

# Tarleton State University General Assembly

Clyde Well Fine Arts Auditorium  
September 2, 2010

## *An address to Faculty and Staff .... by President F. Dominic Dottavio*

Good afternoon. And Happy New Year!

As you can tell by the lines at Wal-Mart, the restaurants and the traffic on Washington Street, the campus has once again come to life.

On move-in day, Lisette and I, and dozens of other volunteers, carried boxes, lamps, groceries, and assorted other “stuff” up and down the stairs . . . not only at Centennial, Legends, Traditions, Ferguson, and Bender, but at the Trogdon House too.



There are some differences between what Lisette and I brought and what we carried in for our students.

Lisette and I don't have a five foot Lava lamp or an illuminated Shiner Bock sign. Our groceries did not include Fruit Loops, Cap'n Crunch or a five gallon tin of cheese puffs.



We did not move an entire shelf of vampire books. I did bring a copy of *Pride, Prejudice and Zombies*, the book recommended for our freshmen as part of the First Year Experience reading program. It is Jane Austen meets “Buffy the Vampire Slayer,” amidst manners, mayhem, and social prejudice.

We did not bring a cardboard cutout of Darth Vader. But I admit we did bring the life-sized cardboard cutout Carol Stavish made of Lisette and me in our Duck Camp bib overalls.

The closest we come to “student décor” is a mounted set of steer horns – the result of a weak moment at last year’s rodeo auction.



A talented Tarleton team has done a magnificent job of restoring the Trogdon House with great love, craftsmanship and an understanding that they were making history as well as preserving it for future generations. Their contributions to this university deserve our thanks and appreciation. Please recognize Aaron Wand, Joe Standridge, Larry Smith, and all of the members of the crew.

We are starting a new journey at Tarleton as we begin this academic year. It is a story set in the midst of budget challenges for universities across Texas and around the nation. There are scores of universities experiencing their second, third, or even fourth year of double digit budget cuts. But, Tarleton is well prepared for the years ahead thanks to the planning and good work of many, including the newly formed Budget Advisory Council.

In the months ahead, we will not only stay the course but, I believe, continue to grow. We will teach students and deliver great service to them and to each other because we have protected our core mission of teaching, research, scholarship and service. I recognize that in these times sacrifices are being made both on campus and in your personal lives.

To help you with additional expenses, I am pleased to announce that we will be providing a modest salary adjustment to all faculty and staff to offset the System’s increase in healthcare costs. The adjustment will be effective November 1. You may ask how we can provide a salary increase (as modest as it may be) when we are looking at State budget decreases.

Well, when it comes to students, we are definitely not leaner. We had historic increases in applications and admissions. On Sunday, we welcomed the largest freshman class in Tarleton history at the opening convocation and candle lighting ceremony. In Fort Worth and Waco we continue to find that if we offer it, they will come. We experienced 15 to 20% increases at these sites.

The journey has begun for record numbers of students because our Enrollment Management offices and all those associated with the Fort Worth and Waco programs have done remarkable work. Would Brad Chilton, Karen Murray and all those associated with their programs please stand so we can thank you.

Record-size classes don’t happen because of one person or one office. It happens because of team work -- all of us working together. Whether you are on the grounds crew that makes our campus beautiful; the set up and tear down crew that makes recruiting events possible; the security team that directs traffic; the advisors who assure progress to degree; the faculty, deans and department heads who represent your academic departments at Texan Tour; the web design team, photographers, and writers who produce information for our prospective students; the fee

collectors, Texan card preparers, residence life leaders, technology wizards, student organization advisors or any one of dozens of other positions on this campus – you contributed to our record enrollment growth.

At Tarleton, people come expecting personal attention, friendly faces, and exemplary service. You gave it to them. And they came. And, I know that you will continue to do so. I would like each and every one of you to stand and cheer yourselves for a job very well done.

We began planning in the fall of 2008 for leaner times and have since built a three-year budget to absorb expected continuing shortfalls in State support. We have done this without compromising our core values and with as little impact as possible on our greatest resource – which is you, our dedicated faculty and staff members. This advanced planning will help us come out of these tough times sooner than most. Our goal is to be leaner, more effective, and stronger.

Lisette and I thought it was a big deal getting moved in to the Trogon House. And it certainly was for the moving crew that had to get things from my U-Haul truck up the stairs on the hottest day of the year.



Last Saturday on Campus Move-In Day, our Residence Life staff and a host of campus and community volunteers moved in 1,439 students. The planners of the move-in did a superb job of organizing check-in stations, traffic flow, refreshments, unloading stations, and a host of other details. Your creativity and care made our students and parents feel welcome. Thank you for all you have done to make move-in an exciting, positive experience for families and students.



While our enrollment numbers are very good news, there are some associated growing pains – not the least of which is parking. Our additional students need and use more space and place greater demands on all of our resources. I recognize the pressure this puts on some units and applaud your dedication and innovation that make it work.

Because of the increased size of the physical campus and its population, Police Chief Justin Williams reviewed parking practices and submitted a proposal for change. To say that it prompted considerable comment is an understatement. Based on what I heard, the Declaration of Independence should have included the “right” to life, liberty, and parking.

Mr. Graham tells me that the parking survey was completed by more than 630 faculty, staff and students. Comments ranged from: “*Don’t fix something that ain’t broke.*” to: “*I think the proposed plan sounds great.*” Your comments on the proposal were diverse and offered some interesting ideas and suggestions for improvement to the plan. I thank you for your feedback. Your opinions do count and we are listening.

Before any decisions are made, I am asking the Executive Cabinet to convene a representative group of faculty, staff and students to work with Chief Williams on a parking proposal review. You will have the opportunity to review their recommendations and to again provide comments before any changes are made. While I don’t know what changes they may recommend, I can assure you, there will be NO INCREASE in parking fees this year.

At this time of year we are all buoyed by the presence of our talented, enthusiastic students. They remind us of the privilege of higher education.

Tarleton is a vibrant learning community whose scholarship serves the public good. Our growing research activity reflects the breadth and depth of our faculty’s expertise. The Southwest Regional Dairy Center is growing. The rotary milking parlor and automated gates are amazing applications of technology to the study of dairy production. This facility and its collaborative programs put Tarleton in a leadership role in dairy science for the nation.

From the expanded Rural Law Enforcement project that shares databases across 75 Texas counties, to the study of more suitable plants and grasses for Texas roadways, our faculty are addressing a number of concerns that not only provide new knowledge and tools for understanding, but also save money for taxpayers.

Important quality-of-life and public health issues are also a research focus for faculty and students. Professor of Mathematics Pam Littleton’s Cubic Academy project seeks to better prepare math, science, and technology teachers. Because of the outstanding reputation of our College of Education, Tarleton is one of seven universities selected by the Sid Richardson Foundation to model improvement in teacher preparation for the State of Texas. Nursing faculty and students are surveying child health in rural Texas and healthcare utilization by rural Hispanics.



***President Dominic Dottavio and Dr. Pam Littleton  
Dr. Littleton is the recipient of The Texas A&M University System’s  
Regents Professor Award - December 2009***

For the faculty, research informs and energizes their teaching. Students are involved in these and many other faculty research endeavors. Engaging students in research is one of the ways we can “Keep It Real.” Through the Keep It REAL initiative, students integrate their coursework across the curriculum and integrate extracurricular experiences with what they see around them on campus, in the community, and around the world.



In addition to research, KEEPING IT REAL strategies include service learning, leadership opportunities, internships, and studying away in the US and abroad. These strategies prepare Tarleton graduates to make meaningful contributions to their communities and careers. The REAL Council reports that there are some twenty applied learning experiences getting started this fall. Please help me thank Denise Martinez and the members of the REAL Council for their leadership in this endeavor..

The REAL Council’s efforts are part of our plan to build a distinctive and relevant education for our students. Through the capable leadership of Drs. Gary Peer, Credence Baker, and our Faculty Fellows, Drs. Chris Guthrie and Kayla Peak, we are intently focused on course and curriculum redesign that will increase the success of the teacher and the learner.

Today’s and tomorrow’s students bring to campus an upbringing and learning experiences much different from those of earlier generations. Beloit College’s Mindset List reminds us of the difference between most of us and our new freshman.

They note that for the freshman:

1. Having hundreds of cable channels but nothing to watch has always been routine.
2. Toothpaste tubes always stood on their end caps.
3. Al Gore has always been animated.

The discussion of new classroom strategies often starts with new technologies. But, the course and curriculum redesign initiative is about much more than replacing a blue book with an i-Pad. Our faculty-led redesign group is taking a wider view to find the right methodologies that effectively communicate ideas and information. At a meeting just prior to this one, Provost Peer presented the theme for this initiative: “*Thriving in the Storm.*” The theme reflects the challenges that public universities are facing across the country and challenges us to seize the opportunity for evaluation and relevant change.

An impressive series of nationally recognized speakers will be coming to campus who will stimulate discussion and provide ideas, energy, and momentum for the redesign effort.

Our faculty have a great deal to share with each other, as teachers and learners. Associate Professor and Head of the Mathematics Department, Dr. Bryant Wyatt, allowed me to share part of an email he sent to Provost Peer.

He said: *“I like to get the whole class to the board and lead them by asking questions. ... Students are actively engaged in the learning process, not just watching me work a bunch of problems. This style may not work for everyone because it is guided chaos, but the level of engagement of the students has convinced me it is the right course for me.*

“Guided chaos” sounds like a lot of my days!

I ask every faculty member to support change, to evaluate and enhance their effectiveness and that of their colleagues. Given Tarleton’s history as a great teaching college, we should expect to become a model for 21<sup>st</sup> century university teaching.

The University’s Strategic Plan for 2011 to 2015 is being reviewed in draft form at The Texas A&M System Office. More than 100 people were involved in developing it. In it, we commit to the core values of: civility, integrity, global awareness, and engaged learning.

The plan sharpens our strategies to meet the Four “Es” and delineates ways we will measure progress and success.

We will excel in scholarship, teaching, and learning;

We will expand our horizons by growing enrollment, embracing diversity, and offering global opportunities to our students.

We will encourage leadership and service, and ensure student success through the Quality Enhancement Plan’s REAL initiatives.

We will extend our reach by serving the needs of the people of this state, increasing our visibility, and forming new partnerships.



Well, I’ve done it. I have repeated the Four “Es.” That makes this an official Assembly speech and it means that the new year is officially underway.

Greg Mortenson, author of the bestselling book *“Three Cups of Tea,”* is one of the speakers coming to Tarleton this year. The title comes from an Afgani proverb that says when we have the first cup of tea, we are strangers. The second cup and we are friends. By the third cup, we are family.

This is our third year at Tarleton. Lisette and I truly feel like family. Moving on the campus feels very much like coming home. We are excited for this year.

Today I am thrilled to welcome new members of our Tarleton family. This is where your journey begins. And just as we asked our freshman, we ask that you too make Tarleton stronger and greater than you found it.

If you have started working at the university this year, would you please stand so that we can welcome you to Tarleton?

Allow me to close in the most appropriate manner for opening day at Memorial Stadium:  
**GO TEXANS!**