

EVENT: UT System Chancellor James B. Milliken's reception welcoming Jennifer Cowley

DATE: Wednesday, April 13, 2022

PRESIDENT'S ROLE: Welcome remarks

Thank you, Chancellor Milliken, for the warm introduction. I want to thank you and the Board of Regents for offering me the incredible opportunity to serve as the 10th president of The University of Texas at Arlington. I am humbled to stand here before you - our community leaders, legislators, alumni and members of our UTA family. I look forward to working with all of you. I am grateful to have my husband Jon Cowley and my parents Jan and Paul Evans here to support me.

I invite you to join me in offering a special thank you to President Lim for your leadership and in supporting a smooth transition.

UTA started as a humble private liberal arts college and in the years since we have risen to become a one of the nation's largest public Tier 1 research universities. We have graduated hundreds of thousands of students, made countless discoveries, and we have increased our impact on our state and country. While we have a long history – our best is yet to come.

In the previous academic year, UTA reached its goal of becoming a Texas Tier One university. We owe a great deal of thanks to the UT System and the State of Texas for its smart and timely investments in UTA. We are now at a time when we must chart where we will go next – what future will we imagine and how will we, as a community, come together to realize our collective vision.

Our state and region need us to dream big. UTA is located in one of the most important regions in this country. Not only is our region bigger than most states - we have the fastest growing population and the fastest growing GDP. People from across the country see the promise that Texas offers. At UTA, we are critical partners in supporting the growth and development of our region's society, culture and economy.

I have been inspired and energized by what I have witnessed and it leads me to believe that The University of Texas at Arlington can **be one of the nation's most inclusive and impactful research universities**. We owe it to ourselves and the state of Texas to reach for this goal.

UTA has the assets needed for us to realize a bright future. We will build off of our many strengths as we reach towards further excellence. We have outstanding and committed faculty and staff. Our students are innovative, hardworking and passionate in creating their impact in the world. We have a supportive state legislature. And most importantly we have a shared understanding that we must evolve and change in order to meet our full potential.

As we plan for our future we will bring a strategic focus over the next several months in four key areas: People & Culture; Student Success; Research & Innovation; and Alumni & Community Engagement.

Any great university starts with great **people and a great culture**. Throughout the university I have seen a spirit of collaboration, with a belief in limitless future possibilities. An immediate priority is recruiting talented leadership who will share our passion for becoming an even more impactful university. I look forward in the coming months to announcing the leaders that will be joining our UTA family. And with a team onboard, we will host conversations about how we can best foster an inclusive culture where our employees feel valued and their contributions are seen as essential to the success of our university.

Another key priority is **student success**. I am a proud graduate of Arlington public schools. It's the great education I received that put me on the path to being able to stand before you today. Our partnerships with Arlington, Fort Worth, Mansfield and the many other school districts in our region are essential to supporting students on a pathway to achieving their dreams of a college education.

It is our commitment to access that has led to UTA being among only 8 research universities nationally designated as a both a Hispanic and an Asian American, Native American and Pacific Islander serving institution.

We are here to provide access to ordinary Texans and help them to lead extraordinary lives. Students like Cindy Ledat should inspire all of us. While attending Dallas college, she worked full-time to support her mother and sister, then transferred to UTA thanks to a scholarship targeted to talented students who have demonstrated financial need. Next month, she will graduate and become the first in her family to earn a college degree. Cindy is among the more than 5,000 graduates who will cross that stage taking that important step of moving from being a UTA student to UTA graduate.

Thanks to our new Blaze Forward program, created in partnership with the UT System, we can ensure that cost is no longer a barrier to students like Cindy. We must now focus our attention on opportunities to enhance our students experiences and to help more of our students successfully graduate. Our students are looking to us for improved student services, greater opportunities for engagement and more impactful learning. Our students want more opportunities like those provided by Dr. Alicia Rueda-Acedo who has her Spanish language students gain real world experience providing local non-profits with much needed translation services. We will work together to design the support our students need to be even more successful.

Our faculty at UTA are the measure of our quality and impact in **research and innovation**. We have true and distinguished excellence across our university. Dr. Sheri McFarland discovered a cancer drug that is in clinical trials that selectively kills cancer cells without damaging the healthy cells that surround them. National Academy Member Dr. Dereje Agonafer is refining micro nuclear reactors that can be deployed across Texas when energy shortages occur. Drs. Diane Jones Allen, Kathryn Holliday and Austin Allen partnered with the Dallas Regional Chamber and the historically Black Freedmen's towns to focus on preserving this important part of our region's history. It's our faculty's hard work that makes us a Texas Tier 1 university. I'm looking forward to dialogue about how we can best enhance our research infrastructure, be stronger collaborators in regional economic development, and take on more of the great challenges facing our society.

To achieve our potential we need the support and **engagement of our donors, alumni and community partners**. We have so many in our community who support us. Our supporters enjoy having UTA students in their offices, schools and in health care settings and partnering with our faculty and staff on research collaborations. Our supporters appreciate the ways in which our students, staff and

faculty volunteer in and give back to our communities. And our supporters cheer on our amazing student-athletes who compete with passion and pride. Just this year, I like many of you have cheered the Lady Mavs basketball team on as they won the conference championship and competed in the NCAA Tournament.

As in athletics, success is best realized as a team. To achieve our university's ambitions, we will need the support and collaboration of our donors, alumni and community partners. In the coming months I look forward to deepening our engagement, telling our great stories, and increasing our visibility so that more in our community see the impact that UTA is creating and choose to be part of realizing our goals.

Together I know we will be united in our efforts to reach for greater excellence as we make UT Arlington one of the nation's most inclusive and impactful research universities.

Thanks to all of you for warmly welcoming me into this amazing community. I am proud to be your president and I look forward to all we will accomplish together.