



# ON THE MOVE

The Official Newsletter of UNT Dallas President Bob Mong

March 4, 2018

## From the President's Desk



Our university is actively engaged in the latest legislative session. I've been traveling to Austin regularly to get our message out, and I am told that our testimony is resonating well among legislators.

They recognize that we are making genuine progress. We're growing faster than any other state university. We're keeping debt low for our graduates. And we are serving so many first-generation students who seek better lives.

I also emphasize that nothing can be accomplished alone.

We live in a world that moves at speeds human beings have never before experienced.

To solve modern problems, each of us knows we need to work with trusted entities joined by a common sense of mission and vision.

The state has set a hard-to-achieve goal called 60-by-30 – meaning that by 2030 we want 60 percent of Texans in their prime early earning years of 25 to 34 to have at least a credential, associates or bachelor's degree. In Dallas County, that number is currently 37 percent. That's why I say it's a stretch goal. And it will be places like UNT Dallas that will help meet this goal.

At its essence, 60-by-30 is all about closing education attainment gaps in our state.

However, earning degrees by age 25 today is too closely linked to how much students' parents earn. All of us – students, faculty, staff – understand this is not the Texas we want.

If this doesn't change, then we won't achieve our 60-by-30 goals.

We know education is the great leveler:

- The lifetime earnings differential between high school to college is roughly \$1 million
- Life expectancy increases
- Quality of life expands

A child growing up in a family of household income of \$30,000 – as so many of our families do at UNT Dallas, Dallas community colleges and DISD – often don't feel that they have the wherewithal to attend college.

Beyond this, Brookings just released a study saying for the first time more than half of America's jobs require a bachelor's degree or more.

That's why we were drawn together, each of us here at UNT Dallas. That's also why we partner well with area school districts, community colleges, industry partners and foundations.

Together, along with other community partners, we provide a different mindset for our counties' students.

We partner because the problems our young people face are too big for any one institution to tackle alone.

This shouldn't be a zero-sum game among educational institutions. We are fortunate to live in a rapidly growing area where there are enough students for every college and university to grow.

I promised the legislature that UNT Dallas will not squander this important moment in time. We will continue to play an essential role in closing educational disparity gaps.

Thank you for all that you do for our students and for our community.

## Trailblazing UNT Dallas students steal the show on first day of Board of Regents meetings on campus

The UNT System Board of Regents meeting on February 14 provided a stage for our students to express how UNT Dallas has affected their lives. Four students impressively and passionately represented their classmates. They included moderator Zainab Hameed, a senior Communication and Technology major, and a panel consisting of Kierra Byrd, a senior Criminal Justice major and first-generation college student; Monty Grant Jr., a freshman political science major and Student Government Association parliamentarian; and Kamran Anwar, a UNT Dallas alum and second-year law student at UNT Dallas College of Law. Speaking in front of Chancellor Lesa Roe, President Bob Mong, UNT President Neal Smatresk, UNT Health Science Center President Michael Williams and the Board of Regents, the panel eloquently addressed topics such as their experiences at UNT Dallas, how UNT Dallas prepares students for careers, resources available to ensure student success and how they envision a role at UNT Dallas as alums. "I am a first-generation college student, and it has been pretty life-changing to say the least," Byrd said of her time at UNT Dallas. "It's phenomenal seeing all these transitions take place in my life. It has been so, so powerful to come here and to experience such a close university where the professors and the administration are so personable, and I have a family and a sense of connection."

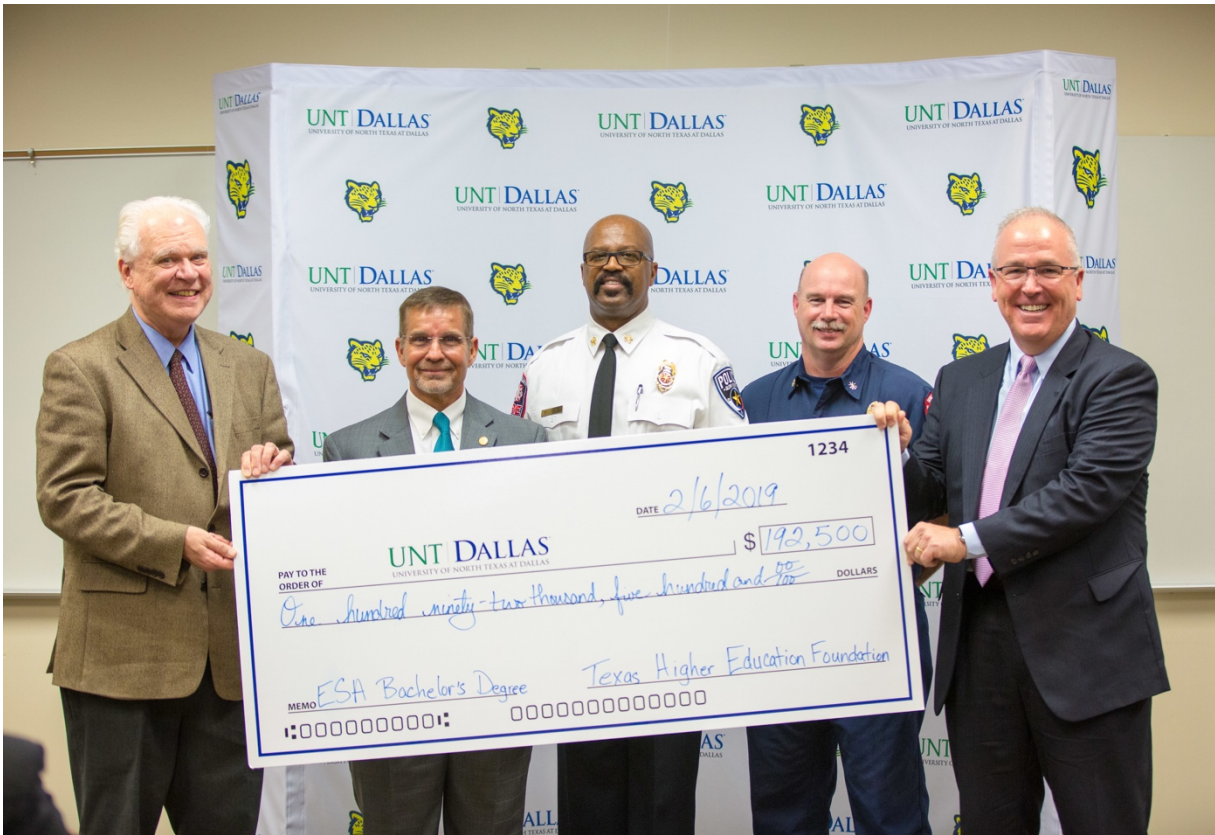
**More:** [Read what else some of UNT Dallas' best and brightest had to say about their university](#)



## Texas Higher Education Foundation grant launches lone Emergency Services Administration degree in North Texas to aid first responders

We are thrilled to be the recipient of a \$192,500 grant from the [Texas Higher Education Foundation](#), the official non-profit partner of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. The grant will develop and deliver the lone Emergency Services Administration bachelor's degree program in North Texas to aid the state's critical first responders in furthering their expertise and careers in public safety. The ESA degree will provide cost-effective access for Texas' first responders to obtain a degree in their field that otherwise is not widely available at the bachelor's level. Representatives from the Texas Higher Education Foundation officially presented the grant to UNT Dallas President Bog Mong during a reception in February. Several area fire executives also attended in support of the launch of this unique degree program. "We are very appreciative of the Texas Higher Education Foundation for funding the launch of this new and exciting degree program that will put affordable bachelor's degrees in the hands of those who work every day serving our public-safety needs," Mong said. "We are excited to have this opportunity to develop and deliver top-quality, cutting-edge education to our first-responder community in North Texas that will speak directly to their occupational specialization."

**More:** [This new degree program will start in the fall of 2019 with a first class of 50 students](#)



## Dr. John Gasko-inspired "Dallas Teachers Speak" photographic art exhibit opens at American Airlines Center on March 16

Throughout America, public school teachers tell stories of being stressed-out, burned-out and getting out of the profession. Across the country, from California to West Virginia, teachers are punctuating this point by walking out, and going on strike. *Time* recently chronicled the despair with a [series of magazine covers](#) and articles that describe demoralizing realities of the modern teacher: Overburdened, underfunded, under-supported and exhausted of hope. While these issues are alarming and require attention, 175 resilient Dallas Independent School District teachers have risen up to provide this essential, hope-filled counter-perspective: A unique photographic art exhibit called *Dallas Teachers Speak*. As gripping and powerful as it is uplifting and inspirational, *Dallas Teachers Speak* will present the city's teachers to the public in a light like never before – as superheroes, as rock stars, as changemakers. *Dallas Teachers Speak* comes from our own Dr. John Gasko in collaboration with non-profit organization [29 Pieces](#) founder and Pulitzer Prize-winning graphic artist Karen Blessen. It is a fascinating exhibit of poster-size, magazine-cover-style portraits set on a black background and accompanied by the words of each teacher in stark red pencil as they speak out on two questions required for participation in the project: "Why do I Teach?" and "What do I need?" This one-of-a-kind exhibit opens March 16 at the American Airlines Center, beginning a two-month run. With some 3,000 posters being produced, exhibits will pop up at numerous locales throughout Dallas during April and May.

**More:** [See more of these remarkable portraits that will also grace the pages of the Dallas Morning News](#)

**WHY DO I TEACH?**

To see that creative spark and confident twinkle in a student's eye when they perform.

**WHAT DO I NEED?**

Students who are hungry for dance, willing to absorb any genre to better their professional repertoire!

— Leah Longoria Huggins  
Dance & Drill Team

**DALLAS TEACHERS SPEAK**

EMERGING UNT DALLAS  
29 PIECES  
ASHOKA

Go to [teach.untDallas.edu](http://teach.untDallas.edu) to respond to your call to teach in Dallas

## Former Prairie View A&M President Dr. George C. Wright delivered an engaging presentation: Is Black History Month still necessary?

Dr. George C. Wright, Texas A&M history professor and former President of Prairie View A&M, provided UNT Dallas students, staff and faculty with one of the most compelling and engaging presentations in recent memory with his discussion on Black History Month. Charismatic and also forceful, Dr. Wright challenged the notion that Black History Month is no longer necessary by putting in perspective the black migrations over the centuries, starting with the forced migration of Africans to the United States as slaves and eventually the Great Migration in which African-Americans flooded into urban centers in the Northeast, Midwest and West because of economic inequalities, racial violence and harsh segregationist laws. His presentation wove his own life experiences as a child growing up in segregated Kentucky, where he would get excited to attend the state fair on the few designated days that blacks were allowed on "Negro Day." NBC 5's Noelle Walker was on campus and [aired a piece on Dr. Wright's discussion](#), complete with an interview of UNT Dallas sophomore Shania Anderson.

More: [Check out our video of Dr. Wright's special visit to campus](#)



**#MyBlackHistory video series chronicles the life experiences of UNT Dallas staff members and former Dallas mayor Ron Kirk**

Our own Benjamin Bullock, Senior Marketing & Communications Coordinator, created a video series in celebration of Black History Month called #MyBlackHistory. The series features four members of the UNT Dallas staff, as well as a special interview with former Dallas mayor Ron Kirk, the first African American to lead the city of Dallas. If you haven't had a chance to view these insightful videos, please make time to do so below.

**More:** [Click here to view all five #MyBlackHistory videos](#)



## Trailblazer Alumni Spotlight...

### NICHOLAS KEITH

#### Masters Curriculum & Instruction



**Employer:** Crowley Independent School District

**Position:** Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction

**What I do:** I lead a team of coordinators who support all core content areas, oversee and manage the development of our district's written curriculum, and oversee the purchase and implementation of district instructional resources.

**Alumni Q&A:**

**How did you decide to focus your career in your respective field?**

I was not a strong math student, but I realized as I got older that if math was taught the right

way, anyone could become a "math person." This realization led me to teach in math and STEM classrooms to help students learn the way I hadn't been taught.

**What is your ultimate career goal?**

Instead of a specific end-goal for my career, I analyze opportunities according to whether or not they fit my vision and abilities. I believe that I can do three things reasonably well: create and curate quality resources for teachers, simplify and communicate complex ideas and bring order from chaos. When I see an opportunity that's a fit in those three areas, I explore it further to see if it might be the next step in my career.

**What was your favorite class or professor and why?**

Dr. Gwendolyn Johnson was my professor for all of my math education classes. I was always impressed by how she gave us room to explore and truly *understand* math concepts. She promoted discussion and exploration, and any time I left her class, I felt like I understood the interconnectedness of mathematical concepts more clearly than ever before. Now, as I lead trainings and professional development, I lean heavily on the way she facilitated our class, and I try to give the learners I'm working with the same chance to make sense of their content.

**Alumni Fun Facts:**

**Favorite book:** *Simple* by Alan Siegel & Irene Etzkorn

**Favorite part about living in Dallas-Fort Worth:** Spring and fall

**Favorite podcast:** *How I Built This*

**Personal Theme Song:** *You Will Be Found* from [Dear Evan Hansen](#)

**Motto:** "Blame nobody. Expect nothing. Do something." *—Bill Parcells*

## #UNT News & Campus Updates

**College of Law gets an A+:** UNT Dallas College of Law received an A+ in diversity from the publication *The National Jurist*. Out of 60 law schools across the nation that made the honor roll, UNT Dallas Law ranked No. 8 nationally. Among Texas schools, UNT Dallas College of Law came in No. 2, behind only the Thurgood Marshall School of Law at Texas Southern University. To see how UNT Dallas College of Law ranks among the top 20 schools in terms of enrollment diversified, click [here](#).

**President Mong featured on CEO Spotlight:** President Mong made a guest appearance on KRLD's CEO Spotlight with David Johnson. The discussion ranged from the evolution of UNT Dallas College of Law to UNT Dallas' impressive enrollment growth over the last three years to becoming the most affordable four-year university in North Texas and the No. 1 nationally in lowest student debt upon graduation. "Our big job has been to operate strategically," Mong told Johnson. "The reason we didn't grow for many years was we weren't operating strategically and we weren't aligning our dollars with our goals, but we are doing that now, and that's why we're growing so fast." To listen to the full interview, click [here](#).

**The Chief Shaw profile:** Our own UNT Dallas Police Department Chief Christopher Shaw was named one of this year's Campus Safety Director of the Year Finalists. He will find out if he wins the prestigious award in June. Campus



Safety magazine recently published a profile of Chief Shaw. Please see why Chief Shaw is one of the finest in his profession, and an invaluable part of the UNT Dallas community. To read his profile, click [here](#).

**Congrats to Benjamin Bullock:** Our own Benjamin Bullock, Senior Marketing & Communications Coordinator, was honored by Who's Who in Black Dallas at a Feb. 12 banquet. Benjamin was joined by a number of family members from across the country. It's quite an honor for a young professional who has been in Dallas and with UNT Dallas for little more than a year. Benjamin produces a wide array of creative videos about UNT Dallas faculty, staff, students and programs. Check out [Benjamin's self-shot video](#) from his big night.

**Dallas County Promise hits 16,000 pledges:** UNT Dallas entered the partnership with one goal in mind: To make higher education accessible and affordable for all. Well, it's working. The Dallas County Promise, launched in 2017 and which allows Dallas County high school seniors to sign a pledge and then attend a Dallas County Community College District school, and then UNT Dallas tuition-free, reported that 16,000 students have signed the pledge. That's more than 95 percent of the seniors in the 43 Promise high schools. To read more about the excellent participation in the Dallas County Promise, click [here](#).

**Construction Update:** We are moving ever-closer to the completion of two landmark buildings that will come to represent their respective campuses -- the Student Center on our main campus, and old City Hall in downtown Dallas that will soon open as the UNT Dallas College of Law Center. The latest update on the 136,000-square-foot Student Center shows it to now be 92 percent complete, and move-in planning has started! We are in the preliminary stages of event-planning for a grand opening. The courtyard between DAL 1 and Founders Hall is also nearing completion. Lighting has been installed and one of the final steps is landscaping later in the month.