

Good afternoon everyone

I want to begin by offering my warmest welcome and thank you to all the faculty, staff, students, alumni, business and community partners who carved time out of their very busy schedules to attend this address today.

Before we start, I would ask that you all join me in a moment of thought and prayer for all of those impacted by hurricanes Harvey and Irma.

I also want to recognize members of the university's senior leadership team in attendance—Provost and Executive Vice-President Tim Chandler, Vice Presidents Traevena Byrd, Marina Cooper, Leah Cox, Brian DeFillipis, Daraius Irani, Deb Moriarty, Joe Oster, as well as TU Police Chief Bernie Gerst, Athletic Director Tim Leonard and Chief of Staff Sam Sidh.

I would like to acknowledge the deans of our six colleges—David Vanko, Shohreh Kaynama, Terry Cooney, Susan Picinich, Lisa Plowfield, and Laurie Mullen, as well as Janet Delany, dean of Graduate Studies and Deb Nolan, dean of University Libraries.

I also want to extend a special thanks to many board members from the Alumni Association, the Towson University Foundation and Board of Visitors who are all joining us today.

To all of our board members and those that serve on the college advisory boards, as well as our donors—thank you. Your support has been highly instrumental in lifting TU to its current place of prominence and national recognition, and your continued support will indeed be even more crucial as we lead this university together toward an even brighter future and even greater success.

Again thank you for your leadership!

I have now enjoyed my 19th month as TU's president and already this twice-a-year tradition—addressing our entire university community—has quickly become something that I very much look forward to.

The address provides me the opportunity to thank everyone for supporting me and TU, reflect and report on the university's progress and achievements of the past year, especially those related to the eight

presidential priorities and the university strategic plan. And, finally, highlight some major issues and actions we will be facing and working on this upcoming year.

So this afternoon I will update you on several of the priorities as well as on the state of our university.

However, to begin I want to share what efforts both Towson University and the University System of Maryland are taking with regard to actions and decisions, both already determined and those being considered by the current administration, that impact our campus, our system and higher education as a whole.

At the forefront are those actions and decisions drastically reducing federal funding of research in critical areas such as climate change and health provided via the National Institutes of Health and the National Science Foundation; elimination of support for the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities; elimination of several independent agencies such as the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars; possible reductions to the State Department's Bureau of

Educational and Cultural Affairs where the Fulbright Program for international exchange is housed; and finally

actions or decisions that will directly impact our most vulnerable students, including possible cuts in funding to various programs, such as Pell, that provide aid to low income students. And the most recent decision by the administration to rescind DACA, affecting almost 800,000 dreamers who signed on to a federal program in hopes that the place that they consider home since childhood will allow them to stay and contribute to its success while realizing their fullest potential.

I want to provide my assurances to the TU community that both this university and the University System of Maryland are working very closely and very hard to advocate for full federal funding in the areas of research, scholarship, creative work and exchange that I described.

We are working very closely and very hard for the continuation of federal aid for low-income and minority students at their current levels;

And finally, for a solution that restores DACA for the almost 800,000 current dreamers as well as a way forward for others.

Please understand that this was not intended as a complete listing of areas we are working on and my intention is not to be political in any way.

Instead it is to inform everyone that the university and the University System of Maryland are indeed working in collaboration with each other—each and every day—as well as with leading higher education advocacy and policy groups such as the Association of American State Colleges and Universities, the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities, and the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges to advocate for funding and programs that we firmly believe support academic excellence in teaching, scholarship and creative work as well as support the success of our students, our faculty, our institutions and higher education in this nation.

Again thank you for your continued support as we all work together on this most important agenda.

Moving on to the state of the university, I am very pleased to report that despite the fiscal challenges facing our state and the significant downward

enrollment pressures universities, nationwide, are experiencing, the state of our university—Towson University—remains strong and is even stronger than when I delivered my very first address on this stage in April 2016.

As I shared this past spring, through the tremendous efforts and achievements of our faculty, students and staff, and with the support of Chancellor Caret, the Regents, Governor Hogan, legislative leaders such as President Miller and Speaker Busch, and thousands of alumni, business and community partners, we as a university are indeed at an inflection point—a decisive moment in Towson University’s proud history that marks we are on the cusp of an era of very significant and very positive change.

One signal of that inflection point for TU is our growing reputation as a first-choice institution and our repeated success in attracting, retaining, and graduating more academically prepared and more diverse students, in both our graduate and undergraduate programs.

This year we received over 13,800 applications for the freshmen class of 2017, an increase of almost 12 percent compared to last fall. We enrolled

2,743 freshmen, 21 percent from outside of Maryland, and also welcomed almost 2,400 new transfer students, a 10 percent increase over 2016.

This growth in undergraduate enrollment was led by the Fisher College of Science and Mathematics and the College of Business and Economics. The demand for their programs speaks volumes about the efforts of the faculty and staff, the leadership of the deans—Dave Vanko and Shohreh Kaynama—as well as the national reputation for excellence achieved by both of those colleges.

This fall we also welcomed almost 850 new graduate students, an increase of almost 12 percent over last year and one of the largest graduate classes in recent years. This strong upward trend in graduate enrollment was led by the College of Education. Up by nearly 30 percent again, this increase speaks volumes about the COE's national reputation for excellence. Dean Mullen please bring back to your college and share with your faculty and staff my sincerest appreciation for their commitment to excellence in graduate education and my kudos for a very successful enrollment this fall.

The fall 2017 incoming class of almost 6,000 new students is the largest in TU's history, one of the most academically prepared, and the most diverse ever, with more than 46 percent identifying as a racial minority and 24 percent as African American. Our new students come to us from 25 states and 14 countries outside the U.S.

This record new class results in another first for TU. The projected enrollment for this fall is 22,499 and will be the largest enrollment in our university's history--quality enrollment growth. When many universities are struggling and many are in fact declining, we have quality enrollment growth that is characterized by increased academic preparedness and diversity. These results warm the hearts of both the president as well as the provost. Isn't that right Provost Chandler?

I want to thank Dave Fedorchek and his admissions team, Dave Horne and his team in financial aid, Mike Berends and his team in enrollment marketing, Dean Delaney and her team in Graduate Studies as well as the deans, faculty and staff in all the colleges for bringing to TU an outstanding fall 2017 class and further clear evidence that Towson University is a first

choice, vibrant university that is vital to the economic and cultural success of greater Baltimore, Maryland and the Mid-Atlantic region.

The performance of our student-athletes—on the field, in the classroom and in the community—is a source of great pride for our university.

This year women's lacrosse advanced to post-season NCAA play, our men's lacrosse won the CAA Championship for the third consecutive year and advanced to the NCAA Final Four for the third time in their history, and our women's track and field team —I am a huge fan of this team —won their first CAA Championship under first-year Coach Mike Jackson. Coach Jackson is here today with three of his student-athletes. Coach, would you and the students please stand so we can give you all our thanks for a spectacular season.

This summer five, or more than 25 percent, of TU teams earned the NCAA Academic Progress Public Recognition Award for posting academic scores in the top 10 percent of their sport nationally. They are men's basketball, men's golf, women's cross-country, gymnastics and tennis.

Seven of Towson’s athletics teams boast the top academic scores in the Colonial Athletic Conference, and 14 of our 19 teams have the highest academic score for all NCAA Division 1 schools in the University System of Maryland—the most of any university in the USM.

I want to offer my recognition and thanks to the student-athletes, coaches, staff, the Athletic Academic Achievement Center and Director of Athletics Tim Leonard for placing academic achievement, where it belongs, at the forefront of the student-athlete experience here at TU.

Another signal of TU’s inflection point is the repeated national recognition and accolades the university is receiving for its outstanding academic quality and commitment to academic excellence. Over the past year, Towson University was named to several nationally recognized “Best University” rankings including:

- *Money* magazine: ranked Towson University among the nation’s Best Colleges joining Johns Hopkins and University of Maryland, College Park, as the highest-ranked institutions in Maryland.

- *Forbes*, once again ranked Towson University in its 2017 Best Colleges rankings
- And for the 32nd consecutive year *U.S. News and World Report* ranked Towson University as a top-15 university in the Northeast.
- And finally *Washington Monthly*: Twelve years ago *Washington Monthly* decided America needed a different kind of college ranking—one not focused on universities known for exclusivity, high tuition costs and high levels of student debt. As they describe it, the prestigious *Washington Monthly* rankings rank colleges for what they do for their students and for our nation. They assess three pillars in their method, social mobility, research and service.

Colleges that enroll lower and middle income students and successfully graduate them do very well in this ranking. So do universities producing the next generation of scientists and those that build an ethos of public obligation by sending their graduates into public and community service.

In their latest national rankings of public and private universities, released just a few weeks ago, *Washington Monthly* ranks TU 64th in the nation amongst master's universities, and Towson University is the highest ranked public university in any category within the state of Maryland.

One of Towson University's great strengths is the excellence and commitment of our outstanding faculty.

The contributions of our faculty are felt through the important scholarly and creative work they contribute to their disciplines; the teaching excellence they engender in the classroom; the mentoring they offer to our students; and the service they provide to our university, the academy and our greater Baltimore community.

Recently a team of faculty from the Fisher College of Science and Mathematics Departments of Biological Sciences, Chemistry, Physics Astronomy and Geosciences, in collaboration with colleagues from the Center for STEM Excellence, University Admissions and the Career

Center, were awarded a \$1 million national grant from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI) to transform undergraduate minority student success in STEM.

This highly prestigious and highly competitive grant is part of the Institutes' Inclusive Excellence Initiative. The national call for proposals attracted over 500 submissions with the Towson University team's submission being one of just 24 grants awarded.

Other awardees joining TU included Tufts University, UCLA and Washington University in Saint Louis.

This unbelievably cross disciplinary and cross divisional team aims, as part of this grant, to establish the Towson University Research Enhancement Program, to bring authentic research experiences to a large and diverse group of students early in their undergraduate career.

The program will recruit diverse students who are interested in science, create a curriculum and support system that promotes the students'

participation in multiple research projects, and then continues to provide assistance in conducting research after graduation from TU.

This is very important work as research shows that undergraduates engaged in research are more likely to persist in science and math, to graduate, and, finally, to pursue STEM careers.

An additional noteworthy point is that the Fisher College has seen an 84 percent increase in minority student majors since 2012.

Joining us today are the co-P.I.'s Drs. Laura Gough and Matt Hemm, and their team of faculty colleagues, Drs. Miranda, Tsuji, Margulies, Shainheit, Moore, Casey, Snyder, Masters and Stapleton. And also lending their expertise and experience to this team, Jen Zeigenfus from admissions and Lori Logan Bennett, director of TU's Career Center.

Would you all please stand so we can recognize you and thank you for your tremendous efforts on behalf of TU and all of higher education.

Last spring, I reported to you that our 2017 legislative session was historic for our university and will set the bar for what we plan to achieve in the years ahead. We thanked the state for its support of our new Science Complex, which will provide much needed state-of-the-art teaching and research laboratories as well as classrooms in support of our growing STEM faculty and students.

Construction for the building will begin this very fall just to the south of Stephens Hall and when the new Science Complex opens in fall 2020, it will be the largest academic building on campus, even larger than the College of Liberal Arts, with more than 10,000 students taking classes there each year.

The \$160 million College of Health Professions Building is next in line as part of the USM Capital Priorities. At present the College of Health Professions can only enroll 15 percent of its applicants because of space limitations, while the State of Maryland looks to fill more than 22,000 unfilled positions in the health professions.

As the state's largest provider of health profession graduates—our top employers, including the University of Maryland Medical System, Johns Hopkins Hospital, MedStar, GBMC and St. Joe's—are eagerly awaiting the completion of this project in 2023. We remain on track and committed to these two very important next-in-line academic building projects.

By now I think everyone here is getting the sense that cranes and construction will be a major part of campus life over the next seven years. But those signs of investment are great indicators of TU's growing importance to the USM, greater Baltimore and the State of Maryland.

With Burdick opening later this fall, the residence tower renovation completed next spring, the conversion of the Marriott to a residence hall and office space next summer, the beginning of the Union renovation and expansion in mid-2018—yes, I said the university union renovation and expansion starts next year—the additions to South Campus playing and practice facilities, the renovation of the Glen Complex and, of course, the completion of the Science Complex and College of Health Professions Building. . .

Well, as I said, there will be many cranes and much construction for the next few years—and though challenging to live and work through—it says much about TU’s future.

When our alumni visit campus after not being here for several years, they often tell me they simply don’t recognize the place, how fabulous it looks and how amazing the growth has been.

I take that opportunity to tell them it is only the beginning, that almost \$700 million dollars in capital investment will be made to our physical plant over the next seven years. And, that is more than has been invested in Towson University’s campus during the previous 20 years.

I tell them that if you think TU’s campus has changed in the past 20 years—you haven’t seen anything—just wait to see the transformation the next seven years bring.

I want to give our colleagues in facilities a special shout-out for their leadership of this impressive agenda—Scott Guckert, Kris Phillips and Kevin Peterson. I hope you three have been catching up on your sleep in

preparation for the next few years. Seriously though, thank you on behalf of our entire university for your leadership in this most important phase of TU's history.

Finally, it has been a very busy five months since my last address and I would like to highlight some of the progress led by so many of our colleagues across campus on three of the presidential priorities. Updates on all eight priorities can be found on the presidential priorities homepage on our website.

First is BTU – Towson University's Partnerships at Work for Greater Baltimore. BTU was launched to create a framework to give greater presence, priority and purpose to the already existing 160 partnerships U faculty, students, and staff have established in Greater Baltimore.

Earlier this year and over the summer, the BTU Council, comprised of 28 representatives from across campus and across the colleges, continued the important work of identifying, classifying and clarifying the many campus partnerships we have. The BTU Council will soon release its first

report to the campus community—an update communicating the current status and to-date realized outcomes of the BTU Initiative.

I want to thank the entire council for their commitment and hard work on this important priority, and acknowledge the leadership of Bobbi Laur, as its chair, and the efforts of Matt Durrington and Chris Jensen, who along with Bobbi, serve as the BTU Leadership Team.

And again I encourage everyone to learn more about this presidential priority at the BTU microsite.

This summer two university-wide committees finished the discovery phase associated with their initiatives by completing a comprehensive inventory of best practices and conducting a needs analysis in support of establishing two world-class centers here at TU—both presidential priorities.

One center is focused on supporting faculty excellence while the second center is aimed at supporting career readiness and placement for our graduates and alumni.

The 21-member committee focusing on faculty excellence developed plans to establish a world-class Center for the Support of Faculty Teaching, Scholarly and Creative Work. The committee has presented their recommendations to the University Senate, the provost, myself and President's Council regarding specifications, organization, and funding requirements for facilities, technology, collaborative space, seminars, teaching workshops and staff, as well as stipends to support faculty development and promote academic innovation.

The committee recommended that the entity to be established be named the Faculty Academic Center for Excellence and that its work focus on three central aspects of faculty life—career-long learning and teaching; research, scholarship and creative activities; and mentoring and advising.

After formal feedback from the University Senate, the committee will complete its work this fall. A faculty-led advisory board will be established to advise on programming, a staffing/hiring plan and assessment protocols. The process of identifying a physical space for the center will begin and plans call for the implementation and funding model to be completed by early 2018.

I want to thank all the members of this committee for offering their experience and expertise to this important work. I also want to acknowledge the outstanding leadership that Vice Provost Maggie Reitz and Dr. Babu Bharadwaj provided to this initiative.

The 22-member Career Readiness Committee also completed extensive preparatory work that included a stakeholder assessment and best practices research in eight areas of focus aimed at providing our students and our alumni with support in their career management, as well as creating strong connections with business, schools, nonprofits, governmental agencies and the arts, so TU can better align their talent needs with our academic programs and our graduates.

In May, the committee's recommendations were presented to Vice President Moriarty and the President's Council to establish a campus-wide career ecosystem committed to specific outcomes for every TU graduate with the goal to reach, engage and connect with every student in an individualized way—early and often.

The committee will be presenting their recommendations regarding initiatives and resource requests to the University Senate for their formal input this fall. Planning calls for an implementation and funding model to be completed in early 2018.

I want to thank all the members of this committee for sharing their knowledge, insight, and enthusiasm for this important priority and to Lori Logan-Bennett for her outstanding leadership as chair of the committee.

Again—all of the updates—including available reports and recommendations—for each of the presidential priorities can be found on the presidential priorities website.

Less than two weeks ago, I scooped Rita's Italian Ice, consoled, hi-fived and hugged the many parents and loved ones who were helping more than 5,200 of our students unpack and set up their lives in our residence halls here on campus.

Move-in is one of my very favorite experiences. I have participated in move-in each year as a provost and now as a president.

I feel truly blessed to share in some of the most joyous but often some of the most emotional moments that parents and their children experience.

Dozens of families thanked me for the incredibly speedy and organized move-in we provide and how that very well-oiled machine relieves so much of the stress they are feeling that day,

I want to thank all those that make move-in day special for our students and their families—TUPD, Facilities, Parking, Res Life, Housing, New Student Programs, Student Activities, the over 300 student and staff volunteers—as they entrust us with their first, last, or as one mom through her tears of joy and sadness told me—her one and only child.

It is in those touching moments with moms, dads, aunts, uncles, grandmas, guardians and friends, that I am reminded of our very important role as educators, mentors and even guardians of our students.

It is a responsibility and privilege I know we all we take very seriously and it informs all that we do as a university community.

At Convocation less than two weeks ago, I asked our new students— a generation that believes we can all do well by doing good in the world—to start here.

Start by making Towson University a better place—a place more welcoming and inclusive for all our community members; a place more open to the sharing of ideas through thoughtful debate; a place that is even more important to the future success of Greater Baltimore and Maryland.

In closing, I ask all of us to join our new students in that pledge and, as president, I want to thank everyone for all you do each and every day to lift up Towson University and each other.

Because of all of you, there is much much to be proud of at Towson University, and there are indeed great things ahead! Thank you!