



CONVOCATION
September 12, 2017

“Thank you, Provost Donovan. What an exciting time for all of us as we launch our one hundred forty fifth academic year.

Convocation is a meaningful and significant event for our campus community. It provides us the opportunity to celebrate the beginning of another academic year, and to share our aspirations for Texas Christian University in the year ahead.

This is a pivotal time for TCU. At Opening Luncheon a few weeks ago, I was delighted to reveal our TCU brand story – Lead On, which articulates who we are, what we stand for and how we make a unique difference in the world. Our brand is much more than the promise we make; it’s also the delivery of that promise. What we say – our promise – and what we do – how we execute on that promise – create our campus experience and culture. We also know that the strongest institutions are built from the inside out – so the cultivation and care of our brand start and end with each of us. Everyone on our campus must understand the important role we all play in shaping TCU’s future.

We all know these are challenging times we live in – we can see fear, conflict and anger everywhere. In the midst of these times, I ask that we pause and reflect on the university’s role.

The college campus remains the greatest opportunity for individuals to immerse themselves in differences. And we have a duty to challenge each other to see those differences as strengths, rather than divisions.

The hard truth is that ideas among individuals and groups sometimes conflict on university campuses – as also happens in the world beyond the campus. It is the role, then, of the university not to prevent those conflicts from occurring, but to create an environment of mutual respect so that ideas TRULY can be exchanged.

In his book, *Long Walk to Freedom*, Nelson Mandela said: "No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite."

So I challenge us to work together to continue our listening and dialogue to truly hear and better understand one another.

I challenge us to model respectful discourse and instill a setting that allows those in the TCU community to express their differences of opinion and share varying perspectives.

Finally, I challenge us to work together to foster diversity and inclusion. We've already made strides toward this end. Based on an excellent recommendation from our colleagues on Faculty Senate, we have restructured the Diversity, Equity and Inclusiveness Committee, which comprises nearly two dozen members of key campus stakeholder groups. This standing committee's charge is to develop a vision for diversity, equity and inclusiveness across campus and to present its recommendations to me. The committee is being very ably led by Dr. Karen Steele and Ms. Aisha Torrey-Sawyer.

This action represents a key step in shaping a campus community that ensures equality of access, opportunity, participation and representation.

And we have other work to do in order to shape our future.

Vision in Action is TCU's ongoing strategic planning framework used to help the University achieve its full potential. This shared vision, which began in 2003, has propelled us to new heights, including innovative academic programs, new facilities and increasingly impressive faculty, staff and students.

The next chapter, called *Vision in Action: Lead On*, follows and builds upon the successes of 2003's *Vision in Action* and 2012's *Vision in Action: The Academy of Tomorrow*. *Vision in Action: Lead On* features four overarching goals for the University, as outlined by the TCU Board of Trustees.

We are charged to implement these goals:

1. Strengthen Academic Profile and Reputation – This may be our biggest and most far-reaching priority, and it's one that has been in the making throughout our history. We have made tremendous progress here, and we need to keep that momentum going.
2. Strengthen Endowment – It's critical that we work to make the higher education experience we offer at TCU as accessible as reasonably possible. Endowment-supported scholarships help us recruit the best and brightest student body, representing true diversity of thought, background and experience. Endowment-supported faculty can help solidify TCU's presence on the national academic stage. Endowment fuels people, programs and progress through transformative scholarships and professorships.
3. Strengthen TCU Experience and Campus Culture – Equally important to the academic experience that TCU provides are the student experience and campus culture. These complementary pieces are integral to and support our overall promise – one that is truly unique. It's not enough to just attract the best; we must create an environment in which they want to stay, and in which they ultimately thrive.
4. Strengthen Workforce – including both our own employees and our graduates. To be the best, we must nurture the strongest faculty and staff who will then prepare our brightest graduates to use their university degree and experience to make a positive and lasting contribution to society, serving as ethical leaders within their chosen disciplines.

Our Board of Trustees has been thoughtful and ambitious in outlining these goals. They are vital to our success, and they are broad in nature. And we need your help to achieve them. It's now time for members of our Horned Frog community to explore how to define and achieve success. Under the leadership of Provost Nowell Donovan, a steering committee and task forces for each of the four goals have been established, including those of you who have already volunteered and those of you who have been nominated to serve. These committees will help inform the tactics and metrics needed to support and achieve TCU's strategic plan.

We are developing an additional task force focused on facility projects, a critical component that must be examined separately but one that sustains and supports the four goals.

There are four phases to the strategic plan:

- Phase One—Campus Input
- Phases Two and Three—Strategy Preparation
- Phase Four—Strategic Plan Implementation

Phase One is now underway. You will hear much more in coming weeks about opportunities to get involved this year as we work to identify the tactics of our plan. It's imperative that all members of our Horned Frog community have a voice in this process. To be successful, it's going to take ALL of us working together. We will host open forums to discuss further in October. Please watch TCU This Week for more information. We also will have a website – strategicplan.tcu.edu – that will feature both current and historical information and provide updates and opportunities for more involvement. Information on the launch of that site will also be noted in *TCU This Week*.

I can't wait to see what lies ahead for TCU. *Vision in Action: Lead On* is intended to shape the University while influencing its direction for generations to come.

As we work together on *Vision in Action: Lead On* in the years ahead, it's worthwhile to acknowledge that the world needs leadership from:

- Good, smart people who are driven to make a difference, and who are unwilling to compromise their principles in the process
- Leaders who are open to broader perspectives, who encourage and challenge one another, and who are willing to listen to others' viewpoints
- Leaders who have the capacity and conscience to work for the greater good

We want our students to be those leaders – and it is up to all of us here to Lead On into the future.

Together, we will strengthen TCU's academic profile and reputation, endowment, experience and campus culture, and workforce. By doing all of this, we will bolster TCU and its ability to be a force for the greater good.

And above all, I urge each of you to remember who we are at TCU: we are ALL members of the Horned Frog family. We have a special culture here that we all must work to protect and nurture.

Thank you very for your leadership and support. I hope as a community we will all join together to Lead On!"