Good afternoon. I’m Lawrence Curry, Professor Emeritus of History and one of two grand marshals for today’s investiture ceremony. It is my honor to welcome all of the distinguished guests to the University of Houston and to the ceremony. We began our program with a processional led by my fellow grand marshal, Elizabeth Brown-Guillory. She will be followed by a parade of flags carried by University of Houston students. The flags of these 137 nations represent the home countries of our diverse student body. They, in turn, will be followed by delegates from institutions of higher learning and learned societies, consuls general based in Houston, faculty, deans and administrators from the University of Houston, faculty and administration representatives from our sister UH System universities and finally, members of the platform party. For now, please remain seated. I will ask you to stand later. So let the processional begin.

Now will you all please stand to greet President Khator and the other members of the platform party.

Ladies and gentlemen, please be seated. As the flags are retired, I draw your attention to the screen that will soon descend behind me. The brief video presentation you will see was originally prepared for a special scholarship event at the original date for the investiture. We’re showing it now to launch this historic day and to celebrate and honor our students and our donors who so generously provide money for our scholarships.

[Video]
Nestled in the heart of one of the nation’s most dynamic cities, the University of Houston is truly a global campus. Our 35,000 students hail from 42 states and 137 countries. From quaint Texas towns to some of the world’s largest cities, outstanding minds from all walks of life gather here to pursue one common goal—academic excellence; excellence achieved with the guidance of more than 1000 faculty members, including Nobel Laureates, Pulitzer prize winners and members of the National Academies. From within the walls of the university’s 40 world-class research centers and institutes, our students excel in leading academic and research programs. Our campus is alive with brilliant minds, honor students, music, architecture and engineering students. Some are the first ones in their family to ever realize the dream of a college education.
All are hungry to learn. This is a place of endless possibilities and bold dreams. For the 23-year-old Army veteran, the 36-year-old single working mom and the 18-year-old leaving home for the first time—all believe the University of Houston is THE place where they can fulfill the promise of their own potential. For most of these students, the dream of a college education is a reality because of the generosity of people they may never know. Nearly two-thirds of UH students depend on some type of financial support. These scholarships ease the financial burden of a college education. Each year through their contributions, thousands of donors tell a new generation of students—go learn, think, reason; for soon we will need your leadership and your wisdom.

Your generosity is tangible evidence that the American dream can work for anyone, from any small town or large city in Texas or from any corner of the globe. This moment and your presence here is about sharing a uniquely American responsibility with the next generation achieving their version of the American dream. Each year, more than 5000 students graduate from the University of Houston. They are our energy, our pride, our most precious contribution to Houston’s economy, the Texas landscape and the American experience. But in today’s economy, few can go it alone. For Houston to realize the benefits these future teachers, lawyers, entrepreneurs, poets, scientists and engineers provide, we must join together to create a bridge that brings bold dreams to reality.

The University of Houston has gathered together hundreds of kind hearts and generous soles who recognize that the future of our community, our state and this nation depends on developing the talents of a new generation of Americans.

All of us are a part of an opportunity that doesn’t just benefit the university of Houston but America as a whole. Because the University of Houston is the place where dreams are fueled by learning, where knowledge creates opportunities and where achievement yields generosity, these are the tenants that create a stronger America and a bright future for all. This is THE University of Houston—one student, one scholarship, one million possibilities.

Elizabeth Brown-Guillory
Professor of English

Ladies and gentlemen, I am Elizabeth Brown-Guillory, Professor of English and the second of today’s two grand marshals. I welcome all of you and invite you to stand for the national anthem, which will be sung by Cynthia Clayton, Assistant Professor in the University of Houston Moores School of Music. Please remain standing for the invocation to be delivered by the Reverend Marcus Cosby, Pastor of the Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church.
[Singing of the National Anthem]

_Rev. Dr. Marcus D. Cosby, Pastor_  
_Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church_  
Let us pray.

_A good and gracious God, we are so grateful to you for this day and for the significance that this day bears in the life of the University of Houston. We thank you for the privilege of coming into this place to celebrate what you have done by giving to this university this Chancellor and President. We invoke your presence in this place so that our time here might be fruitful, be productive to the end that this institution might continue to produce excellence in education, scholars and students who go on to make a difference in this world. We thank you for Dr. Renu Khator, and we pray your blessing upon her as she continues to do the work that you have charged her to do in this place. We pray for each professor, each faculty member, each student, each administrator; and we ask that you will continue to allow the University of Houston to be a beacon light in education shining all over this world, so this global economy might be made better because these students go forth to make a difference in this world. In this time of transition and change, we ask that the University of Houston might remain steady in excellence; and we pray that as this Chancellor and President becomes the eighth Chancellor here, that you will use her to do great things so that the standard might continue to be elevated from day to day._  
_Bless now these moments that we share together, and may they be fruitful for your glory. It is in your precious name that we pray with thanksgiving. Amen._

Please be seated.

_Elizabeth Brown-Guillory_  
_President of English_  
Now, it is my privilege to introduce the Chairman of the University of Houston System Board of Regents, Mr. Welcome Wilson, Sr., who will preside over the remainder of this ceremony.

_Welcome W. Wilson, Sr._  
_Chairman, UH System Board of Regents_  
Good afternoon. On this historic day in the life of the University of Houston, where I earned my bachelor’s degree 60 years ago in a few months, it is an honor for me to welcome all of you to this campus. Today’s ceremony takes place of the investiture originally scheduled for
September. Unfortunately, an unwelcome visitor named Ike disrupted our plans for the investiture and the scholarship event of the day. Another unwelcome event occurred last week with the passing of a giant in the University of Houston scheme of things – our fifth president, Philip Guthrie Hoffman. President Hoffman was a true scholar, teacher, mentor and leader. He guided this university through memorable times—the transition from a private to a public institution, racial desegregation, enrollment growth, a building boom that created the campus as we see today and the establishment of the University of Houston System with four universities. If I may, I would like all of you to remain seated, bow your heads and observe a moment of silence as we remember Philip Guthrie Hoffman.

Thank you.

It is my honor now to recognize the members of the platform party. Please stand for a moment each of you. When I call your name, wave your arm so we’ll know where you are, and then you may be seated again. I will ask this audience to listen carefully—to hold your applause until all have been introduced.

With us today:

- Representing U.S. Senator John Cornyn, Mr. Jay Guerrero
- The Honorable David Dewhurst, Texas Lieutenant Governor
- The Honorable Sheila Jackson Lee, U.S. Representative in whose district the University of Houston sits
- The Honorable Gene Green, U.S. Representative and a proud alumnus that holds two degrees from the University of Houston
- Representing Texas Senator Rodney Ellis, whose district includes both University of Houston and University of Houston-Downtown, Mr. Dallas Jones
- The Honorable Bill White, Mayor of Houston
- The Honorable Ed Emmett, Harris County Judge
- The Honorable Alma Allen, Texas State Representative who was firstly elected to the House in 2005. Representative Alan serves on the House Appropriations Committee—very important. She was a former administrator in the Houston Independent School District and a member of the State Board of Education. She is a UH alumni and earned her Doctor of Education here.
- The Honorable Dora Olivo, Texas State Representative; another proud alumni of the University of Houston. Representative Olivo was elected in 1997 from Rosenberg. She commuted from Fort Bend County for years to achieve both her master’s and her law degree from the University of Houston.
The Honorable Debbie Riddle, Texas State Representative, a member of the House Appropriations Committee. Representative Riddle has been a leader in helping the University of Houston develop a presence in the growing area of northwest Houston.

These three representatives are all extremely influential members of the legislature and are strong supporters of our drive to attain tier-one status for the University of Houston. You’ll be hearing tier-one mentioned more than once.

- Judy Genshaft, President of the University of South Florida where President Khator served for 22 years before coming to Houston.
- Lisa Jones, Faculty Senate President at UH-Clear Lake
- Sam Dike, president of the UH Student Government Association
- Denise Prescott, Staff Council Chair of U of H-Victoria
- Curtis Frasier, Executive Vice President of Shell Energy Resources
- The Reverend Marcus Cosby, who delivered the invocation
- Grand Marshals Lawrence Curry and Elizabeth Brown-Guillory

On the platform party, as well, we have the University of Houston System Regents:

- First of all, the Vice Chairman of the Board of Regents, Regent Lynden Rose
- The Secretary of the Board of Regents, Regent Jim Wise
- A former Vice Chairman of the Board of Regents, Calvin Stephens

All three of these gentlemen will assist in the presentation of the insignia of the office of President.

Other members of the Board are here today, and I’m proud to introduce:

- Dr. Dennis Golden from Carthage, Texas
- Carroll Robertson Ray
- Nelda Blair
- Jacob Monty

And former Regents of the University of Houston:

- Dorothy Alcorn
- Michael Cemo
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Theresa Chang
Elizabeth Ghrist
Debbie Hanna
Leroy Hermes
Robert Johnson
Gene McDavid
Morgan Dunn O’Connor
John O’Quinn
Wilhelmina Beth Robertson
Kay Kerr Walker

From our sister universities:

William Staples, President of UH-Clear Lake
Max Castillo, President of UH-Downtown
Tim Hudson, President of UH-Victoria

With them, as well, are representatives from each of their respective governance groups—faculty senate, student government and staff council. Would you please stand?

Finally, I recognize the University of Houston and the UH System Vice Chancellors. Would you please stand?

I’m also honored to note the presence in the audience of a host of local and state elected officials and members of the Houston Counselor Corps. Would you please stand?

I would like to note the impressive display of flags you saw at the beginning of this ceremony representing the 137 countries from which the University of Houston International students come. Did you hear what I said? One hundred thirty-seven countries; we are truly a global university. Would you please stand? Ladies and gentlemen, a warm round of applause for all of them and our distinguished guest on the platform party.

[Applause]

An investiture is an academic event. It marks the official moment when the torch is symbolically passed to a new leader. Today, here at the University of Houston, this investiture ceremony is also a time for the university community to reflect on our past, to celebrate today’s successes and
envision our future. Today, the torch is being passed to a woman that we know deep in our hearts and minds will take this institution to this tier-one status that this university deserves.

[Applause]

Renu Khator’s journey has brought her from a small city in India to graduate and doctoral degrees from Purdue University to a spectacular 22-year career at the University of South Florida ending with being Provost. Hers has been a journey of clear goals, focused energy, tireless drive and unrelenting optimism, along with stellar leadership. When the board selected her, I knew we had recruited an academic superstar. She bring to the University of Houston System and to the University of Houston those same traits and values that have marked her professional and personal lives. And the journey on which we enthusiastically embark with her promise to be as rewarding and fulfilling as her life and her career has been to her. It is now my privilege to invite to the podium the Mayor of the City of Houston, a major supporter of the University of Houston. He has led our community admirably, effectively and with great dignity, the Honorable Bill White.

**Bill White**  
*Mayor of the City of Houston*

Thank you. There are going to be a lot of speeches, so you’d better hold off on that stuff. Welcome, it’s great to be with you and governor Dewhurst, Congressman Green, Congressman Sheila Jackson Lee, our three state representatives that are with us, my colleague Judge Emmett—just because we’re together doesn’t mean there’s a hurricane now—members of the board of Regents. We gather today to celebrate the investiture of my friend and colleague in a number of enterprises already, Renu Khator. She’s a special person. You know that. We also assemble to celebrate a greater purpose, the reminder that in our great city—the fourth largest city in America, the largest city in the greatest state in the greatest country in the world these days—that a cornerstone of who we are is this great institution. There are people here upon this podium—members of the Board of Regents, former members, those of us who are elected officials and others who have been blessed by some degree of responsibility by our citizens, some degree of celebrity, I guess you would say—we humbly rise to acknowledge that we don’t have the most important jobs. Over the long run, the most important jobs in any country in any time and place are the jobs of those who educate the next generations and the job of those who lead and facilitate that education. To you, we give our honor by our presence this day. The University of Houston is the most important single institution in this city. I say that; not just because I’m with you here, but I’ve said it at meetings of the Greater Houston Partnership. I’ve said it at civic club meetings. I’ve said it at other places, at many places at many times that did
not include University of Houston graduates. I once even said it to a body of the UT Alumni Association. Okay?

[Applause]

Now don’t get too hard on UT. They’re suffering some wounds after the Texas Tech whipping.

[Applause]

All of us can say when we’re together as a team—although there’s rivalry between the different cities and the different institutions—hey, if we had to lose, might as well lose to a team from Texas, okay. And we know the great traditions within these great institutions. We root for each other. That’s the point. But in Houston in particular we root for the University of Houston. Great cities have at their foundation a diverse number—and we have several—of outstanding institutions of higher education. Each of those institutions plays an important role. The same can be said about the community colleges. The same can be said about the public and private schools that train those who go on to higher education. But there’s a special place for a large university with the research capability, with undergraduate and graduate programs; and indeed there can be no such thing as a truly great international city without a great institution such as the University of Houston, and we need to get even better.

You know the winds of change are strong right now. You know that. Hey, we just went through, I think, the longest election in U.S. history. Right? And both major candidates were outstanding citizens who ran in two major political parties. I don't know the views of libertarian, but put them in that; but all the outstanding candidates representing the values of America ran on the basis of change. Right? You know that the winds of change are strong, and it’s not just about one office either. It’s about a sense of our community, our state, our nation. We want to get moving. People are proud here in this community of the way that we pull together. We’ve had to pull together and endure more storms than we want to. Actually, when I leave here right now, I’m going to be dealing with some issues involving FEMA. Thank goodness for a law degree. There are some wins, and part of that change is that we recognize that in this world of global competition that how we train the next generation of Americans to compete and win in the world economy is the most critical issue facing our country. We understand that we may have a war on terror. We have a war on narcotics. We have a war on poverty, but I’ll tell you what. The war against ignorance and the competitive struggle that has produced such outstanding innovation and free enterprise in America is fueled by the educated workforce. So I commit to you—and I’m sure you’ll hear others—to help us lift this university even higher as you have invested this new president. She embodies so much of what is great about our nation, about our
community, about Houston. We pride ourselves on the fact that it doesn’t matter who your
daddy was or how long you’ve been here or what your faith was or what your first language is, in
Houston, Texas and in Texas we live the American dream and the ideal of—hey, doesn’t matter
how long you’ve been here. We’ll judge you on your merits, and if you contribute and work
hard, you are an important person in our community. We lift people up. We root for their
success, especially the success of newcomers since most of the people who live here have come
from somewhere else. In a way throughout the globe, we get some of the best, and Renu is just
an example of that. You know, my wife said after one dinner that we had with Renu—and I
hope this is not politically incorrect in saying—you know, now I know why we need to recruit
faculty from all over the world; because I’m not sure there’s another person on the whole planet
who is as disciplined and intelligent and beautiful as the President of the University of Houston.

[Applause]

She said that as a compliment. By beauty she meant grace. You have a graceful and effective
leader. Whoever the leader is, I want to say that the 2.2 million people of the City of Houston
stand behind the University of Houston and all it means. Finally, I’ll say to those who are
members of the business community here—people who are lawyers, people who are doctors,
people who are small business people, those who are alums and those who are not—in our
nation, you can tell where people’s hearts are by where they put their treasure, right? Words are
cheap. Investment is expensive. You can tell, based on the amount spent on higher education
per capita public dollars, that we have a ways to go; and whether your call it top tier-one or
whatever you call it, we think that we deserve more investment, and the University of Houston
deserves some too. I say that because Lieutenant Governor and members of the legislature are
here. But I know in their hearts they know the truth of that statement. For the individuals who
run businesses, those who are alums, those who are private donors, I ask you to consider
University of Houston in your gifts.

Now this will not apply if you think you're going to live forever and can take it with you. In that
case, there are psychiatric services that are available; but for those who realize that life is a gift,
that we won’t be here forever and that we need to lift others up on our shoulders as they have
lifted us up with institutions such as this, then I remind people that all great institutions of higher
education—yes, they get some significant share of federal, state and other public funding, but
they also do depend on the generosity of donors. It’s because of donors and some of the
buildings that are named on this campus and some anonymous gifts that University of Houston
has gotten to where it is today. We think it is right that the State of Texas in its budget realizes
how important it is to have a great state institution in its largest and fastest growing community
that does pay a lot more taxes to the state than any other city. We realize that.
We also understand that many people in our community have been blessed, and we cannot wait for any of us who are elected officials or those who take public money, which is money raised by coercion, to make our voluntary gifts and contributions. So I urge you to reflect. Just today in the paper I read about a gift by somebody who is an alum of an institution of higher education in the city that we will pass in 10 years, Chicago, also a great American city. It was a major gift—$300 million. That’s not bad. He explained his gift as follows—that the institution made an investment in me when I was young, and now I’m just giving them a portion of that return on investment. Now, not many of us have $300 million to give, but I’ll tell you what. Those who are alums of this institution or of institutions of higher ed and consider Houston to be part of what they want to leave as their legacy, I encourage in honor of Dr. Khator to help this great institution. Thank you very much.

Chairman Wilson
Thank you, Mayor White. Our next speaker has just been elected to his first full term having served two years as an appointed county judge. Please welcome the honorable Ed Emmett, County Judge of Harris County.

Ed Emmett
Harris County Judge
Thank you very much. This is not the first time I’ve spoken following Mayor White. It’s kind of a difficult thing to do, and I’m sure it won’t be the last time. I’m particularly pleased to be here today officially. I do always like to play one trump card. The Mayor always speaks on behalf of the 2.2 million residents of the City of Houston. I get to speak on behalf of the 4 million residents of Harris County.

So with regard to all the things he just said, I’ll say, me too; plus 1.8 million. Officially, we are here today for the investiture of Dr. Renu Khator. I, too, have a personal story in that I met Dr. Khator in a neighborhood dinner near my home because before becoming county judge, I had very close ties to India and to the Indo-American community here in Harris County. I won’t go into the gory details; but basically my son, when he was a sophomore in college, called his Presbyterian elder parents and said, I’m going to go study under a swami in India for a few years.
We went, “Oh, great.” So I followed him over, and I’ve now been to India in excess of a dozen times, and I’ve grown to love the culture, so when I heard that a woman of Indian heritage was coming to be president of the University of Houston, I couldn’t wait to meet her. I, too, was astounded. In fact, what we’re here today for is more than just the investiture of Dr. Khator. We really are here looking into the future; and yes, you will hear tier-one over and over and over. Anyone who is in any policy position representing Harris County or this entire region or, for my mind, the entire State of Texas who doesn’t think the University of Houston should be tier-one is just not thinking about the future of the State of Texas. It’s imperative that the University of Houston be given tier-one status, and that comes from a Rice University graduate. I confess.

[Applause]

It is so important for the fourth largest city in the third largest county in the country to do that. You noticed we’re the third largest county. We do have a sort of friendly rivalry going there. I won’t talk about Rice versus Texas in football, however. I probably won’t even talk about Rice versus University of Houston in football. We’ll wait and see what happens the last game of the season. But this is a very, very serious and important thing that we do today. I want to leave you with an image that frankly goes far beyond me and far beyond Dr. Khator. That is, what is started today, we won’t really see the results of necessarily in our lifetime. We’ll see the beginnings, but the results will be seen through the eyes of children not yet born. I’ll mention two. One will be a child born just a few blocks from here who is probably going to be born to a family of very limited means, and that child will grow up and will look across a few streets and see this magnificent institution called the University of Houston. The University of Houston will then change that child’s life, and that child will go on to, perhaps, change history. As Houston becomes the gateway to North America—which it will through a lot of reasons as we continue in a global market and a global economy—there will be children born around the world; and I mention an ashram in India in a little village called Malavalli somewhere between Mumbai and Puna—and most of you have no idea where that is. There’s probably a child who is going to be born in a hut with no electricity, with no running water that is going to someday look up and find himself or herself coming to the City of Houston to the premier institution known as the University of Houston, and all of that begins here today with the investiture of Dr. Renu Khator. I’m please to be a part of it. Thank you very much.

Chairman Wilson
Thank you, Judge Emmett. Our next speaker is a long-time friend of higher education and a special friend of the University of Houston System, Lieutenant Governor David Dewhurst.

David Dewhurst
Texas Lieutenant Governor

Welcome, thank you. Ladies and gentlemen, it’s a real honor for me to be here today. Welcome, we’ve been friends for about 25 years. You’re shameless in talking about the legislature and money and all of that. I mean, unbelievable; but bless your heart. Bless your heart. I’m a long-time businessman right here in Houston, and I’m in politics now. Mayor White was talking about the legislature. Let me just share with you. In the last three years, I have stood in front of the legislature each year and said, “Look, I’m going to champion higher education.” In the 2005-2006-2007 three-year period, we put $4.6 billion more money into higher education, and this next session in 2009, we’re going to do more, and I’m going to talk a little bit more about tier-one in just one-second.

[Applause]

Texas is a special place; born and raised right here in Houston. For those of you who weren’t born here, I know you got here as quickly as you could. Texas really is unique. All you have to do is go back and just think about what happened, Judge, in all of the state, county, city; people on Hurricane Ike, on Rita. We were there rescuing 3,420 people from the top of cars or about to drown and on top of rooftops. Texas is a special place; and by being special, we have some obligations. In the next 20 years, 49.5 percent of the entire population growth in the entire country occurs in three states—Florida, Texas and California. Right now, we’re the fastest growing state, population wise, in the country. That’s because last year, 2007, 28 percent of all the jobs created in America—created right here. First six months of the year, 31 percent; and that’s why it’s so important that we take our fine universities and make them even better, so that’s why I’m delighted to be here today to play a small role in this installation of Dr. Renu Khator as Chancellor and President of this great institution, the University of Houston.

I had the opportunity last year to first meet Dr. Khator, and then I met her at a number of different events. She was in my office in the capitol. I’ve had dinner with her. In each one of these meetings, I’ve been really, really impressed by her intellect, by her contagious enthusiasm, by her creativity and yes, by her dogged determination to take this university and make it a tier-one university.

[Applause]

You see, Dr. Khator just never gives up. Every time she sees me, even a quiet dinner, she has my arm somewhere like that. Dr. Khator, you're wearing me out. If you keep this up, I’m just going to have to give in.
[Applause]

If I say this publicly, then Welcome and Renu aren’t going to spend as much time with me, I know; but over and over again, I’ve said, “As our population doubles in the next 25 years, in the next 10 years as we add 8 million to 9 million more people here in Texas, we’re going to need a third more public schools, a third more public school teachers, more university facilities, more faculty and yes, a third and fourth tier-one university. As a Houstonian, I think this is a great selection for a tier-one university.

[Applause]

Mirabeau B. Lamar, the second president of the Republic of Texas—I went to high school in Houston—had an interesting phrase. He said, “A cultivated mind is the guardian genius of democracy.” Cultivated mind—he didn’t say an educated mind. He didn’t say a knowledgeable mind, a mind that’s full of a lot of facts. He said “cultivated.” It just struck me because cultivation is hard work. Whether you're talking about farming, whether you're talking about life, cultivation not only means something special, but it’s a never-ending process. It’s a journey, not a destination. That’s one of the ways that I see Dr. Khator. I know that she’s going to put every ounce of her energy, her creativity and her wisdom in cultivating this fine university into a tier-one university so that it, in turn, may motivate the next generation of leaders from Houston from this area of Texas to a never-ending journey of excellence and knowledge. We have a number of speakers today, and I’m going to be very short, which is difficult for a man who’s 5 feet 17 inches tall. I’m just going to end by saying to Dr. Khator, my congratulations to you. My congratulations to your family on this very special day, and thank you from all of us for your dedication to higher education, for your dedication to the students, to the faculty and the staff of this great university and for your dedication to the people of the great State of Texas. Thank you.

Chairman Wilson
Thank you, governor Dewhurst.

[Applause]

Please welcome to the podium a true friend and supporter of the University of Houston in whose district our campus is located, congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee, who is bringing greetings from the House of Representatives.

[Applause]
Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee

To Dr. Khator and her wonderful family, the honorees of this day, to the trustees and the chairman of the Board of Regents, to our Lieutenant Governor—who you heard it first he has just announced the University of Houston as a tier-one institution; we call that breaking news—my friend and colleague, Congressman Gene Green who is boasting today because he is an alumnus of this great institution; my friend, representative Alma Allen and the other state representatives; to all of the members of the roster here today and to all of you; there is no doubt that I have a family relationship with this institution, one that I am very proud of. There are, in fact, some of you who have watched my children grow over the years. Thank you very much. You did a great job. I come today because a friend of learning and education is being honored with this very special ceremony. The early philosophers, I believe, crafted the terminology or the concept of destiny. So I actually believe that the choice of this day, November 7th, was destined to be the day for Dr. Khator. I know it was previously scheduled, but what a wonderment to have her ascending officially today in a week of change. Now, no, I am not going to discuss the partisan aspect of that change; but what I will say is that we saw America do what the world admires, have an orderly, democratic, peaceful transition of government. Change, using the best of our constitution and the Declaration of Independence, which does suggest that we all are created equal with certain inalienable rights of life and liberty in the pursuit of happiness. We acted upon that on Tuesday. This week can symbolically be a week of change for this great university. A daughter who migrated to this country, a man who was born of an immigrant and a U.S. citizen—that is the best of America. A daughter who first was educated in India, a nation that is one of the strongest allies of our country, the United States, and we intend to make it even stronger. Yet, she received her graduate degrees from an institution of learning here in this nation. So we see a perfect combination of one who loves learning and yet her history would reflect on former the prime minister’s remarks out of India, “As you watch her serve this nation, citizenship consists of service of the country, to be in service of this country.” That is what I see in Dr. Khator and particularly as the University of Houston opened its doors with the work of Dr. Anderson but the rollup sleeves of the students but the power of your new president and chancellor. When you help those who could not help themselves, I want you to know that Dr. Khator was on the line serving those with the greatest smile saying, “This must be not only a tier-one university but a community university. That’s something to be proud of, a unique and special combination.”

[Applause]

The Lieutenant Governor is right. She never lets up. I love that. In the first days of her administration, she was in Washington, DC meeting with me in my office, pressing the envelope
for why the University of Houston should not be tier-one in the state but number one in Washington as a research institution, and she is absolutely right. So we have a plan, and that plan is to ensure that her goals and aspirations are met with somewhat what Aristotle said when he said, “All who have meditated on the art of governing mankind have been convinced that the fate of empires depends on the education of our youth.” Dr. Khator is clearly, squarely an advocate for the education of our youth, however diverse they are in this campus; really the premier campus of diversity, I believe, in the state and certainly in the nation. You have a lot to be proud of.

So in addition to working very hard with my dear friend and colleague, looking for the resources that are necessary to create this research institution—which, by the way, all of us know that research institutions create work. They’re, in fact, the work of the 21st century; for as you research and invent, you create jobs. What a combination. An American institution that is doing the research that puts people to work. So Dr. Khator, let me thank you for your energy and advocacy. In the spirit of Dr. Marguerite Barnett, who served as a president of this campus, you now serve as the president and as well the Chancellor—history making, the week of change. That is, I think, what the late President/Chancellor Hoffman would have wanted. My sympathy to his family. I believe it is certainly a message that we get in the spirit of change.

I do want to answer her on one avocation that she said, and the reason why I want to do so is because I want to join Mayor White and encourage all of the donors and contributors that will help propel this institution. We even need a few of you as we advocate and work to see that her request is at least considered fully, and I believe in destiny that the University of Houston band plays in the inauguration in 2009. That is her advocacy today, and I have an obligation to make that strong point. I hope my colleague will join me.

So I close in thanking Dr. Khator for the advocacy in which she speaks and the love of education that she as exhibited. She reminds me of the strength of Eleanor Roosevelt who often spoke about looking fear in the eye. Many of you thought it was President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, but I can assure that it came first from Eleanor. She said, “We gain strength and courage and confidence by each experience in which we really stop to look fear in the face. We must do that which we think we cannot do.” That is the spirit of our new chancellor. She’s going to do what we think we cannot do. The only thing she asks of us is for us to stand along side her very strong side. So I give you the words of Martin Luther King in my closing because I think this will help you press forward. “We shall overcome because the moral ark of the universe is long, but it bends toward justice.” We shall overcome because Carlyle is right, no lie can live forever. We shall overcome because William Cullen Bryant is right, truth crushed to earth will rise again. The University of Houston is a shining star, but now you have the right general who will carry us
forward into the 21st century—tier-one research, a great American institution serving those who make American great. Change is coming today. It is at the University of Houston. God bless you and God bless America.

Chairman Wilson
Thank you so much, Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee. Our next speaker is also bringing greetings from the U.S. House of Representatives but also from thousands of alumni in the University of Houston System and the University of Houston. He is a proud alumni of the university where he earned both his Bachelor of Arts degree and his law degree. Please welcome Congressman Gene Green.

Congressman Gene Green
Good afternoon. You cannot imagine how proud it is for me to be an alumnus of the University of Houston and be here today. I want to welcome—although she’s already hit the ground running and working for many months—Renu Khator who will be both Chancellor and President of our great university. I do have to correct something, Welcome. It was a Bachelor of Business Administration, and I took enough hours in law school to take the bar, and I passed it, and I still intend some day to go back and finish, but a lot of things have gotten in the way.

Chairman Wilson
Don’t change the record.

Congressman Green
I wanted to say that because I had an opponent to allege I was saying I was a graduate of law school, and I never did, but I try not to correct it all the time but seeing all the media outside, I know I needed to.

[Applause]

But I did get my undergraduate. Let me talk about the promise of this university that it’s been living for decades. In January of 1967, two teenagers showed up on campus from north side Houston. Neither of their parents had been to college. One of them wanted to be a high school algebra teacher. That’s what she wanted to do her whole life, and she did. The other one wanted to earn a living. That’s why I was a business major. Like a lot of University of Houston students, he worked his way through school at a printing company; whereas the young lady actually took out student loans, which is again a lot like University of Houston students. They both had a commitment, though. They wanted to get married, but one of them had to be a college graduate before they could that. It just so happens the young lady did it in three years
and the fellow took 4-1/2. That’s the promise and commitment of this university. To a new generation—and that’s thousands of students who enter here every year whose parents may not have gone to college, may not have even gone to high school. They go on to become things that they couldn’t even dream about. I know my wife, Helen, who in January put up with me for 39 years, was one of the best high school algebra teachers in the Aldine school district because many superintendents would tell me, “She’s a master teacher.” I agreed with it because I actually understood I got more votes from her being a good teacher than whatever vote I did in the legislature. I also know that as a business major, I worked at the printing company for a number of years and then, Welcome, I actually went back. My first term in the legislature I decided I needed to go law school instead of getting my MBA. I served in the State House, and I want to welcome my three colleagues here in the State Senate. Governor, I have to admit it was a great day on the floor of the Senate when the chair of our finance committee in the terms I served would come over and say, “Gene, what do you need to get you to vote for our finance bill?” I would pull out my list of University of Houston special items. Whether it be Max trying to make sure the downtown school’s satisfied the fire code decades ago; also because a promise of this university, the promise to educate thousands of people, and I have to admit in our congressional office, the majority of the staff members are University of Houston graduates. They did just like my wife and I did. They wanted to get that higher education and made that commitment. One other thing is I knew my wife was a good math teacher because when I was taking business calculus, I was thankful to make my “C” because she tutored me every night to make sure I could do that.

The promise of this university goes more than that two teenagers in 1967 because it’s replicated every semester at this university. That’s what makes it a great university, the research work that it’s done, and it’s going to grow because whether it was in the State Senate or the State House or now in Congress, believe me; I’m trying to find every dime of your federal tax dollars to bring home here to the University of Houston because we’re educating the next generation, obviously, of congress, of algebra teachers, of presidents. Whatever the students want to do, they have that opportunity here on campus, including being Nobel Laureates. That’s why I’m honored here today to be able to speak for the literally thousands and thousands of alumni because our story is what people are living today here—students—but for decades have been living here at the University of Houston, and that’s what makes this a great university. Thank you.

Chairman Wilson
Thank you, Congressman Green. Please welcome our next speaker, a good friend of President Khator. May I introduce the president of the University of South Florida, Dr. Judy Genshaft.
Good afternoon. On behalf of the University of South Florida, our board of trustees, staff, faculty, students, I bring greetings. This afternoon, we observe the investiture of Dr. Renu Khator as the Chancellor for the University of Houston System and President of the University of Houston. I’d like to congratulate the University of Houston’s Board of Regents on their excellent selection. As you may know, Dr. Khator previously served for 4-1/2 years as Provost and Sr. Vice President at the University of South Florida, capping a 22-year history at my institution. When I began as president of the University of South Florida in July 2000, there was an opening for an interim dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. We wanted someone who was bright, talented, smart, showed leadership abilities and who could work as part of my leadership team. After consultation with faculty, staff and community leaders, I chose Renu Khator. Within a year, she became the permanent dean. Three years later, my provost stepped down because of health reasons. Dr. Khator had proven herself as a superb dean and was prepared to become my interim provost. Once again, after a national search, she became my permanent provost. At that time, I gave Dr. Khator a very unique gift, a crystal paperweight. What’s unique about this paperweight is not its size, not its shape, not the type of crystal it was made of, not even its value. What’s unique about this gift is that someday, you’re supposed to give it away. Let me tell you why. This paperweight was given to me from an important female mentor when I was a faculty member at the Ohio State University. She said to me, “This is a gift for you to have for awhile but not to keep. It should be given to a woman who has the traits necessary to become a true leader. Hold on to this treasure until you find another woman whom you wish to give it to.” So no one really keeps this memento. It’s only meant to belong to you until you identify someone who is deserving of it. This gift shows a vote of confidence that the recipient will move forward. It’s not the paperweight itself that really matters. It’s the idea that goes along with it. In her book, *How We Lead Matters*, Marilyn Carlson Nelson writes, “I treasure the recognition; not for the prize for I know it not will endure but as an affirmation.”

Dr. Khator, I’m so pleased and proud of your success. The University of Houston is fortunate to have you as a leader and in turn I know you will devote your considerable talents and energies to making the University of Houston the most it can be. Once again, congratulations to you all.

Chairman Wilson
Thank you, President Genshaft. Our next speaker is Curtis Frasier. He is Executive Vice President of Shell Energy Resources, and he is here today representing Shell Oil Company, our lead underwriter for this ceremony.
Curtis Frasier  
*Executive Vice President, Shell Energy Resources*

Thanks. Wow! I’d have to say, I guess, that as a child of a university professor and the nephew of university president, I’m both honored and delighted to be engaged in this special occasion and the investiture of Renu Khator as the President of the University of Houston. Like many businesses in our city and the City of Houston itself, the University of Houston has had an exciting past that’s a very fast-paced past. It also currently stands before an enormous opportunity that remains to be captured and potential that remains to be realized. The history that remains to be written, the history to be made by you, frankly, and to be led by Dr. Khator as she leads this institution towards its potential and into this opportunistic future is a great one. As in the past, I think that’s a journey that’s best traveled together. Local businesses and the University of Houston have had a long-standing, mutually-beneficial relationship. For example, Shell over the last quarter century has gone out of its way to seek out and hire graduates and students from the University of Houston through all levels of our company. We have mechanical, chemical, electrical engineers, lawyers, accountants, MBAs. In fact, the President of Shell Oil Company currently, Marvin Odum, received his MBA here at the Bauer College of Business, and two past presidents of Shell Chemical, Lane Sloan and Fran Keeth, are graduates of the University of Houston. In fact, Cougar red kind of runs through Shell Oil Company. We have over 900 University of Houston graduates working in offices in the city and around the United States, and it’s not unique to Shell. For local businesses and even global businesses, Cougars prowl the corridors of offices and businesses all over this state, across the nation and around the world. So why does the University of Houston feature in the recruitment by companies like Shell? It’s because of the high quality of education and the depth of preparation students receive when they come here to this institution. It’s not only the act of preparing human talent for the business community that sets Houston apart; you’ve done a tremendous job of actually addressing directly some of the important challenges that face us in the business world, not only through scientific and engineering and other technical research and development but in some really interesting stuff that’s being done on business issues, particularly, for example, in the global energy management institute recently created at the Bauer College—some really, really interesting things.

Going forward, I think that this combined effort of business and the University of Houston should only be strengthened and deepened, and I think it will be a key success factor for both of us going forward. For our part in Shell, we have and will continue to participate in the development of curricula and research programs. We also participate through the direct hands-on participation of senior leaders and faculty departments, and they then benefit from seeing first hand some of the fantastic stuff that’s going on in classrooms and laboratories across this campus. So exciting times are times of great opportunity and boy, these are exciting times.
Whether you're in the business or the business of education, information management, financial products and services, manufacturing, energy, whatever, opportunity knocks; and the business community stands prepared to work with the University of Houston as we go forward and answer that call.

So Dr. Khator, on behalf of Shell and really the entire business community, we’d just like to, once again, say welcome. We look forward to a journey together. We wish you every success as you take the University of Houston on to greater and greater heights—previously and frequently referred to as tier-one. Congratulations to you and congratulations to the entire University of Houston.

Chairman Wilson
Did you hear what Curtis said? The President and CEO of Shell Oil Company has a business degree from the Bauer College of Business at the University of Houston—the President of Shell Oil. The next president of Shell Oil is going to come from our students somewhere here on the campus, I promise.

[Applause]

Next we will hear from the representatives of the UH system administration and the systems governance groups. I will introduce them now en mass. Without further introduction, you will hear from Max Castillo, President of the UH-Downtown, representing the UH System. Lisa Jones, faculty Senate President at UH-Clear Lake, representing UH System faculty; Sam Dike, President of the UH Student Government Association, representing UH System students; and Denise Prescott, Staff Council Chairman at UH-Victoria, representing UH Systems. The speakers were selected by the leadership of each of the groups that they represent.

Max Castillo
President of UH-Downtown

Good afternoon. As President of UH-Downtown, I am deeply honored to have been chosen to represent the executive leadership for three of the component universities that comprise the University of Houston System. My presidential colleagues, Dr. Bill Staples of UH-Clear Lake, Dr. Tim Hudson of UH-Victoria, and I join our collective faculties, students and alumni in bringing greetings to Chancellor Khator and all gathered here at this historical occasion. We find ourselves at a very, very critical stage in the evolution of the University of Houston. From what we’ve heard now in modest commuter school to a regional destination university with multiple centers of excellence and now progressing toward national distinction and competitiveness as a tier-one institution and one of the top 50 research universities in the country, as that transition
takes place, we must keep in mind that all components of the UH System will continue to play a vital and a very critical role in the college-going culture that is now being promoted in our area of public schools. In that regard, the ongoing mission of access, of excellence and opportunity will take an even higher priority as more and more individuals pursue higher education. Higher education will become a variable in quality of life issues. Higher education will support the viability of the workplace; and higher education will figure prominently in the future success of the City of Houston. The metroplex will depend even more on a college-educated workforce to sustain a knowledge-based economy. Each of the unique missions of the component universities in the UH System will play a role in enhancing the socioeconomic status of our graduates and the economic development of the greater Houston area.

During my 17-year tenure at UH-Downtown, I have worked with five presidents and four Chancellors. I’ve been here awhile. Each of those individuals, each of these leaders has brought a unique set of skills and experiences to that role, leaving behind a more evolved institution better prepared to respond to organizational, societal and cultural change. Now we have a new president who brings not only her own unique set of skills and experiences but a larger than life vision for the University of Houston and the University of Houston System. Renu Khator has the capacity to lead the University of Houston toward this vision. She is the ideal leader for the university and the system. Dr. Khator brings to us a new level of energy, enthusiasm and leadership to carry the institution to the next level of greatness. We’re all very much aware that the future success of higher education in our region will be shaped by collaborative partnerships among business, government and the third sector. Chancellor Khator will ensure that the principal partners within these types of collaborative are the UH System component universities—UH, UH-Downtown, UH-Clear Lake and UH-Victoria. At the same time, the four universities in the UH System will continue to work together to create a model metropolitan university system to meet the growing education needs of a racially and ethnically diverse population. Students will not just come from Houston but from throughout Texas, from all over the United States and throughout the world. Chancellor Khator, my presidential colleagues and I extend best wishes for your success in fulfilling the goals that you and the Regents and everyone in our community have set for this institution. Thank you.

Chairman Wilson
Ms. Jones

Lisa Jones
Faculty Senate President at UH-Clear Lake
Good afternoon. As a proud faculty member of the University of Houston-Clear Lake and a professor there and a proud alumni of the University of Houston-Central, it is truly an honor to
be a part of this special occasion. To Dr. Khator, distinguished guests, faculty, students and friends, on behalf of the Faculty Senate Presidents and the Faculty Senates of the University of Houston-Central, University of Houston-Downtown, University of Houston-Victoria and the University of Houston-Clear Lake, Dr. Khator, we are very happy that you are here. We look forward to working with you as we all forge ahead to create a vision for the system that embraces a commitment to excellence among our faculty, staff and students; a commitment to changing their lives for the better, one degree at a time; and a commitment to making our mark within the global community. As the university celebrates 80 years of dedication and service to the Houston area, we must continue to strive for access, excellence and impact for all students. With all of us working together, this vision, these goals can become a realization and not just a dream deferred for us and for our students. Thank you.

Sam Dike
President of the UH Student Government Association

For some time, my parents have been pushing me to graduate early, so later today I’ll be sending them photos of this event. I’ll tell them I graduated with a doctorate.

[Applause]

Let me say how excited I am and honored to stand before you all today. President Khator, members of the board and distinguished guests and friends of the University of Houston, today as we gather here, we celebrate not only the extraordinary leadership of our President, Dr. Renu Khator, but we must also celebrate the extraordinary leadership of the University of Houston System. This system serves as a symbol of unity for this region and for this state. This university has provided me with an exceptional educational experience and has been engaged in groundbreaking research that will change the world. The university has been engaged in reaching out to its neighbors through programming and arts and sciences and through other partnerships that will benefit the community from years to come. My friends, this is the definition of a great university—the sense of unit, the sense of excitement and passion for greatness are all qualities exhibited by Dr. Renu Khator. It is because of this fact that I stand here today to welcome a new era, a new vision and a new leader to the University of Houston family. So on behalf of the students of the University of Houston System and the University of Houston, I congratulate you, Dr. Renu Khator, on your investiture as the Chancellor of the University of Houston System and President of the University of Houston System. Go Coogs.

[Applause]

Denise Prescott
Staff Council Chairman at UH-Victoria
Good afternoon, UH citizens and community supporters. I’m here on this momentous occasion representing the University of Houston’s four staff councils. We’re here today to offer you, Chancellor and President Khator, our congratulations on this day, your investiture. We’re proud to welcome you to the UH family, and we look forward to working with you as we move the University of Houston System forward. The staff councils of our universities represent approximately 4500 individual staff members. As elected representatives of these staffs, we want to offer our support, our involvement in the process, our energy and excitement and our commitment to stand with your as we move toward tier-one. We’re confident that with your leadership, now is the right time for UH to reach this goal. We are excited that with our collective vision, leadership and energy, tier-one can be a reality. Chancellor Khator, congratulations.

Chairman Wilson
Thank you. Our gratitude goes to all of the groups you represent for the wonderful congratulatory messages. Now it is my distinct honor and privilege to invite Renu Khator to come forward for the investiture. I would also like to invite Regents Rose, Stephens, Wise and Ray to come forward to present this symbol of the office of the president.

Regent Rose, please step forward for the presentation of the academic mace. The mace, carried in all academic processions, symbolizes the university’s authority and unity. This tradition began in the late 14th century when two ancient symbols of power, the royal scepter and the battle mace were combined to form the present day symbol of authority.

[Applause]

Regent Stephens, would you step forward for presentation of the University of Houston charter. We will not read the entire document but let me quote from a few lines. I quote. “It is the responsibility of the University of Houston to provide an educational program to serve the public welfare constructively, to promote greater individual self realization, to assist industry in obtaining more intelligent leaders and workers and promulgate social integration through open-minded inquiry and public discussion.”

[Applause]

Regent Wise and Regent Ray, please step forward and do the honor with the third symbol of office.
[Applause]

With the placement of this special medallion on President Khator, we complete the presentation of the symbols of office. And now it is my distinct privilege and honor to administer the oath of office.

On behalf of Texas Governor Rick Perry and his appointees on the University of Houston System Board of Regents, it is my high honor to administer the oath of office to Renu Khator. Chancellor and President Khator, please repeat after me. I, Renu Khator, do solemnly swear

Dr. Khator
I, Renu Khator, do solemnly swear

Chairman Wilson
that I will faithfully execute my duties

Dr. Khator
that I will faithfully execute my duties

Chairman Wilson
as Chancellor of the University of Houston System

Dr. Khator
as Chancellor of the University of Houston System

Chairman Wilson
and president of the University of Houston

Dr. Khator
and president of the University of Houston

Chairman Wilson
and will to the best of my ability

Dr. Khator
and will to the best of my ability

Chairman Wilson
preserve, protect and defend

Dr. Khator
preserve, protect and defend

Chairman Wilson
the constitution and laws

Dr. Khator
the constitution and laws

Chairman Wilson
of the United States of America

Dr. Khator
of the United States of America

Chairman Wilson
and this State of Texas

Dr. Khator
and this State of Texas

Chairman Wilson
so help me God.

Dr. Khator
so help me God.

Chairman Wilson
Congratulations! You are now formally invested as Chancellor and President for our great university.

Dr. Khator
Thank you.

[Applause]
Thank you Chairman Wilson, and thank you honorable guests for your inspiring words—Lieutenant Governor Dewhurst, Congresswoman Jackson Lee, Congressman Green, Texas Representative Allen, Olivo and Riddle, Mayor White, Judge Emmett, President Genshaft, Mr. Frasier. Thanks also to our UH System speakers representing the UH System presidents, faculty, staff and students. I welcome here our federal, state, local elected officials, distinguished members of the Counselor Corps, presidents, delegates from various universities and learned societies from around the nation and the world, current and former members of the UH System Board of Regents, colleagues from our sister institutions—UH-Clear Lake, UH-Downtown and UH-Victoria—our outstanding faculty, staff, students, alumni and friends of the University of Houston. Welcome! And thank you for your presence here today.

I am proud, honored and humbled to stand before you today—proud, because I know the spectacular history of this institution and the many accomplishments that it has; honored because you have placed your trust in me, and you have made me a part of your family; and humbled because I know that this journey that has brought me to this point today has not been mine alone. So many of you as friends and mentors and supporters have traveled with me. An investiture is never about an individual. It is about a moment in history. It’s about a moment today. It is a moment for the University of Houston. Today is the time when we celebrate our past, examine our present and envision our future. I stand here eternally grateful to my homeland, India, for giving me the context in which I have framed my life; to my parents for giving me the values that guide my daily life. They were never preparing their daughter for the workforce, but nonetheless, they gave me what I needed simply by living their lives the way they did—with integrity and compassion. Ten years ago, when I started on the path of higher education administration, my dad promised that, “One day when you become a university president, I will come to America.” Today, I’m here but it’s too late for him. He passed away three years ago. Dad, this moment is for you. My family—my mom, my sister and my brother who could not be here today but they are joining by the internet—I thank you for your love and guidance.

There are many friends here from Tampa and from the University of South Florida, including you heard from President Judy Genshaft. I can’t even tell you how much your presence means to me here today. Thank you for 25 years of friendship, guidance and mentoring. Thank you for allowing me to make mistakes, learn from them and have the ability to be here today with you.

A very special salute to our current and former University of Houston System Regents, Chancellors and Presidents. You have led and guided this university to its present level of excellent, and for that we owe you a great debt of gratitude, admiration and respect. I would be remiss if I did not mention the passing last week of the father of the modern University of
Houston, President Philip G. Hoffman, a true icon, an influential figure in our institutional history. His legacy will live forever.

Today I also salute our distinguished faculty, our dedicated staff and members of my administrative team. What a great university you have built. To our students and alumni, thank you for making this great university your home. And to the friends of the University of Houston and civic and political leaders, thank you for embracing this great university as your own.

I am grateful to our current Board of Regents. Thank you for selecting me. I know you're the smartest board. I am honored and I promise I will not let you down. To our community partners and all of you who reached out to me during this past few months, please know that I want to say in true Texan style, thanks y'all.

[Applause]

And a very special thanks to the Indian community [speaking Indian].

Before I move on, please allow me to take a personal moment and introduce my family—our two precious daughters, Pooja and Parul. It so happens that they are ophthalmologists, but they really are my eyes because they allow me to see this new generation and understand it, so I would like to ask Pooja and our great son-in-law, Darrin, and Parul, would you please stand?

[Applause]

Lastly, there is one person here without whom I would be nothing; a person who has made me whatever little I am today. Please meet my teacher, my mentor, my friend, my partner and my husband, Dr. Suresh Khator.

[Applause]

Just as my personal journey has been shaped by many mentors and many forces, the journey of the University of Houston has also been shaped by many visionaries, and today is the time to salute them. The University of Houston was born in 1927 from the dream of a small group of civic leaders who saw the need to provide higher education locally to working men and women of Houston and their sons and daughters; those who could not afford to go to college out of town or out of state but nonetheless who wanted an education at par with the best in the world. The dream started with a public two-year college and soon evolved into a private four-year university just within seven years. I would like to take you to a day in 1936 when Mr. Hugh Roy Cullen
who himself never attended college picked up a brochure entitled *A Typical Student’s Daily Program*. This brochure outlined a day in the life of a young student who got up at 5:30 a.m. every morning, dressed in a dark suit and hat, took the 7:18 Southmore bus to his job downtown. He would eat his 29 cents lunch at Walgreens, work until 5 and then ride another bus for his night classes at the University of Houston—then holding classes in loaned spaces in churches and high schools. He would finally head home around 9:30 and study before going to sleep around midnight. “That’s the kind of person I would like to help,” Mr. Cullen said. His enthusiasm led to the first in a series of many gifts and literally created the University of Houston as we know it today. Mr. Cullen’s family continues the legacy of service and philanthropy through this day and has been joined by many other generous donors whose generosity is the reason we are here today. In the 1940s and 1950s, the university found its broader mission. It welcomed thousands of World War II veterans under the GI bill and expanded to serve 13,000 students charging the tuition of $20 per credit hour. It may sound very low to you today, but it was six times higher than what public universities charged at the time. The times became tough. In the 1960s, the University of Houston became a public university and also enrolled its first African-American student. Over the next two decades, the growth continued—people, buildings, research and also the aspirations and dreams of our students. Guided by its mission to provide access, the University of Houston expanded its offering throughout the region and eventually grew into a premier system of higher education, adding universities in Clear Lake, Downtown and Victoria, all in a short span—1973 and 1974. In recent years, the UH System expanded its footprints further, and it started to offer courses in Sugar Land, Cinco Ranch and Pearland. Meanwhile, the University of Houston, the flagship campus, transformed itself into one of America’s top 100 public research universities.

That brings me to today.

We stand here today on November 7, 2008, looking at the next chapter of this incredible journey, who we are today and what we are made of, our character and values will define what we become tomorrow. We are first and foremost a place where learning is as natural as breathing; where discoveries are happening every day, where community engagement takes on a new meaning. We are Houston’s university, and here is what we contribute to the city and the region. We make an incredible $3.1 billion of economic impact annually. We add 8000 skilled workers to the workforce annually. We are recognized as one of the most diverse universities in the nation. I challenge you—I challenge you—to spend one day in Houston without being touched by a Cougar. It is impossible; because Cougars are everywhere. They are in classrooms, in corporate headquarters, in performance halls. They are serving our energy sector and they are in our hospitals. They are practically everywhere. As astronauts, they are even in outer space, flying for our country and for NASA, one of our oldest partners in research. Cougars are
shaping and building our economy and our future. But we are also a university with a global dimension. We serve 3174 students from 136 countries, making us the 29th ranked university in the United States in the number of international students. We are home to the finest faculty, including Nobel Laureates, Tony award winners and members of the prestigious National Academies, including Dr. Neal Amundson who has the rare honor of being in all of the three academies. Our faculty publishes a new book every third day. Our programs are consistently ranked among the very best in the nation and in the world. Our students have won more than 80 Olympic medals, and our educational presence touches students in almost every continent in the world—in Africa, Asia, Europe, North and South America. This is the University of Houston, a university that is part and parcel of this spectacular city and this entrepreneurial state. However, this is not the end of the story. Our next chapter is yet to be written. What will that be? No matter what we write together, one thing is certain. This chapter is going to be big and this chapter is going to be bold. I have a well-known quotation on my desk which reads, “Make no small plans for they have no power to stir the soul.” Well, it’s time for the University of Houston to stir the soul of higher education in Texas and in the nation.

Our nation faces two significant challenges in higher education—affordable access and global competitiveness. We know that a vast number of students are not graduating from college. Some do not even begin the journey because they don’t believe they can. Some believe they can but never take the first step. Yet, others take the first step but never finish the journey. No matter what the underlying cause may be, one thing is certain; we as a nation, we as a society are the losers. We lose the intellectual power necessary to transform our collective future. Now I won’t talk about alarming statistics and disturbing patterns. Suffice to say that we as a nation are fast losing our competitiveness in the field of higher education. In order to keep America as a leader in the global economy, in order to keep Texas competitive and in order to keep Houston at the cutting edge, it is essential that we make higher education accessible and affordable. In today’s world where knowledge is power and innovation is the currency of progress, higher education is not a luxury; it is a necessity. We at the University of Houston acknowledge this challenge and do declare that our first priority is the students’ success. We pledge that as a system of higher education, we will provide access to students from all backgrounds living in any part of the region, the state, the nation and the world, and having any level of educational aspirations. We pledge that their educational experience will be top tier, and their training will be globally relevant and competitive. Our students will interact with all ethnic groups and nationalities and learn the skills to lead in the global marketplace. They will be proud of their heritage, yet respect others’ cultures. They will be leaders, yet have the courage to be led by others’ ideas. Today we dedicate this investiture to our students and their dreams and pledge to raise this year $100 million toward students’ success.
Now Hurricane Ike forced us to reschedule today’s ceremony which originally included a scholarship event, but it did not change our resolve and neither did it change the generosity of our donors and friends. Together they have raised an amount for scholarship that is unprecedented in the history of this institution from one single event. They have raised for scholarships $1 million. Would you please give them a big applause?

Commercialization of research and application of knowledge are the tangible outcomes of this endeavor, and we will pursue them, but great universities are great because they also contribute to other outcomes. Their research has the capacity to shape our future 10, 15 or 100 years from now and in ways that we can’t even imagine today. I salute all the philosophers, social scientists, architects and artists along with scientists and researchers who have made the University of Houston the finest metropolitan university in the country.

We cannot rest on our laurels, though. There is still much to be done. That brings me to our second pledge, and that is to make the University of Houston a nationally and internationally competitive research university. During my 100-day solicitation, where I got 12,000 ideas of what I should do at the University of Houston, I clearly heard your voice, and I heard your aspirations for the University of Houston to be a top-tier university. We may use different terms to describe it—top tier, tier-one, nationally competitive, nationally premier research university—but underneath all of this there is one desire, and that is the pursuit of excellence—excellence in faculty, excellence in research and creative capacity, excellence in educational programming and learning environment and excellence in our partnership with the community. Today, the faculty and staff of the University of Houston reaffirm their commitment to pursue excellence and does obtain the top-tier status that we so desire.

Four initiatives will serve pathways to achieving this goal.

Our first initiative—and let me say it enthusiastically and energetically—is the UH Energy Initiative! This initiative will bring together 70 of our finest faculty from 14 centers and institutes from 8 colleges and multiple disciplines to pursue the broadest and the highest level of energy research, including fossil fuels, biofuels and wind and solar. Houston is the energy capital of the world, and with 3,600 energy companies in Texas, this is a strategy alignment that has numerous benefits for the state and the nation and provides an opportunity for global impact. The energy initiative will facilitate relationships with industry partners to understand their needs
and grow our capacity to provide the workforce, the technologies and the business innovations needed by Houston; not only to compete but also to lead in energy industry globally. I am pleased to announce the establishment of the Presidential Energy Advisory Board. In partnership with our faculty-led energy alliance, this board will guide the University of Houston’s multi-million dollar investment in the field of energy and our desire to become the premier energy university in the nation.

The second initiative, the UH Health Initiative builds on another of Houston’s strengths—healthcare. Houston is home to the world’s largest medical complex, the Texas Medical Center. We have many health related programs and research areas including science and engineering, social sciences, law, social work, pharmacy, optometry, business and many others. Our strength lies in the integration of these disciplines and in the intersection of basic sciences, engineering and social sciences; and this initiative promises to accomplish exactly that. With this initiative, we will expand our presence and our partnerships with Texas Medical Center institutions, filling gaps that currently exist and advancing strengths already in place. I am pleased to announce that we are launching the UH Health Initiative with the recruitment in the next few weeks of a mega cluster headed by a member of the National Academy of Sciences.

Our third initiative, the UH Arts initiative is equally important to us. The arts initiative will position the University of Houston as a world-class arts destination and as a national innovator in commissioning new work, employing and training thousands of artists and sponsoring world-class art series. Now one of the greatest advantages of living in Houston, as I quickly learned, is the incredible depth and breadth of the arts. Houston arts attracts nearly 11 million people and generates $620 million worth of economic activity every year. The arts here at the University of Houston are a big part of their success. We pledge to expand and strengthen our partnerships with area theaters, museums, performance venues and arts organizations. And along side, our faculty will strive for excellence in the liberal arts, general education, humanities, social sciences and will pursue a Phi Beta Kappa Chapter. These new initiatives complement our existing commitment to strengthen our centers of excellence, what I like to call “our star programs,” many of which are ranked in the top 50, top 20, top 5 and number 1 in the nation. These include entrepreneurship, health law, optometry, hotel restaurant management, social work, psychology, chemical engineering, music management, creative writing, and I can just go on.

Under the fourth initiative labeled as the “Star Initiative,” we pledge to make our stars shine even brighter. Between goals of a student’s success and global competitiveness, we’ll have a multiplier effect on Houston and Texas. Our success will build a larger and more skilled workforce and empower community, better prepared corporate and community leaders, a strong
and stable regional economy, a competitively educated state population and a true global reach and impact.

To accomplish our objectives, our efforts will be going beyond the classroom. We will be building a strong athletics program, more residence halls, a better stadium, a more vibrant student life and yes, something that probably you all are waiting for, more parking. Strong athletics is essential to our future, and I am prepared to do everything in my power to help us achieve that goal.

This is a bold vision. How will this bold vision become a reality? It will take us all. It will take this entire community to take the University of Houston to greater heights. Your commitment and passion have the power to transform the University of Houston. Your passion and commitment have the power to make the University of Houston a nationally and globally competitive university. To dream anything less is to shortchange our students, our region and our state, and we can’t do that.

In closing, let me read you a poem from Rabindranath Tagore, India’s foremost poet and the first Asian to be awarded a Nobel Prize in literature. Tagore wrote this poem as the winds of independence and nationalism were beginning to stir in the land of my birthplace. Even though the topic is nationhood, the poem inspires a vision that I believe applies to today’s University of Houston.

*Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high*  
*Where knowledge is free*  
*Where words come out from the depth of truth*  
*Where tireless striving stretches its arms toward perfection*  
*Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way*  
*Into the dreary desert sand of dead habit*  
*Where the mind is led forward by thee*  
*Into ever-widening thought and action*  
*Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.*

Ladies and gentlemen, friends and colleagues and Cougars, let the University of Houston awake. Let us all be bold. Let us begin to write the next chapter of the University of Houston, and let’s do it together. Thank you very much.

*Chairman Wilson*
Congratulations, President Khator. We thank you for your inspiring words, your leadership and the promise of a new and exciting chapter in the history of the University of Houston. Professor Curry.

**Professor Lawrence Curry**

I want to thank all of you for sharing with us this historic day in the life of the University of Houston. Now, will you please stand and sing the University of Houston alma mater accompanied by the wind ensemble. If you need the words, you’ll find them in the back of the cover of the program.

[Singing]

Were almost through but sit down just for a moment, please. Our gratitude goes to the students and faculty from our own Moores School of Music, whose performances today were under the direction of Professor David Bertman, and we want to thank them for that.

[Applause]

Before we conclude the ceremony, I want you to know that all of you—*all of you*—are invited to the celebratory reception at our nearby Campus Recreation and Wellness Center, which began 8 minutes ago. Please join us there. And now for the recessional. I ask the platform party and all those seated in the hall who will be participating in the recessional—that is the delegates and faculty and academic regalia and special guests—to stand; and will the rest of you remain seated until I tell you that the recessional has concluded. Thank you. Let the recessional begin.

[Recessional]

Conclusion

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