

## Dr. Matson Remarks

Good morning, everyone.

Today, August 20<sup>th</sup>, is the 232<sup>nd</sup> day of the year. There are only 133 days left in 2018 and San Antonio's Tricentennial celebration. Then, it's onto 2019 and the start of our own 10-Year Anniversary!

2018 has been a truly special year for our great City... and it has also been a defining time for Texas A&M-San Antonio.

During the past eight months, I have visited with countless individuals. Through those conversations, I have gained a deeper appreciation for the important role our University plays in the 25-year horizon of our community's forecasted growth for the next one million people.

Increasingly, our future success is intertwined with the success of our great city... and our nation. And the expectations are high.

At the Move-In Day for Esperanza Hall last week, I met students from California and Virginia... and many places throughout Texas. As more people come to San Antonio from across the country and around the world, they will enroll in our programs... and our impact will grow exponentially in academic prestige and research. **[PAUSE]**

A lot can happen in 12 months. At this time last year, Hurricane Harvey was gathering momentum on its way to blasting the Texas coast just east of Rockport on August 26. The people of Texas bounced back from that natural disaster ... with strength and resiliency. We recognize that same grit and determination in our students and in ourselves.

Every day, we are learning, evolving and making adjustments to ensure that we serve each other well and — more importantly — that we remain focused on student success. In our fast-paced, networked, always-on world, it's important to unplug ... and celebrate the sense of community we're working together to achieve.

As you could probably tell from the opening music... there is much to celebrate.

Today symbolizes a New Academic Year. In many circles and our campus micro-cultures, today means new beginnings, new students, new faculty, new staff and... **[PAUSE]** new challenges! The chance to welcome a new class of students and new employees to our campus community is certainly something to celebrate. I'd like to ask all those new faculty and staff who have joined us since the Spring Convocation

to rise so that we can welcome you. **[PAUSE AND LEAD  
APPLAUSE]**

Whether I'm visiting with different groups in San Antonio or talking with colleagues around the country, I'm often asked the same question: "What's happening on campus?"

I usually rattle off a litany of wonderful things.

Lately, that mundane question has brought clarity about our broader campus development... and I will use a metaphor as our organizational descriptor... and it is: institutional rhythm.

I ask you to think through this concept with me, as you frame your thoughts about our progress and tempo. Keep in mind that we're still building practices or processes in all parts of the University. While it may not be perfect, there is incredible progress in every corner, every office and every department. I'd ask you to indulge me for a moment with the metaphor... to overly simplify the many roles it takes to create music... and to consider what role you play in the ultimate concert performance.

Your role may be analogous to a composer writing music... or a skilled and talented musician playing the music... or the stage guide ensuring that the ensemble or orchestra has all that it needs to brilliantly perform!

However you identify your role, you are a critical beat in the composition this University orchestra performs... especially when it comes to building the national model for student and academic success. And we need to rehearse... and continue to rehearse and assess our musical score to reach mastery.

For example, flashback to where we were in 2016 “finding our way” as compared to the current rhythm of our academic calendar.

- On August 11, we had our second annual Move-In Day at Esperanza Hall... and this fall we expect to be at full capacity.
- Last Friday, we held our third annual Jaguar March to welcome our third, four-year cohort.
- We are welcoming another cohort of vibrant transfer students and graduate students.
- We are also welcoming a third cohort of new faculty and staff that have joined since we started the comprehensive expansion.
- This fall, we’ll continue to host all our annual traditions... each with greater expertise as we learn from our growth. **[PAUSE]**

Another critical element of institutional rhythm is the role of shared governance. I cannot overstate the importance of faculty and staff governance in how we operate and behave as a university community.

With the voices of Staff Council and Faculty Senate, the consultative process is valued and integral to how we are evolving our University.

As we move forward ... our leadership team is working to stay in rhythm, in step with each other... singing from the same sheet of music — in ways that support each other, consistent with our academic growth... and our students.

This morning's performances symbolize our willingness to listen and grow through the eyes of others. And we will not falter in creating a community that allows the distinctive voices of all our students to be heard. **[PAUSE]**

As a University, our unique institutional rhythm is most visible as we implement our Strategic Plan, named Build. Impact. Transform. At last year's Fall Convocation, I shared goals and outcomes. This handout you received today has a more detailed look at our measures and progress.

The big picture here is focus and using data to drive decisions that impact our desired outcomes. This summer, the President's Cabinet spent time examining our strategic plan... and we refined measurements to align with what we learned from our collective experience during the past 12 to 15 months. We continue to use external data — such as the NSSE Survey and TXHCB standards. You'll see an update on each of the four goals with indicators to measure movement.

The reorganizations we implemented earlier this summer are a significant effort to align and reflect our core value of **Student Focus**:

1. We have realigned front-line critical programs that support academic success to reside within the Division of Academic Affairs and Student Success.
2. We are also laser-focused on student engagement... using strengths-based student development, co-curricular learning, student leadership and a strong emphasis on parent engagement to be a key focus of the Division of Student Affairs.
3. And we have refocused our efforts to create a comprehensive approach towards strategic student recruitment. This new approach integrates all operational aspects of enrollment management, financial aid and the registrar. These efforts are now in a new Division of Enrollment Management.

These changes were necessary to keep pace with the rhythm of a growing university. We have also created a Performance Dashboard — one of the other handouts you received — to track a variety of measures in support of the Strategic Plan. That dashboard will be updated each semester. **[PAUSE]**

Yes, we must always examine what we're doing carefully to ensure the best and brightest future. We also should take a moment to pause and acknowledge ALL THAT WE ARE DOING! This video features a smattering of our amazing collaborations... or you can think of them as a variety of melodies that occur every single day on our campus.

At the Spring Commencement in Freeman Auditorium — we witnessed a record number of graduates cross the stage. More than 650 individuals received diplomas that day.

One of those graduates, now an alumnus, is Michael Johnson. If you think of our University as a well-tuned orchestra, then Michael is one of our all-star soloists. And he exemplifies one of our core values:

**Audacious!**

Michael was the first student in our first four-year cohort — the Class of 2020 — to graduate. You might be asking yourself, “Wait a minute, I

thought he was in the Class of 2020?” Well, he set out to finish in two years... and he did!

Now, he’s enrolling in our MBA program, and he expects to graduate in... you guessed it... 2020... and walk the stage again with his fellow classmates.

We are living through a period in our nation’s history that offers daily reminders about the importance of our University’s voice in stewardship and civility to all people. I formed the President’s Commission on Equity in 2017 to foster an institutional culture of excellence that values equity and inclusion — particularly for those who join us from historically under-represented communities. You may recall we provided input to this process at Spring Convocation and through charrettes earlier this year.

The PCOE remains diligent in its outreach to ensure that your voice is heard... and the PCOE Framework Report in your handouts provides an institutional focus on equity-mindedness. The PCOE has carefully studied other campus approaches to inclusive practices. And they have thoughtfully crafted a chronology of the campus approach and their accomplishments to date. Words matter, now more than ever. I encourage you to please review this document and share it with others.



Also, the PCOE has been important in advancing accessibility across campus. For example:

- The new Science and Technology Building reflects universal design of space.
- A new Electronic Information Resources Access Committee has been formed.
- And we've launched Blackboard Ally — this product integrates seamlessly into Blackboard and makes digital course content more accessible. [PAUSE]

Harry Staley is one student who has benefitted from these efforts. And his story exemplifies inclusion and our core value of **Opportunity** in action.

Harry is a computer science major... and he was one of 30 students to receive a National Scholarship from the National Federation of the Blind this spring. He was recognized for his achievement in the field of artificial intelligence.

At his acceptance Harry said... (quote) "I am honored to be among this year's scholarship class. I would like to thank the A&M-SA faculty, staff and the Disability Support Services team for their hard work in helping make my academic accommodations a reality." (end quote)

These are just a few highlights of their important work. Will members of the PCOE past and present please stand and be recognized. **[PAUSE AND LEAD APPLAUSE]** Thank you.

As the campus grows, we are prioritizing academic programs in an intentional manner. Those proposed programs contemplate employment forecasts and the talent and knowledge that employers are seeking... as well as the trajectory of industries that are critical to the local and national economies.

Academic program expansion correlates to Strategic Goal #2 — and it reflects our core value of **Collaboration**. Developing new programs requires planning and preparation by our faculty, academic leaders and our staff. Please notice the introduction of a limited number of doctoral programs. We recognize that this is not a perfect science... and there are many opportunities worthy of pursuit. For the near term, we are focused and aligned with these priorities as the best and highest use of our resources. **[PAUSE]**

As you have already seen there's much happening in all parts of the University. I'd like to share a few more recent successes within our three colleges and efforts by our Office of Advancement.

Now, I'd like to turn our eyes to the future... to look at just a bit of what we have planned for the fall. **[PAUSE]**

On the back of your Convocation program is a list of key events happening throughout the fall. Last year, I asked Dr. Durant Frantzen to lead the strengthening of academic activities for Hispanic Heritage Month. A dedicated group of faculty have prepared a month-long series of programs... and I anticipate rich conversations worthy of a Hispanic Serving Institution. I invite you to attend all the fall activities and to share this calendar with students and colleagues.

September 25<sup>th</sup> marks the official grand opening of the Science and Technology Building. The building is a magnificent addition... and for some departments, it's their first permanent home! We will also host a ceremony honoring The Mays Family Foundation in recognition for the Mays Center for Experiential Learning and Community Engagement.

Many hands and minds are working tirelessly. I'd like to thank everyone who is working diligently on making sure all the details come together in the final push to the first day of classes. A special thanks to Todd Mocabee, Bill Griffenberg, VP Spindle, Johnny Guevara, the entire SSC team, our Procurement offices, Business Affairs and everyone who is

making magic happen. Let's give all those people a big round of applause! **[PAUSE AND LEAD APPLAUSE]**

Keeping with facilities and infrastructure, this slide highlights key projects in the pipeline... along with their funding sources. For the foreseeable short-term, we have Phase 2 of the Science and Technology Building scheduled to open in spring 2019... and the Academic and Administration Building forecasted for fall 2020. The other public-private projects support our growth trajectory... and there are a couple of requests in the 86<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session.

I've included these campus footprint images to give you a big-picture perspective on how the campus will grow in concert with our enrollment growth. This shows you a 2018 perspective.

Here are the proposed concepts in the "thinking stage" to accommodate anticipated student enrollment of up to 9,000.

The intent here is to demonstrate the planning efforts that are underway as capital construction has a longer lead-time. We are forecasting growth again that is consistent with the strategic plan and academic plan.

**[PAUSE]**

This coming year, you'll see a new strategic enrollment plan that will undoubtedly refine our growth targets.

This past year — led primarily by Holly Verhesshalt and Provost O'Brien — Academic Affairs has been writing our Compliance Certification, which is the voluminous self-study document submitted to SACSCOC as part of the University's reaffirmation.

The compliance certification is due on September 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018. After that, efforts will begin on the Quality Enhancement Plan, which will focus on improving student learning outcomes related to math. We have a planned on-site visit in March 2019. I would like to acknowledge Holly for her leadership role in this area, among all the other important work you do for our campus. **[PAUSE]**

In addition, the College of Business is currently in candidacy stage for accreditation by AACSB... and they are finalizing the initial self-evaluation report for submittal in September. The College of Education

and Human Development is also in the planning stages for accreditation by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs... also known as K-KREP.

As you may have noticed, we have refreshed the curation of our collection and the artwork has moved. Each piece now has a text box that tells its story. In a few days, we will add a QR code to each work of art... and those codes will launch to our website where you can learn more about the artist and the piece itself. A special thank you to Fernando Estrada and Jorge Lucio for building that section of the web.

On September 24, we will have an Art Walk showcase. I invite you to stroll around, meet the artists, admire the many paintings and learn more about them. And later this semester, the Tricentennial Commemorative Flame will be relocated from Downtown Main Plaza to campus.

We are busy making plans for our 10-Year Anniversary in 2019. This is the official anniversary logo along with a few of the preliminary efforts to document our history and create an interactive timeline of seminal events.

Dr. Melissa Mahan and David Perryman are co-leading the effort... with a committee of faculty and staff. I suspect some of you will be recruited to assist with planning. If you have artifacts or photographs to share, please bring them forward. Stay tuned for more information in the coming weeks!

Another core value we embody is creating a culture of Excellence.

In today's dynamic environment, we will continue to cultivate an inclusive campus community. Toward that end, the PCOE will launch a Diversity Forum. The Forum will address equity-minded issues affecting our University and the broader world.

The PCOE now has two active subcommittees:

- One is engaged in supporting campus events or activities, and it will have funding to co-sponsor one-time diversity, equity or inclusion events. The intent is to enable the PCOE to expand the opportunity for on-campus dialogue with students, faculty and staff. This can include academic activities or co-curricular events that contribute to the equity-mindedness of our campus and may include support for guest speakers. The PCOE is ready to partner with you throughout the academic year.

- The other subcommittee will be working with the Office of the Provost to incorporate aspects of diversity into the academic course offerings as well as supporting research where practical.

**[PAUSE]**

As you all know, we are taking steps to enhance our capabilities in all areas of the University.

To enhance our strategic goal to become a national model for student and academic success, work is underway for an additional customized modular building. Modular C will be ready in December.

It will serve as a one-stop center for students to access resources focused on their academic success, retention and time to degree. It brings together the Advising Center, the Tutoring Center and Academic Success Coaches. The Writing Center, meanwhile, is expanding within the Central Academic Building. **[PAUSE]**

As you can see from the rendering... a Rec Sports Center is prominent on the horizon. We are working to identify a funding mechanism for this initiative because we will finalize our plans for our Athletics program this academic year. On September 19<sup>th</sup>, the Athletics feasibility study will be shared... and we will move through the consultation process and



begin to initiate an implementation plan. It's too early to tell, but a reasonable guess is that if our budget remains strong, we would field a sports program either in 2020 or 2021. I invite you to engage in the consultative process.

I am excited to announce a new institute for our University. Last week, the Regents approved the creation of the Henry G. Cisneros Institute for Emerging Leaders. This is funded by a \$1.3 million gift by Dr. Cisneros and others. Additional fundraising is underway to support the Institute, which will report directly to Provost O'Brien. **[PAUSE]**

In addition, we were selected to join the Facebook Cyber Security Program as one of only nine universities in the country and the only one in Texas. This prominent program will expand opportunities for students and faculty in cyber security. The launch ceremony will occur on August 29<sup>th</sup>. **[PAUSE]**

With our Faculty Excellence Awards, we will continue to recognize Distinguished Scholarly, Research, or Artistic Achievement... Distinguished Teaching... and Distinguished Service.

I'd also like to formally acknowledge that the inaugural Employee Development Day received overwhelmingly positive feedback from participants... and this will become an annual event!

In addition, I am pleased to announce that this academic year, we will introduce three categories of Staff Awards where staff are recognized for Excellence, and one group award. [PAUSE]

I call to your attention that as our University patterns evolve and we adjust to the tempo and rhythm of the academic year... that we acknowledge we are... On A Mission... to build a prominent University of the future. One that embraces student success. One that brings to life a cross-section of distinctive voices. One that lifts academic scholarship and embraces research throughout our University community.

“We are a diverse community with boundless potential... united and audacious in action... determined to propel the world forward... committed to building a brighter future.”

I will end with a video montage of many voices sharing their version of what On a Mission means to them. Together, they and we convey a single, harmonious message. Thank you.