



FALL CONVOCATION
September 13, 2016

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

Convocation is a meaningful and important 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.

As we do this, it’s especially important for us to focus on WHY we are here – and acknowledge the critical responsibility we have within our society.

I want to take a moment to review our mission, our vision and our values, all of which serve to center us on who we are, what we aspire to be and what most powerfully guides us.

- Our mission is to educate individuals to think and act as ethical leaders and responsible citizens in the global community.
- Our vision is to be a world-class, values-centered university.
- And our values include academic achievement, personal freedom and integrity, the dignity of and respect for the individual, and a deep heritage that includes inclusiveness and service.

These are not words we take lightly. As you reflect on these statements, you’ll notice that they convey a commitment to our traditions and time-tested principles of respect, civility and compassion.

We all know these are challenging times we live in – we can see fear, conflict and anger everywhere – from college campuses to the national political stage. In the midst of these times, I challenge us to pause and reflect on the university’s role as an open marketplace of ideas.

Indeed, the college campus remains the greatest opportunity for individuals to immerse themselves in differences, and the value of free expression must be a protected platform for facilitating cultural understanding.

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.

Our listening to ideas different from our own may actually lead us to discover that we have more in common than we think.

In the coming year, it is my hope that TCU can be a shining example of how to engage in discussions that are passionate and important, while also remaining respectful, constructive and focused on understanding.

American law professor, legal and social policy writer and best-selling novelist Stephen Carter had this to say about civility: Teaching civility is an obligation of the family.

Here at TCU, we have the tremendous responsibility – and the tremendous honor – to shape and transform the leaders who, tomorrow, will shape and transform our world. This responsibility inspires me every day.

We have a special culture here that we all must work to protect and nurture. It's up to all of us, and I'm confident we can meet the challenge.

In fact, I am energized and optimistic about this year and what we will accomplish together.

Let's work together to continue our listening and dialogue to truly hear and better understand one another.

Let's work together to model civil discourse and instill a setting that allows those in the TCU community to express their differences of opinion and share varying perspectives.

Finally, let's work together to foster diversity and inclusion.

We are ALL members of the Horned Frog family. And as a family, we may not always agree, but we have an obligation to be civil to one another.

Before I close, I'd like to turn your attention to a video showcasing one of our new students. His name is Manyiel Mel, and this video, which was wildly popular on social media this summer, captures him receiving his TCU acceptance letter, making his dream come true.

I can't think of a better reminder of why we are all here. With our great responsibility also comes great joy – let us never forget that.

Our future indeed is bright when we have students like Manyiel who represent a world that is smaller than ever before – a world that is represented right here on our campus, creating deeper understanding.

I wish you all this same sense of enthusiasm and purpose – may we each feel as excited to be a Horned Frog as our friend Manyiel!

We are so fortunate today to have Manyiel and his host family with us. Would you all please stand so we can recognize you? We are so happy you are here – welcome to TCU.”