

Inauguration Speech
Taylor Eighmy
3/20/18

This is a SPECIAL DAY for our university.

Even though inaugurations are an important--- and historically traditional--- part of both transformation and evolution of academic institutions, I VERY MUCH WANTED TODAY TO BE ABOUT THE CELEBRATION OF OUR STUDENTS and what we, as this university community, can do to catalyze their learning, their growth, and their opportunities to become world-ready and civically engaged.

First, I'd like to thank a few of the PEOPLE WHO MADE TODAY POSSIBLE.

I am grateful to the HARDWORKING STAFF AND FACULTY ON MY INAGURATION COMMITTEE who put this entire celebration together. They are exemplars of teamwork and collaboration.

Part of our celebration involves music—great music—and how fortunate are we that we have such a FABULOUS MUSIC DEPARTMENT here at UTSA.

I believe we have CLOSE TO 300 STUDENT MUSICIANS HERE TODAY. I really want to give a shout out to PROFESSORS EUGENE DOWDY, RON ELLIS AND JOHN SILANTEAN for all of their work with our student musicians.

Another part of our celebration involved the creative process, and how fortunate are we to have such a DISTINGUISHED POET, CARMEN TAFOLLA--- and a Texas Poet Laureate no less--- to be here with us!

I really want to thank our DISTINGUISHED GUESTS, ELECTED OFFICIALS, CIVIC LEADERS, FRIENDS OF THE UNIVERSITY, BENEFACTORS, ALUMNI, AND UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY MEMBERS. Your engagement means we can realize this big idea that we are San Antonio's university of the future and that great cities need great universities.

I want to thank each and everyone of you for your embracing Peggy and me and for your sharing your visions of where this university should go on its upward trajectory.

I want to thank U.T. System Regents ERNIE ALISEDA and RAD WEAVER, their support is greatly appreciated.

I especially want to thank CHANCELLOR MCRAVEN and his wife Georgeann McRaven—who couldn't be with us today—for embracing Peggy and me as we began this adventure here in San Antonio.

I want to thank my U.T. SYSTEM COLLEAGUES, especially Steve Leslie, Randa Safady, and Bill Shute and FELLOW PRESIDENTS Bill Henrich, Dick Benson, and Mike Tidwell for your friendship, collaborations, and engagement.

I especially want to thank DR. PEDRO REYES, our former interim president, for his wisdom, counsel and friendship.

At last count, I've worked for 14 presidents and chancellors at my former institutions. There are a number of these who have shaped me and imparted their wisdom on me. I

I would like to give a special shout-out to two of them: DR. GUY BAILEY, the current president at UT Rio Grande Valley (and former provost here at UTSA) and DR. JIMMY CHEEK, the former Chancellor at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. It means a great deal to me that they are here today.

I also want to thank the DELEGATES FROM OVER 50 INSTITUTIONS for attending. The sheer determination and creativity of the inauguration planning committee has resulted in this impressive number.

Be sure to follow Finbarr's adventures on Instagram!

I want to THANK ALL OUR FACULTY here today, especially our announcer DR. LISA MONTOYA, and DR. KELLY NASH our mace bearer.

I really want to thank our platform party: my assembled leadership team, and today's speakers:

- Student Regent JACIEL CASTRO
- SGA President MARCUS THOMAS
- Councilwoman SHIRLEY GONZALES
- Our resident poet CARMEN TAFOLLA
- and CHANCELLOR MCRAVEN

One special note, I am grateful that STAFF SARGENT GUERRERO and his wife TCHANA can be with us today.

Thank you Sargent Guerrero for your service to our country.

I am so fortunate that many FAMILY, FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES can be with us today—thank you all for making time to travel to San Antonio.

Lastly, I want to thank my IMMEDIATE FAMILY—my wife Peggy, my daughter Hannah and our future son-in-law Patrick—for joining me on this wonderful adventure.

I would like to speak briefly to THREE IMPORTANT TOPICS that are on very much on my mind.

1. First, to our students: "DREAM NO SMALL DREAMS"

We have the best students.

The German poet, writer, and statesmen JOHANN WOLFGANG VON GOETHE (1749-1832) said this: "Dream no small dreams for they have no power to move the hearts of men."

To the students here today and the 31,000 students at UTSA, I say this, dream no small dreams while you are here.

NOW IS YOUR MOMENT TO REALIZE YOUR DREAMS.

I know each of you are so dedicated in your academic progress, your plans to graduate, your managing your class work and employment responsibilities, and your time with family.

This is that MAGICAL MOMENT IN YOUR LIFE to try things, explore things, and find that genesis of your dream. If you can find the time, you might:

- Join Rowdy Crew and support our athletic teams
- Run for office and serve in student government
- Join one of our 360 student organizations
- Do an internship here in San Antonio, or Austin or Washington, DC
- Join one of our musical ensembles
- Volunteer with a civic organization
- Take service learning courses
- Study abroad, or
- My favorite—do undergraduate research

Moreover, find a faculty mentor, like Professors Ellis, Dowdy, Tafolla, Montoya and Nash—or from the 150 faculty members here today.

I would not be here today, I would not have dreamed big or realized my dream, without a faculty mentor. LET ME SHARE THIS STORY WITH YOU...

To every student here today, and to all of our UTSA students, our responsibility and obligation to each of you is to help you find your dream.

2. Second, to our university community: OUR CONSTELLATION IN OUR EXPANDING UNIVERSE

Carmen's poem has left me speechless. I really want us to consider that this is OUR poem—UTSA's poem—and OUR CLARION CALL.

Our UTSA community of 40,000 individuals is a constellation made up of 40,000 "ESTRELLAS" or stars.

We are at that moment in time where ALL 40,000 OF US CAN COME TOGETHER to realize our future, our collection of dreams.

I am reminded of the journeys that other great public research institutions—institutions like UC Irvine, UC Riverside, and Arizona State—all of whom are relatively young universities and who embarked upon steep, upward trajectories to become the very best learning, doctoral granting, community engaged, discovery enterprises.

EACH OF THESE INSTITUTIONS HAD A MOMENT where their constellations formed under their clarion calls.

OUR JOURNEY CAN BE THEIR JOURNEY, if we can create our constellation in this moment and in this place and with all of our opportunity before us.

Let me add to this idea about this being our place and our time.

I have become fascinated by the life and career of our very own DR. TOMÁS RIVERA.

He grew up in Crystal, Texas, SON OF SPANISH-SPEAKING MEXICAN-AMERICAN MIGRANT WORKERS, a former high school teacher, writer, poet, literary critic, educational advocate, community leader, and academic leader.

His career and his advocacy is a testament to the power of education in transforming lives.

In 1971, he became a PROFESSOR OF SPANISH HERE AT UTSA. In 1973, he was appointed an associate dean and in 1975 became a vice-president. In 1978, he left UTSA to become executive vice-president and then interim provost at UT-El Paso.

I mentioned earlier that UC Riverside is a young university with a BRILLIANT UPWARD TRAJECTORY.

Well, in 1979, Dr. Rivera became UC Riverside's fourth chancellor, the youngest chief executive in the UC System at the time, and ONE OF THE FIRST HISPANIC ADMINISTRATORS IN THE UC SYSTEM.

Moreover, he was the chancellor of an institution that today is just 64 years old—only 15 years older than UTSA.

HE DIED WELL BEFORE HIS TIME in 1984 – AT ONLY 48 YEARS OLD. Yet he had a profound impact there in his five short years.

Here at UTSA, we have our very own Tomás Rivera Center focused on life-long student success—one unique way that HIS LEGACY AND VISION ARE REALIZED HERE IN SAN ANTONIO.

I had a hunch that if I looked carefully enough, I would find his thoughts about UNIVERSITIES AND THEIR INCREDIBLY IMPORTANT ROLE IN SHAPING THE FUTURE, shaping possibility, shaping the hope that comes from learning and realizing your dreams.

It should not surprise you therefore, that I HAVE BEEN POURING THROUGH HIS PAPERS held in the Tomás Rivera on line special collections at UC Riverside.

Not surprisingly, I found these very appropriate notes for a speech he gave about LEADERSHIP AND CHANGE AND POSSIBILITY.

IMAGINE EACH OF YOU AS LEADERS as you hear me paraphrase aloud his notes:

“Real leaders are always thinking and doing. There is no end in things to do. There is not enough time for what they want to do. Real leaders know that the world is truly theirs to invent (one of billions in the universe) and that they have but a moment in the history of mankind to effect this invention.”

So to each of you, I say this: this can be our moment, our clarion call, OUR BRIGHT, EVOLVING CONSTELLATION.

3. To our city: WE ARE THE URBAN SERVING UNIVERSITY OF THE FUTURE

The comments from Chancellor McRaven and Councilwoman Gonzalez certainly speak to this notion of being an EXEMPLARY URBAN SERVING UNIVERSITY.

UTSA was designated in 2015 by the Carnegie Commission as a COMMUNITY-ENGAGED UNIVERSITY.

Engagement is defined by the Commission as:

“...the partnership of college and university knowledge and resources with those of the public and private sectors to enrich scholarship, research, and creative activity; enhance curriculum, teaching and learning; prepare educated, engaged citizens; strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility; address critical societal issues; and contribute to the public good.”

One form of reciprocal engagement is to GIVE BACK TO OUR COMMUNITY.

To that end, I have asked that we designate this year, our city's TRICENTENNIAL year, as a Year of Service for UTSA to give back to San Antonio.

This Saturday, we will have UTSA's first annual DAY OF SERVICE with city partners to kick off our year of service.

OVER 1,200 students, faculty, staff and supporters have signed up to participate!

After today's ceremony—during the reception just outside—we have a table set up where you can REGISTER FOR THE DAY OF SERVICE, if you haven't done so already

If you have already registered, you can also stop by the booth to GET YOUR DAY OF SERVICE T-SHIRT

You can also REGISTER ONLINE USING THE URL ON THE SCREEN

SOME OF OUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS WILL BE STAYING THROUGH SATURDAY TO JOIN PEGGY, FINBARR AND ME IN THIS DAY OF SERVICE. WE HOPE TO SEE YOU THIS SATURDAY. Be ready to share your dreams, you part in our constellation of stars, and your passion for giving back.

Thank you all again for the TREMENDOUS OPPORTUNITY TO SERVE YOU ALL AS YOUR PRESIDENT AND TO SERVE THIS YOUNG, AMAZING INSTITUTION. I am looking forward to everything we will do together for this great university and great city. Thank you!