

President's Fall Address
November 12, 2019

Good afternoon, everyone.

I want to begin by offering my warmest welcome and thank you to the faculty, staff, students, alumni, business and community partners who are here with us today.

It is my pleasure to recognize members of the university's senior leadership team and recognize and thank the deans of our six colleges, including Deb Nolan, dean of University Libraries, and interim deans Greg Faller and Karen Eskow.

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

And finally I would like to give a shoutout to my husband Trevor Iles, who many know loves this university and its people as much as I do. Trevor is all-in for TU!

I will start by saying, it is a great time to be a Towson Tiger! TU is a university on the move with great momentum—and it is evident in so, so many ways.

This fall we welcomed 19,000 undergraduates and close to 3,000 graduate students to campus, including more than 2,100 students transferring in. Our freshman class of 2023 numbers more than 2,700 and is the most diverse and most academically prepared in TU history.

Together, these new students—from 33 states and 26 countries—bring TU's projected enrollment to nearly 23,000.

This community of diverse and talented students makes our campus vibrant and vital—and positions Towson University as the largest university, public or private, in Greater Baltimore, and the second largest and the fastest growing in all of Maryland.

Today I will share highlights of our progress as well as the many accolades our campus and our community members are receiving.

First, TU continues to achieve recognition from the major national rankings services in higher education. This past year Towson University was listed as:

- one of the top public universities in the nation by *Forbes*.
- one of the top colleges in the northeast by *Princeton Review*.
- and one of the top two universities in Maryland by *Money* magazine for the return on investment a TU degree gives to our graduates.

In *U.S. News & World Report 2020 Guide to Colleges and Universities*:

- Towson University was ranked for the very first time as a Top National University AND achieved recognition as one of the Top 100 Public Universities in the nation, ahead of universities such as Georgia State University, West Virginia University, Old Dominion and University of Memphis.
- This new category and this new top 100 ranking truly reflects a university on the rise and points to the excellence of our academic programs, our faculty, our facilities, as well as TU's commitment to advance world-class research, scholarship and creative work.

The university's national recognition through rankings is just one indication of our strong momentum. The new construction projects and transformation of the physical campus is nothing short of extraordinary.

By now you have all seen the soon-to-be largest building on campus, the Science Complex, now at its full height. It will be bustling with students and faculty in its classrooms and in its labs when it opens in fall 2020.

The next capital priority is the construction of the first-ever building that will house TU's College of Health Professions. Both planning and design funding have been secured from the state with the support of our Regents and University System. This new building will soon be taking shape anchoring the northeast side of campus toward downtown Towson and is scheduled to open in spring 2024.

And it could not come soon enough, with a shortage statewide of over 23,000 unfilled positions. Towson University is the leading provider of healthcare professionals in Maryland and the new College of Health Professions Hall will add state-of-the-art instructional and research space so TU can continue to meet that ever-growing demand.

Since arriving on campus as TU's president in 2016, I have had the privilege and the pleasure to work with so many faculty, staff and administrators leading efforts to transform TU's campus to support its growing role as a pre-eminent university for our region and our state.

The Science Complex and CHP will soon join the recent expansion of Burdick Hall ... the New University Union scheduled to open in fall 2021 ... the completed renovation of the Residence Tower ... the almost completed renewal of Glen Dining ... the transformation of the Marriott Hotel to much needed residential space renamed as 10 West ... the upcoming opening of TU's first Business Engagement Center in what was the Armory in downtown Towson ... and last week after 37 years as a temporary building, the Stephens Annex is no more.

Yes, construction is messy and often creates hassle but this over \$700 million in capital being invested—the largest investment in TU in more than 25 years—is also a signal of TU’s vitality and importance to Maryland. It is indeed a university on the rise.

Add that to the fact TU opened amazing new Women’s Soccer and Field Hockey Complexes. It is the single largest investment in women’s athletics in its history.

The demand for a high-quality education has never been stronger and we have it here at TU. None of this would be possible without our world-class faculty and world-class staff.

This year the excellence of our faculty and staff was once again recognized with the most prestigious awards bestowed by the USM Board of Regents.

Today I’d like everyone to join me to celebrate Jayne French from the Center for Student Diversity. This year Jayne was selected by the Board of Regents to receive their highest honor for her excellence and impact in the category of Inclusion, Multiculturalism, and Diversity. If that was not enough, Jayne is the very first person ever, and on any campus, to win TWO USM Board of Regents Staff Awards for her excellence and impact. Thank you Jayne for the difference you make.

I also want to recognize and celebrate Vincent Thomas, professor of dance. This past year Professor Thomas was honored by the Regents with their highest and most prestigious recognition—the USM Board of Regents Faculty Award for Excellence in Scholarship, Research and Creative Activity. He is an internationally renowned choreographer, dancer and educator, and Professor Thomas is a trailblazer—an artist who truly makes an impact—in the classroom and in the community as he works to invent and inspire dance that explores life, love and social justice. Thank you, Professor Thomas.

Our TU community is also very, very proud of Joyce Garczynski, assistant university librarian for development and communication, who recently received the 2019 Association of College & Research Libraries Award for her leadership, especially her commitment to collaboration among librarians.

Last but certainly not least, TU Presidential Scholar and alumna Dr. Nancy Grasmick is also with us today. Dr. Grasmick this year was honored with the Excellence in Education Award from the Maryland Association of Boards of Education for her exemplary leadership and service to public education in Maryland. In 1991, Dr. Grasmick made history as Maryland's first female state superintendent of schools. During 20 years in that position, the longest tenure of any appointed superintendent in U.S. history and serving under four governors, she guided Maryland's public schools to a national #1 ranking.

Nancy has a saying, "If you rest, you rust." She continues her pioneering leadership here at TU as well as serving as the first female President of the Board at the Kennedy Krieger Institute. Thank you, Nancy, for your leadership, your support and your trust.

Towson University's success is fueled by a strong commitment to academic excellence and transformational student opportunities for mentorship and research with our outstanding faculty. I take great pride today in recognizing the achievements of some of our faculty.

I would like to commend faculty in the undergraduate cybersecurity program on two most prestigious national accreditations.

First, TU is one of only four institutions in the world, including the U.S. Naval and U.S. Air Force Academies, to receive the renowned cybersecurity accreditation, its most rigorous credential from ABET, the national higher education Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology.

And if that isn't enough, TU is the only institution in Maryland and one of but 20 in the U.S., to receive the National Center of Academic Excellence in Cyber Operations from the National Security Agency and Department of Homeland Security.

TU was again named by the Society of Actuaries as an International Center of Actuarial Excellence, the only such institution in Maryland and one of just 32 institutions worldwide, to receive this rigorous five-year certification. I'd like to commend all the faculty, who are represented here today by Dr. Min Deng, director of the Actuarial Science and Risk Management Program.

Today I have the honor of recognizing talented faculty members who have recently received grants and recognition for the opportunities they create right here at Towson.

To begin, almost \$2 million was awarded to three department of nursing faculty members and all of them are here today: Dr. Hayley Mark, chairperson of the Nursing Department, received a \$900,000 grant to help address the critical need for well-prepared faculty to educate our future nursing workforce; Dr. Kathleen Ogle received nearly \$150,000 to examine opportunities for graduate nursing education; and finally Dr. Briana Snyder received more than \$1 million to introduce an online degree option for Associate-to-Bachelor's students and provide continuing education for nursing department students.

These grants are so important. Thank you for your leadership!

Another first was realized by TU's Department of Computer and Information Sciences and its cybersecurity program. The Maryland Department of Commerce awarded TU a \$500,000 E-Innovation grant to create a Center for Cybersecurity Education & Research. TU becomes just the second USM institution to secure this type of funding.

Please join me in recognizing the outstanding work of the CIS faculty who are represented here today by Dr. Sidd Kaza, chairperson of the Department of Computer and Information Sciences.

To continue to advance the work of our outstanding faculty and support the excellence of our academic programs, we as a university need to be even more intentional about our funding models that provide support for those most important objectives.

This past summer, with the support of TU's Academic Senate, provost and deans, I recommended to the USM Board of Regents that it approve differential tuition in support of the College of Business and Economics and the Departments of Nursing and Computer and Information Sciences.

The regents, as they did for College Park and UMB, approved our request. The differential tuition will be phased in over three years and will not impact any students currently that are enrolled in these programs.

The total revenue from these differentials will go back to those departments and that college to provide funding to continue the requisite investment in faculty, facilities and support to further advance their academic excellence.

It is through teaching, scholarship, research and creative activity that our world-class faculty make important contributions to their disciplines and to the academy.

At TU, our faculty bring relevance and rigor to the classroom and to the students fortunate enough to work alongside them in undergraduate and graduate research experiences.

To make sure we support and advance this most valued hallmark of an exceptional academic experience at TU, it is time we establish a faculty-led Office of Undergraduate Research.

It is also time to establish a faculty-led Office of Competitive Scholarships to support our many students who seek highly competitive flagship educational opportunities such as Fulbright, Rhodes, Marshall and Truman Fellowships and Scholars Programs.

The time is right for these two initiatives in support of our students and our faculty to begin. I look forward to working with the provost and the deans in leading these two important initiatives.

When I first arrived at Towson University nearly four years ago, I learned from various faculty, staff and students that at times they did not feel welcomed and supported at TU because of their identities or because of their differences.

We as a community know we cannot achieve a high-quality educational experience without diverse people bringing diverse experiences and diverse perspectives into our classrooms and across our campus.

We are all very proud that the relentless work of so many—like Jayne French—has resulted in several notable national diversity and inclusion rankings for TU.

In the 2020 *U.S. News & World Report* Guide to Best Colleges, TU was ranked among the top 100 universities for overall student diversity and tied with Harvard University on the guide's social mobility index.

This summer, TU was named an LGBTQ-Friendly Campus by *CampusPrideIndex.org*, a national benchmark that measures institutional commitment to LGBTQ-inclusive policies, programs and practices.

And while rankings recognize the relentless and important work of our faculty and staff, hearing about the transformation of TU's campus to one that is more diverse and inclusive from our own students, alumni, staff and faculty. That is what truly matters.

Over the past four years I have listened to and learned from our trans and nonbinary students, faculty and staff as they told me about the hurt and struggle they experience when their dead names, that do not align with their identities, are used.

This fall, after almost two years of intense and extensive work by several committees, the first phase of the Chosen Name Initiative was implemented so that all members of our community can feel welcomed and their identities supported. I want to thank all of those instrumental in implementing this important initiative, including the Office of Inclusion and Institutional Equity and the Office of Information Technology. I also want to give special thanks to Dr. Leah Cox—VP of Inclusion and Institutional Equity—for her leadership and a big shoutout to Dan Fricker at OTS who was so instrumental to realizing this result.

During this year's homecoming celebration, I learned firsthand from our alumni how important feeling welcomed at TU—and now feeling welcomed back—truly is.

This year our homecoming included a remarkable and long-overdue celebration of a campus icon and father figure to many that also reminded us how much our campus community and university values have changed over the past 50 years.

On homecoming Saturday, October 19, in front of a large gathering of students, faculty, staff, alumni and university community members, the generously donated bronze bust of Dr. Julius Chapman, TU's first dean of minority affairs, was unveiled on a bright sunny morning on a site in front of the Media Center.

Dr. Chapman began his work at TU in 1969. On a recent October morning, he was lauded for the incredible positive impact he had on TU's African American students when, during one of the most racially turbulent times in our nation's history, they were but 1% of TU's enrolled students.

Next fall, the space where the Stephens Annex once stood will become the Dr. Julius Chapman Quad, a most befitting renaming for a space that will soon become a place for students, faculty and staff to gather together.

TU has changed much since 1969. Our institutional focus on inclusive student success is yielding significant results. Today on our campus, 42% percent of all TU students identify as a racial or ethnic minority, an increase of 20% since 2016. This past fall, 25% of the Class of 2023 identified as African American and 9% as Latinx.

But these are not simply numbers or percentages. These enrollments mean that the university in fact reflects the diversity in the state of Maryland and in our nation. Our students look a lot like high school students across our state and nation.

And this is not just about enrollments; TU students are succeeding—graduating with the second-highest six-year graduation rate in Maryland. Towson University is one of only a handful of U.S. universities where the graduation rate of our minority student population exceeds that of our entire student body.

I cannot emphasize enough how important that result is—TU fosters and achieves inclusive student success and we do it at scale.

Today TU is educating and graduating more black and brown students than any other university in the state of Maryland. Simply put, Towson University, the second-largest university in the state with an enrollment of 23,000, is delivering on its promise to educate the workforce and citizens needed for our state's bright future. Towson University truly is Maryland's university.

But we could not achieve those results and provide a transformational university education experience to our students without the support of so many of our community.

With gifts totaling more than \$14 million, TU celebrated a new record for our annual fundraising campaign just this past year, marking a 34% increase over the prior year.

We all need to recognize these achievements and thank all our fellow Tigers who supported TU. Did you know that more than 1,000 faculty and staff members contributed more than \$800,000 of support, a 66% increase over last year? The College of Business and Economics led the way with 75% participation. I would like to thank CBE Dean Kaynama for her leadership, and the faculty and staff who contributed to this stunning result.

I also want to recognize several generous donors who gave notable gifts this year:

Barbara Hill and Ancelmo Lopes—we thank them for their generous gift of more than \$400,000 to establish the new Hill-Lopes Scholars program to boost the number of women entering STEM fields. It is through their vision and their generosity that we will ensure TU is a leader in this area.

I would also like to thank the faculty directors of this ground-breaking initiative. This fierce trio is here today: Dr. Peko Tsuji, Associate Professor of Biological Sciences; Dr. Cindy Ghent, Associate Professor of Biological Sciences; and Dr. Beth Kautzman, Associate Professor of Chemistry. Thank you for your important work.

I also want to recognize the France-Merrick Foundation for a \$500,000 gift to establish an endowed scholarship; the estate of Dr. Eddie Loh, retired TU faculty member, for a \$1 million gift; members of the Board of Visitors, led by a

significant contribution from alumna and Presidential Scholar Dr. Nancy Grasmick, for \$700,000 in gifts; and finally the Towson University Foundation for awarding \$100,000 in grants to support projects led by TU faculty and staff.

The entire TU community made this exceptional achievement in philanthropic support possible. It is your incredible pride in Towson University and your generosity that is enhancing our capacity to make world-changing impact.

But this did not happen without leadership. I want to recognize and thank VP Brian DeFilippis for his outstanding leadership, as well as the entire TU Advancement Team for all their hard work.

Again your gifts make a difference and I cannot thank you all enough for your support of this amazing university.

Towson University is the largest university in Greater Baltimore and we anchor this community and region through our expertise and research as well as our investment in programs and partnerships, public spaces and buildings, that expand and extend our reach.

Last spring TU took another step connecting the campus and the business community with the development of the historic Armory building, right at the corner of Washington and Chesapeake in the heart of downtown Towson. When it opens in fall 2020, this vibrant space will be known as The StarTUp and it will be TU's front door for start-ups, small businesses, as well as our region's largest corporations.

The StarTUp will catalyze entrepreneurs and executives—and connect them—to each other and to TU's outstanding programs and people.

This will be a *business-first* space, where leaders will network and connect with peers, accelerate their ventures, find their next strategic hire, develop new solutions for pressing challenges, attract investment and showcase their businesses. It will become a one-stop experience that raises the bar for successful university-business engagement.

But it is more than just a building. We're investing in how we do business *with* business by streamlining our corporate engagement and putting the right people and resources in a highly visible, accessible place, right in downtown, right across from the Baltimore County Government offices.

Just across the street, TU is also purchasing a 12-story building at 401 Washington Avenue. This 130,000-square-foot office building will house non-academic university functions, freeing up much-needed space in the core of campus.

When you consider the development on Towson University's campus as well as near campus—Towson Row with Whole Foods, 101 York, Circle East and Towson Mews—there is more than \$1.7 billion in public and private investment being made in Towson right now. It is a truly historic revitalization that is arguably the most investment per square foot happening right now in all of Maryland. And it is driven by Towson University.

Our university is recognized as a leader nationally and in Maryland for advancing the public good. We are committed to positive impact, making a difference and transforming lives—and that doesn't stop with the boundaries of our campus.

Our more than 350 BTU partnerships contribute to our momentum.

TU is the only institution in Greater Baltimore—and only USM institution—to earn the Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement. This national designation—rigorous, independent confirmation that community engagement—

applying knowledge for the public good—is truly part of our DNA. It is part of who we are.

It is our faculty, staff and students who lead that commitment and that call to action. In fact members of the TU community received more awards this year than any other university from Campus Compact/Mid-Atlantic—an organization that provides leadership to two- and four-year public and private universities in Maryland, D.C. and Delaware in the areas of public service and civic engagement.

I'd like to celebrate the teams and individuals who were honored:

- The Engaged Campus Award went to TU. Thanks to Dr. Chris Jensen, director of civic engagement & social responsibility and his entire team for their outstanding work.
- The award for Extending a University's Impact into the Community went to BTU—Partnerships at Work for Greater Baltimore. I'd like to thank Bobbie Laur, associate vice president of outreach, and the entire team in the Division of Strategic Partnerships and Applied Research for their great work on BTU. I would also like to recognize their fearless leader Dr. Daraius Irani.
- The award for individual faculty service-learning in a public institution also went TU faculty member Dr. Jessica Shiller, associate professor of education for her Honors College course on urban education.
- And the fourth award went to TU for our partnership with Baltimore County Public Schools' Model United Nations program. I would like to recognize faculty lead Dr. Alison McCartney, professor of political science, and our community partners, Renee Baylin, liaison from Baltimore County Public Schools, and Hugh Kearney, social studies teacher who has been the co-director of this project since its inception in 2002.

Leading and modeling TU's commitment to community service are our incredible student athletes, who last year won the NCAA national championship for the most community service hours by a Division I school.

A total of 537 Towson Tigers hosted more than 62 events tallying nearly 6,000 hours in just three months! I want to thank Tim Leonard, Director of Athletics, and the entire Athletics Department, for their all-in commitment to community service as one of their highest priorities.

The excitement around the Towson Tigers is visible on and off the field over the past year.

The TU women's basketball team was on fire this year, winning the 2019 Colonial Athletic Association championship. Although they wish they could be here, they are just getting off a plane after playing the University of San Diego last night. I would like to recognize 2019 CAA Coach of the Year Diane Richardson and members of the 2019 CAA Women's Basketball championship team. They kept us riveted all season long! Your historic first on a national stage made us all proud.

When I say it is a great time to be a Tiger, it is because of the leadership of our boards, the generosity of our donors, the pride and support of our alumni, our diverse and inclusive campus community, our talented students and our outstanding faculty and dedicated staff.

Our institutional momentum and the historic investment being made on our campus can be seen in the work we are doing together each and every day.

There is much fueling our forward momentum and we are indeed a university on the rise!

Each and every day, remember, there is much to be proud of at Towson University, and working together, there are truly great things ahead!

Thank you!