



**2016 State of the University Address
Sept. 16, 2016**

V. Barbara Bush

Good afternoon. Please be seated and remember to turn off your cell phones and mobile devices. Thank you.

Thank you all for coming. I'm Barbara Bush, chair of the Faculty Senate. And I represent the Faculty Senate officers, Sherri Broyles, vice chair; Srinivasan Srivilliputhur, secretary; our executive committee and senators. As their representative, I am honored to help celebrate the 2016 State of the University.

We are joined today on this momentous occasion by distinguished guests and members of the UNT System and UNT leadership. Please hold your applause until all have been recognized.

Joining us today are:

- Erik With, who is here on behalf of U.S. Congressman and UNT alumnus Michael Burgess
- Breanne Jackson, here on behalf of State Senator [and alumna] Jane Nelson
- Denton County Judge Mary Horn and members of the Denton County Commissioners Court
- Members of the Denton City Council
- Denton ISD Superintendent [and alumnus] Jamie Wilson
- Members of our Denton chambers and the Denton Economic Development Partnership

Our distinguished guests include some of our biggest supporters:

- Members of our President's Leadership Board [and alumni], including:
 - Jim McNatt
 - Ken Newman
 - Kristin Farmer
 - C. Dan Smith, who is also a former chair of the UNT System Board of Regents and is the current chair of the UNT Foundation Board
- Members of our Founders' Circle
- Members of the UNT Foundation Board
- Members of the UNT Alumni Association Board

Now, please welcome our UNT System representatives:

- UNT System Board of Regents Vice Chair and alumnus Donald Potts and Student Regent Chris Lee
- Our former members of the Board of Regents who are in attendance today
- Chancellor Lee Jackson and vice chancellors

We also want to welcome other members of the UNT System administration and representatives from our sister institutions. Lastly, I would like to acknowledge members of UNT's leadership who are present today:

- The President's Cabinet
- Deans
- My fellow members of the Faculty Senate
- Staff Senate chair, Christi Hestand, and members of Staff Senate leadership
- Graduate Student Council President Seth Ketron, as well as other members of the Graduate Student Council leadership
- Student Government Association President Grant Hale and Vice President Barrett Cole as well as other members of the SGA leadership

(Applause)

Thank you all for joining us.

Today, we celebrate our 2016 State of the University and our 126th year as an institution. We have many milestones to celebrate. Most notably, we are now a Carnegie-ranked top tier, or Tier One, research university.

As many of you know, this achievement is the culmination of a long-held vision and much collective hard work. We should all be proud of what this recognition says about the quality of our institution; the quality of our faculty, staff, students and alumni; and the quality of our teaching, scholarship and creative activity, research and service.

However, as you will hear from President Smatresk, this is not the end of our journey. We must continue to work together as a community focused on our core mission of helping our students do well in college, graduate, and build meaningful lives and careers. This is what drives our success. This is the most fulfilling part of our work.

Today, President Smatresk will share with you what we have accomplished in the past few years, and how we move forward as a team, united by a shared purpose. Please join me in welcoming President Neal Smatresk to the stage.

President Neal Smatresk

President Smatresk gave his address in conjunction with a PowerPoint Presentation.

[Download the PowerPoint Presentation from the 2016 State of the University address. \(590KB, PDF\)](#)

Thank you, Barbara, and it's a pleasure to work with our Faculty Senate as partners in making this a better university.

Well, welcome, what a beautiful September day we have. The students are back in school. The campus is alive and hustling. We even won our first football game last weekend. (*Applause*) And I'm ever so thankful that I can be sharing this with hundreds of our friends, supporters and people who I've come to know over the last few years. Debbie and I are delighted to be here and delighted to share the progress of our university with you.

Well, we have a lot to talk about today and a lot to review. I'm going to take a slightly different approach this year. Instead of just talking about one year's progress, and we have made significant progress in the past year, I want to put this in a bit of a perspective. So we're looking at the last two and a half years, about the time I've been here, benchmarking ourselves against our performance in the fall of 2014 and then looking forward and beyond to see how we're doing.

We're going to cover what we've done, a few highlights from last year, we'll benchmark ourselves and talk about our greatest challenges, our goals for the next five years — interestingly enough some of which we've already surpassed — our plans for '17, and some initiatives from a planning workshop that we recently held.

Infrastructure improvements

Now, I have a number of fairly dense slides, talking about the kinds of things that got done. You'll be able to grab these on your way out the door, with a little cheat sheet that we'll provide [for] everybody. But I'm going to hit some of the highlights here of what we've done.

Let's start with some of our infrastructure. First, you know that when we got here we had some fiscal challenges and I'm going to stop talking about them reasonably soon. But what I'm proud to say right now is that our revenue growth has been exceptional over the past few years, we're out of the woods and we're building our reserves.

We completed a capital campaign. We have new financial management software. In fact, we've restored all of our IT bones and the foundation to go from worst to first in many important areas. And I'll fill you in on some of those in just a bit.

We also have completed a number of important projects. Rawlins Hall, the new student Union, capital projects and — very important to our faculty — we've been progressively increasing merit and equity salary adjustments for faculty, staff and administration when needed. And when we do this, we started with 1 percent in '14, we were a little pinched, 2 percent last year, 3 percent this upcoming year. And I believe you'll see that we'll be able to retain the best and brightest who come to the university.

Enrollment and retention gains

Our academics have also been very, very strong. We broke enrollment records now [for] two years in a row, and we've welcomed our largest freshman classes two years in a row. We grew our summer enrollments and this is important because you need to expand the use of this campus out over time and make sure that we're using summer as a third semester. When you do that, our

students graduate faster and they get into the job market quicker and they manage their debts better. So we're expanding on our use of summer.

We also have done a lot to make sure that we're serving our students. We have mandatory one-week advising for freshmen. We have three-point advising in their freshman year, which is a whole lot better than "it was optional" prior to this. And that means they get off on the right foot and they get moving a little bit faster. We've improved and increased dramatically the number of scholarships that we hand out and we've handed out our financial aid packages in a much more timely fashion and much earlier in the year so that students can make smart choices about what they're going to do in the following year.

And I have to say this is due in large measure to Vice President [for Enrollment] Shannon Goodman and his team who've done amazing things, and Elizabeth With, our VP for Student Affairs, who has really worked hard on the orientation and building spirit and camaraderie in our entering classes. So I think that's worth a big round of applause for their achievements.

(Applause)

All of that combined has caused the University of North Texas to be ranked as one of the most affordable universities in the country in several recent, very objectively done, articles. And that, you might say, "Well, that just means you're inexpensive." No, it puts us in great company, Yale, Stanford, Princeton, a number of other major institutions. We are ranked as affordable in providing a great and quality education for students and their parents who are too wealthy to afford deep financial federal aid and too rich to get a break. So this is a really important observation and I want to say it's one of the things that brings students to us. We're working hard on behalf of our students.

We also have launched a number of exciting new programs — the Eagle Express, which helps students to graduate faster and if they do well discounts their last semester; our Eagle Advantage plan, admitting the top 20 [percent of] students automatically from high schools that enroll in it and we've now got over 15 or 16 high schools and it's growing; and the Oklahoma tuition plan. It's about time we started bringing folks from Oklahoma to Texas as opposed to sending them up there to play football. So we're going to be pulling more and more from the state of Oklahoma and I think you're going to see that we're offering a very competitive program for those students.

Academic highlights

Other academic highlights: This year, we have increased our total National Merit Scholars to 32, adding 11 more National Merit Scholars, and the premium in the sweepstakes competing for these students is huge. And we're doing really well in competing for them on the national level.

Here's a great one: We have more students [becoming] Goldwater [Scholars] award winners than any other school in Texas. In fact, four of our students last year received Goldwater awards. There's about 200 given out nationwide. This is an incredible accolade, and four is the maximum number you can get. This places us in very good company and, in fact, we have [received] enough Goldwater awards to put us in the Top 20 nationwide. This tells you the commitment our faculty have to mentoring and working with their students and helping them to succeed.

We have launched [UNT's] New College at Frisco. We've brought up our academic budget by about \$41 million in the past two years. We had a great reaccreditation visit. We look forward to getting our final seal of approval next December. We celebrated our 125th anniversary.

And oh, by the way, we brought in a couple of new deans and I'm sure you're going to be delighted to interact with them. John Richmond is our new dean of [the College of] music and if you were wandering by the halls you probably heard our symphonic band practicing. They're going to be heading to Cuba here in the near future for a historic occasion, being one of the first universities in the country to interact with students from the Institute of Music there and this is a real feather in our cap.

We're also very proud to welcome Kinshuk, who is our dean of the College of Information. And here's an interesting fact to take home. Our College of Information has more doctoral students per faculty member than any other college in this university. They're doing great work and they're highly ranked.

We also have been working on our research and reputation. You've heard from Barbara that we have become Carnegie Tier One. I'm not putting the mission accomplished sign up on the back of the aircraft carrier. We're going to continue to push to more deeply entrench ourselves in Tier One, as you'll see in a moment.

We've been working on our Science Research Building. Under Vice President [for Research and Innovation] Tom McCoy's leadership, we've launched an Office of Innovation and Commercialization to increase patents and technology transfer. And I have high hopes for this in partnership with expanding what used to be called Sack & Save and is now going to be called the Collab Lab, which will be a center for student entrepreneurship and innovation as well as faculty gathering spots. I think we're going to do some really good things in this in the near future.

We have 62 academic programs ranked in the Top 100. Now this number threw me because the last time I looked we had 47. And then the new list came out and we updated our list — and it's a little embarrassing because one of the goals I'm going to show you later said we're going to audaciously set a bold goal to go from 47 to 57 nationally ranked programs in the Top 100. And now we're at 62. So I'm looking at the Chancellor [Lee Jackson] and I suspect he's going to make me revise this goal — upward, yes, not downward. *(Laughter)*.

We've invested a lot in our graduate student programs. You'll see why that's important momentarily.

Research highlights

We built four new Research Institutes of Excellence under Dr. McCoy's leadership. This is a big deal. And I want to just give you a couple of highlights. One of those is called the BioDiscovery Institute. There's at least four different departments interacting in this venture. It has a National Academy [of Sciences] scientist as the leader of it, it's got some of our most potent science research faculty in it. They're dedicated to finding new products in plant science and in animal science.

But just this week, if you've been watching the news, you may have heard of a University of North Texas scientist having a breakthrough discovery in the fight against breast cancer. Dr. Ron Mittler has found a protein, and the regulation of this protein can make breast tumors grow larger or completely stop them in their tracks. This could be a watershed moment and it's coming to you as a result of the efforts of UNT and the BioDiscovery Institute. This is great news and this is the kind of thing we're looking for even more as time goes on.

We brought in 14 high-impact research hires, people who are bringing in or have grants in hand of about \$1 million. And we plan on trying to keep the pressure growing in this arena because this is how we're going to move ahead.

We have improved our customer service for grants and contracts because when you slow up grants and contracts, well, everything grinds to a halt. And again, congratulations to Dr. McCoy, Britt [Krhovjak, senior director of Office of Grants and Contracts Administration] and his staff for doing that.

We've reorganized alumni and advancement divisions. And you'll see later that we've expanded our access to the Texas Research Incentive Program. And I'll give you the specific numbers on that in a moment.

Momentum for 2016-17

So, how do things look when we're going into this year? Well, I think they look pretty darn good.

First, our fall enrollment, get ready, 37,973 — 27 shy of 38,000. (*Applause*) If any of you feel like enrolling right now (*laughter*), we could use a few extra students so that we hit the millennium mark. But maybe next year we'll blow by 38,000 and hit 39,000 on our way to the growth that we believe is important to sustain this region. We also have 300 students at our New College at Frisco.

We project that our budget this year will increase by about \$51 million. Again, our financial health is strong, and that's going to be the cornerstone that allows us to bring in new faculty, bring in new research and really grow as a prominent institution.

We grew our academic budget by growing 81 new faculty positions. And you'll see later they were sorely needed after two years of lower budgets. This is also one of the most talented and diverse groups of faculty that we've ever brought in. I think you can look for leadership in years to come from this group.

We have about 30 major capital projects in process. We're about to hit minority-serving institution status, we should hit it next year.

We've committed the University of North Texas to not just being Tier One academically but to having Tier One athletic programs under the leadership of our new Vice President for Athletics and Athletic Director Wren Baker. Wren, thank you, wave to the crowd so they get to see you. (*Applause*)

We've locked in a deal to help promote ourselves and work with one of the most potent organizations in the world, the Dallas Cowboys. We are the exclusive higher education partner with them. And if you've been watching preseason, you've probably seen UNT all over the place. That will continue on as we are on Spanish and English radio broadcasts, television broadcasts, their websites and a host of other venues, which we hope will bring us national exposure and build our national enrollment.

We're also beginning a new building for the College of Visual Arts and Design. I'll talk a little more about that later. But that college is ranked first in the Southwest, fifth for public in the

country in design and it's really going places with this new facility, which I think you'll find is beautiful.

So, let's see the highlight reel.

[UNT's Path to Excellence video plays](#)

I hope you're not applauding because you think the talk's over. I love that video. It really captures, I think, in a very short period of time some of the great forward progress that we've made.

Peer comparisons

So, we had a great year. And we have many reasons to celebrate. So why aren't we comfortable? Well, let's take a look.

As we were elevated to Carnegie Tier One status, we joined a different group of peers. It's kind of like we moved from Conference USA to the Big 12. And in that we have to now compare ourselves to some much tougher competition. Our new peers include other Texas universities that moved up into Carnegie rankings with us — Texas Tech, Houston, UT-Arlington. Similar universities, no medical school, fairly large enrollment, publics — University of Oklahoma, George Mason, [University of] Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

And then we have a series of schools that we would like to be more like because they're higher rated into the Tier One rankings and well known nationally — UC-Santa Barbara, Arizona State, and a recent miracle, Georgia State, who've done remarkably well as they consolidated through the Georgia System Board of Regents' recent actions. These are all up and coming and institutions that we'll be proud to be in the same groups with.

But where do we stand compared to these institutions? I'm going to go through these fairly quickly and I want to start by saying, in many of the measures we compare favorably, but I'm going to focus on a few measures where I believe we need to close the gaps.

The first is retention. Our retention compares favorably to Texas institutions, but we're lower than our national peers and our aspirants. Our six-year graduation rates compare favorably to Texas, but we're lower than our peers and our aspirants. Now I want to point out that this data, which is from national sources called IPEDS and that's inside baseball, is about three years old. It's from the FY14 year, so it includes FY13 and 14. So we're now comparing ourselves to our old data compared to their old data three years ago. So we're going to have to see how we've done since that time.

We also can take a look at a very important Carnegie factor, which is our graduate population and our doctoral student production. We're not bad in terms of our overall graduate population. But our doctoral production's low and we need to increase it because doctoral production is one of the foundations of academic reputation as we send our students out to take positions in other institutions. We need to up our game in doctoral production.

We also very much need to improve our research output and our gifts. You can see that the little green bars, UNT, don't compare too favorably to our aspirants or our peers in either gifts or grants. And we need to double and then perhaps re-double our output in these critical areas over

the next decade. And it's going to be a tough haul, but we're dedicated to get it done and we're going to be focused on that mission.

If you take a look at total revenues, this will tell part of the story. Our revenues as of this year, as of FY14, were lower than anybody else on the board. And if you add the research output and the gifting output, you'll see the difference in total revenues between us and the other institutions, just captured by those two variables. So that's why I say we really have to increase our research output and we really have to increase our gifts.

You'll also see that there's a direct impact of that in terms of [the] number of faculty that we employ. Tenured/tenure-track faculty are the lifeblood of reputation and success at a university and we need to increase our number to become competitive. In fact, we're about 200 behind the institutions we would most like to become.

Challenges

So we face two major challenges. The first challenge that we face is that we need to do better at telling our story about how we add value to our students' education. We need to improve their success here and make sure that they can secure great jobs when they graduate. This is something all of us in the UNT System are committed to. And here at UNT we're doing something about it and I'll talk about that in a moment.

But there's another challenge buried within that one. In our nation, graduating high school classes are in decline. In 45 states in the country, the high school graduating classes are shrinking. They're not here in Texas yet, but by 2024 they will be and the number of college-qualified students is leveling out right now. So that means the competition for students is becoming fierce. And you can see the swell of that when you look at the ITTs of the world closing and other institutions that are private, for-profit [and] struggling and even a number of private institutions that can no longer attract students because of the decline in the high school graduating classes. This is an existential threat.

What we need to do is to make sure we're competing well because North Texas is now one of the preferred recruiting grounds for every major institution in this country. We are facing severe competition. We have to out-perform. We have to tell our story. And we have to make sure that students think of us first because we have added more value to their education. And that is going to be something that we have to dedicate ourselves to.

The second major challenge we face is firmly embedding ourselves in the Carnegie Tier One rankings by improving our research output and our reputation. And so, we need to now take a little look at the suggestions our faculty have had for how we're going to provide a more nimble culture that doesn't make incremental change, but that can think through to solving these major challenges for us in a very short period of time. We have about three or four years before the next Carnegie rankings.

So let's see some of the ideas that our faculty, staff, students and administration have come up with, and some of their enthusiasm for developing a new way to run this university.

Building a Culture of Innovation at UNT video plays

Those are participants from our last planning workshop and you can see that they're squarely focused on the task of helping us to have the most innovative higher education culture of any

school in the country. I think this is going to be key to us moving forward, and I want to thank them. Their spirit and the enthusiasm that they had for this is enormous, and we can't get there without everybody pulling in the same direction.

Goals

So if we're going to get there, though, we must learn how to move faster and execute better so that we can reach our goals. And again, I said our flight path for this is about three to four years. We have to make significant progress, just in time for the next Carnegie rankings.

So what are those goals?

Well we have a series of goals that we have presented to our [UNT System] Board [of Regents] and discussed with our regents. And I think, in general, they are fairly audacious except maybe for this top one. We committed to improving the number of Top 100 academic programs from 47 to 57. Umm, chancellor [Jackson], I wonder if the bonus clause of my contract can now kick in (*laughter*) because ... oh, no, we're going to increase it even higher, OK. So, we do need to — now that we're at 62 — I guess the next goal has to be about 82 or something like that. We're going to work hard to continue to grow the reputation of our very strong departments.

We're going to double our annual research expenditures in the next five years. We're going to increase graduate student enrollment from about 6,700 to over 8,000 graduate students with an emphasis on doctoral student growth.

We're going to increase the total number of degrees that we award every year to 9,000 from a base this year of— depending on how you count — about 8,500. And those numbers are going to depend heavily on our retention rates and our ability to move students quickly through our programs in an effective way for them and to limit their debt.

We need to increase our annual cash gifts, not total gifts, to about \$23 million a year. And so, as I scan this audience, I think, this isn't too hard. Twenty-three people, \$1 million each, we ought to get there really fast. And I thank you for your help in advance. (*Laughter*)

We also need to launch two new programs that I believe will have a big effect. The first we call Career Connect. It was part of our accreditation process, but something the faculty are embracing and our staff and advisors are embracing well. This project aims to give students internships, research opportunities and, very significantly, [to] deepen their ability to develop as professionals with portfolios to accompany them upon graduation. We think in the next five years, at least 50 percent of our students should be certified through this program and I believe more will participate once they see the value of it. So this is an institution-wide commitment that we have already made.

We also need to engage at least half, it not more, of our faculty and staff in leadership and change management and team building training. This will be important for us to work more effectively and you're going to see some specific ideas around this that came up out of the [Planning Implementation Workshop](#) that I think are pretty exciting.

Students and reputation

Well, these goals are focused squarely on our students and our reputation. So let's be clear. We always keep our priorities straight. We're going to improve the reputation of the institution and

improve our research, and use that research to make sure that our students are getting a fantastic educational experience.

So are we closing the gaps between our peers and trying to achieve those goals? Here are a few interesting tidbits. Since the fall of 2014, our revenues have grown by \$95 million. Forty-one of that, or 43 percent, has been invested in academics and we expect to continue that trend to continue to grow and build and serve our students.

We grew our research expenditures last year by a relatively modest \$2 million. But you're going to see that, based on the number of faculty we had, this is a fairly significant achievement. As we grow our faculty numbers and hire more high impact faculty, we expect to see acceleration of this number, especially as we begin writing more collaborative grants.

Our total gift commitments rose — and this is total gift commitments, not cash gifts — from about \$23 million to \$26 million, making it our second best gifting year ever. And within there, embedded in those numbers, were \$6.7 million for new endowments, and endowments are the life blood of building the margin of excellence in institutions. Endowments help to create endowed chairs, which attract top-quality faculty, and provide scholarships so that students can do research. And this is one of the largest number of endowments that we've seen in any given academic year.

We also were blanked out in Texas research funds, matching funds from the state in FY13 and [FY]14. We received zero dollars while our competition was scrambling hard. We have since upped that. Now when we receive gifts, particularly gifts that foster and nurture our research environment like the generous gift Jim McNatt gave to our logistics program last year, we are gaining access to TRIP funding. And this year we should receive approximately \$5 million dollars, part of which was gathered last year, part of which will be claimed here in the next few weeks. So we're doing much better at competing on a statewide basis for Texas matching funds.

Closing the gaps

Now I have a few graphs, because sometimes the trends don't look clear when you just use one-word bullet points. So let's take a look at our enrollment. You can see that our enrollment has been fairly steady. We lost a bit of ground in 2014, but since then we've really picked up steam. And we now are ready to breach the 38,000 barrier.

Our graduate enrollment shows a similar but exaggerated trend — a loss of enrollment. And this is due primarily to a program in which public schools in Texas stopped offering the incentives for higher education doctoral students and master's students to come back to the university. However, the College of Education has recovered a lot of that ground and they're doing really well now, and you can see that we're beginning to grow our graduate student population again. That's the graph in the upper right corner.

FTIC headcount — first time incoming class, freshmen — and you can see that the growth in our freshman class is strong and I will submit to you that the best indicator of reputation is your freshman class. As our reputation improves, more and more students make UNT their first choice.

And our new transfer students — again you can see the trend that I'm talking about. We had a great year, we've done fantastically between student affairs, our academic affairs and our vice

president for enrollment. Finley [Graves, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs], Shannon and Elizabeth have done wonderfully in writing articulation agreements to help ease the path for students to transfer to this university.

However, on a Texas-wide basis, enrollment at community colleges is declining. It declined last year, and our five major feeder institutions have declining enrollment. You can see that we've started to tail off and we're going to have to work even harder to make sure that transfer students view UNT as a friendly place to get a degree in a timely fashion and to get a high-quality degree that will lead to a job.

Our retention and graduation rates are the most heartening numbers that I've seen this entire year. Some of you probably aren't extremely excited about words like retention and graduation, but if you were a student or a parent here, you would be. Our retention for our first-year students has risen, on average, a point a year for the last four years. That's great progress.

Even more amazing is that our six-year graduation rate numbers have risen by one percentage point a year. So we're really closing those gaps between us and the competition very quickly and I think in many cases we're surpassing some of the fine schools that you saw on that list.

Our new six-year graduation rate is about 53 to 54 percent and we expect that rate to continue to accelerate. That's due to the amazing effort of advisors and our folks in student affairs who are actually working with every student who says they may leave the university and helping them to find their path back into the academic mainstream and to graduate on time.

And of course if we improve our six-year graduation rate, you're going to expect to see an enhancement of the total number of degrees we've awarded this year. And, again, I'll say these are definitions that are a little squirrely because they come from the federal government.

But this year we believe we'll be at about 8,500 or 8,600 students graduating, by our current counts. That will represent an increase of about 400 students from last year. I think we're on the right track and we're doing what the state of Texas needs in order to have a prosperous future.

Now let's look at a very serious slide. This is our faculty hires, the one that looks like a ski slope. When I got here, we were in some budgetary distress. We did what we had to do to be sure that we could cover our contingent liabilities in that time. We had to save some money. We froze positions, we cut our budget, in order to make sure that we were solid financially. And I won't repeat the woes that we had during that period of time, but when you cut budget in the fall of '14, its impact on faculty hires isn't felt until the next year, because we lost some positions and we didn't have a big hiring year.

Last year, as we came out of the woods and our budget grew, we opened up a number of searches, we had 81 hires and you can see the impact of that on our unofficial faculty count for this year. We're up now to what may be an all-time high and we need to continue to keep growing the lines that we have. And we'll expect to accelerate that this year.

Paralleling to some extent the number of faculty that we have, is our grant output. It fell, leveled out and now has increased. And I'll point out that that increase that we see is with the lower faculty base. So as we add more faculty, we can expect to see an acceleration of this. So for anyone who doesn't think revenues are critical to the success of an institution, please look

carefully at these slides. Our ability to commit new funds, to expand lines and to serve our students and to grow our research programs is utterly critical to our success.

Moving forward

So how are we going to address these goals going forward?

Well, we're going to continue to hire faculty, both at the assistant professor level and high-impact hires. We're continuing to expand our research groups. In fact, we're going to add two new research groups. I know Kristin Farmer's here, who has launched for us the Kristin Farmer Autism Center, a wonderful research tool. We just had a blue ribbon panel come into town, five of the most prominent nationally known autism spectrum disorders researchers in the country. They were very impressed with the group here. They felt we needed a little bit of organization and some leadership, and that we would be able to put a very strong program together. In fact, they said we ought to be able to build the strongest program for ASD research in the state in a very short period of time. And better yet, they want to network with us, they want to help, they want to interact with us in research.

So we're very excited about launching this particular program and we think it will not only have a big effect on our educational programs and our granting, it will have an effect on the community around us where we have deep needs to make sure that we're taking care of children with early diagnostics and intervention so that we can help our region.

We also are going to organize a group around big data. We have a lot of individual faculty who are working on the big data mining projects of the day. We're not terribly organized in this area and it's another commitment that is coming out of the VP for Research [and Innovation] office. And I think this is going to be very important both educationally as well as in terms of our research activities, with a new cyberlab, by the way, opening out in Frisco — which we're very excited about — for cybersecurity, which is indirectly a part of big data analysis.

We're building new research space for the biomedical engineering program, our newest and fastest growing program, by the way, one that is exceedingly gender diverse for engineering. We are opening up our Science Research Building this spring. Both of these projects will add desperately needed square footage to our wet lab research capabilities and help us to grow our grant funding.

We're going to fund 100 new positions for doctoral students this year, dedicated to increasing our doctoral student production. And the competition is on, different departments are already submitting proposals, and I think it's a very healthy thing for this university to compete for resources to see who can do the best with what we give them.

We're going to open our Collab Lab, the new innovation space, pop-up restaurants — which I think is exciting — that our students [will] run, operate and advertise. We'll have part of our art program and makerspaces in it. We'll be having hackathons and a number of entrepreneurial and innovation building events for students, faculty, staff and even the community. So once we launch, probably around next summer, you can look forward to a really good hot place for innovation to be occurring in Denton County.

Transportation and parking

Finally — yeah I had to talk about it — transportation and parking. I thought maybe I could just kind of skate by this slide, but, we've had a couple complaints about parking this year.

(Laughter) And, I guess it's always one of the big problems on any campus. And I know it doesn't help when I say the parking's better here than any place I've ever been, because for all of you, it feels a little worse this year.

Part of the reason for that is because we had to remove some parking spaces due to different construction projects on campus. So, the good news is, we're renovating and building. We're growing Greek Row. We're building a central pathway. We're putting up new buildings.

Part of the problem is that we had a few rough starts in how we organized it and I think it's better to say we didn't do it as well as we could and we're dedicated to fixing it. But the underlying plan is sound. We brought in one of the top university parking and transportation groups in the world. They helped us to develop a plan and what they said was really pretty simple. They said, "As you get bigger, you're going to run out of parking. Building more parking is really expensive, so you need to get people to change their behavior." Hence, the large number of tweets I receive every day. *(Laughter)*

People aren't fond of changing their behavior, but we need more of our students, and faculty and staff to be taking other transportation options. We need to make those options more palatable. They also said, "You haven't priced your parking right, it's really cheap everywhere. Make parking toward the core expensive and create very inexpensive remote parking." We did that. It wasn't the most popular thing we ever did. I'm not sure we've leveled everything quite right yet, but we're working on it.

We now have very inexpensive remote parking at \$125 a year — that's amazing — behind Apogee and Victory Hall. And that lot sits quite empty. Students would rather fight for parking spaces or get tickets on campus than park in remote parking where we're shuttling students and have offered them an E-Ride option for free — they get on their cell phone, they tell people they need a ride, we pick them up in 7-10 minutes, drive them where they need to go. It's a pretty awesome deal.

We also need to increase bike-share programs, skateboarding on campus — yes, even skateboarding — and we're going to offer Zipcars, cars you can rent by the hour.

More importantly, we've discovered that convenience really drives our market. We've had students who said, "Well, you know, I'd rather park and get a ticket and be close to class, 'cause hey, my parents are paying for the ticket." Remember that parents. So instead of having them have to have that choice, why don't we create some more expensive pay-by-the-hour parking lots, but let's make it real convenient. They can run in, grab a spot, pay on their iPhone in a pay-by-phone lot. If they stay a little extra, they can re-up on the iPhone. If you want convenience, you can pay for convenience.

But, the ultimate answer's going to be, we do need some more parking, and our VP for Finance and Administration Bob Brown, and I, pull our hair out over it — and you can tell it's had a bad effect on both of us *(laughter)*. So, what we're doing right now is we're trying to figure out maybe when Fouts Field goes down, do we put in some flat surface parking?

And let me give you this quick fact: Flat surface parking — about \$1,200 a space. Structured parking — about \$12,000 a space. Which bill would you rather pay? If we can find more flat surface parking, great, and if we don't have immediate need for the land, that's wonderful. But at some point we'll probably have to put that land in play and other solutions will need to apply. We are working on it. The plan is good. We just have some rough spots with the execution and we're going to get them worked out. *NT Daily*, I hope you appreciated that.

New projects

We also need to break ground on our new visual arts and design building. This is a very exciting project. We're going to launch a new program in integrated resort management in partnership with North Central Texas College. I think this is going to be a really great program, it can help serve the resort community in Oklahoma where they've already pledged scholarship support for students, and we're going to do it at a very fair cost. And so we're excited about this and we think it will be a popular program particularly because we'll be co-located on the Gainesville NCTC campus.

We're going to complete our data projects, and I cannot emphasize enough how much we need access to very well-defined and high-quality data. Once that gets done, it's going to open the door up for us to use higher ed big data. The most impressive thing I've seen in recent years is the use of predictive analytics. There's a number of organizations who can help us develop those services, but basically, [by] using the data on our students and how their class-going rates are, in composite and even broken down to the individual level, we can make effective interventions that give us early warning, that help promote our students' success, that keep them in school and keep them graduating in a timely fashion.

So this is going to be a major innovation. By the way, the institutions that have already started to employ this have seen tremendous gains in retention so we're looking for the same type of impact once our IT data structures are solid.

We're going to renovate our Sage Hall to become a one-stop academic success center. It will take three years, it'll be a floor at a time. We're doing this out of our own funds, but where better to have an academic success center than in something [named] Sage.

We will be committed to supporting our students directly with career advice, with tutoring and with other types of interventions should they need help and support.

We're building a new residence hall and a new dining hall to accommodate our growing freshman classes, and along with that we're going to build a beautiful new UNT Visitor's Center, which coincidentally will be located right next to the new dining hall and the new residence hall, because of course they all look like that, don't they?

As we build these, they'll help to welcome people to our campus and provide them a wonderful campus visit experience. But they'll also take a little bit of pressure off the renovation cycles for some of our other properties so that we can make sure that all of our residence halls are kept up to snuff, and are comfortable and are modernized.

We're planning a new classroom building that will be funded from internal sources. And we're going to provide coaching and change management leadership support for chairs and faculty who

want it this year. So, this is going to be a major innovation. We expect it to have a big impact on us. Now...

Jaws theme song plays

Planning implementation projects

I hear the sharks. During our Planning Implementation Workshop, we decided that we would try to unleash the creative potential of the people in the room. We had 120 participants — students, faculty, staff and administration — and we challenged them to come up with ideas that would help us meet our goals: to improve our research and reputation, to improve student success, and to build a culture that was more nimble.

And we had 12 different presentations to the “Shark Tank,” which consisted of the [President’s] Cabinet. The participants voted their top three favorite projects, but the cabinet, out of their own funds, get to sponsor other projects just like *Shark Tank* on TV. And here’s the good news — I did not know how this would turn out. I was a little worried about pie in the sky proposals, but that didn’t happen. We got really deep, thoughtful proposals that made sense and would pencil, and people approached it the right way. Here’s some highlights from some of what we found in the shark tank.

One group says let’s expand our online high-demand majors at the master’s level and offer them all over the place. This is a matter of convenience for many returning students, they don’t have the time to commute to a campus, we know now that we have the technology to offer a high-quality program, especially to able learners. And, if we do that, we can reinvest the profits in building our doctoral program and our on-campus graduate student strengths.

Similarly, we can create five-year master’s programs where you get your bachelor’s and your master’s in one pass, which will significantly boost our master’s numbers, and again generating revenues that can be used to reinvest in building our graduate programs. Great ideas.

We’re going to foster faculty collaboration in spaces like Avesta and the Collab Lab, building an ersatz faculty club if you will — excuse me, faculty and staff club — and doing it in space that’s currently dormant in the evening hours, which will help to generate more revenues for our student Union building. It’s a good idea. And we need places where we can get together and talk and innovate.

We’re also going to help our faculty become student success coaches. In fact, we’ll be offering out of the President’s Office a Coach of the Year Award. If you wonder about coaches of the year, you say what does that mean? Let me give you an example.

One of our chemists is named Bill Acree. He is a remarkably talented researcher. He brings a number of undergraduate students into his lab, sometimes even TAMS [Texas Academy of Mathematics and Science] students, into his lab. They work with him. When they get out of here, he places them in some of the most prestigious institutions in the country. Most recently, in Yale and in Stanford. Students out of his lab have basically won the top research honors for graduate students. And that’s the kind of mentorship and coaching that we hope to see from our faculty. I’m very proud of what he’s done, but it’s just a sample of the caring and the mentoring that goes on at this university.

We also had a number of suggestions for building mobile apps and websites to help connect people for research, for innovation and for student success, and to build a feeling of engagement on the campus. So many great app ideas that we're going to actually build an app integration team so that we don't overwhelm ourselves with a new product, and that we organize our approaches to this quite well.

We also critically need to allocate research space better. There was a request out of one of the tables to build a group that maximizes our research dollar generation and our reputation by making sure that all of our research space was being put to its highest call and purpose. This will be a project that Tom [McCoy] and a number of other individuals are working on this year.

We're going to also create faculty and staff teams to remove barriers, internal barriers, to research. We've just discovered some and we've managed to clear those barriers, but we're going to have to build basically a kind of rapid response team — every time we find that we have policies that are getting in the way of building our reputation and serving our students. It turns out, there's a number of those and so we're going to work on it.

In companionship with that, one of our tables, led by Terry Pohlen [Associate Dean for Operations and Research] and Su Gao [Chair of the Department of Mathematics], were suggesting that we build lean process in this institution. If you haven't heard of lean process, it means "find out what you really care about and build a process that gets you there quickly without a lot of unnecessary, bureaucratic hoops to jump through." Toyota's doing this. In fact, some of our faculty are working with Toyota right now. There are others who can help, but if we can re-engineer how we work, not just in this campus, but how we work with our system colleagues who support us, lean process implementation could go a long way toward helping us to use our energy more effectively.

These are some of the ideas that the "Shark Tank" produced. I'm very proud of them, and as we near the end of our talk, I think it's time for us to know that it's going to be a really busy and productive year, but let's catch our breath and remember why we're here.

Call to action

Helping UNT Students Achieve Their Dreams video plays

Well, if that doesn't put a smile on your face, nothing will. That's why we're here and if we're going to make all those dreams come true, we all need to commit, you as a community — our faculty, our staff, our students — we're all working for the same thing.

In fact, we have 10 divisions. We have 12 colleges. We have 58 academic departments and over 3,900 employees, but we are one team, united by one purpose, and that's to empower our students to make their dreams come true.

Thank you all very much.

End