

**EVENT:** State of the University 2023

**Date:** Wednesday, September 6

**PRESIDENT'S ROLE:** Keynote

Welcome to our inaugural State of the University address. This will become an annual tradition to celebrate our collective achievements and plans for the future. Y'all I am excited to share some of the tremendous progress we have made so far.

The one thing that has stood out to me most over the last year and a half, is just how much commitment there is at UTA. There is a commitment to creating opportunities to develop the incredible talents of our students, a passion for innovation and discovery, and a dedication to engagement in the communities we serve. There's something truly special about UTA.

It's the Maverick Factor. It's this unique element within our Mavericks that sets us apart. It's being a game changer, being unafraid to take on visionary scholarship, it's an unstoppable force to forge your own path, it's making a positive impact in communities through partnership. It's what has transformed UTA into a national research university.

Your voice has helped us focus on any number of dreams, ideas and solutions, which are being incorporated into our strategic plan. And your actions are why we've seen an explosion of progress. Thanks to all of you who are laying the groundwork for our future.

Today, I'll highlight our recent progress on our five strategic themes, which represent our Maverick Factor in action – and which are vital to achieving our dreams.

Our people and culture are at the heart of UTA's success. With over 5,400 dedicated employees – y'all - we are one of the largest employers in our entire region. We have a committed team advancing our mission and many of our faculty and staff have celebrated decades at UTA.

Over the past year, we've also welcomed many new faces. I want to personally thank those who managed our offices in the interim and to welcome the leaders that are new to our campus, who already embody the Maverick Factor.

I also want to celebrate the great accomplishments from our faculty and staff this past year.

We had those who received lifetime achievement awards - like Cindy Trowbridge, who was honored by the National Athletic Trainer's Association and Walter Betts who was recognized by the Texas Library Association.

We also celebrate our faculty who were recognized as prestigious fellows in their respective fields, including two new fellows in the National Academy of Inventors. Bringing our total fellow count in that society to 20.

Kevin Schug and Ling Xu are pursuing impactful research abroad as Fulbright Scholars. Kevin, who's research focuses on solving a variety of analytical and physical chemistry problems will be in the Czech Republic starting in January, and Ling leaves for Taiwan later this month to work on a project raising awareness about the importance of dementia caregivers.

Our staff are making a mark too. Daisy Valk, a recruitment coordinator for our Fort Worth campus was honored as one of 50 Fort Worth Emerging Latino Leaders by the Fort Worth Chamber. While James Kumm was selected to serve on an American Council on Education committee for military-connected students because of his incredible impact on veterans.

I wish I had the time to list every award and achievement our faculty and staff have earned this past year - just know that our colleagues across this university are being recognized for their extraordinary work.

This is what we accomplish with the Maverick Factor.

As we look to the future of UTA and the culture we are building. I want to acknowledge that this past legislative session brought higher education into the spotlight, with increases in financial support and new policy changes that affect UTA. With these changes, we will continue to make sure we support everyone at our university. That will be our focus as we move forward.

Our culture at UTA is integral to our progress as a national research university. It's why we are investing in you. We invested 2 million dollars for market adjustments to the salaries for 1,000 of our faculty and staff in the last year and will be investing another \$2.4 million for further targeted adjustments this academic year. We have also raised the wages for many of our student employees, recognizing their vital campus roles.

And the redesign of our Employee Tuition Affordability Program has allowed more of our employees to enroll in classes to advance their expertise. This is important progress we are making to ensure we are attracting and retaining the best talent.

We will soon launch a pilot translation program that recognizes our employees in student facing roles who can speak the first languages that many of our students and their families speak – allowing us to more meaningfully connect and engage.

And y'all, I am pleased to share that this month, we are launching our Shared Values Initiative, which will help us further define the culture we aspire to at UTA. The upcoming UTA People and Culture survey, will be asking our employees for feedback on how we are doing in creating an environment where our team can do their best work.

Our theme for the survey is Mavs Thrive Together - because it's absolutely true. And as we focus on the future, we will continue to foster a culture of engagement and belonging at UTA for everyone to thrive.

A second-degree black belt, editor of the school paper, and high school graduate. I'm talking about 14-year-old Oforitsenere Bodunrin. She graduated from Arlington Martin High School, and she's chosen to come to UTA.

Ryutaro Bath is from Tennessee and a National Merit Finalist, he's joining us this fall aspiring to be an aerospace engineer.

These are just two of the more than 4,800 first-time college students enrolled at UTA for Fall 2023. This is the 7<sup>th</sup> year in a row that we have a record-breaking first year class, showing 7% growth over last year.

They join our over 40,000 students enrolled at UTA who all have their own unique path here. Our students know that whether they are from nearby or halfway around the world - UTA is a great choice.

I think our students tell our story best, so let's hear from Daniela Pedraja, our student body president, for some highlights of our progress in student success...

### [\[VIDEO PLAYS\]](#)

And Daniela is right, this has been a standout year for UTA as an institution focused on opportunity. I'm proud to share that our Spanish Community Translation and Interpreting Program which prepares students for careers in translation and UTA's Bridge-to-Math-Doctorate Program which provides students with the skills they need to be prepared for doctoral education are being nationally recognized as 2023 Examples of *Excelencia* for demonstrating intentionality and commitment to serving Latino students in higher education.

And its not just our programs that are being nationally recognized, it's our students too. Like, Elodie Tessier who competed in the Wheelchair Basketball World Championships in Dubai or Madison Le who made the Women's Golf Coaches Association All American Scholars list and claimed the Women's Texas Amateur title in July. She is among the 86 of our student-athletes on the Academic All-Western Athletic Conference honors list.

At UTA, a big part of student success is about the experiences our students have while at UTA - that prepare them to be career ready. Whether it is a computer science student working on making cancer images more accessible, or an architecture student exploring innovative ways to mitigate heat islands in cities. When these students graduate, they'll be unstoppable thanks to their opportunities at UTA.

And we are partnering to create successful career opportunities for our students. Maverick Dining's first of its kind Exchange Market in the College of Business offers business majors a unique internship to learn food service management. And graduating students will receive job support to enter careers in the food service and hospitality industry.

In education, we are building off of the success of our Grand Prairie Teachers Academy - creating a virtual Teachers Academy that will allow high school students across our region who dream of becoming teachers to start on that path at UTA while in high school.

We are renaming our Division of Global Education and Enterprise Development to Extension and Extended Campus to better represent the work that we do. And this office is expanding its efforts.

For example, they've partnered with Credly for our digital badging and microcredentialing initiative, launching 200 badges this fall to empower students to showcase their skills to employers on social media, this includes skills such as accounting, corporate event planning, human resources, and user experience design.

We are focusing in on our students' persistence and outcomes. We have seen our graduation rate increase over the years, and we're doing a lot to make sure all our students can finish their education including addressing non-academic barriers through initiatives like the UTA Maverick Food Pantry presented by Kroger which provided more than 30,000 pounds of food to more

than 6,000 students last year. And Chartwell's has committed to donating 1,000 pounds of food every month this academic year.

We recognize that some of our students experience housing insecurity. This fall we launched a pilot housing scholarship for new incoming students who have aged out of foster care or experienced homelessness, ensuring they can focus on their studies.

We know our students mental well-being is critical to their success. We are enhancing mental health support, by expanding our Residential Outreach Counselor program, reaching students in all of our residence halls. This fall we are further expanding our support, through partnership with the University of Texas system, by providing free on-demand and scheduled virtual mental health care. These combined efforts are going to truly help ensure our students have the support they need.

Y'all we are committed to bringing the Maverick Factor into the communities we engage with.

CAPPA faculty Karabi Bezboruah and Emily Nwakpuda worked this past year with the Levitt Pavillion to help them better reach Arlington residents. And social work faculty member Diane Mitschke has been working for years to ensure that Burmese refugees get access to the health and social support they need to successfully settle into our region. Our students in nursing and social work have partnered with the City of Arlington Fire Department to engage in wellness checks for those who have recently been discharged from the hospital to make sure they are recovering and have access to the resources they need. These faculty along with many others work with our students teaching them to be civically engaged and create positive impact.

And when our students graduate, they join our more than 270,000 alums across the world – our reach and impact is staggering. Our alumni engagement has been exceptional this year, with sold-out happy hour events.

And y'all know we have incredible alumni. That is why we are focused on how we engage all those alums out there. They are our cheerleaders and advocates – and a strong alumni network builds a strong UTA.

We are growing our development and alumni relationships team to enable more of our alums and partners to connect to share their time, talent and resources to support us in achieving our dreams.

Take Art and Business Alums Preston Ward and Brian Geck, who co-own Sky Elements Drones a Guinness World Record holder for the largest aerial sentence formed by drones. They came back to campus this May to put on a spectacular UTA themed drone show for our graduation celebration.

Lou Diamond Phillips, known for movies such as *La Bamba* and *Stand and Deliver* and the upcoming film *Et Tu*. Well this fall he is making plans to come to UTA to engage in a residency helping our students to prepare for careers in film and theater. So stay tuned, details to come.

This past fiscal year, we set a goal of raising 22 million dollars in support, and I am proud to share UTA not only reached our fundraising goal but boy did we exceed it. We are now at over 27 million dollars raised. It's our largest fundraising year in a decade, making a significant impact on our Maverick community.

And I know y'all heard about the amazing generosity of Alumnus Kelcy Warren who provided a \$12 million investment in UTA to help us build our new resource and energy engineering program that launched this fall.

Thanks to the generosity of an anonymous alum, the Real Admiral Grace M. Hopper STEM Scholarship received an additional \$1 million gift and surpassed 1,000 students awarded. Impacting students like Alejandra Flores, who aspires to enhance prosthetic technology.

And we can't talk about gifts without sharing Professor Abdolhossein Haji-Sheikh gift. He retired this year after an amazing 57 years of service. He has established an endowed professorship in Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering for faculty excellence in Thermal Energy.

Corporate and foundation engagement is also flourishing at UTA. The Amon G. Carter Foundation provided a gift of \$500,000 to upgrade our broadcast production studio, enabling an outstanding experiential learning environment for our students.

Corporate partners like Yardi Systems are creating an impact. With a gift of \$320,000 the Yardi Scholars program offers scholarships to deserving first generation business majors.

Our partners provide financial support and they also establish strong college relationships, offering valuable mentorship and career pathways for UTA students.

Over the next year we'll be working across the university to build a holistic engagement plan that will ensure that we are connected in ways that support the critical industries and organizations in our region and are positioned to attract new jobs with the talent we produce.

We rely on our teams across campus to make sure we have the infrastructure we need to support the success of our students, faculty and staff.

Our information technology infrastructure team has been hard at work. One of the projects that I am most excited about is our Conference and Classroom Technology Modernization program which focuses on creating a seamless classroom technology experience for faculty and students.

Now, I know as the semester gets started back parking is at the top of everyone's minds. Well through a partnership with auxiliary services and engineering faculty Jay Rosenberger and Chen Kan – we are able to provide real-time parking updates on our new UTA Parking Finder platform – making it easier to find an open parking space.

Our campus sustainability efforts have been recognized nationally, ranking #14 among universities in the 2023 Times Higher Education Impact Rankings. And we recently started postconsumer food composting, so all those bananas you eat in our cafeterias – well the skins along with your other food waste will be composted and turned into soil. We composted nearly 3,000 pounds of food waste in our first month.

Just imagine what our impact will be by the end of the year.

Now I know y'all have seen the new Social Work and Smart Hospital building, but our team in Facilities Management has undertaken lots of other projects this past year updating 98 classrooms, creating 14 individual restrooms for enhanced privacy, as well as HVAC system improvements that keep us cool – which with the heat this summer, has been pretty darn important.

Looking ahead, our capital plan will result in more than \$700 million dollars in construction over the next decade, focusing on academic and research space renewal, green space enhancement, performance space, and more. We have got some BIG plans.

Construction will begin soon on the new Greek life center to support our Greek Life organizations on campus, including the 20 Greek organizations without houses.

Maverick Hall will provide an additional 650+ beds for our students living on campus by Fall 2025.

And construction is expected to get started this winter on the renovation and expansion of the Life Sciences Building, our largest construction project yet. This project will complete our Health Sciences Quad and update and add space for teaching and research labs, classrooms, and informal learning spaces.

Our Cooper Street Bridges are undergoing renewal, thanks to help from our College of Architecture, Public Affairs, and Planning students, including landscape architecture graduate student Elizabeth Moore who sits on our planning committee. Having her on the team has been invaluable. We expect the bridge project to be finished next May and create a truly Maverick welcome to our campus.

Now I know everyone is wondering what we are planning for the corner of Cooper and Abrams now that social work has vacated that building. A team from the Urban Land Institute is with us here in this room and are on campus this week to offer their advice on creating something truly special at this critical corner – so stay tuned for a future update on that one.

Y'all we are a major national research university that is continuing to grow in impact. In the past fiscal year, we achieved a record \$138 million dollars in research expenditures, including over a \$10 million dollar increase in federal research funding and a 20% boost in the US Department of Health and Human Services funding for key areas like Alzheimer's Research and Brain Health. Private sector research expenditures also increased by over 12% to more than \$11 million.

It is our amazing faculty that are helping to create solutions to our nation's most challenging problems. I'm going to share three examples related to improving our health and wellness. In bioengineering they're revolutionizing the treatment of cartilage tears in the shoulder. Thanks to a \$2.1 million dollar National Institutes of Health grant we're developing a method that would stimulate the body to regenerate tissue to reattach the tear. This technique could not only speed up healing but also offers a safer alternative to current treatment methods.

Thanks to a grant from the State of Texas, Ann Eckhardt is leading a team to find innovative solutions to develop more nursing faculty, as our state and country address this critical workforce shortage.

And researchers in communications, business, and kinesiology were awarded funds from our flagship initiative, the Interdisciplinary Research Program in the Office of Research and Innovation, to develop new collaborations across campus. They'll be developing elearning training modules to enhance breast cancer patients' workplace communication - lessening apprehension and fostering social support for breast cancer patients.

We are striving to create a significant research impact that solves some of the greatest challenges of our times. This work, that's the Maverick Factor.

Now, Governor Abbott has shared the goal that Texas become the knowledge capital of this country. And the state's support is crucial to make sure that UTA contributes to that goal. I want to thank State Representative Chris Turner and all of our area elected officials for their support of higher education and UTA, resulting in a substantial investment for UTA's research and economic development initiatives.

UTA received \$7.5 million dollars in new state funding for the Texas Manufacturing Assistance Center – allowing us to strengthen the state’s manufacturing industrial base. This new funding will allow us to provide manufacturers with training on cybersecurity, advanced manufacturing technologies, and develop the next generation of manufacturing employees. Having TMAC in our backyard is directly supporting the economic development of our state.

The state has also provided resources that will enable us to expand our research infrastructure and to support the emerging biomanufacturing and biotechnology industry in Texas. We are actively working with our regions Chambers, economic development authorities, cities, companies and non-profit partners on the creation of a Biomanufacturing Innovation Hub. The hub will play a critical role by innovating new tools and technologies that are needed to produce future transformative medicines. The hub will build the capacity that our region needs to support the expansion of jobs in this important emerging industry through developing the talent needed to fuel that growth.

We’re focusing on growing and supporting our doctoral students. We’ve expanded tuition support and recently announced health insurance coverage for PhD students. We’re investing \$1 million dollars to expand graduate fellowships and more than \$500,000 to increase the salaries of our lowest paid doctoral students all in an effort to ensure we are attracting the brightest minds to UTA. We are also growing our undergraduate research programs, to allow more of our students to gain research experiences and be prepared for graduate school.

We are also investing in our faculty.

We know that to create the impact we want on the state of Texas, our nation and beyond that we must expand the size of our faculty. We know we need more scholars taking on the biggest challenges of our times. And our UT System Chancellor Milliken and our Board of Regents fully supports our aspirations.

I am proud to announce that we will be launching RISE 100, our Recruiting Innovative Scholars for Excellence initiative that will bring 100 new faculty to UTA over the next couple of years, growing our research engaged faculty by 15%.

This initiative represents a \$60 million investment in the future of our university. And while we are investing university resources, the scale of this investment is only possible because of the generous support of the University of Texas System Board of Regents who created the Regents Research Excellence program that will be critical in enabling us to reach our research and innovation goals.

Our aim is to hire in areas that will create impact and support the growth and development of our economy, society and culture. There are so many areas in which we can and will create impact. I’ll share just two examples.

UTA is working to become designated as an Innovation and Economic Prosperity University – a program that recognizes universities that have a commitment to and a strategy for regional economic engagement, growth and economic opportunity. Y’all North Texas has a growing advanced manufacturing sector and we are already the top producer of talent that goes to work in these advanced manufacturing companies. We are well positioned to play an important role in helping our region and state grow these jobs.

We WILL play an important role in the effort to put the United States, once again, back in a leadership role in designing and manufacturing the world’s most advanced semiconductors. We are already leaders in semiconductor research and our multi-disciplinary team has been working over the last year to examine how UTA can best partner to support the national and state-wide efforts to on-shore semiconductor design and production and bring more jobs right here to

Texas. These faculty hires will advance innovation and create the workforce talent needed to support this growing industry.

We are also committed to the communities we serve and the positive impact we have. We have faculty across our campus that are engaged in meaningful community-based scholarship. Our faculty work in partnership with non-profits, government agencies and directly with community members to ensure that the scholarship we are engaged in is creating impact in the communities we serve.

It is why we are seeking to be classified as a Carnegie Community Engaged University. We'll be hiring a cluster of faculty who are passionately committed to preparing engaged citizens, strengthening civic responsibility, and addressing critical societal issues.

These two clusters are just the start. Over the coming weeks we'll be releasing more details about our faculty hiring plans and how we will expand our research impact.

Our RISE 100 hiring initiative will be a transformative investment for UTA and the impact that we can create in our region and state. The last time we worked to grow our research faculty by 100 it took 15 years. Y'all we are going to aim to make that happen in less than five. RISE 100 will drive excellence in teaching and advance research and innovation.

Y'all I am so proud of all we have accomplished during our time together. The Maverick Factor - that indomitable spirit within each of us - has driven us to excel in every aspect of our university's mission.

From the commitment to opportunity in education, to the passion for groundbreaking research and innovation, and the unwavering dedication to community engagement, we are truly Mavericks. Our impact extends far beyond the campus, reaching into the hearts and lives of individuals and communities across North Texas and far beyond.

I am excited for the future that lies ahead. Together, we will continue to make a positive impact, leaving a lasting legacy for generations to come.

With the Maverick Factor guiding us, there is no limit to what we can achieve. Thank you again for being here - and go Mavs!