



Chancellor's Observations on the Beginning of TCU's 140th Year September 2012

This semester, we begin Texas Christian University's 140th year. It's an exciting and ideal time to take a careful look at what has come before and to anticipate and to plan for what lies ahead. We can learn from cautionary tales and challenges overcome, balanced with the optimism of a new academic year, as fresh as the smell of textbooks opened for the first time ever (or perhaps more meaningful in this day and age, a box holding a Kindle or a Nook).

Our Convocation ceremony took a new turn this year, bringing together the voices of faculty, staff, and students to determine how our university can grow from good to great. Through this letter to the TCU community, I would like to reflect upon the same topic, taking a few minutes to look back to the last academic year and to consider the potential of a new one.

The 2011-2012 academic year can certainly be viewed as memorable. On the plus side: an exciting vision for the next decade approved by the Board of Trustees, excellent enrollment and retention gains, the addition of accomplished new faculty and the endowment of new faculty positions, the beginning of construction of two new residence halls, completion of the Amon G. Carter Stadium project, recognition as a "great college to work for," the choice of the "big idea" (or Quality Enhancement Plan) that will be a transformative force for our university, and the completion of a spectacularly successful fund-raising campaign.

On the other side of the balance sheet were challenges to TCU's integrity and image at a time when universities are under especially close scrutiny. These challenges also brought the chance to take bold and responsive action, to show that we live out the values we espouse. As we begin a new year, we have the opportunity to build upon the achievements of 2011-2012, learn from its disappointments, and move forward with intention and integrity.

Growing enrollment and rising retention

Since 1873, we have been in the business of education, and we continue to be very fortunate to be considered a "hot" school. Over the past six decades, TCU's total enrollment has increased slowly and steadily, reaching 9,518 in the fall 2011 semester.

While our enrollment goal in recent years was 1,600 incoming freshmen, actual enrollment exceeded 1,800 for three consecutive years, including last year. Those incoming classes were outstanding. However, we were quite aware that they were larger than optimal size. While these classes were larger than previous class sizes, the campus community made adjustments to warmly welcome all incoming students. On an extremely positive note, the vital freshman-to-sophomore retention rate had steadily improved to 87 percent last year. Currently it is actually at 89.7%, another good gain.

Again this year, we have excellent enrollment and retention gains. Here are some highlights:

- Our total enrollment is up slightly at 9,725, still well under the 10,000 cap set by the Board of Trustees.
- Undergraduate enrollment at 8,456 is also up, while graduate enrollment at 1,269 is down slightly. Of course, our goal is to increase the number of graduate students, so we still have work to do in this area.
- The Class of 2016 comprises 1,853 entering first-year students, selected from 19,400 applicants. This makes TCU the second most selective school in Texas, after Rice.
- This year's freshman class is defined by the highest SAT and ACT scores in TCU history.
- The freshman-to-sophomore retention rate has risen almost three points since last year to a remarkable 89.7 percent. This is a clear indicator that we are doing something very well as we go about our business of educating today's students.

Addition of accomplished new faculty and staff

As with enrollment, the size of our community also has grown, rising by 99 faculty members and 134 staff members to 1,891 last fall. In spite of student growth, the faculty-student ratio improved to about 1:13 in 2010-2011. Thus we were able to sustain the personalized TCU experience. A number of our teacher-scholars were honored with significant national and international recognitions.

This year we have 50 new members of the faculty. With 581 in the full-time faculty ranks, 63 professors hold endowed positions — more than 11 percent of the total and certainly a point of pride. In recent years, donors have created 13 endowed positions.

Recognition as a "Great College to Work For"

TCU was recognized by The Chronicle of Higher Education as one of 43 "Great Colleges to Work For" last year. This reaffirmed our commitment to further improve the campus environment for faculty and staff — after all, they shape the TCU experience for our students.

We learned this summer that TCU again has been selected as a "Great College to Work For," this time on the new honor roll that comprises 42 of the 103 schools now on the list. We are delighted that TCU received one of the two highest scores in the country on the survey of faculty and staff upon which the recognition is based. Even better, TCU was recognized in 11 of the 12 categories surveyed.

Determining and implementing the "Big Idea"

Another important element in TCU's forward momentum is the Quality Enhancement Plan, or QEP, a critical component of our reaffirmation of the accreditation process done every 10 years. Faculty and staff across campus worked hard to determine the "big idea" that will focus our efforts. Last academic year, a number of exciting proposals were submitted, all with tremendous merit, and I would like to thank everyone who participated.

The big idea has been selected — *Global Citizenship 2020: A Plan for Comprehensive Internationalization at TCU*. Global Citizenship 2020 will elevate TCU's national profile by building a first-rate comprehensive global education program.

This Quality Enhancement Plan will be submitted as part of our overall SACS reaffirmation of accreditation process. The visiting SACS team will be on our campus in March 2013 to evaluate TCU's compliance with their standards. The Quality Enhancement Plan signifies that we have a

mission appropriate for an institution of higher education and that we have the resources and programs to sustain our mission. We look forward to sharing TCU's work with our colleagues from SACS.

Living up to our reputation

The low point of the last academic year was the arrest of several of our students. This news quickly spread across the city, state and nation — in large part because of TCU's reputation for integrity. I fully believe that our campus community dealt with this issue with transparency and character that in many ways has strengthened our reputation for forthrightness. And out of the negative came good, including a student creed and new leadership initiatives.

Student leaders developed the student creed, which is becoming an integral part of a TCU education. It is short and simple: "As TCU students we commit to excellence by serving with respect, learning with passion, and leading with integrity." At this year's Opening Luncheon for all faculty and staff, Brent Folan spoke on behalf of the Student Government Association. He recited the student creed and then challenged us – faculty and staff – to take time to consider how we might commit to the creed in our thoughts, words and actions in our daily dealings with students. I intend to follow up on that challenge and hope you will join me in this worthy endeavor.

New leadership initiatives include broadening Project Step Up, a program to empower student leaders that previously was available only for athletic team captains, but now will reach all campus leaders. We remain committed to cultivating a spirit of leadership on our campus, and Class of 2015 Horned Frogs will take part in this afternoon's inaugural Second Year Pinning Ceremony to mark their passage to sophomores and to emphasize their growing responsibilities as campus leaders.

Creating "The Academy of Tomorrow"

Vision in Action has boldly shaped TCU through two distinct phases of strategic planning. Building upon the success of VIA, the Board of Trustees, led by Chairman Clarence Scharbauer III, last January approved a new vision that builds upon Vision in Action that will influence TCU for the next decade and beyond. Our challenge: to anticipate and prepare for "The Academy of Tomorrow" while remaining true to our overarching vision: "to be a world-class, values-centered university."

You can be confident that TCU will gain recognition as a great national university by maintaining our historic character as a person-centered, residential, liberal arts school *rather than by changing our identity*. Our goal remains focused on taking bright students with uncommon potential and transforming them into ethical leaders who impact the world through research, scholarship and creative activity of high quality. This will enhance the scholarly reputation of students and faculty alike.

To further enhance TCU's reputation, the Board of Trustees provided direction in three key areas:

- Academic profile/reputation
- Size/balance
- Optimal campus environment

Each component of the extended Vision in Action plan, which is called "The Academy of Tomorrow" has been assigned to an administrator for oversight. Many of you, no doubt, have

been tapped to serve in a variety of ways as we move down this new path. We will release updates on our progress in the future.

Without a doubt, filling in the framework of our ongoing vision will be a key focus of the 2012-2013 academic year. We have appointed eight committees to guide us in this process so we will be ready when resources become available.

Design development has started on the first phase of an Intellectual Commons on the east campus. This will be as transformative as the Campus Commons has been on the west campus. The Intellectual Commons is being designed to foster innovation and collaboration and to create interdisciplinary connections

It will include:

- A new instructional building east of the Mary Couts Burnett Library for classrooms, faculty offices, food service, library use and interdisciplinary space
- Designated space for the TCU Energy Institute
- An addition to the Annie Richardson Bass Building and renovation of existing space for the Harris College of Nursing & Health Sciences
- And a transformation of the Mary Couts Burnett Library into a technology and multimedia-rich environment designed for today's students and those of the future

Work is under way on our two new residence halls, the first phase of the Worth Hills Development. The facilities are scheduled to open in fall 2013 with 400 beds total. With single and double room suites, the halls are designed to enhance the student experience. At our Trustees' directive, we aspire to provide residential space as long as demand remains strong.

The Campaign for TCU

The Campaign for TCU spectacularly concluded with the end of the 2011-2012 academic year. The campaign raised \$434 million — \$184 million above the original \$250 million goal. This included \$67 million for faculty and academic program support. Thirteen new endowed faculty positions were created. Donors contributed \$108.7 million in new scholarship support — an amazing achievement. Campaign gifts underwrote the construction or extensive renovation of 26 facilities.

TCU's invitation to join the Big 12 gave special impetus to finish the completely donor-funded new Amon G. Carter Stadium in time for the first game in the new conference. Of course, this required completion of the University's largest fund-raising project ever. With the conference change, TCU is performing on a larger stage and can expect even greater visibility. Reuniting with historic rivals such as the University of Texas and Baylor, we are looking forward to — and already seeing — stronger ties with Big 12 schools, academic as well as athletic.

I hope you had an opportunity to participate in the dedication of the stadium last week and attend the first game there on Saturday. The support of our hometown and community leaders was enormous and underscored that TCU is truly Fort Worth's "home team." This is true in the broadest sense of the term as we forge strong connections and partnerships throughout the greater community.

Our own campus community played a significant role in the campaign. For example, faculty, staff and student representatives served on the campaign steering committee throughout, and faculty and staff reached one of the highest giving rates among university faculty/staff in the country —

75 percent. And I would like to say a very sincere “thank you” for your demonstrated belief in TCU.

Going forward

The Campaign Scholarship Initiative brought almost \$109 million for student scholarships and financial aid. Though the campaign has concluded, keeping TCU’s doors open to the most deserving and accomplished students remains imperative. Consequently, seeking additional scholarship funding will remain our highest fund-raising priority during the 2012-2013 academic year.

Creating "The Academy of Tomorrow" and truly realizing the vision of being a world-class, values-centered university will require extensive resources and unprecedented support. During the coming year, our Advancement staff will be analyzing and evaluating data, working with administrators, faculty and staff to develop fund-raising priorities, and weighing the possibilities for the *next* campaign.

This is my 10th year at TCU. Consequently, I will be trying to look at everything with fresh eyes. I will be asking many “why” questions. We owe it to ourselves not to take anything for granted, especially since our economy remains uncertain. Among the many questions we will consider is how we can continue to be fiscally prudent and good stewards of TCU’s resources, particularly in regard to benefits.

The success of *The Campaign for TCU* made one thing perfectly clear: *Individually we contribute. Together we transform.* We first used this phrase to describe our generous donors. But it represents an even greater ideal: that together we can accomplish exponentially more. I appreciate the unique role you play here and all your contributions to TCU and the greater good.

With so many exciting developments on campus, we indeed have the potential for a transformative 2012-2013 academic year. Without a doubt, this university is too good not to become great!