what we will do in order to get there.

And I talked to you just briefly, I said we really have some deeply held beliefs. These beliefs are guiding principles that we will govern ourselves by first. We have talked about creativity as part of our mantra as long as I've been here, and it was well understood long before that. So creativity is a critical part of our identity. We also believe that moving into this modern age of digital disruption that the union of creativity and technology is strategically important to our future and the growth of the creative economy around us. These are fundamentally important tenets of how we proceed to identify, shape and brand ourselves.

But we also know that our students are the reason we're here. We're here to connect them to their dreams. There's nothing more basic, and there's nothing that makes us happier than when we see our students become successful. But I've also said before, and you've heard it, time and again. I believe this is the most caring community that I have ever encountered. And that caring is translating itself into success for our students. So this community, as individuals and as an organization, has committed itself to going the extra mile to help our students succeed, because #UNTCares. Anyone wants to tweet that, it'll be an instant hit.

And now, let's hear from our students.

### [UNT Serves Students video plays](#)

OK – If that doesn't make you feel good, then you're in the wrong building.

I regularly go out and talk to our students. It's one of the things that lifts me up and gives me energy. And when I hear from them, I hear their hopes and dreams. I also hear their fears and anxieties. And what I know for a fact is they don't just come here to have us deliver them content, and give them a pat on the back, and go out and try to get a job. They come here to be changed, in deep and abiding ways. They want to be transformed into successful professionals with strong skills, confidence and a network of friends. And we have to be the catalyst of that transformation. And this is part of what I believe makes our university unique. We are strong at this. We believe in it. And we are doing things to help. But let's talk about what caring means, and some of the challenges that lie ahead. You've heard me say before that the high school graduating class demographics in our country are getting a little problematic.

Now, what this pretty complicated chart shows is the student population as it changes through a year. On your left, the number of students who entered in the fall. On your right, the number of students, actually that should be 2018, who left in 2018, who are still here in 2018. Through the year we gain students, that's the numbers up on the top. There's about 6,000 of them. And through the year, we lose students. Some of the students that we lose, we lose for good reasons.



They graduate. Now, these are older numbers, and there's differences in things like IPEDs definition, and THECB definitions, and then oh, what's real.

But this year, as you know, we graduated about 9,400 students. That's great. That's success. We count them as retained. But we also leak some students. We leak about 8,500 students. Now, of that 8,500 students, some will return to us. Over 2,000 a year. Maybe we leak at the end of the day about 6,000 students. That's still too much. That's too many for a community that cares. We need to commit ourselves to helping our students stay and graduate. Now, there are good reasons students leave. They found a different major somewhere else where they could be served better. And there are also reasons that are preventable. We know students leave for personal reasons, for behavioral reasons, for financial reasons. And sometimes for grade reasons. So we're going to do something different this year. We're going to dedicate ourselves to looking at how our students persist. And to looking at how we can improve our retention of those students. And in order to do that, we have built this year with student success as our single top priority. And we're going to do a number of things.

So this year, let's look at our retention. It's not bad. It's reasonably comparable to the retention of many large institutions around the country. About 78, 79 percent of our students are retained year over year, who come in as first-time students. And about 78 percent of our transfer students are retained. Again, not bad numbers. But they're not good enough for us. If we want to compete at the highest levels, if we really want to make sure that along with losing 6,000 students, we don't lose 6,000 hopes and dreams, we need to do better.

So this year, in our planning implementation workshop, the place where we lay out our strategies going forward, we dedicated ourselves to a single topic instead of a multitude of topics. The sole topic was: how can we retain students, help them persist, and guide them to successful careers and a sense of wellbeing? We committed to developing personal plans, departmental plans, and university plans to get this done. Now, I just want you to imagine this. We can try to drive more enrollment to grow. Because as we grow, our revenues increase, and we hopefully will graduate more students and meet the state's needs. But if we continue to leak, then by not patching the hole in the bucket we're wasting human potential. And in a tough demographic, where the high school classes are tapering off, and the number of college-qualified students on a national level is declining, what's going to be easier? I look over at Shannon Goodman, recruiting more and more and more students so we can still leak? Or patching the hole in the bucket?

So we're going to try to do better. If every one of our faculty members, and every one of our advisors could help one more student each be retained here, we'd have 1500 more students this year, and we wouldn't have just beaten our enrollment record, we'd shatter our enrollment record, with over 39,000 students, pushing 40,000 students.

This is important to them. It's important to our economy, and it's important to us. So that's what we've committed to this year. We have a student success team that will be led by my chief of staff, Deb Rohr, as a presidential initiative. That's going to span every one of our vice presidential divisions, to try and see what we can do to do better.

In academic affairs, led by our provost Jennifer Cowley, we're going to be taking a hard look at how departments and colleges work. Our deans are all involved and engaged. In fact, we have this new, wonderful set of analytics that we've developed through Jason Simon and his folks, and with help from our ITSS colleagues in system.

This will allow us to pinpoint areas where we have roadblocks, or barriers, or high failure rates. So we're going to do better, using analytics, using common sense, and using a personal sense of commitment to help every one of our students succeed.

We increased advising support. And that probably accounts for some of the gains that we've seen over the past year, year and a half. We've also provided one-stop support at that academic success center. We have a class concierge service. If you need a class to graduate and you couldn't get in, you call the class concierge, Lisa Maxwell. And she twists arms and talks to deans, until she gets you in, and you get to graduate this year instead of next year. Saves time, saves money, saves a life.

We also have joined a nationwide cluster of universities, from our parent organization, the American Public and Land Grant Universities, collaborating to improve retention. We're helping our students manage their finances better.

One of the honors that our staff received this year was that we were put in the top five in the country for student money management. We have a really good program there, and it helps our students to be more fiscally accountable so that they don't run out of money and decide they're in deep debt and can't come back to school. And finally, we're going to continue to improve transfer, through our seamless transfer program, with Collin County College, with other great partner institutions like NCTC.

So we have a lot to work on this year. I think we can look forward to signal changes. Because if we care, 78 percent's not enough, losing 20 percent of our students on an annual turnover isn't good enough. We're going to do better, and we're going to make sure our students succeed.

We're also here, though, to make sure that we can connect them to the careers of their dreams. You heard our students say, "I want to get on a career path."

But how do they even know what kind of a career path to get on, in this digitally disrupted age, an age where robotics and artificial intelligence may be taking their jobs? Which way do you jump? Well it's up to us to have facile programming, it's up to us to help them develop the soft skills they need.

We have a program called Career Connect. And this program allows faculty members who can document that their students have received certain types of "soft skills", whether it's oral communication or various types of analytic thinking engagement, internships, things like that, to document it in any portfolio system, and then ultimately, on their transcripts. We're developing employer networks, so that we're listening to the employers to try to understand what it is they're looking for, what they need, and how we can better prepare our students and build curricula around those needs.

We're improving our online and class accessibility by embracing next generation innovations in learning. In fact, we just hired for the first Adam Fein, who will be the Vice President for Digital Strategy and Innovation. He comes from University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana, we're happy to have him here. It's been a long hard search, but in this search, I think we found a champion for working with us to create better online, because students demand accessibility, they demand convenience, and yet, we demand a high level of learning outcomes. And we believe with his leadership and guidance, we're going to really be able to flourish, especially as we work with some of our great partners, like NetDragon.

We have a rapid growth of integrative studies degrees. One of the things we know is, you have to be more facile, more agile, as you build degree programs. We have built-in programs that let our students move and build majors, so that they can go out and get the jobs that they need.

And we're also developing a number of dynamic new programs that help our students gain twenty-first century skills we know they need. Things like Consumer Experience, Digital Merchandising, Data Analytics, UX, User Interface Design, our Sports Management programs and Entertainment programs in Frisco and other places. These are all programs that speak to the modern economy.

And by the way, speaking of our Sports Management program, we have now began serious conversations with the Dallas Cowboys, around the development of our curricula, the utilization of Cowboys talent, along with talent from other great groups, the PGA, Texas Motor Speedway, and a number of other partners, who can help us grow. We hired a new director of our Sports Management program, Bob Heere, and we're excited about this partnership, which will leverage our great educational brand with the great Cowboys brand, the dominant sports franchise in the world, so that we can develop good online programs, Bachelor's programs, Master's programs, online programs. Both face-to-face, blended and online, that we can market internationally.

And I think over the next year, we'll be building this curriculum, and we'll be beginning to market it, and I think you'll see that it becomes the program to beat in the world. I will tell you, this will be the best Sports Management and Entertainment program in the world.

And speaking of innovative new curricula. This is a picture of Inspire Park, no, it's not an artist rendering, it's actually a photograph of the building, and it's beautiful. This building is 57,000 square feet. It's a building that has laboratory space in it, as well as excellent teaching spaces in it. This building, along with our new campus and a current Hall Office Park location, are going to be the epicenter for something that I've been waiting for, frankly, all my life.

I've longed to see us build contextually relevant programs. Programs that speak to the needs of our students, speak to their skill developments, speak to our ability to close the distance between us and employers, so that when they leave us, they can seamlessly interact with industry and the commercial world.

And we will be launching this program next year in our Frisco branch campus. And let's talk about what some of the things we're doing there, and I hope that our colleagues from Frisco here will take this to heart because you can see how hard we've been working.

We currently offer nine Bachelor's degrees on this campus with four more coming next year, in a wide array of very popular fields. We offer four Master's degrees: Data Analytics, Business Admin, Design and Sports Management. Two more degrees coming: Counseling and Education Leadership this year. This is what really excites me, and I got to say, Wesley Randall, thank you for your hard work in this, and of course, Jennifer. Next year, we're offering a cohort degree to incoming freshmen that I believe is going to be the most most revolutionary degree program that we've ever put out.

This program will emphasize applied critical skills, like critical thinking, creative problem solving, project structure and management, teamwork, oral and written development, data gathering and analysis and business case development. It has been built with and in a collaboration with regional employers, who've told us what they want and what they need right [01:01:30] now on the market.

It has been built to meet the needs of these by building in these competencies into the core curriculum. So it doesn't expand the numbers of hours students need. It also will be very case driven. Cooperative education and internships will be offered in the summer. Project based and experiential learning will be part of this curriculum.

And can you imagine being lectured by the executives from Toyota, by the executives from the Cowboys organization, and the other major groups around Frisco, and the industrial partners that we have. From day one, these students are going to be getting an exceptional experience, and they will hit the marketplace job-ready.

And here's the best part. They're going to be our founding class. Now you can only have one founding class. And so next year, we will have the first freshman founding class out at our branch campus at Frisco.

And here is another challenge to the audience. David, write this one down. I'd love to see that every one of our founding class members gets a \$5,000 a year scholarship, and I know there is couple donors in the audience, and if anybody feels like funding founding eagles, I just made that up, Don, I would be very happy to talk with them, because I think it's a wonderful way to celebrate them to get them off the ground well, and begin really showing everyone what this new curriculum is capable of doing.

Funding Founding Eagles. Yeah, that's it.

This program has one more surprise. You can get it in three years. It will reduce the cost of attendance, it will help students to have less debt, and to get out in the marketplace quickly. I think it's a winner. And so, I'm asking everyone here who's done work on this to, I'm saying to you, "Thank you for the work you've done, keep the work going, and let's make this something really special that will ultimately help inform what we do on this campus."

Now, the other piece of what we are looking at going forward is, how do we take caring for our students, building their dreams, giving them a great education, and making sure they're successful. How do we integrate that with this idea that creativity is part of our identity?

And we have some opportunities this year. First, we're searching for a new Vice-President for Marketing and Branding to help us promote this vision, we need someone who feels it in their hearts the way we feel about creativity in our hearts.

We also are currently conducting a brand audit jointly with our System. In fact, our System paid for it. Thank you very much, Lesa. This brand audit will help us understand what the world thinks about us. More importantly, what we think about ourselves, because we can't sell a brand we don't believe in. And I know many of the people in this room have been through parts of this exercise, and as we peeled the layers of this onion, we're going to get to the core of who we are.

We're going to go around listening to departments, to see how creativity is expressed, in our research and educational programs, and this year we will crystallize our brand, and our unique identity, and make sure that we promote it widely, so that we no longer the best kept secret, so that now, we're that innovative next generation university, that we aspire to become.

And finally, if we're going to have an identity, our strategic plan needs to embrace that identity, and so that's the next piece of the puzzle. If we believe that the union of creativity and technology is important to our future, and to the growth of the creative economy around us, what will we do about it? And here is where we have another wonderful opportunity.

We're currently searching for VP for Research and Innovation. If someone is going to guide our reference, and help us integrate this vision across the campus, it will be in large measure due to a new VP RI, along with our Provost's office, and working with the deans, I believe we can really establish something unique. So this hire will be important, but let's not forget, we're not throwing the baby out with the bath water, we're going to continue to build on the spires of excellence we have.

We've come so far, and you've seen that, multi-PI, multi-institutional grants are going to be the path of the future for us, Andrey Vivodin is really helping us in there upfront along with our folks in engineering and sciences. We also need to continue to grow our PhD base, because it's very important to our rankings, and our reputation, and we've made some real progress. I know, Jennifer and I were talking earlier today, we've made some moves in a couple departments. We've noticed that the quality of our incoming students has been dramatically enhanced. And that's going to really be a critical feature of us going forward.

We also will be taking a more conscientious and studied approach to how we push our faculty out, so that they can win accolades, win award, so our departments can be ranked at a higher level. Many universities game it, we have not indulged in that game, but there is nothing wrong with being prepared and doing a better job.

And finally, we will continue the core kinds of things that you have to do to build a great research program. We'll continue to bring in incredible faculty, we'll continue to build new spaces, like the biomedical engineering space, that you may have seen in the infrastructure slide. That's interesting, the BME program is growing in leaps and bounds. It's the fastest growing program in the entire university right now. Biomedical Engineering, of course we have to build a

new space for it. And along with that, hire faculty and make sure that they're funded and successful and that we continue to thrive.

Along with that, I've mentioned VP for digital strategy and innovation. Working with our partners, like NetDragon and others. We're going to continue to drive Next Generation online productions. This is going to be important. Not just for educational purposes, but because we're actually co-developing products that we can sell as innovators and education out on the market. And finally, our new program and hires have to reflect this identity and the belief that we will become dominate drivers in the digital and creative economy around us. Now, you've heard me use the word creative economy and sometimes it's hard to muster up a picture of what that actually is. So, let's take a look at this quick snippet.

15 percent of the US gross domestic product, that is not a little number. And that number is growing every year. And here's what it looks like.

### *The Creative Economy – Where UNT Plays video rolls*

Well you get the idea. I mean think about it now, we're a region where sports and entertainment is growing rapidly. Hospitality, travel, tourism, and food and beverage management are important because they are part of how we entertain ourselves. Streaming music and videos, digital delivery is everywhere. And it will dominate everything that we do and almost anything I'd need a prop, that you can do on this. Play a game, use social media, entertain yourself by chatting with friends, is part of this creative economy. How many of us spend a majority of our day, playing with one of these or looking at the computer.

Consumer experience, communication design, digital merchandising, these areas that we are first in the nation in, will dominate sales growth, analytics, and artificial intelligence will guide almost everything that we do. Other program areas that we have now at this university; data analytics, UX/UI, sports management, new media, art, music, marketing, journalism, fashion, computer science, hospitality, and so many others, will drive business and grow the economy of North Texas. And even things like esports, we have the first varsity esports team in the state.

These are all billion dollar, multi-billion dollar industries and yes, we will play in this arena. So, as we look at the things that we've talked about today, one of the things that I hope you'll realize is that what I'm saying isn't exactly brand new, nor is it completely revolutionary. We've been talking about this for the past four years, we've been talking about how we will merge creativity and technology. How we will improve our students educations. How we'll give them access to modern agile curricula. How we will improve their experience. How our research and creativity and collaboration between us will drive us into the new economy. Just to make sure you remember, we're going to take a quick look back at the last four years of state of the Universities and then hear from some of our students.

### *UNT's Creativity is Unparalleled video plays*

A warm hug on a nice day. I couldn't have possibly said it any better, because that's what we do here for our students, with our students. It's what we aspire to, and it's what makes this campus

so amazing. All of you in this community, you make such a difference. This amazing progress, this record-setting year, as we begin to ascend, has really been because of you. We owe it to you. You've made such a difference. And the initiatives that you see before you today are the beginning of this transformation of the University of North Texas into a next generation university.

It's time for us to dream big, and launch ourselves into national prominence. And the union of creativity and technology is going to ignite our passions for research and scholarship. And our faculty staff and partners working together will unleash uncommon talents in our students, because they will become the creative leaders of tomorrow.

And so I ask all of you, Mean Green family, to rise with us. Rise with us, move this vision forward, and together we will soar higher. Go Mean Green!