

**Address on the State of the University
September 14, 2005**

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This is my eighth Address on the State of the University. Over the years, I have found these occasions most valuable, for they create a natural rhythm for taking stock and for setting out an agenda. In my first address – in October, 1998 – I expressed the six themes that have organized a pattern of emphasis for the whole of this administration. They were broadly accepted and have worn well. In successive years, I have summarized annual progress and have laid out more detailed agendas, most of which have been fulfilled to the benefit of the University.

I have also used these messages consistently to show how the wiser and grander strands of Texas ambition are linked to the constitutional mandate toward a university of the first class. Great Texas leaders, especially President Mirabeau B. Lamar and Governor John Connally, were committed to realizing the vision underlying the mandate, because they understood that the true freedom and strength of Texans depend upon it. They were right, and history will prove them so. There is no way to separate the effectiveness of this university from the life and well-being of Texas, and it is healthy for us to recognize that fact annually as we define goals for our work.

This year's address is my last, and I will take some liberties. As always, I will summarize progress and lay out the challenges for the year ahead, but I would also like to convey a few big messages to those who will inherit the future. That group includes all who are listening today and others who may see this address in a written form.

I have loved Texas since I was very young. Though I was born and was raised in Louisiana, my parents were Texans, and my family connections were here. I had a strong exposure to Texas, but not a daily one. My allegiance to Texas was more of a choice than that of a true native, but it has been firm for a lifetime. I have often wondered why Texas has generated this passion and loyalty within me, and I am not sure of the answer. But we all know that these emotions have arisen in a great many people, natives or latecomers, and we know that a good deal has been written about what lies beneath the phenomenon. I will not try to analyze. There is a magic in Texas. It is outrageously unbounded by anyone else's convention. It is sometimes foolish. It can be brutally tough and unforgiving. But it captivates. It motivates. There is imagination and spirit in it. There is life in the magic.

I hope it will always be so.

Eight years of service as President of this university have only reinforced my affection for Texas and my belief in her special possibilities. I have been in every corner; I have met many thousands of Texans; I have learned about issues of which I knew

nothing before. This has been Texas at close range. No illusions. No myths. No hiding what she faces. Yet I love her all the more, because of the ambition, and the energy, and the spirit, and the swirl of cultures, and the pride, and the hope – and the magic. What a powerful place is Texas; how much promise there is. But how Texas needs this university to enable her best; and how this university must reach for the top to enable Texas as it ought to be enabled.

A university of the first class is not sought to swell the pride of those within, but to build worth for those beyond.

On countless official occasions over the last few years, I have heard our state song, *Texas, Our Texas*, played and sung. There is a line to which I would like to draw your attention. It is an expression of hope – a wish for Texas at large: "That you may grow in power and worth throughout the ages long."

Fascinating is the admonition to build "worth," for worth, to me, is a rich concept extending far beyond economic strength to include the value of individuals, personal merit, civic cohesion, and capability in all forms. In moments to come, think a little about the idea of building worth in Texas. You will have your own definition of what it means, but I dare say that you will find depth there.

In your musings, it will not take long before you reach a recognition of the enormous power of this university to build worth for Texas. I doubt that there is any other asset of the people with greater capacity or a larger impact – produced day after day, year after year, decade after decade, at a level reached by very few peers in Texas and by none on nearly the same scale. Why would you want a goose with golden eggs when you have this?

As I depart from my present role, I ask you, as citizens, to be steadily on guard. Jealously demand from the University that it remain true to its mission, and require it to perform faithfully and well. Just as jealously, do all you can to see that it is strengthened and protected from harm in public life.

Chicago's visionary urban architect and planner, Daniel Hudson Burnham, once said this:

Make no little plans; they have no magic to stir men's blood and probably themselves will not be realized. Make big plans; aim high in hope and work, remembering that a noble, logical diagram once recorded will not die, but long after we are gone be a living thing, asserting itself with ever-growing insistence.

We could make Burnham an honorary Texan for saying something like that. But we do better to respect his words by living them. I believe that on important occasions over the past eight years, we have indeed lived them.

Setting our sights on a billion-dollar goal for the *We're Texas* Campaign was a big plan. So, too, was the idea of acquiring the Suida-Manning Collection and embarking on the construction of a Blanton Museum with the power to transform campus life and educational experience for all our students. The task forces on Enrollment Strategy and Racial Respect and Fairness gave us big plans. Mr. John Jackson had big plans for the geosciences when he dedicated his life's fortune to them. But the biggest plans came from the Commission of 125, who did aim high in hope and work, urging us to create and to live out a disciplined culture of excellence and to reach for the very top of leadership in American higher education. The report of the Commission is a noble, logical diagram. I hope fervently that it will become a living thing in the life of the University, asserting itself with insistence in the generation before us.

At last year's Address on the State of the University, I suggested that the upcoming 2004-2005 academic year might be called "The Year of Follow-Through." In retrospect, that sounds as inspiring as "The Commissar's Five-Year Plan" or "The Year of Incremental Changes." But university cycles sometimes require consolidation. Some years you talk the talk; some years you walk the walk.

This past year, there were a number of task force recommendations from the previous year that needed to be addressed with careful study and discussion in the University community. In other words, we needed to form more committees and task forces to respond to earlier ones. It's the nature of our business. But as we all know, making recommendations is usually the easy part. Implementing decisions and instituting change are more difficult, especially if those changes have the magic to stir the blood.

- We continued our 10-year faculty expansion based on the plan to add 300 new positions. At last count, we were up by 151 positions relative to 2000-2001, when I announced the program, so we are about halfway to the goal. Nearly all of the added strength is on the tenure track.
- At the same time, to improve the faculty-student ratio, we are striving to reduce our student population toward a target of 48,000, as recommended by the Task Force on Enrollment Strategy. This is difficult now because UT has become a popular choice among college-bound students. The nearly 24,000 applications we received for fall admission were the second highest ever. The final numbers for fall enrollment will not be in until the end of this week, but we anticipate that we will have just about 50,000 students, down slightly from last year's enrollment, but significantly lower than our high of 52,261 in 2002-

2003. With freshman entry held steady at approximately 6,900, we should reach our recommended goal of 48,000 students in five years or less.

- This fall, for the first time since the *Hopwood* decision in 1996, we were able to use new race-sensitive methods in our admissions process. Preliminary indications tell us that the freshman class of 2005 will be 5 percent African American, 17 percent Asian American, 18 percent Hispanic, and 55 percent white. In the fall of 1997, the freshman class was 2.7 percent African American and 12.4 percent Hispanic, so the African American participation has almost doubled and the Hispanic participation has risen by nearly half again. Hard work and commitment underlie that progress.
- Our enrollment figures will include about 450 students who were unable to enroll in New Orleans universities for the fall term, but were specially admitted at UT to allow them to continue their educational progress. Most of them are Texans. Some had been previously accepted to UT, but had chosen to attend Tulane. I am proud of the generous response from deans, department chairs, the staff of our Office of Admissions, and many others to accommodate these students. The University of Texas family has once again shown its compassion and caring spirit. We welcome all of these new students to our campus and wish them the best of success in their academic careers and in their lives ahead.
- In all measures of student progress, we are experiencing our highest levels of achievement to date. Freshman retention is at 93.2 percent, a new high, maintaining our string of retention rates above 90 percent for five years in a row. Our four-year graduation rate is 45.6 percent, up by almost 4 percent from last year and also a new high. A four-year graduation rate of 50 percent is within sight. We should aim to be above 60 percent. And our total graduation rate rose to 74.3 percent, also a new high. This rate has risen about 10 percent over the past seven years and needs to reach a figure above 80 percent. We are getting there.
- Preliminary indications also show that freshmen are coming to us from 803 Texas high schools, that the average SAT score will likely rise from 1230 to 1242. About 69 percent of the Texans in the class were admitted automatically under the Top 10 Percent Law.
- The Tuition Policy Advisory Committee, composed of student leaders and university officers, worked diligently and unanimously again this year. They recommended an increase of 4.75 percent in the total cost of tuition and fees for 2005-2006. The success of flat-fee pilot programs in the College of Natural Sciences and the College of Liberal Arts encouraged them to recommend such a policy for all undergraduate colleges and schools, beginning with the current academic year. It has been implemented as

recommended. This system allows students to enroll in additional coursework at no additional cost and encourages more rapid progress toward degrees.

- We continue to focus on a competitive compensation plan aimed at recruitment and retention of top national talent, especially for faculty. In the past year, we experienced more serious competition for our faculty talent in the national academic arena. A new program created by the UT System proved to be an invaluable aid in recruitment and retention.
- I am glad to note that we have offered a competitive raise program in each of the past eight years, despite state budget cuts and a significant economic downturn. In this period, we have gained ground versus our competition, both locally and nationally. We must continue to make UT an attractive, stable employment environment. The ability to recruit and hold talent is at the center of what we can do for Texas.
- We fell short on our plan to build recurring funding for repair and renovation of facilities. It was necessary to sacrifice the resources that would have been used for that purpose to finance increases in energy costs and compensation for faculty and staff. The much-needed renovation of the Experimental Science Building has been consequently delayed.
- Better news is that several new facilities and major renovations are progressing, mostly on the basis of independent financing. The gallery building of the Blanton Museum of Art will be completed in another month and will open its doors publicly in February 2006. Construction on the Blanton's education building is beginning. The renovation of Batts Hall should be finished by March, which will complete the superb reconstruction of the east side of the South Mall. The Nano Science and Technology building is rising now and should be ready by May. Construction is moving forward on the Almetris Duren Residence Hall, named in honor of the legendary housemother, mentor, and friend to UT's African American students from 1956 to 1980. The old Student Health Center has been demolished to make way for a new home for the Department of Biomedical Engineering. Construction of a new home for the Institute of Geophysics and the Texas Advanced Computation Center is about to begin on the Pickle Campus. The student-supported outdoor aquatics complex should be ready for use next month. These are all healthy developments for the University.

A year ago, the Commission of 125 submitted its final report, and I spoke at length last year on the significance of the Commission's work and ideas. In the intervening months, the University has been addressing its recommendations.

- The Task Force on Curricular Reform, chaired by Bill Powers, Dean of the School of Law, is conducting a comprehensive review of the core curriculum, with the charge to place a specific proposal before the general faculty by October 31. This is the first review of the curriculum since 1981. I understand that discussion has been animated by the best of aspirations.
- In the spring, Provost Sheldon Ekland-Olson and I convened separate focus groups consisting of deans, department chairs, and faculty leaders to discuss the Commission's primary recommendation to strengthen UT's academic leadership at the unit level. To the surprise and pleasure of the Provost and me, a nearly identical set of conclusions about the best actions to take emerged from each of the three groups. The Provost is already moving in the indicated directions, which have to do with making a departmental leadership position more compatible with a chair's career as a scholar, strengthening the resources commanded by the chair, giving the chair greater ability to pursue a plan of development for his or her unit, and reducing the amount of operational detail that the chair must manage personally.
- We are in the process of developing and articulating a follow-up plan for the 16 additional recommendations of the Commission. Moreover, we must begin to formulate a fundraising plan aimed directly at fulfilling the resource-sensitive goals of the Commission.

The findings of the Commission of 125 reflect the vision and hard work of more than 200 of our most dedicated supporters, and the University owes them our gratitude and our utmost attention. The Commission's recommendations will take time to execute successfully. Indeed, they are meant as guidance for an entire generation, so much of the implementation was always meant to be entrusted to my successors. In the meantime, the Commission will assemble next month for a one-year report on the progress to date.

In our effort to build cross-cultural knowledge and skill among students, faculty, and staff, we began to implement initiatives recommended by the Task Force on Racial Respect and Fairness.

- An Honor Code Implementation Committee recommended ways to provide common reminders of our shared values and obligations, and many of their suggestions have already been realized.
- We completed our search for a Vice Provost for Inclusion and Cross-Cultural Effectiveness, a title that will require lots of space on an office door, but one that also declares our seriousness about goals important to this university and to Texas. Gregory Vincent, former Vice Provost for Institutional Equity and Diversity at the University of Oregon, brings great knowledge and energy into the post. Previously, he served as Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and

Campus Diversity at LSU. Vice Provost Vincent's credentials are impeccable and he has already begun to make an impact on our campus.

A number of other crucial positions were filled:

- Rick Eason is the new Vice President for Development. He is a native of San Antonio, a former managing Director at Marts & Lundy, and former Vice President for Development at Southwestern University during an extremely successful capital campaign. Kevin Hegarty carried two vice presidencies while we were carrying out the search that led to Rick Eason's appointment, and I want to thank him publicly for such an extraordinary effort on behalf of the University.
- Juan Gonzalez is the new Vice President for Student Affairs. He is a native of Amarillo and former Vice President for Student Affairs at Arizona State University. Prior to that appointment, he served in the corresponding post at Georgetown University and elsewhere. He has a wealth of experience and is glad to be returning to his native Texas, where he can contribute to solutions for the future of this complex and dynamic society.

Dr. Gonzalez follows Jim Vick, who set a national standard in his leadership of Student Affairs during the past 16 years. I thank him once more for his outstanding service. He will continue to contribute to the University as a faculty member in the Department of Mathematics and as our new Faculty Athletics Representative.

- After a bit of arm-twisting, Rod Hart agreed to serve as Dean of the College of Communication. He has been a professor of Speech Communication at UT since 1979 and is the Director of the Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Participation. He did an outstanding job as interim dean and will provide imaginative and wise leadership for years to come.
- After much deliberation, we settled the administrative structure and operating principles for the Jackson School of Geosciences. The School has been authorized by Regents and the Coordinating Board and is now operating as a new college. Dr. William Fisher is serving as Inaugural Dean until the search for a new permanent dean is completed. Bill Fisher's prior service as an academic leader at UT, his scientific leadership internationally, and his federal appointments have given him tremendous stature.
- Finally, James Steinberg has been selected as Dean of the LBJ School of Public Affairs and will join us in January. He is now Vice President and Director of the Foreign Policy Studies Program at the Brookings Institution in Washington. He served as Deputy National Security Adviser to President

Clinton. The LBJ School faculty and staff, the LBJ Foundation, and the University community look forward to his leadership. In the interim, Admiral Bob Inman is serving as Dean of the LBJ School, and we thank him for his superb guidance during this period.

This past year the University made progress in the development of a number of notable academic initiatives. There is time to mention only a few:

- The University of Texas Film Institute and its for-profit production company, Burnt Orange Productions, produced its first film, entitled *The Quiet*. The film is screening this week by invitation to the Toronto International Film Festival. More than 20 UT students worked on the film in various stages of production.
- In a venturesome decision by its membership, the Department of Biomedical Engineering is becoming a jointly administered department spanning three institutions: UT Austin, the UT Health Science Center at Houston, and the M. D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston.
- The Lone Star Education and Research Network (or LEARN, for short) has become operational. It was created to provide advanced networking for its member institutions, which include 26 Texas research-active universities, all nine academic medical centers, and the entire Texas Association of Community Colleges. LEARN will hold and operate the physical assets – optical fiber and associated hardware – needed to support a multi-lambda network offering optimal global connectivity. Dan Updegrave may be the only person who understands all of what I just said. He has provided outstanding leadership in this area, both statewide and nationally.
- Our Neuroscience program has been greatly strengthened by commitments to new faculty and space.
- And in April we established the South Asia Institute to focus on fostering understanding and exchange with that part of the world. This is a natural for Texas, given the great academic assets already on this campus and the tremendous volume of exchange between Texas and South Asia. The Institute is under the direction of Dr. James Brow, professor of anthropology and Asian studies.

What would any Address on the State of the University be without an update of what took place during the recent Legislative session? That's a rhetorical question.

In the final analysis, the University gained little ground during the session but sustained no heavy damage. We received stalwart support from key leaders and genuine friends, but there was focused opposition from others. We retained board-level control of tuition and full retention of indirect costs. But we were unable to convince the Legislature to cap the Top 10 percent admits at 50 percent. State appropriations from general revenue will have an annual growth rate of 1.4 percent through 2007, lower even than the average growth rate of about 1.8 percent per year over the last two decades. With inflation at more than 3 percent now, the value of our state support will continue its 20-year decline in real terms. Also, we had no success with the Tuition Revenue Bond bill, which we had hoped would address the restoration of the dying Experimental Science Building.

Friends and well-wishers have asked me often what I will miss about being the P resident of The University of Texas at Austin. Many wonderful things, but probably not springtime in the odd-numbered years.

The University must find fresh ways to build public support and sympathy among state leadership. This is easier said than done, because much of the difficulty we face actually has little to do with higher education. Political attitudes toward higher education become hardened in the legislative process by the terrible challenges that our leaders face in other sectors, especially in public education and health care.

But we cannot stop trying to explain the tremendous worth built for Texas by this university and others across our state. Texas can win in the race toward the future only by investment in knowledge. Long ago, Thomas Jefferson, late in life and speaking of his hopes for his beloved University of Virginia, urged his state's leaders "to perceive the important truths: that knowledge is power; that knowledge is safety; that knowledge is happiness."

So, friends, the battle is not new, but it is more important than ever, given the globally competitive environment in which our children must make their way. The Texas of 2020 will be far different from Jefferson's Virginia of 1820. If knowledge was central to the important truths then, it sure is now. Finding better ways to convey that message will occupy many hours of my successor's thinking.

In a moment of transition, a departing leader is tempted to convey last wishes to those who will carry the future. At least, I admit that I am tempted. And I am going to give in. I ask your indulgence as I close with four such messages.

To the new President of The University of Texas: Your greatest challenge will be to work out a new, stable financial model for the long-term sustenance of the University. For decades, we have been drifting away from a model built on public higher education as a public good toward one that treats all higher education, even in the public sector, as a private benefit. We have been able to retain our essential character as a public flagship

institution as we have edged along the path we are on, but we are approaching a point of no return. Will the University be forced to become essentially private to sustain its quality? Or will it remain broadly public and simply degrade in quality as it adapts to diminishing public support. Or will a new agreement be found among the leadership of this university and the state to establish a new model that can extend the values of the public flagship indefinitely into the future? In my judgment, this is the most important problem that you, as the new president, will face. Make big plans, indeed. If you succeed in Texas, you will succeed for America, and you will have a strong hand in the preservation of what may well be America's most wondrous invention.

To the leadership of our state and our system: Take the utmost care with what you have here. It is self-evident that The University of Texas at Austin has evolved into one of the great institutions of the world. This is not a brag; it is a fact. Fewer than a hundred universities with equivalent power have ever existed anywhere in the world. We have inherited one, largely because of actions taken by leaders who preceded us. Perhaps it will be possible to build another public institution of competitive strength elsewhere in Texas, but it will take more than will and resources. It will take leadership, luck, and something indefinable in the academic community that becomes the foundation of greatness. There is nothing sure about it. As you – the leaders above this university – work on broader concerns in higher education in Texas, do not take for granted what you have here, and do not harm it. Any diminution of this institution will leave Texas much poorer and less able to address the future; moreover, you probably will not be able to restore damage wrought. Make big plans, but also make sure that support and protection of The University of Texas is a part of them.

To the faculty of The University of Texas: You are the guardians of our academic values and standards, which are at the heart of what this university has become and which underlie its power to bring benefit to the public. I urge you to protect them carefully and to strengthen them even further. You are in a time when you must think penetratingly about academic issues at the center of our proper service: How to teach students best? How to best prepare the leadership that will be needed in Texas and beyond? How to maintain a strong synergy between teaching and research as each sector evolves in organization and practice? How to lead by helping other top universities to find answers to similar questions? The faculty of any leading university must engage each of these questions and develop considered answers. The beginning point is to recognize duty and responsibility, not just opportunity and tradition. Make big plans, because a truly great faculty never stops doing so.

Finally, to the students and alumni of the University: Any university lives very largely in the lives of those touched and motivated by it, first among them its current students and graduates. Reach high in your work and relationships, find the best ways for UT to contribute worth to your lives, and keep exploring its possibilities over your lifetime. And support it, so that it can do for others what it did and does for you. Make big plans, for the quality of the university is expressed in your character, your achievements, and your contribution to family and community.

I am glad to declare that the state of the University is sound. She has faithfully confronted her challenges, and she has remained true to her values. We can all be proud of how she has grown, what she has become, how she has assumed a leadership position with confidence and grace, and how respect grows for her worldwide. This is not to say that the University is as strong or effective as it could be. Improvement is both needed and possible, and attention will be given in that direction for the remainder of my time here. Serious longer-term challenges do confront our university, in company with all others in the public sector. But challenges have marked the University's past, and its success to date provides confidence for the future.

Our core purpose, we say, is to transform lives for the benefit of society. And we have done that successfully for generations – through our teaching, through research opportunities, through the sense of public service we instill in the young people who come here. Everyone who takes part in this noble enterprise called The University of Texas – students, faculty, staff, alumni, and friends – has been moved by the spirit of this place. Hearts and minds are not the same after four years of the UT experience. They are stronger, better prepared, more hopeful, and ready to change the world. The University does indeed transform lives. I know that firsthand, because it has, in this duty, transformed Mary Ann's and mine. It has been our greatest privilege to serve.

Thank you all for being partners in the effort, and thank you all for listening.