

Investiture Address
David E. Daniel
March 29, 2006

Thank you.

Assistant Secretary Luce, Regent Clements, Executive Vice Chancellor Sullivan, distinguished presidents and university representatives, members of the UT System and UTD, and honored guests:

When Susan and I arrived at UTD a few months ago, we were immediately struck by the vitality and energy of UTD and the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex, humbled by the responsibility bestowed upon us, invigorated by new friends, and enriched by the diversity of creative expression found at this university and in the Metroplex. The last few months have marked an extraordinary and exciting period of our lives. We wish to express our sincere appreciation to so many of you who have warmly welcomed us to this wonderful university and community. Thank you.

In the late 1950s, the three founders of Texas Instruments, Eugene McDermott, Cecil Green, and Erik Jonsson, created what was to become UTD because they were convinced that the region must, “grow academically; it must provide the intellectual atmosphere which will allow it to compete in the new industries dependent on highly trained and creative minds.”

I’m a civil engineer who understands that enduring structures must be built upon a solid foundation. In the academic world, a solid foundation means quality people – faculty, staff, and students – and a culture that demands and celebrates excellence.

We have that foundation. Take Alan McDiarmid and Russell Hulse, two of our faculty members who happen to be Nobel Laureates. And Ray Baughman and his team of scientists whose work on carbon nanotubes and artificial muscles might one day earn them such distinction. And Marion Underwood, one of the most respected scholars in the field of children’s emotions and psychology. And there’s Frank Bass and Suresh Sethi, two of the nation’s most renowned business professors. And Brian Berry, a pre-eminent scholar in economy and geography. And Betty Pace, an exceptionally accomplished researcher working on Sickle Cell disease. And David Edmunds, one of the very best scholars on the history of Native Americans. And Bruce Gnade, a world-class researcher in electronic materials. And the list goes on and on. If our Founders could be here today, they would be very gratified by the intellectual atmosphere at UTD.

Our staff, too, is remarkable. Sandee Goertzen is one such example, serving the university with distinction. But this list goes on, too, and includes extraordinary people such as Rodolfo Hernandez Guerrero, who directs our Center for U.S.-Mexico Studies, and Donise Pearson from our Callier Center, and Michael Doty, perhaps the person most appreciated by our students because he directs our Career Services Center.

And then there are our students. Forgive me if you've heard this before, but it bears repeating. If UTD were invited to join the Big 10 Conference, we would not threaten the balance of power on the football field, but we would raise the academic average of the undergraduate class. Our freshman profile, based on percent of freshmen graduating from the top 10% of their high school class and SAT score, is superior to 7 schools in the Big 10. If we were invited to join the SEC, the Pac 10, or the Big 12 Conference, our freshmen would similarly raise the academic average of undergraduates among these conferences.

But to appreciate the quality of our students, you have to put names with the statistics. Michelle Detwiler came to UTD after a successful career as a professional model. She graduated Summa Cum Laude from UTD with a perfect 4.0 GPA in molecular biology, earned a graduate degree from Johns Hopkins, and now serves as President of The World Health Forum. Justin Boland and Stacy Walker both graduated with high academic honors in physics, got married, earned PhD's from Caltech, and went on to exceptional early career success – Justin just won the Cal Tech Entrepreneur Award for his development of a device that converts motion into electricity. Doug Martin, an honors graduate of Plano High School, who graduated with a nearly perfect GPA and dual major in chemistry and biochemistry, is now in the MD/PhD program at the Mayo Clinic. The careers of some of our graduates have risen to unprecedented heights – like that of NASA astronaut Jim Reilly, who has logged more than 500 hours in space on two space shuttle missions. And this list, too, goes on and on.

One of the first philanthropists who I met in Dallas summed up the spirit of this community succinctly. When asked to explain why the city had invested so heavily and successfully in support of the arts, she said simply, "Dallas will support world-class quality, but not mediocrity." This was music to my ears. UTD is built on a foundation of excellence.

But we're here to talk about the future. In the words of John Scharr, "The future is not a result of choices among alternative paths offered by the present, but a place that is created--created first in the mind and will, created next in activity. The future is not some place we are going to, but one we are creating. The paths are not to be found, but made, and the activity of making them, changes both the maker and the destination."

Creating the future does not involve getting in your car, reading the map, and then heading off to a defined destination. No. Creating the future is all about building a road that does not yet exist to a place where no one has yet been.

The proposed vision statement for UTD, which we shall ask the Board of Regents to approve, is a profound statement: "To be one of the best public research universities in the nation, and one of the great universities of the world."

Why did we put "public" in the vision statement and not just say that we want to be one of the best universities? Because we are proud to be a public university. Nearly two-thirds of all college-educated Americans earned their degrees from public universities. In my opinion, the nation's best

universities are public research universities – Berkeley, Michigan, and Virginia, among others. Ultimately, it is the public, and not just the individual student, that benefits from great public research universities.

Some people have asked me why we included the statement, “one of the great universities of the world,” in our proposed vision statement. One person noted that we have so far to reach to get there, and another remarked that we’re not the Sorbonne. I wanted that statement included because to be among the best, we must view ourselves in a global context. Our world has become a global market where almost everything is a mouse-click and nano-second away. UTD must and will be a global player. We are well positioned to act globally because the Metroplex is one of the world’s most important cities and because of our connections to the global technology research and business enterprises.

I don’t deny that becoming one of the great universities of the world is a lofty goal for us, but I’m not at all intimidated by such a goal. Some other relatively young universities, like the National University of Singapore, are rapidly achieving such status, and we can, too.

In addition, I wanted the words “great university” in our vision statement. Being a great university means that you set the bar high in everything you do, for everyone you hire. It means that, although your main focus may be on management, science, and engineering, you know that no great university can succeed in an intellectual vacuum with respect to the arts and humanities. Technology and business give us a better life, but the arts and humanities give us a better life to live. Our work will embrace the full dimension and expression that makes for a great university. We will be a complete university, as all great universities are.

Experience has taught me that the best way to get things done is to follow an orderly process that involves four steps: leadership, planning, execution, and resources. Never, ever do this backwards. Never throw money at a problem until you have strong leadership in place and a viable plan worked out. I just hope the third step, execution, doesn’t characterize my presidency too graphically.

Our work to create the future starts with leadership. I don’t think that I can improve upon the words of one of our founders, Erik Jonsson, who in 1980 said, “The key ingredient necessary for success is good leadership. People are motivated best by those leaders who are willing to give as well as take, listen to any member of the organization as well as talk, learn as well as teach, be firm in their convictions and yet able to acknowledge error, and tolerate failure which sometimes results from pursuing high-risk opportunities. Good leaders must be willing to dream the big dream and be sensitive to build the proper environment for creative thinking.”

We have an outstanding team of leaders in place at UTD, at least below the level of President. Some tough decisions lie ahead, but in making those decisions, I promise you that I will be as transparent and fair as I can possibly be, but will always focus on what needs to be done to achieve our goals no matter how difficult the decision.

Leadership is essential at all levels in outstanding organizations. At UTD, vice presidents, deans and other institutional leaders define and enable what this institution is and will become. I am confident that no comparable university has a more capable group of leaders than UTD. I pledge to you that you shall continue to have the leadership at all levels that this outstanding institution deserves.

The second ingredient is planning, which is what our strategic plan, “Creating the Future,” is all about. This plan was formulated from the work of hundreds of people and reflects a collective vision and plan. I owe special thanks to Robert Nelsen, who tirelessly led our process.

Imagine for a moment that you leave UTD today, get whisked away to a far-off land, and then suddenly are plopped back at UTD in 10 to 15 years. What would you see? You’d find a far larger and stronger university, not quite like any other.

- We will have doubled the number of faculty, and more than doubled the amount of research, attaining Tier 1 status of at least \$100M of annual research expenditures.
- Our campus will have changed dramatically. Imagine twice the number of buildings. Imagine a university village with restaurants, coffee shops, bookstores, and other places where students, artists, technology entrepreneurs, writers, and local residents rub elbows, exchange ideas, and create the future.
- Our people will have changed: we’ll be more diverse, more inclusive, a magnet for leaders, and a place of intellectual freedom and opportunity. Lives will be altered. Futures will be created.
- Graduates from the class of 2006 will have found that their UTD degrees have become more respected and valued as time passes. Hold on to that diploma – it will be even more special in the future.
- We will have become an enormous economic engine for North Texas, with an annual payroll pushing towards \$1B. No city, no nation, can be secure without a healthy economy. Wealth creation is a good thing, and we’ll create it through ideas, innovations, discoveries, and people.
- We would not have become all things to all people, but we will be one of the nation’s research gems in our targeted areas, including communication disorders, brain health, entrepreneurship, business planning, executive training, technology and arts, electronics, communications, nanotechnology, biomedical research, math and science education, economics, international relations, the humanities, software development, and information systems. We know how to focus, we are focused, and we will stay focused.

Now to the third critical ingredient: execution. William Shakespeare said, “Be great in act, as you have been in thought.” We are already acting on many of the changes necessary to achieve our goals. We are developing an implementation plan and business model, consistent with UTD’s objectives.

We'll define benchmarks, measure progress, provide periodic updates to our stakeholders, and make the inevitable and necessary course corrections.

In a nutshell, here's what UTD's going to do:

- Double the number of faculty
- More than double the amount of research
- Increase the student body by 5,000 students
- Create new programs in the areas of greatest opportunity for discovery, building on existing strengths
- Tell our story better
- Improve annual giving and endowment
- Increase the number of PhD's granted
- Enhance graduation rates
- Ensure that we are inclusive of all segments of our population
- Invest in innovation and leadership
- Be more efficient

The fourth step in this process is garnering the necessary resources. The growth in the size of the student body will provide the funding necessary for more than half the new faculty positions. But growth in number of students alone will not be sufficient. Public-private partnerships, such as the \$300M program enabled by Texas Instruments' decision to build a new \$3.2B chip manufacturing plant a short distance from our campus, will become the new model for getting many things done. The increase in research income and technology transfer will be important forms of financial support to build research infrastructure. We have significant assets that we will use wisely for our financial benefit. Finally, corporate and private giving will be essential to the creation of our future.

We'll need dozens of endowed chairs to attract talent. We'll have them. We're going to have to construct tens of thousands of square feet of new research, classroom, and support space. We'll build and pay for new space through a combination of funding sources: State funds, UT System funds, income from research, private and corporate support, and other sources. We'll need to support and create several of the nation's best and most exciting research enterprises in areas of critical opportunity. We'll generate the ideas within our areas of focus and secure the necessary funding from people and companies who care about investment in the Metroplex's future.

We will hold down costs and find efficiencies, but quality costs money, and mediocrity is not an option. We'll have a viable and sustainable business model that will support our growth.

We must be patient. Don't expect a miracle. It takes hard work and a community of alumni, business leaders, philanthropists, faculty, staff, students, and people who care about the future to make a great university.

UTD is in a truly unique position. We are, I believe, one of the few universities in America that actually has a realistic chance to effect major change, improvement, and advancement in the rankings. Why? Because:

- The fundamentals are all in place: we have the right focus in our academic programs, we are built on a foundation of quality, we already have a very strong faculty and student body, and our location is ideal.
- Our location is key: we're one of the nation's most economically productive regions, one of the fastest growing metropolitan areas in the nation, an area with a tremendous diversity of culture and business, in close proximity to some of the nation's most important technology companies, and well connected via key transportation hubs.
- Powerful partnership opportunities: the UT System and its component institutions, UT Southwestern Medical Center (one of the great graduate medical education and research centers of the world), nearby UT Arlington, and outstanding local businesses, schools, cities, foundations, and others.
- The resources are here. The UT System is powerful and possesses significant resources. The Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex is one of the largest and wealthiest cities in the nation, with a proud history of philanthropy and civic support. For a university president, there are few better places to be than right here in Richardson, in the middle of Dallas and the Metroplex, deep in the heart of Texas.

It has been said that a measure of the greatness of a society is the attention paid the lives that its children will lead. There can be no greater gift than the promise to our children that their lives will be better than ours. Toward this end, there is no more important work that we as a nation do than invest in the education of our children. Education is the ultimate empowerment from which freedom and hope are derived.

In today's knowledge-based, global economy, education has never been more important. Tomorrow's winners will be smart, educated, creative people who know how to collaborate, to lead, and to get things done. The great research universities will define the highest ground of all throughout the world. These universities will be the special places that draw the most talented people, spin off the most interesting technologies, inspire the most creative artists, and define the ultimate winners in an age of unprecedented global competition. China, Singapore, and India all understand this, and are investing massively in their top research universities. We must, too.

Above all else, UTD will succeed because Dallas and Texas need for us to succeed. They need great universities to sustain their quality of life in a new, knowledge-based, innovation-driven world. And all the necessary ingredients are all in place for UTD to become one of those great universities.

When my work is done here at UTD, I know that I will leave an even stronger university, one that is well on its way to becoming one of the nation's best public research universities and a great university in the full dimension of that expression.

Good work is fun work. As we continue with the journey started by our founders, we'll smile and laugh a lot, celebrate successes, and know that our good work is improving the lives of our people and our community.

Our founders inspired us. Our faculty and students engage us. Our community builds and sustains us. Our extraordinary future beacons. Together, we will create it. Let's get to work.

Thank you.