President Mabry's Remarks
Grand Opening,
Ben and Maytee Fisch College of Pharmacy
September 17, 2015

Good morning to you all!

We are here today for two purposes. One is to celebrate the opening of the Ben and Maytee Fisch College of Pharmacy and its inaugural class, the class of 2019.

The second purpose is to celebrate the completion of W.T. Brookshire Hall, home of the Ben and Maytee Fisch College of Pharmacy. We are pleased to show off both this new professional college and this new state-of-the-art facility.

Only 17 months ago, we gathered under a pavilion just up the hill to celebrate the development of the new Fisch College of Pharmacy and the groundbreaking for W.T. Brookshire Hall. Many of you were here for that.

I told you then how the home of the Ben and Maytee Fisch College of Pharmacy would be a remarkable facility.

I told you it would be designed to create an environment for close, student-faculty interaction, that it would have state-of-the-art technology, and that it would be customized to host the Fisch College’s unique team-based learning curriculum.

I am happy to say that this facility and the college itself are both even more than I first envisioned. You are seated in the midst of one of the most beautiful and best-designed pharmacy colleges in the nation.
Before the first faculty member was hired or a single shovelful of dirt was moved, we thought and planned—on and off—for 10 years. And, I am honored and humbled when I think of the tremendous amount of work so many of you put in over the past three years to make this day a reality.

In 2013, the 83rd Texas Legislature, then-Governor Rick Perry, and the UT System Board of Regents approved a SB 566 and then our proposal to establish a self-sustaining college of pharmacy at UT Tyler.

Our proposal would not have become reality without the help of four people early on: my friend, Kirk Calhoun, president of UT Health Northeast; former UT System Chancellor Francisco Cigarroa; Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Pedro Reyes and Executive Vice Chancellor for Health Affairs Kenneth Shine. They came on board early and helped me convince legislators and our regents.

Senator Kevin Eltife then did the heavy lifting in the Legislature—such an understatement—along with Travis Clardy in the House. And, really, our entire delegation of East Texas legislators played essential roles in getting SB 566 to the governor’s desk. I remember sitting in Representative Matt Schaefer’s office trying to talk to one of the governor’s Higher Ed staff members who was vocally opposed to our plan.

Getting our bill through also relied heavily on Brookshire Grocery Company Chairman, Brad Brookshire, who committed his resources to the project and spoke personally to the Lt. Governor.

He allowed his CEO, Rick Rayford—an alumnus—to testify before the Legislature as to the need for the College. Rick harnessed the lobbying power not only of the corporation, but of the Texas retail industry, too.

Also, our area hospitals, the business community, Tyler City Council, the Tyler Chamber of Commerce, and universities across East Texas all played a role—
represented by SFA President Baker Pattillo here today. It was Jeff Austin III who suggested I make this a regional effort and get presidents, mayors, county judges (and so on) to sign a letter to the governor.

The Fisch Foundation came forward with one of the largest single gift commitments in UT Tyler history, thus settling the name for the Ben and Maytee Fisch College of Pharmacy.

Brookshire Grocery Company also (within weeks) committed to become a major philanthropic partner, naming the building for the Company’s founder, W.T. Brookshire. That extra funding allowed us to expand the size of this building from 40,000 gsf to 60,000 gsf, adding the research space and technical advancements to make this facility among the best in the nation.

I realized years ago that a college of pharmacy made sense because of the strength of the Tyler medical industry and because of the University's strength in nursing, chemistry and biology, among other science fields; and also because of the great need for pharmacists in our region and across the nation.

Just under 600 students applied for the inaugural 76 open positions. But Dean Brunner couldn’t count or couldn’t decide among some great applicants, or was sympathetic to students because 82, not 76, are in the first cohort. That first class is here today.

The Ben and Maytee Fisch Foundation’s support of our dream is one major reason we are standing here today.

Brookshire Grocery Company’s vision for a larger, more effective and more beautiful facility is another major reason. And all of you—Kevin, Regent Pejovich, Kirk, Tom Mullins, Baker and many more—are the reason we have been successful.

Thank you all. Because of you, we are here.