

Excerpt from remarks made at the Distinguished Alumni Dinner, October 18, 2008

Tarleton is Pride! The 30-second message you have just seen will be shown on national television during the Tarleton-Angelo State game on October 30, as part of the CBS College Sports Network Division II package. We are the only Lone Star Conference game on this year's national TV lineup. All around the country people will see the spirit and pride that are so much a part of Tarleton.

Tarleton Pride has been on parade this weekend – literally. Today, I had the honor of participating in the Homecoming parade—on horseback — two firsts for me. With pride I can say, that now, I truly feel initiated as a Tarleton Texan.

Tonight, we celebrate Tarleton in the accomplishments of our Distinguished Honorees. You will meet a banking executive, a major-leaguer with a World Series ring, and a man and a woman who can be described as “Mavericks” . . . really. Our Honorees have helped Tarleton build exceptional new physical facilities. They have built the academic reputation of our university. They are leaders in their fields and in their communities. Through their service to the university and by their example, they are making Tarleton an even better place for today's and tomorrow's students.



President
Dottavio talks
about the first
Strategic Goal:
Excel in
Scholarship,
Teaching and
Learning

(Barry B.
Thompson
Student Center
Ballroom)

This fall, I refined our focus on four Strategic Goals for Tarleton. Each of these honorees is helping us reach them. Here's how.

Our first goal is: *Excel in Scholarship, Teaching, and Learning*. As part of this goal, we are fostering innovation, increasing research opportunities, and nurturing programs of national prominence. Tarleton could not be pursuing these goals without the efforts of so many academic leaders – past and present. Professor Joe Cude served as a scholar-citizen on the Tarleton faculty for nearly 30 years. Dean Ron Bradberry served as Dean of the College of Graduate Studies and 36 years on our faculty. As faculty, Joe and Ron defined the excellence of this university.

Ronnie Giles was instrumental in the development of our wonderful Terrell Softball Complex and the Recreational Sports Center. The Recreational Sports Center supports our second Strategic Goal: *Expand Our Horizons*. In addition to serving our current students, the Recreational Sports Center has hosted eleven camps, serving more than 4,000 junior high and high school students from across the state since it opened in October 2007.

Places like the new Dining Hall and Recreational Sports Center bring our diverse community together and create a climate for personal growth. Now more than ever, our graduates must have the cultural competence to succeed in a global economy. We know that learning extends beyond the classroom.

That is why our third Strategic Goal is: *Encourage Leadership, Service and Student Success*. Tarleton is committed to preparing students not only for careers, but also for leadership and service in their communities. Involvement in student organizations and activities – like planning Homecoming events – builds the skills and confidence required for future success.

We don't need to look far for a model of a student leader becoming a community leader. Honoree Ronnie Sullins was President of the Student Body. In the years since, he has been a leader for the banking profession, his church, and his community. To our benefit, he has shared his business acumen with his alma mater as a member of the Tarleton Foundation Board and as president of the Alumni Association.

On campus, students have the opportunity to connect with each other through a variety of activities. The student-athlete experience is one of the most important because it develops not only the skills for competition in sport, but for life. Honoree Chad Fox earned two varsity letters as a member of the Tarleton baseball team in the early '90s. He earned the title "World Series Champion" with the Florida Marlins. He earned the title "Comeback Kid" after two Tommy John surgeries. He will always have the title "Tarleton Texan."

Alumni involvement with the university is important to our success. We hope you will stay as well connected with your alma mater as Don Henrich, who has served as both on the Alumni Association and Foundation Boards. Don and his wife Georgia are leaders in the oil and gas drilling industry. They have been generous friends of the new Tarleton Alumni Center. The Alumni House has become a favorite building of mine from the time I first visited this campus and saw those words over the door: "The gates are always open." For all of you, for all of the Tarleton family past, present and future: The gates will always be open.

I ask each of you to help us with our fourth Strategic Goal: *Extend Our Reach*. We want to ensure that the people of this state and beyond understand that Tarleton is an important economic generator. That we are preparing the next generation of leaders. And we are discovering new knowledge and new applications for innovation that will improve the quality of our lives. We must communicate our excellence to our alumni and friends and to those who do not know much about Tarleton. You, our alumni are vitally important to spreading the word. I ask you to be storytellers. Let people know what I have learned in these few months: Tarleton is a treasure for its students, its graduates, and its communities.

Congratulations to our Distinguished Alumni Honorees. And thanks to all of you for welcoming Lisette and me and for showing Tarleton Pride!