I want to thank each of you for joining us as we celebrate the start of what will be a truly transforming project for this campus, the UT Tyler Alumni House.

UT Tyler alumni have been at the center of what we do—and at the center of productivity for this region—since the first class graduated more than 40 years ago. You don’t have to look far to find one of our former students working successfully each day to make East Texas stronger. From banking to nursing, education to engineering, Patriot Alumni are having a significant impact on this region and beyond.

Since this university began in 1971, we have been a major social and economic driver for East Texas. This university has a regional impact of more than $550 million annually and is responsible for keeping 2,000 students per year in East Texas who would otherwise leave to attend school elsewhere. After graduation, those students become an important factor in our economy.

Our alumni can be found serving as corporate CEOs, university leaders, business men and women, teachers, artists, chemists, nurses, historians, accountants and entrepreneurs—as well as government and civic or nonprofit leaders. They are everywhere in all walks of life, and I am always excited and amazed to hear the success stories of those who began their journey at this university.

We are hosting commencement next week, and another class of more than a thousand will join our more than 32,000 alumni. Our alumni association is rapidly growing, and our former students have expressed a need for a place where they can reconnect with their alma mater.
And so the Alumni House, which in a little more than a year will stand at the entrance to our campus, was conceived.

The Alumni House will be a different sort of project from anything we have built before. We want this space to be comfortable, even homey, and welcoming. And so we are designing it as both a comfortable meeting space and as a fitting first-look, if you will, to those entering our campus.

The building’s 12,000 gsf will serve us in several ways.

• First, it will be a place for our alumni to gather, perhaps before attending a campus event, to reconnect for a luncheon, or to meet with recruiters from businesses or graduate programs. The bottom floor of the facility will have three large rooms that will serve as that gathering space—the boardroom and gallery, the presidential library, the Patriots room and the kitchen. There will be outside spaces, too.

• Second, it will serve as a place to display memorabilia, archival collections, awards and honors earned by our alumni, current students, faculty and the University over the years—perhaps even our golf national championship plaque will find a home here.

• Third, the top floor will house our University Advancement personnel, including our alumni affairs director. That means visiting alumni will have immediate access to Brittany and her staff.

• Finally, we are building a facility that will be an addition to this community as a whole. We plan to open the building up to groups all across campus, but also to groups throughout Tyler and our entire region, giving our community an additional place to gather and connect with this university.
As you can tell, we have important plans for this facility, and it would not be possible without the support of this community.

We are proud to announce that we will be naming several of the rooms and outside spaces in this new facility. The alumni house will contain:

- Ralph Spence Boardroom & Gallery
- Bill Barrett Presidential Library
- Miles & Debbie Koon Patriots Room
- David and Janis King Alumni Green

In addition, I want to thank Michael and Ashley Wysocki and Michael and Lisa Lujan for aiding us with the Alumni and Advancement office spaces in the building.

Then there is the R.W. Fair Foundation’s gift of an Eagle sculpture to be placed on the front lawn near the building’s drop-off point. The statue will become an icon at the front of the building.

In addition, many of you have purchased bricks to be placed in the surrounding gardens.

Plus, some have given very generously and declined recognition, but I would still like to say thank you to those who have asked to remain anonymous and say how much we appreciate your gifts.

Each construction project at this university improves our campus in a dramatic way. This one is unique in its purpose, and I am proud that we are moving forward. I encourage you to stop by over the next few months and view our progress as we make progress on the UT Tyler Alumni House.