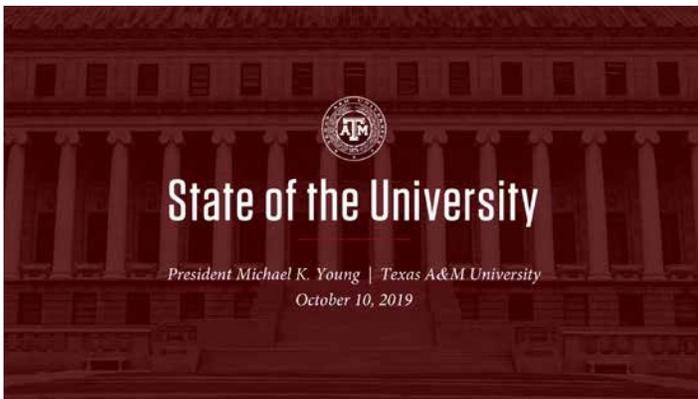




Texas A&M University

State of the University Address

OCTOBER 10, 2019



HOWDY!

Thank you, Mikey, for that very kind introduction.

In his first months as president of our student body, Mikey Jailliet has served this university in this role representing not only the largest student body in our history, but also the largest student body of any university in the United States, period.

Thank you, Mikey, and all of your fellow leaders, for your continued service on our behalf and on behalf of the students who are at the heart of why we are here at this university.

I would also like to thank the Corps of Cadets today – they are the Keepers of the Spirit – for joining us to post the colors, as well as thank the Century Singers for their excellent performance today. Thank you all.

I'd like to begin today's address by telling you two stories, both of which happened on the same day last month.

These stories are important not just because they capture the range – and I do mean range – of our research, but because they are about you.

They tell us the extraordinary work you're engaged in each and every day.

And they highlight the remarkable impact and influence our projects have on regions around the world, and even beyond.

Here's the first story:

A few weeks ago, I had the opportunity to travel to San Diego to tour on a ship called the *JOIDES Resolution*.



It is home to our largest federal research program, recently extended by \$350 million dollars over the next five years.

We're very proud that Texas A&M serves as the science operator for that ship, meaning that we provide operations, logistics, training and management for multiple expeditions every year.

We also coordinate collaborations among researchers from 26 different countries, all for the single purpose of advancing scientific discovery.

This was the first time the ship was docked in the United States in more than a decade.



And I was honored to be invited by Dr. Brad Clement, Director of Science Services, and Dr. Debbie Thomas, Dean of our College of Geosciences, who actually got her start as a graduate researcher on the ship. And Dean Thomas will again join an expedition in January of this coming year.



This ship does extraordinary work. By drilling through sediment and rock in the deepest depths of the ocean, it helps scientists explore the history of the earth, gathering climate information and other historical data.

That day in San Diego, I had the privilege of sitting in on a meeting of researchers just before they were to set sail on a two-month expedition. The excitement in the room was palpable and I was so proud of the work that we do. I am grateful for the support from the National Science Foundation, which entrusts us to carry out our work with excellence and integrity for scientific advancement.

The story of the *JOIDES Resolution* would be impressive on its own. But a second experience really brought home for me the breadth and depth of our university's research and influence.

Later that same day – literally that same day – I was approached by a person who asked me if I was the president of Texas A&M.



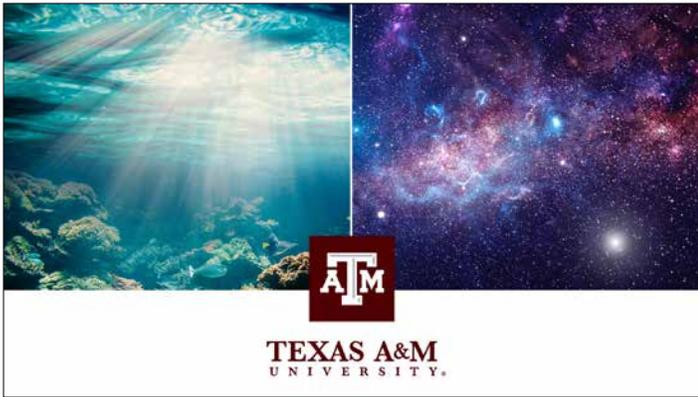
It turned out to be Dr. Pooneh Bagher, who is a professor in our College of Medicine in the Department of Medical Physiology.

Dr. Bagher was in San Diego for another research project. This one involves looking at the long-term physiological effects of microgravity on our cardiovascular systems at the International Space Station.



Dr. Bagher's research is of importance to understanding the impact of space on our bodies for astronauts and is but one example of the great work that we do in support as a space-grant university.

So at the end of that day I realized based on those two examples, from miles below the earth's surface to 250 miles above the earth – from the deepest depths of the

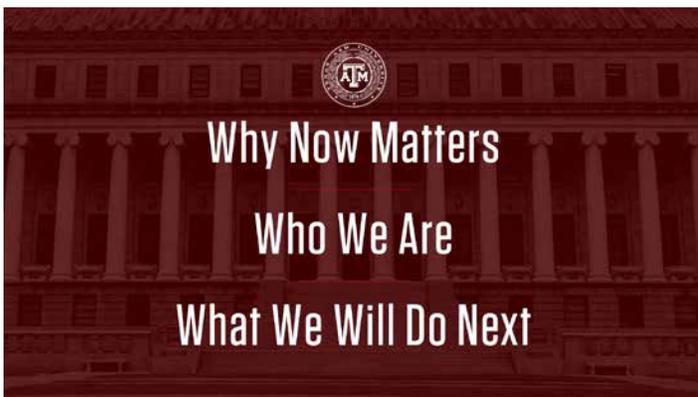


ocean to the farthest reaches of space – our university mission is driving education, research and discovery that selflessly serves humanity. An amazing experience. So thank you. There she is. Dr. Bagher would you stand up and just let us recognize you. And I don't know if Dean Thomas is here as well. Thank you.

Thank you for allowing me to take some time to tell these two stories. I know that these stories are but two of thousands that demonstrate the incredible work you do here and around the world.

What you do matters. It is of consequence. It makes a difference. It changes the world.

Because of your efforts and contributions, the state of the university is strong and vibrant. That is not to say that we are without challenges. We as Aggies are conditioned to face and overcome challenges, to strive for excellence every day, to celebrate success and plan for more.



So there are many things I'd like to cover today, but I'd like to focus on three major ideas:

- Why now matters;
- Who we are; and
- What we will do next

Let's start with why now matters.

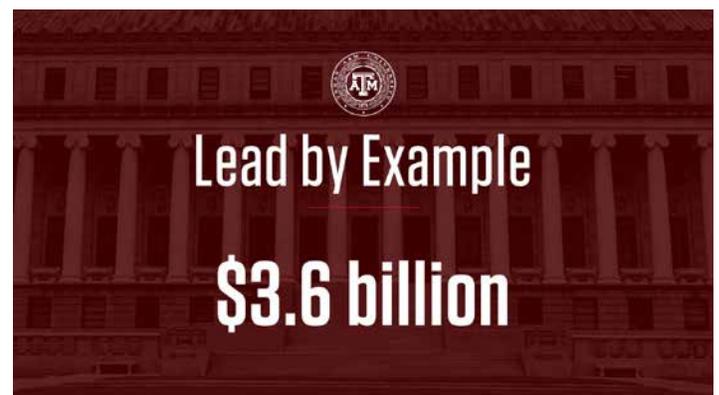
It is always a great day to be an Aggie, but today, October 10, 2019, that's especially true. Consider the convergence of some very exciting news taking place at this very time in the history of our university.



We are at the culmination of Vision 2020, a bold, well-crafted strategic plan created in 1998 by visionary, prescient Aggies. The aspiration of these leaders set a path that led to our designation as a tier-one research university as well as a member of the Association of American Universities. Many of those Aggies remain actively involved today and we are very, very grateful for their foresight.

We are also in the final push on our \$4 billion Lead By Example fundraising campaign – as Mikey mentioned, the largest of its kind to date in our history and in the history of Texas, and the fourth largest ever for a public university in the United States.

This campaign is scheduled to end at the end of 2020 and I'm proud to announce that we are now at \$3.6 billion in that campaign.



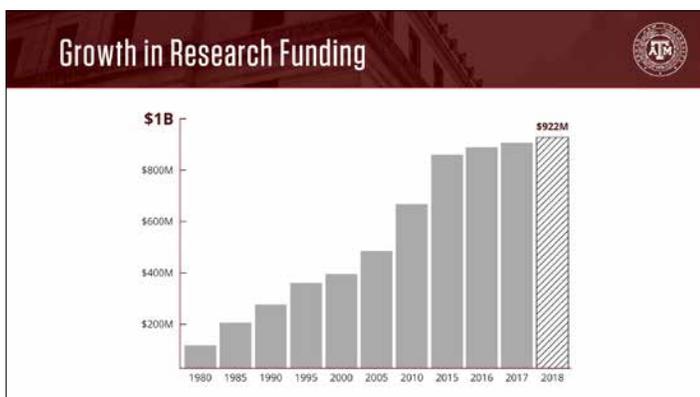
These vital funds help our students, faculty and staff have the resources they need to continue the pursuit of excellence as a world-class university.

We are very grateful to our former students who have gone on to great success, and then choose to give back to help future Aggies and our great university.

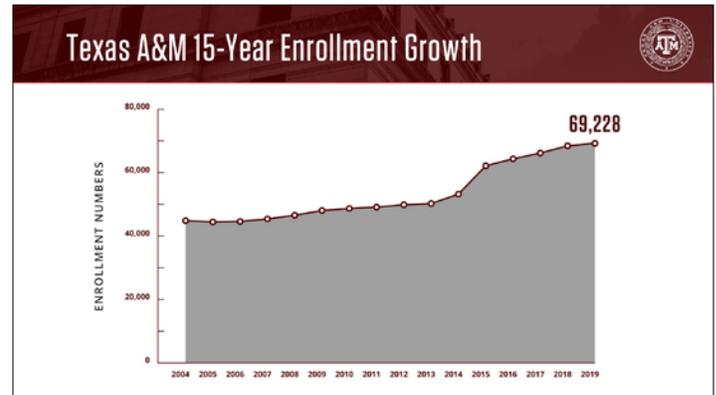


I wish to thank our university affiliate organizations and their dedicated teams, who galvanize Aggies in support of the university, improving the quality of education and building lifelong friendships. I wonder if they could stand as I mention them. The Association of Former Students, led by President and CEO Porter Garner III, Class of 1979; The Texas A&M Foundation, led by President Tyson Voelkel Class of 1996; The 12th Man Foundation, President and CEO Travis Dabney, also of the Class of '96, a good class; and the George and Barbara Bush Foundation, led by President David Jones.

Thank you, thank you very much for what you do as leaders. And thank you to all of the other support organizations and especially the half-million strong Aggie Network for your support of our university.



In addition to the generous support from our Aggie family, this year we received the most research funding in our history. We are now a top 20 university across public and private universities alike.



Because of the growth in the state and tremendous demand for what we as a university have to offer, we have grown by the equivalent of three universities in the last 15 years.

We are now the largest university in the nation in terms of enrollment.

While we experienced growth, we have also continued to enhance the quality of education. I think this is important to point out. Growth with quality, not at the expense of quality.

Here are some examples of our commitment to quality: Among Texas public universities, Texas A&M is tied for first in time-to-degree and has the highest six-year graduation rate, as well as the greatest lifetime return on students' investment in their education.



Consequently, our rankings remain strong. Last month, we crossed into the Top 20 public university rankings in the Wall Street Journal/Times Higher Education rankings, and Money Magazine ranked us again as the #1 best value university in Texas, #18 in the nation.



In other great news, Texas A&M received the largest-ever investment by the Texas legislature – \$91 million additional dollars for our students over the biennium of this year and next.

We are extremely grateful to the 86th Texas state legislature, Governor Greg Abbott, the advocacy of the Aggie Network, the leadership of our Board of Regents and our Chancellor, John Sharp, and faculty, staff and students who made such a compelling case. We will discuss the planned impact of the investment in a few minutes.

Texas A&M also earned the Higher Education Excellence in Diversity, or “HEED” Award and is being recognized as a “Diversity Champion” by INSIGHT Into Diversity magazine.



The HEED Award is a national honor recognizing U.S. colleges and universities that demonstrate an outstanding commitment to diversity and inclusion. Congratulations to Dr. Robin Means Coleman and her team, as well as faculty, staff and students who made this award possible.

Of course, we have much more work to do. We need to make our students feel welcomed, respected and included, as well as everybody who steps on this campus, our faculty and our staff. This is sadly not always the case. Every person in this room and indeed the entire university shares this responsibility. This award is validation that we can celebrate the work that is underway as we continue to pursue our core values in our regard for each other.



Our six core values of respect, excellence, leadership, loyalty, integrity, and selfless service differentiate us from other universities.

They represent the core of who we are as well as our aspirations.

Texas A&M Today



Now let's take a moment to talk about who we are today. I like to describe our campus as a living laboratory where tradition, scholarship and cutting-edge innovation often contribute to the success of the other. Investment in buildings and, more importantly, the people within those buildings, is an important indication of the type of place we want Texas A&M to be – a great, great place to learn and discover.

We have a responsibility to equip our faculty, staff and students with the best resources we can. Consider the building alone that is taking place during this time.

Zachry Engineering Education Complex



The Zachry Engineering Complex has been open for just over a year. In that time nearly 14,000 students per semester have taken at least one class there, and the room huddle spaces were reserved more than 100,000 times for students to work together.

The art and design of the building is conducive to the way students study and create. From open areas like what you see in this slide here, to transformational learning opportunities such as with The SuSu and Mark A. Fischer Engineering Design Center, named for beloved Aggies who contribute their time and treasure to bettering this campus they love so much. Here students have access to state-of-the-art prototyping

Zachry Engineering Education Complex



tools, equipment and support staff to unlock their creativity. Dean Kathy Banks and her team, along with the individuals, families and corporations that made this space possible are to be commended. Thank you.

Student Services Building



In 2017 we broke ground on a new 95,000-square-foot Student Services Building. This is near completion. This does deserve a "Whoop." This will be a central, convenient place on campus for our students to access a host of services, including counseling, disability services, housing options, etc. It will also offer conference rooms and common areas where students can relax and work together in a quiet environment.

21st Century Classroom Building



The 21st Century Classroom building near Simpson Drill Field is also under construction. With 118,000 square feet, this building will add more than 2,200 new classroom seats, with flexibility in arranging studios for enhanced learning, including a large 600-seat in-the-round arena. The co-located offices of the Center for Teaching Excellence, Instructional Media Services and the Office of Academic Innovations will collaborate to enhance pedagogical innovation in learning.



space for the Health Sciences – two new AgriLife buildings for research including the new Plant Pathology and Microbiology Building, and two new planned satellite recreation centers.



The Music Activities Center opened at the end of August. This building is a reflection of how important music is to Texas A&M, both as part of the educational process and as a medium that creates lifelong friendships.



Texas A&M at Galveston opened a beautiful Main Academic Complex and an Aggie Special Events Center which provides critical meeting space for students, faculty and staff to foster collaboration and innovation, and engage with the surrounding community.

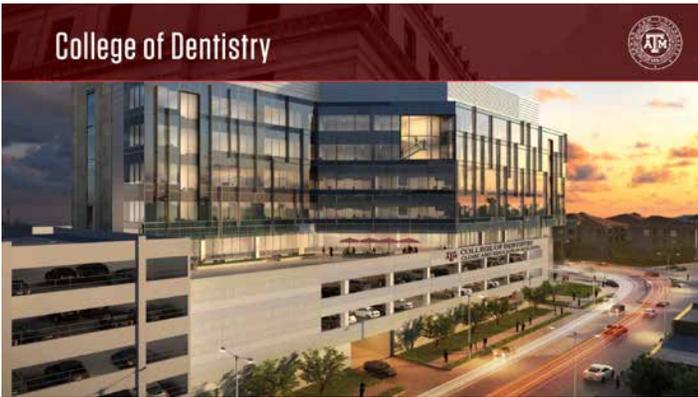


This wonderful part of campus comfortably houses all 349 members of the Fightin' Texas Aggie Band, as well as rehearsal rooms, offices, student lounges, concert spaces and an impressive 100-yard artificial turf field for practice. I'm proud to say I actually have a locker over there that contains my clarinet so I can practice there as well.



The Higher Education Center at McAllen is already serving more than 500 students to better meet the needs of the area, among the fastest growing regions in the nation.

Other projects of note include the brand new Instructional Laboratory & Innovative Learning Building (ILSQ), the Medical Research and Education Building – which incidentally more than doubled the research



And in January, the College of Dentistry officially dedicates its new building in Dallas. In addition to teaching students, the college serves more than 100,000 patient visits per year through its clinical programs. This building will allow us to increase that number by an additional 15,000 to 20,000 patient visits for the underserved community.



These new buildings go hand-in-hand with the investment of more than \$100 million annually in maintenance for existing facilities.

In this short period of time, we will have invested an additional \$1.5 billion in buildings completed and underway, expanding our infrastructure by more than 1.5 million square feet.

The majority of our construction is dedicated to our core academic enterprise as you've seen from all of these.

I do also want to mention, however, the beautiful new E.B. Cushing Track and Field Stadium, as well as Davis Diamond for softball.

Plans are in place now for building out a beautiful green space as well, and an amphitheater in what is referred to now as Aggie Park to enhance the beauty of our campus as well as provide space for a broad range of

student activities including concerts, lectures, as well as Aggie Ring Day.



I talk about the building infrastructure because it is an important indication of our investment in our most critical resource – our people – people who are breaking new ground in learning and discovery on all of our campuses and indeed, around the world.

I referenced our growth earlier. It's critical that we provide all the infrastructure and critical resources for everyone on our campuses to have optimal learning and research opportunities. This investment is necessary to ensure that we serve that growth and continue to provide the highest quality educational environment possible.

All of this construction allows us to grow our capacity to achieve at the highest levels across our three missions: student learning, research and discovery, and impact. Our impact extends not only through the students we teach and the discoveries we make, but also through the service we render.



And let me give you an example about what is going on in these buildings and all of the other buildings around our campuses. I would like to talk about some wonderful

traction that we are getting with the \$100 million dollar President's Excellence Fund.

Thank you to faculty members across all colleges and schools who have embraced these grants with enthusiasm. Through Round Two of the grants, every single college and school has been represented. Ninety-four percent of all Assistant Professors, over half of all of our Associate Professors and almost 40 percent of Full Professors have joined to date. I also would like to thank staff members who support the faculty through administering a transparent, technologically savvy, and streamlined process.



Round 1 of X Grants has already netted an additional half million dollars in extramural grants. Round 1 of T3 Grants totaling \$3 million dollars has resulted in additional external funding of more than \$4.6 million.

We are tracking progress and we continue to report about the amazing research collaborations that take place in year one's grants; each builds on the next. The next rounds for awards include \$3 million in December 2019 for T3 Grants and \$7 million in May 2020 for round three X Grants.

Now that we've talked about why we're here and who we are. I want to take some time to focus on where we're going.



Thanks to the advocacy of the Texas A&M University System Board of Regents, System Chancellor, the Aggie Network, and our faculty, students and staff, the case was made to the legislature that growth in enrollment without growth in funding was not sustainable.



I want to stress six priorities for additional investment over the coming few years:

1. Faculty Investment
2. Student Success Initiative
3. Graduate Education
4. Emerging Areas of Critical Research
5. Academic Innovation
6. Staff Advancement

Let me discuss briefly each in turn.



Priority one is Investment in Faculty.

In order for our students to learn and thrive and for us to remain on the cutting edge of research, we must hire and retain the best faculty possible. We will invest approximately \$10 million per year in this priority. We will hire an additional 100 faculty or more, allowing us to increase support in critical areas of instructional need and in areas of significant research potential, as

well as increase faculty diversity. We will also address compensation imbalances among faculty.

We will continue to leverage great programs that have already been established, such as the Chancellor's Research Initiative, the Governor's University Research Initiative, and matching fund opportunities.



Building on the success of the President's Excellence Fund, I am also pleased to announce an additional set of grants designed to further enhance our research. These grants will be called Clinical Research Partnership Grants and will center on researchers and clinical partners and will total \$1 million per year for the remaining eight years of the President's Excellence Fund. This additional \$8 million dollars in funding will be on top of the \$100 million already committed to date for the Excellence Fund.

Designed to stimulate new collaborations between Texas A&M researchers and clinical partners, requests for a Clinical Research Partnership Grant may be made for up to \$200,000 dollars for a two-year period. These proposals will undergo merit-based review. The aim is to seed connections between our researchers and our delivery partners, leading to growth, impact, and external support of our work in this field. More information is forthcoming through the Vice President for Research in the weeks to come.

Our next priority is the Student Success Initiative. We will invest \$5 million per year to support this critical program. Areas of focus include: retention, graduation rates, time-to-graduation, learning outcomes, and placement.



Students are at the heart of our enterprise. We must do everything possible to ensure their success. For example, we are committed to moving our first-year student retention rate from good to great.

Improving retention from 92 to 95 percent would mean that approximately 325 more students per year would stay in school instead of dropping out or transferring.

Each year that could help about 900 more Aggie students graduate in four years, helping them save time, incur less debt and launch their careers.

As our mission states, we want to prepare students to assume roles in leadership, responsibility and service to society. In order to do so, we will maintain a relentless commitment to helping students succeed in learning, graduating and serving.



The entire university is committed to the Student Success Initiative. In Galveston, for example, student retention has already improved by 8 percent in just one year. We know we can do it and we must.



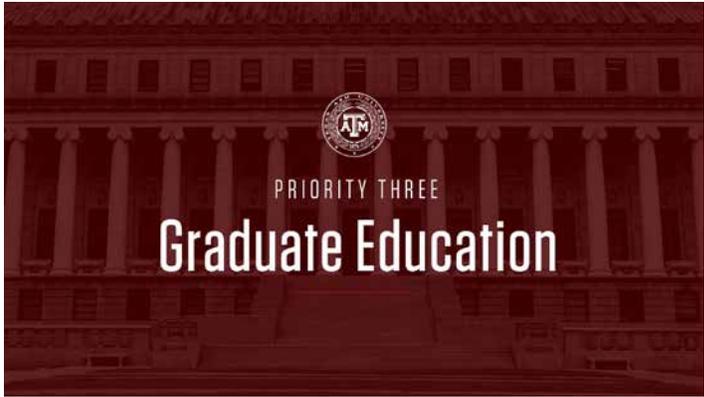
Another example of our Student Success Initiative is our focus on first-generation students. Nearly a quarter of our students are first generation – they are the first in their families to attend college. Building student success means celebrating and supporting these individuals in every aspect of their academic endeavors including experiences outside the classroom.

I respect so much these students who are blazing the trail for their families and themselves. In fact, about one-third of my Leadership Team were first generation students.



I wonder if I could take a moment and just ask all of you who are or were first-generation students – would you stand up please? That gives you a small indication of the importance of this and the impact it's likely to have. All of you are mentors on a daily basis in your words and deeds and serve as an example to all of our students who are here. Thank you.

Our next priority is graduate education. We will invest \$5 million per year. We must meet the overarching financial



needs of our graduate students in order to recruit and retain the best, including commitments of multi-year support. We must provide more interdisciplinary opportunities for our graduate students. And we must provide enriched research support as well as enhanced career development services. And we will do that.



We also know that in order to remain competitive and continue our pursuit of excellence, we must invest in emerging areas of critical research – our fourth priority – where we'll invest another \$5 million per year. Examples include data science, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, among others. We want to bring to bear the full spectrum of research in these areas, much of which is already taking place on our campus.

Another example is increased support for technology commercialization, which will enhance our capacity to ensure that the cutting-edge work that we do on our campuses gets out into the lives of real people around the globe.



Academic innovation is our fifth priority. This is about leveraging new ways to enhance how students learn. It is about unlocking creativity across the university to enhance pedagogical efforts. We have so many brilliant teachers on this campus and all of our campuses. I want to turn loose, if you will, or unleash that creativity in the minds of our great faculty to explore new ways of teaching.



To that end, I am also announcing another \$1 million per year investment in a second series of grants. These will be called Presidential Transformational Teaching Grants. This new seed-grant program is designed to offer new funds to further Texas A&M University's commitment to advancing transformational learning.

These grants will be funded annually at \$1 million per year for the remaining eight years of the President's Excellence Fund for a total of \$8 million additional dollars. We will fund 30 projects, each lasting two years.

In the days to come, the Dean of Faculties will communicate about opportunities to apply for these exciting grants and I hope you will take it seriously and you will engage.

In addition, we will invest another \$1.5 million dollars in the priority of academic innovation in areas that

range from instructional design for high-quality course production via technology to enhanced online learning experiences for students, as well as enhanced data analytics and lifetime learning.

I think this cartoon sums it best!



It's about transformation. Transformational teaching and learning and evolving. This is what we're about. And this is what we'll enhance and develop as well.



Our sixth priority is staff advancement. As we all know, our staff are absolutely critical to everything we do and everything we try to accomplish. We want Texas A&M to not only be a great place for students but also for staff and faculty who work, learn and live here. In the months to come, you'll hear more about this and have the opportunity to provide input as we foster ways for employees to connect inside and outside of work, and to partner with our community to attract and retain talent.

One program under development is called "Flourish" and that is just what we want. This will align with other programs that span wellness and support. This also includes better onboarding of new faculty and staff. It's a positive, strength-based approach to employee engagement and wellbeing, and it begins from the

date of hire until retirement. In the end, this is about supporting all employees to achieve their greatest career potential and have the highest level of health and wellbeing possible. Look for more about the Flourish program in the weeks and months to come.



So these are our six priorities:

1. Faculty investment
2. Student success initiative
3. Graduate education
4. Emerging areas of critical research
5. Academic innovation
6. Staff advancement

We look forward to receiving your input and implementing these programs.



But we cannot and should not look only towards short-term priorities. In order to help our university thrive, the Provost is chairing a process to create a strategic plan for our university for the next 10 years. We are asking for your input at a series of fora, some of which have already been announced, each with a unique topic related to the plan including: increasing our global impact; positioning Texas A&M University as a best place to work, live, and learn; growing and supporting faculty,

staff, and research; and enhancing and reinventing education for students. This plan will take us through 2030.

In 2026, mid-way through, amazingly, Texas A&M University will turn 150 years old. We want to reach that milestone anniversary being the best that we can be. Please make every effort to attend one of these sessions to contribute your voice to what we need done here at this university.



And all that we discussed today aligns with our Strategic Pillars: Transformational Education, Discovery and Innovation, and Impact on the state, nation and the world.

As we have progressed and grown, it has become increasingly clear that our ability to achieve our goals is intimately and directly related to our capacity to come together as a community.



So today we add a fourth important strategic pillar – that of community. Embedded within our local communities, forged by Texas and embracing our global presence, Texas A&M University is committed to enriching the learning and working environment for all visitors, students, faculty and staff.

Be it faculty working with students, researchers in the field, service projects in Bryan/College Station or around the globe, the Aggie citizen is a citizen of substance, forever demonstrating a willingness to help humanity, with an abiding commitment to the success of each other.

one last message to us. It was an "I love you" for who you are, what you do and what you stand for. One last "I love you" to Aggies everywhere. So while I recover, let's take a moment to watch a video in his own words and a few photos from that day.

[TX.AG/41TRIBUTE](https://www.tx.ag/41tribute)

We love President Bush and Mrs. Bush. We will honor their memory on this campus and beyond through the Presidential library, through the students who graduate from the Bush School of Government and Public Service, and in always striving to live the core values that this university shares with his enduring legacy of service.

Today, as you return to your classrooms, offices and research labs, I want to thank you for the work you do each and every day. Thanks to your efforts and your contributions, the State of the University is strong and vibrant.

As we move into 2020 with vigor and a firm commitment to the success of this institution and to each other, let us be grateful for what we have been given, optimistic about the future, and enthusiastic about serving our university, our community, our state, nation and world.

Thank you for listening...and thank you for dedicating yourselves each and every day to making Texas A&M a great, great university. Thank you.



A soaring example of our community coming together occurred within the last year with the passing of President Bush. On December 6, 2018, we laid to rest President George Herbert Walker Bush, 41st President of the United States, in a grove behind his Presidential Library on our campus next to his beloved wife, former First Lady Barbara Bush, and their daughter Robin. The world watched that day as Union Pacific train 4141 brought him for the last time to Texas A&M University, along with his family members to College Station.

Our university and indeed the entire Bryan/College Station community rallied in preparing for this momentous occasion. The world got a glimpse into why President Bush loved Texas A&M so much. As they removed his coffin from the train, the band played, predictably, "Hail to the Chief." But then, to the surprise of those watching around the world – and delight of Aggies everywhere – the band played "The Aggie War Hymn," an unexpected funeral march. The crowd that was gathered on the other side of the train briefly erupted in "Whoops." President Bush had personally selected that song to play at that moment. And I truly believe his choice of playing "The Aggie War Hymn" was