DR. MABRY: Good morning! It’s a great day to be here!

I know it’s unusual for us to meet in the middle of the year, but it seemed the best way to share our new Strategic Plan. I hope at the end of this time you will walk away with a sense of excitement about the future of this university.
As you know, I've been here a while. Ok, maybe a little longer than a while. I wasn’t even president when this photo was taken. In fact, I think it may have been Merle’s first visit to Tyler.

I remember that first drive, that first visit. The city seemed wonderful, although the university was smaller than we expected, just a few buildings clustered around an idyllic lake.

The Cowan Center had recently opened. If you wanted to live on campus, your only choice was University Pines. There was no campus dining. No organized athletics beyond tennis. No Palestine or Longview campuses.

Despite the small size of the university, from that very first visit I couldn’t ignore the great potential in the land, in Tyler, in East Texas, and in every person I met on this campus. I was drawn in by a pleasant, energetic and effective faculty and staff.

I could immediately envision what this institution could become. I could see a campus with student activities, a fitness facility, and nationally-ranked athletic teams. I could see a place where our student nurses could learn and our outstanding nursing faculty could teach and do their
research in a state-of-the-art facility. A place where landmark structures, fountains, and gardens would create an environment different from any other university in the UT System.

That first year, we developed a strategic plan that would put those ideas and others into action. Many of the concepts we discussed during my early years here have come to fruition, although a few—not many—are yet to be done.

But let me assure you that much of our phenomenal growth would not have happened without strategic planning. Would some of it? Certainly. But in truth good planning has brought us to the great position we are in today!

That sleepy commuter university is now thriving, beginning to be recognized on the national stage, and ready to move to the next level.

I asked at Convocation: What comes next? The answer: new ideas, new techniques and modes of operation—and a need for special attention to new markets and new opportunities. We need to be smarter and adapt to the ever-changing educational climate around us.
In August, we asked for your help. Together, we set out to create a plan that would be your plan, your vision, your ideas for the future.

This slide depicts the comprehensive process that we have gone through over the past 18 months. We’ve developed ideas, then simplified them, added new ideas, and then simplified some more. The intention was to give all of us a guiding document that would direct us in our future planning, a direction for our ship, so to speak.
I want to say a quick thank you to those who have been a part of this process. You have all done great work in a variety of roles, from idea generation at the beginning of the process, to note taking during the nearly 40 meetings the committee held with university stakeholders, to working through the numerous versions of the plan as ideas were presented and developed.

Chair Michael Donley, along with vice-chairs Laura Jackson, Harold Doty and Ken Wink have led the team doing the writing, but many of you out there have assisted in the process.

I also want to particularly thank the leaders and members of the Faculty Senate for their valuable ideas and input.

Thanks to all of you who have worked on this project!
Let’s take a quick look at the present. We are almost at 9,000 students, one-fourth of our students are graduate students and we’re classified as a Master’s Level-Large university.

We are growing, gaining an ever-stronger reputation at state, national and international levels, and adding new programs each year.
Now to the future. Here’s a quick snapshot at where we will likely be in just 10 years. We will have more students, a larger campus and more buildings and programs.

Note that our Carnegie classification will become “doctoral university with moderate research.” That future designation is less a goal than a natural result of departmental growth across campus.

Nursing and HRD asked for doctoral programs years ago. We fought a pitched battle to get those programs in place. Then the Pharm. D. came along as we added pharmacy. Nursing just had their Doctor of Nursing Practice proposal approved last month. That’s four. We have other strong programs who are asking to move forward to the doctoral level. Psychology, one of the strongest units on campus, wants to develop a doctoral degree in clinical psychology. Education has asked to add an Ed. D.

To be clear, no one in administration or UT System is mandating these changes—they are the result of the natural evolution of our faculty and their disciplines. With some undergraduate education moving to high
schools with dual credit (whether we like it or not) and by junior colleges beginning to add baccalaureate degrees, these new graduate programs make enormous strategic sense for the University of Texas at Tyler.

I'll let you read the mission in the handout you received today, because it’s much longer and has a lot of pieces in it that enable us to comply with certain UT System, Coordinating Board, and SACS requirements.

I want to share the new formulation of our vision with you. We still care about excellence in education and research. This vision more directly says we care about producing leaders, people who are able and driven to enhance the economic and social well-being of those in this region.
Our listening sessions led the strategic planning committee to revamp the list of UT Tyler core values. These values define us and play an important part in our planning. These core values will come into play as we work to enhance our brand, really sear into the minds of East Texans who we are.

What does it mean to be a University of Texas at Tyler Patriot?

**Patriots are Trailblazers:**

Many East Texans come from a long line of pioneers, homesteaders, people who blazed through new territory and built this great state. We want to build on that tradition of purpose and innovation to be on the front edge of what is happening in education and create new opportunities for better lives in this region.

**Patriots are Productive:**

We have a responsibility to teach our students to be productive citizens. After all, in order to be able to care for others we must first care for ourselves. Think of the airline instruction to put your own mask on before trying to help your children or others with their masks.
We must learn to be productive accountants, HRD professionals, mathematicians, teachers, artists, and pharmacists. By teaching our students to be those things first they can contribute to society directly while benefitting their parents, and then have the stability, time and other resources to make important contributions toward helping others directly. Another way to say this is that Patriots don’t just talk—they think and do!

PATRIOTS ARE INQUISITIVE:

When my children and grandchildren were young, they never stopped asking why, no matter how much I “sometimes” wanted them to stop. Their curiosity for the world was insatiable. When do we lose that? We want to be sure our students don’t lose their curiosity, their thirst for knowledge; indeed, we want to enhance their love of learning.

PATRIOTS EXHIBIT LEADERSHIP:

We’ve talked about “developing the whole student” or “developing university men and women” for several years. This idea is another big one that sets our university apart. We want our students to be thought leaders as well as action leaders. We need to teach our students the communication skills and analytical thinking skills needed to not only be the one in charge when needed, but also how to be the one to follow. If university graduates are not the ones to lead, then who will? Leadership was recently identified as a key priority by Chancellor McRaven, but I am proud to say we have been dedicated to this pursuit for years already.

PATRIOTS HAVE CHARACTER:

Character is a big core value for us. Simply put, Patriots try to do the right thing every time. We are ethical, honest, and fair at all times. Character makes knowledge into something that truly benefits families, neighbors, communities, and the world as a whole.
PATRIOTS HAVE COMPASSION:

Patriots care about others in a meaningful way. Every day, I see you exhibit this trait. You care deeply for our students and become dedicated to their growth and success. Our compassion, combined with our strong desire for excellence, defines this university.

PATRIOTS HAVE COURAGE:

Patriots are willing to make tough decisions. We do this in the interest of our students. Sometimes we have to make them work harder than they want to work, for example. We are civil, even polite, but carefully stand up for our beliefs and we stand up for those with a softer voice or no voice at all.

These values are who we are. No matter what building we construct or program we add, long after all of us in this room are gone, I sincerely hope that these beliefs will remain unaltered. For that to happen, we must decide every day to instill them in ourselves and our students.

It is not enough at this university to simply teach our subjects. We are molding young people, shaping leaders with compassion and courage and character—and a desire to blaze new trails.
Now, on to the center of our Strategic Plan. In the fall at Convocation, I ran quickly through the initial themes. In a moment, Dr. Mirmiran will come forward to show you the six themes and present three slides for each:

- the theme itself,
- strategies,
- and goals and tactics

The three pieces work together. Think of the theme as an umbrella. The strategies are the framework that holds the umbrella together. The goals and tactics are the fabric that make the umbrella useful.

We talked about strategies at Convocation, but they have changed quite a bit.

Remember, this is your strategic plan. That was why we have asked for so much input since we started the process a year ago.

Further, this plan is still not quite finished! After today, I would like you to take one last look through the plan and give us any additional ideas you have, especially those regarding tactics and specific metrics to measure.
when we’ve completed something or achieved success.

The plan, as it is now, is already posted online and can be accessed using the QR code on the back of your program. I encourage you to take a look. We will lock the final plan down in May.

As I said in the fall, you will see some overlap because some goals can fall into more than one theme.

Dr. Mirmiran, will you come forward and introduce the themes?
DR. MIRMIRAN: Thank you, President Mabry!

It is my honor to present the six themes of the strategic plan. These have been shaped from many great ideas all across campus. Each theme is a unique view into the future landscape of our university that we plan to build together.

I am going to move through these quickly, and not go through every point on each slide. Instead, I would like to highlight one or two key pieces of each theme.

Theme 1 is Building a Community to Educate and Inspire Patriots. We must never forget that our core mission is to build a community of university men and women who are not only well educated in their disciplines, but are also inspired Patriots who shape the world as productive citizens and effective leaders.
These strategies will guide us as we build our holistic education on the foundation of Patriot core values. Through a determination to build character in our students, as well as an understanding of teamwork and leadership, we will develop the tools we need to expand our reach well beyond our region.
We will build the Honors College as the hallmark of our quality education to attract the best and brightest from East Texas and beyond. This will include the honors in majors initiative.

There has been a lot of discussions at our town hall meetings about innovative ideas to expand and strengthen our pre-college programs. We will make sure to show high-schoolers that the education we offer is superior throughout the State.
Our second theme, Focusing on Excellence represents a long-standing tradition at our university. We will continue to steward that quality as a shared responsibility with our faculty and staff, from classrooms to laboratories and from registrar to human resources.
We will double down on retaining and recruiting high-quality faculty and staff, who will help strengthen our academic programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels, and in both on-campus and online programs.

We want our faculty and staff to build their careers here. We fully understand that retaining quality faculty will require a more competitive pay scale. Great faculty and staff and excellent programs will in turn help recruit and retain quality students.
A natural outcome of this theme, and a logical next step for us, will be the elevation of our Carnegie class to R3, doctoral-moderate research university. This will require graduating 20 or more doctoral students each year, and we are almost there.

With national rankings such as 7th for our online graduate nursing programs and 15th for our MBA in healthcare, we are confident that the change in Carnegie classification will open doors to new opportunities and further enhance the quality of our programs.

As President Mabry noted, we are simply responding to the requests of faculty in departments and colleges who are ready to offer doctoral degrees. We are NOT mandating a higher classification as an administrative directive.

Also under this theme, we want to establish a mentoring program, an excellent idea, suggested by our Faculty Senate. By mentoring those who are new to their positions, we can help them navigate the challenges of their early years, which will aid us in retaining the great faculty and staff members we work so hard to recruit.
We also want to retain more of our first-time, full-time freshmen. The retention rate was at 61.2 percent in 2014. Through the development of new retention initiatives, we can increase that number by at least 10 percentage points. This is an achievable objective, and I believe we can do even better.
We pride ourselves on our academic rigor, and we’ve come a long way in the realm of new pedagogies over the past few years. We have a strong core curriculum, and many specialized academic programs that are recognized by our peers. This third theme focuses on building from that foundation.
Although our courses are rigorous—when combined with engaging practical applications, a supportive faculty, great academic success support services, and a rich extracurricular life—they result in an environment where our students have the tools they need to learn on their own terms and a student life that supports their academic pursuits.
We have some truly amazing faculty at this university. We want our faculty to be recognized as the authority on innovative pedagogy in an ever changing ecosystem of learning from competency-based credentials to flexible modes of delivery that ARE no longer bound by time, pace, or place, and from narrow discipline-based teaching to holistic integrative learning. Our faculty will be the agents of change, developing new courses and writing the textbooks of the future.

We also want to support student learning through an appropriate combination of technology and pedagogy, for both on-campus and off-campus students. By making learning and support available where students need it, we can encourage them to learn. If they learn, they succeed. And since student success is our first goal, if they succeed so do we.
Our fourth theme has been added since Convocation, and is focused on strategies that support our students.
Over the past few years, we have worked hard to develop engagement programs and student activities that are vital to this university. An engaged student is a successful student, and we want to build on that philosophy.
We will be expanding student engagement programs, undergraduate research, service learning, integrating core competencies and patriot values in the curriculum, and STEM-related fields to help attract great students here and graduate them here.
We will continue to support our core function of high-quality teaching. We are doing a great job of teaching students. We will better our teaching through an enhanced focus on research, graduate education, scholarship, and creative work of our faculty, so our students will not be just consumers of knowledge but also producers of new knowledge.

There is no real change in our direction here. We have always said we want to focus equally on quality teaching and research. By renewing that dedication, we will become better teachers and researchers.
Just as we invest in enhancing our quality teaching, we will be investing in our research infrastructure, grantsmanship of our faculty, strategically planned cluster hires, and in research faculty lines.
We will focus on promoting interdisciplinary research with other academic and health institutions, and between our own academic units. Through the seeking of additional grant funding, the building of intellectual property ventures, and a dedication to hiring clusters of faculty who are willing to come here and build new programs, we will continue to grow all of our programs.

We all want to develop new ideas based on a determination to solve pertinent problems. Let’s invest in solving those problems. Let’s develop chair positions for faculty who want to go that direction.
Our final theme is centered on increasing our reputation and impact in this region and beyond. Let’s build a national and international reputation on every level we can!
We have a great impact on this region, so let’s make that influence grow among all our stakeholders, from alumni to local communities and from businesses to government agencies.
We will steward our relationship with alumni, as it will lift us in so many ways, from advocacy to philanthropy. Outside classrooms, we will engage our East Texas community by serving as a solution center for their needs; and yet we will reach beyond the region to make our distinct mark on the national and global stage for our students and faculty.

Thank you.
DR. MABRY: As part of this strategic plan, we have identified several Areas of Excellence as examples of how we can expand our teaching, research, and science while having a positive impact on the development of East Texas.

These projects, some already in their beginning stages and others only concepts, are cross-disciplinary efforts built at the interface of the strengths of our faculty, the needs of our community, and areas of State and UT System priorities. All of these will need to be approved through System as we move forward.

We need more big ideas like these, and I encourage you to think about more innovative ways for us all to work together. I fully expect this list to change and expand.
The University of Texas at Tyler’s Leadership Institute will help us focus our commitment to leadership education, research and community outreach.

This effort is being led by the College of Business and Technology, but it truly affects every single aspect of our university and I hope those of you who are teaching leadership principles in education and elsewhere will come on board to make this a truly collaborative effort.
I’m pretty sure plenty of us have been the “Target” of retail cybersecurity problems (pun intended). As technology advances, hackers get smarter and consumers are the victims.

This Center will help address a true national and international need.

The Computer Science Department is taking the lead in addressing research and policy issues on consumer-based cybersecurity. The intent of the department is to become an NSA/DHS National Center of Excellence in Cyber Defense Education and to become an authority and an advocate for consumer-based cybersecurity.
An embryonic partnership among faculty of the Ben and Maytee Fisch College of Pharmacy, the College of Arts and Sciences, and the College of Engineering has led to the development of a new universitywide cluster hire initiative – a Collaborative for Research on Pharmaceutical Engineering and Sciences (C-ROPES).

Faculty from chemistry & biochemistry, biology, engineering, and pharmaceutical and clinical sciences will work on a range of projects from drug discovery to drug delivery, and from engineering of active therapeutics to product design and development.

Research will cover areas from synthetic biology to nanopharmacology, nanotechnology diagnostics, drug delivery and treatment of brain-related and central nervous system diseases and injuries. There are also plans for a joint PhD in Integrated Biomedical Sciences with UT Health Northeast.
We have focused for the last several years on the development of P-16 education and recruiting students who want to go into STEM fields. We have a reputation around Texas through the Ingenuity Center’s Project Lead the Way and are making great strides through the Innovation Academy and programs such as Engineering.

This Center will focus on bringing high-ability students, whether STEM-focused or in other areas, to the university.
You’ve probably heard about this one in the news. It’s quickly becoming a relevant aspect of our research and so we have included it here.

The Center for Environment, Biodiversity and Conservation is a collaboration that includes 19 faculty from 3 colleges and 5 departments.

Those faculty have research expertise in ecology, conservation genetics, genomics, environmental economics, policy and regulation, hydrology, pollution, and green supply chains.

The center will conduct essential research to find practical solutions to the ecological issues created by species extinction and decline.
As you saw in the first video, there is real evidence that we have worked hard to add physical facilities to meet the needs of our students, faculty and staff.

We have been in a nearly constant state of construction. And I’m not sure that’s going to change anytime soon as we continue to build the best university in Texas.

Let’s look at drawings of the new home for the College of Business. We will begin construction in October. We will turn to the remodeling of the Arts & Sciences Building as soon as the business project is complete.
So we have talked much about what we would like to build today: an Honors College, additional research facilities, and new doctoral programs to name a few. I’m sure some of you might be asking where do we plan to put all of this.

I often say that we are the only non-urban academic institution in the UT System. While it has its challenges, it also comes to great advantage because, unlike many of our urban colleagues, we are not landlocked.

We have already agreed to purchase the church adjacent to the Ornelas Activity Center and that purchase is going through the process with System. That building, for now, will serve the Innovation Academy as it grows. We are diligently working on growing in other areas as properties become available.

Let’s take a moment to look at the concept we have developed to create space for our future facilities: The UT Tyler East Campus.

Now, before I do, this is clearly conceptual. Like many projects, it may look very different by the time we are done. We may well run into roadblocks along the way that require us to go to a Plan B or Plan C.
One of the lines I used to use in the Legislature and with others was that we were like teenagers; teenagers in need of socks, shoes, new jeans and a bigger coat. In our last two strategic plans that meant we spent a whole lot of time focusing on facilities.

We needed buildings if we were going to grow, and we needed space that our students could depend on. So we built things, and built them well. We built programs and landmarks and academic programs and athletic teams. We built great educators and endowed professorships and Colleges.

This plan, however, is different. Although it certainly has some buildings and new programs in it, we are traveling upwards. We are no longer teenagers, no longer undergrads. We are graduate students who need to learn a different way of thinking, a higher way to exist, in order to grow and move forward.

This is an amazing plan that I believe will take UT Tyler where it needs to go, will guide the university as it faces the challenges of the coming decade. But as you can see there are still details to be developed and
decided as you work toward accomplishing these goals. I am proud to say I feel we are about 90 percent there.

This day, this plan, is like the launching of a new ship or the igniting of the second stage of our rocket. We are entering a new phase of UT Tyler’s journey.

We’ve talked a lot today about how our ship is going to look in the future. But there is one piece we haven’t covered, one very important piece that will need to fall into place as this university moves to the next phase.

It’s time to tell you we will need a new captain.

I am tremendously proud of what all of us together have accomplished here, and I am extremely excited about the future of this university. But it is time for me to step aside in favor of a new president with new ideas and new levels of energy.

So I have decided to return to retire from the presidency and return to the faculty at the end of this calendar year, Dec. 31, 2016. I will, at that time, have completed 18 ½ truly rewarding years in this role.

Why now, at such an exciting time for this university? This is as good a time as there is. I’ve learned there is never a right time to go. I talked to then-EVC Pedro Reyes about leaving nearly three years ago, but I decided to continue on as we worked to get the Pharmacy College bill through the Legislature. Then the Alumni House and the Music Building became major efforts.

There is always something else to do, something else to build, and exciting new programs to get authorized or funded. I am so fortunate to have been able to be part of something so amazing for so many years.

This University of Texas at Tyler presidency has been a labor of love and far more than a job. Like any other leader, if I succeeded it was because of each of you. I have been surrounded by bright, hard-working, compassionate, energetic individuals my entire career here.
I have been truly fortunate to have the very best faculty and staff possible—people with a can-do attitude: hard-working trailblazers who always look at the glass as half full. I encourage you to never let that positive attitude slip away.

Each of you, with your outstanding knowledge, effort, and leadership, have allowed me to spend my time dreaming, creating and promoting the development of a truly first-rate institution.

I have also been fortunate to have similarly great support from this community. Tyler and East Texas leaders and philanthropists have made many of the landmark facilities here possible. We have worked together to meet this region’s needs. Community stalwarts have responded many times over the years with voices of support for our endeavors, and open checkbooks. Not every president is so fortunate.

I also could not have had any measure of success without Merle. Many of you know this is truly a two-person job, and she’s been at my side all these years, often the most insistent, most effective possible advocate for this university. She gave up her job as an award-winning teacher to take on this co-leader role. Longview University Center once dedicated one of their largest new monument signs for her.

She led the TISD Foundation and has and has made many, many friends for this university. She currently spends hours and hours leading the Altar society for the Catholic Diocese. Thank you, Merle, for everything. I’m looking forward to spending this new phase of our lives together.

During the time between now and the end of the year, I hope to work with each of you to make certain UT Tyler continues to have strong resources and a unified strategic plan for our future.

Thank you for this opportunity. God Bless you all and Go Patriots!
This is truly an amazing place, and I look forward to seeing it grow.

Thank you