



THE UNIVERSITY OF
TOLEDO



PROVING RESILIENCE: LEADERSHIP IN ACTION

STATE OF THE UNIVERSITY ADDRESS
Dr. Sharon L. Gaber, President
Tuesday, April 7, 2020



If this were a normal day in early April, we would all be on a campus buzzing with activity. Instead, we've made necessary changes to our way of life to ensure the health and safety of our community.

These are challenging times as we — and everyone across the country and the world — respond to the coronavirus pandemic. We've made difficult decisions: moving to remote learning for the rest of the semester and for summer courses, too, asking our students to move off campus and requiring employees to work from home.

We also canceled all spring events, including our most treasured tradition — commencement. I am heartbroken that we will not be able to celebrate our students as they walk across the stage to receive their diploma, but look forward to honoring your accomplishments and hard work over these past years with a virtual celebration.

The well-being of our campus community has been our top priority throughout this extremely challenging time. I want to thank you all for your patience, flexibility and commitment to our institutional mission. Together with our Board of Trustees and senior leaders, and the understanding and dedication of our faculty, staff, students, alumni and supporters, we have all made changes to our day-to-day way of lives in order to protect everyone. We are living our mission to improve the human condition — and it starts with protecting the most vulnerable among us.

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Especially in this time of uncertainty, I felt it was critical to continue the tradition of providing an annual State of the University address — just in a different, digital format as advised by our public health experts. It's important to acknowledge the many accomplishments from this academic year that we have to be proud of — and to share with you what I look forward to in the coming year.

It takes strong leadership to make tough choices, and your University of Toledo is a leading institution of higher education. Despite these difficult times, our role as a public research university is more important than ever — we are educating the next generation of critical thinkers and innovative leaders, advancing knowledge through groundbreaking research, and serving as a strong community partner with our region and our state.





“Where others see challenges, Rockets see opportunities.”

UToledo is leading the way to better tomorrows — for hundreds of thousands here in our region and around the world. Cleaner drinking water and energy sources. Better vaccines, testing and treatments for serious public health challenges. Safer communities. All possible because Rockets aren't satisfied with gaining knowledge — **we are leading change.**

We are now at the halfway point of our Strategic Plan. That plan is our roadmap toward 2022, when UToledo will celebrate our 150th anniversary. Throughout these last few years, together, we have accomplished several great milestones. As we talk about some of them today, you'll hear one word being repeated over and over: **Leadership.**

Leadership starts with each of us. The world is changing — and whether it's during times of great progress, or when we're called on to make difficult choices, it's the actions we take that define us. **Where others see challenges, Rockets see opportunities.**



RAISING EXPECTATIONS



Because of the strong leaders on our campus, our national reputation continues to grow. UToledo now has 20 academic programs — including undergraduate, graduate, online and professional programs — that are nationally ranked by U.S. News & World Report. With this number, we have doubled our Strategic Plan goal and quadrupled our nationally ranked programs since 2016!

We also have been ranked among the top 100 public universities in the latest Wall Street Journal/Times Higher Education Rankings. And the Princeton Review recently ranked our College of Law fifth on its national list of the top law schools with the “Greatest Resources for Women,” and again included UToledo in its “Best Law Schools 2020” ranking.



We are expanding our impact as thought leaders, advancing important conversations around the world. Our faculty experts are influencing the national dialogue on important topics including the presidential election process, the #metoo movement and efforts to prevent threats of mass violence in our schools.

They are appearing in outlets like The Wall Street Journal, National Public Radio, The New York Times and The Washington Post. In the last year, UToledo and our expertise have been featured in the media more than 5,800 times, reaching a global audience of billions.



Last year when I gave this State of the University address, I encouraged all of us to live out the attributes of our new Fueling Tomorrows brand, celebrating the people on our campus who are innovative leaders driven to make an impact on the world. I asked each of you to tell our story proudly; to let Ohio, the country and the world know who Rockets are through our work, our passion and our purpose. The examples I just mentioned are proof that we’re doing **all of that**.





Now, let me say a few words about some of the tough choices that leadership requires. It's been well documented that the UT Medical Center is in a challenging financial situation. We understand the community's concerns about access to healthcare. At the same time, we need to address the economic realities we face as a small independent hospital in a rapidly evolving healthcare industry. We are working to stabilize the hospital's finances — which included opening up the medical staff bylaws — as we evaluate options for the future. We will continue to be as transparent as we can be throughout this process as recommendations come forward.

Now, I want to say **thank you** to all of our clinical faculty and medical staff who have stepped up during this global pandemic to offer rapid coronavirus testing and care for our patients. I'll share more about this later, but couldn't mention our hospital without recognizing these dedicated medical professionals.

“While change is inevitable, I remain confident that UToledo's future is brighter than ever.”

While change is inevitable, I remain confident that UToledo's future is brighter than ever. We remain committed to our educational mission and are leading by example:

1. We are **innovating education and programs** throughout our colleges;
2. Our students are **succeeding** like never before;
3. Our **research and discoveries** are changing lives around the globe;
4. And we are **supporting our communities** with service, partnership and knowledge.

Our students are realizing their potential as leaders and innovators, through one-of-a-kind learning experiences made possible by collaborative teams across our campuses.





I'd like to congratulate our College of Law graduates for their impressive scores on the summer bar exam — **an 89% first-time passage rate, the highest in a decade and well above the statewide average of 82%.**



And I'd like to recognize all 76 of our 2019 College of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences graduates who passed the state's required pharmacy law exam on their first attempt.

Not only does the 100% passage rate surpass all other schools in Ohio, but it represents the highest passage rate in the nation.

Our College of Nursing is another great example of creative programs and partnerships. The new competency-based online R.N. to B.S.N. program is the first of its kind in Ohio and has already doubled enrollment since last spring. This program offers flexible education that allows working students to learn at their own pace.



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And last month, we announced a new dual-admission partnership with Owens Community College that creates a seamless pathway for nursing students to earn an Associate in Applied Science degree in registered nursing from Owens, followed by a Bachelor of Science degree in nursing here at UToledo.






POWERING SUCCESS

Our campus-wide commitment to student success is stronger than ever.

To our students: we are here for you and we miss being with you on campus. Your faculty, advisors, deans and so many others across the University work tirelessly — especially during challenging times like these — to help you achieve your dreams and fulfill your potential.

We've worked to find creative ways to continue the on-campus services you want and need. Live tutoring is being provided on Zoom. The Counseling Center — which grew its team and expanded hours and locations to the Health Science Campus this year — is now providing phone consultations. The Career Services team is available via phone or web conference. And throughout this, we continue to provide food to those who use our Student Food Pantries — now located on both the Main and Health Science campuses.




It is because of the creative leadership on our campuses that we were able to reach a huge student success milestone. **Following fall 2019 commencement, our six-year graduation rate improved to a record high of 51.7% — up more than 10% since 2015 and meeting our strategic plan goal three years early!**

That achievement was possible because of our great progress on student retention. For the seventh straight year, more students returned to campus in the fall for their second year. **Our first-to-second year retention rate for undergraduate students was 76.4% this school year, the highest rate on record in the last 20 years!**

Our commitment to student success is attracting top students to our campuses. We were proud to welcome our best academically prepared class of first-year students for the second year in a row.

And this year our student-athletes were recognized with the Mid-American Conference Institutional Academic Achievement Award for earning a school-record overall GPA of 3.277. It was the second straight year, and sixth of the last eight, that we won the award.



One soon-to-be graduate has already interned at two of the world's leading tech companies, Google and Adobe — and will head to Microsoft after graduation! She is using her problem-solving skills to help others and increase diversity in her field. I'm sure you'll be as impressed by her as I am.

CLICK IMAGE TO WATCH HER STORY



Each of our students has a great story to tell.

Emma Sampson is a great example of a student-athlete who is demonstrating leadership in both her academic and athletic pursuits. A mechanical engineering junior and swimmer, she was one of two student-athletes chosen to represent the Mid-American Conference at this year's NCAA Leadership Forum. The Forum was unfortunately canceled, but we're proud of her selection for this important role.

The arts and sciences collaborated on an important project this year to design a medical device for a professional actor's wheelchair to improve his expressiveness and range of motion on stage. Together with Dr. Matt Foss and Dr. Brian Trease, students in theatre and engineering created a device that costs only \$65 to duplicate, and a new group of students is now working to bring their prototype to market.

Second-year law student Damon Williams recently made history when he was selected to be the next leader of The University of Toledo Law Review. He is the first African-American student to hold the prestigious and highly competitive position of editor-in-chief in the publication's 52-year history.



Not even a global pandemic could stop us from celebrating the achievements of our fourth-year medical students. This year's virtual Match Day honored 167 members of the UToledo 2020 class — the number of students matching with our own College of Medicine and Life Sciences residency programs increased 30% over 2019, and the total number of students staying in northwest Ohio increased nearly 50%!

These numbers show that we are providing our region with well-trained, well-qualified physicians. The results wouldn't be possible without our Academic Affiliation with ProMedica — together, we are fulfilling our mission to educate medical students and advance life-saving knowledge through research.

We're all disappointed not to have spring sports this year to cheer for our talented student-athletes, but I did want to take this opportunity to congratulate UToledo senior Petronela Simiuc for being named Most Outstanding Female Track Performer by the Mid-American Conference. She earned the MAC title in the 800 meters, mile and distance medley relay at the MAC Indoor Championships. She was also named First Team All-MAC in each of the events and broke UToledo's indoor 800-meter record.

And I'd also like to thank everyone in the Rocket community for helping us lead the MAC in home football attendance for the third straight year! We appreciate you bringing your spirit to the Glass Bowl in 2019 — and look forward to seeing you there again in just a few months.



EMMA SAMPSON
JUNIOR
MECHANICAL ENGINEERING



DAMON WILLIAMS
SECOND-YEAR LAW STUDENT



PETRONELA SIMIUC
MOST OUTSTANDING FEMALE
TRACK PERFORMER



ADVANCING RESEARCH



DR. RANDY ELLINGSON
SOLAR TECHNOLOGIES



Even though we're not on campus right now, the important research work of our faculty continues as we apply for grants, test theories and publish papers.

Our researchers are leaders in their fields — facing the world's most urgent problems head-on, with a cross-disciplinary approach and innovative solutions. **In just the first six months of this year, we received \$32.2 million in competitive research awards, an increase of nearly 24% over this time last year.**

This year, our campus was chosen by the U.S. Department of Energy to host a National Lab Day. The two-day event last October brought together representatives from the 17 Department of Energy National Labs and more than 450 researchers exploring the critical scientific challenges of our time, including renewable technologies, astrophysics, water management and materials manufacturing.

While it was exciting to host, more importantly the event opened doors to promising new partnerships with Oak Ridge National Lab on automotive research, with Idaho National Lab to repurpose nuclear reactors for hydrogen production, and with others as well.



Dr. Michael Weintraub is working on a major initiative called the Terrestrial Aquatic Interface, led by Pacific Northwest National Laboratory.

[CLICK IMAGE TO LEARN MORE](#)

We are continuing UToledo's expertise in creating the next generation of solar technologies.

One of the largest grants awarded this year went to Dr. Randy Ellingson and his team. The \$7.4 million award from the U.S. Air Force supports work to enhance the reliability and efficiency of lightweight solar power to improve the safety and effectiveness of Department of Defense missions.

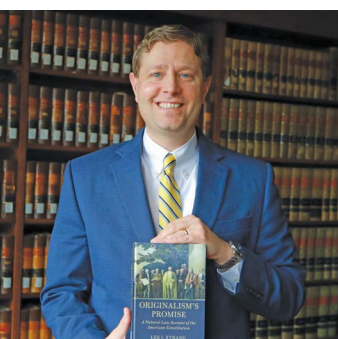
And UToledo physicists have had great success drawing record levels of power from the same amount of sunlight using a breakthrough technique.





DR. YANFA YAN
PROFESSOR
PHYSICS AND ASTRONOMY

Dr. Yanfa Yan is currently leading \$5.7 million in projects with the U.S. Department of Energy that collaborate with the National Renewable Energy Laboratory and First Solar. In a field where every fraction counts, his efforts have increased the efficiency of the new solar cell to about 23% — compared to the 18% currently available on the market.



LEE STRANG
PROFESSOR
COLLEGE OF LAW



**DR. STEVEN SUCHECK
& DR. KATHERINE WALL**
COLLABORATION
SYNTHETIC VACCINE

A new book by a UToledo law professor is timely in a presidential election year. In his book, “Originalism’s Promise: A Natural Law Account of the American Constitution,” Lee Strang provides an argument for how Americans should interpret the Constitution.

In times like these, the efforts of our researchers working to protect public health are critical. Dr. Steven Sucheck and Dr. Katherine Wall are collaborating on a \$2.3 million NIH funded project to create a synthetic vaccine against a deadly antibiotic-resistant bacterial infection.



ALEXX RAYK
PUBLIC HEALTH MAJOR
HONORS COLLEGE

And our faculty are serving as mentors to aspiring scholars like Alexx Rayk, a public health major and Honors College student. Alexx’s work with immunologist Dr. Heather Conti has contributed extensively to research on campus and in the pages of academic journals. Alexx has also published research on wealth inequality and its effects on healthcare with Dr. Timothy Jordan.



DR. AMANDA BRYANT-FRIEDRICH
PROFESSOR/ DEAN
COLLEGE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

And congratulations to Dr. Amanda Bryant-Friedrich, professor of medicinal and biological chemistry and dean of the College of Graduate Studies, who is among the 443 scientists to be newly elected Fellows of the American Association for the Advancement of Sciences, the world’s largest general scientific society. Six current and former UToledo faculty members have now been elected AAAS Fellows.





BUILDING COMMUNITY

Your University of Toledo continues to play an important role in our community.

Research this year into the economic impact of the opioid epidemic in northwest Ohio and poverty in Toledo will help shape the responses needed to address these issues.

Our Human Trafficking and Social Justice Institute partnered this year with the Lucas County Sheriff's office to launch the Runaway Project, which helps prevent our young people from becoming victims of trafficking and drug addiction.

UToledo also embraces our role to be a source of expertise beyond our campus and city borders.



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DR. JENNIFER HANRAHAN
COLLEGE OF MEDICINE AND
LIFE SCIENCES
INFECTIOUS DISEASE EXPERT

During this coronavirus outbreak, our faculty have served as community leaders, sharing their knowledge with our local and national media outlets ... from our infectious disease experts helping us to prevent exposure, to mental health leaders providing tips to better cope with this challenging situation, to business faculty offering leadership advice in times of crisis.

College of Medicine and Life Sciences infectious disease expert Dr. Jennifer Hanrahan has been featured in a number of publications and in a University-produced video that was viewed by more than 11,000 people.

While I've focused today on our faculty, staff and students, I also want to recognize our global community of dedicated alumni, donors and supporters whose generosity helps power our mission. In fiscal 2020 so far, more than 8,000 people have made financial contributions to The University of Toledo. And thanks to their support, **more than 11,500 hard-working students have received scholarships this academic year.**



During this pandemic, many of those students cannot work on campus, or are unable to return to their home countries. To help these students in need, we are raising support for the [Rocket-to-Rocket Student Emergency fund.](#)

I hope those of you who are able will join me in making a gift of \$5, \$10 or more toward our goal of \$75,000 to help students with housing, utilities, medical bills and other critical needs.

These may be challenging times, but we're in this together.

“These may be challenging times, but we’re in this together.”



Thank you for all you've done, and continue to do, for The University of Toledo. I am so proud of how you've stepped up — as students, as faculty, staff, alumni and community members — to not only ensure that our academic mission continues forward, but also realizing that our collective sacrifices are for the greater good of our region.

We are providing real-time solutions to this crisis. The University of Toledo Medical Center, for example, was the first laboratory in northwest Ohio to facilitate testing for COVID-19. This service helped to reduce waiting periods and prioritize testing for high-risk patients, first responders and healthcare providers.

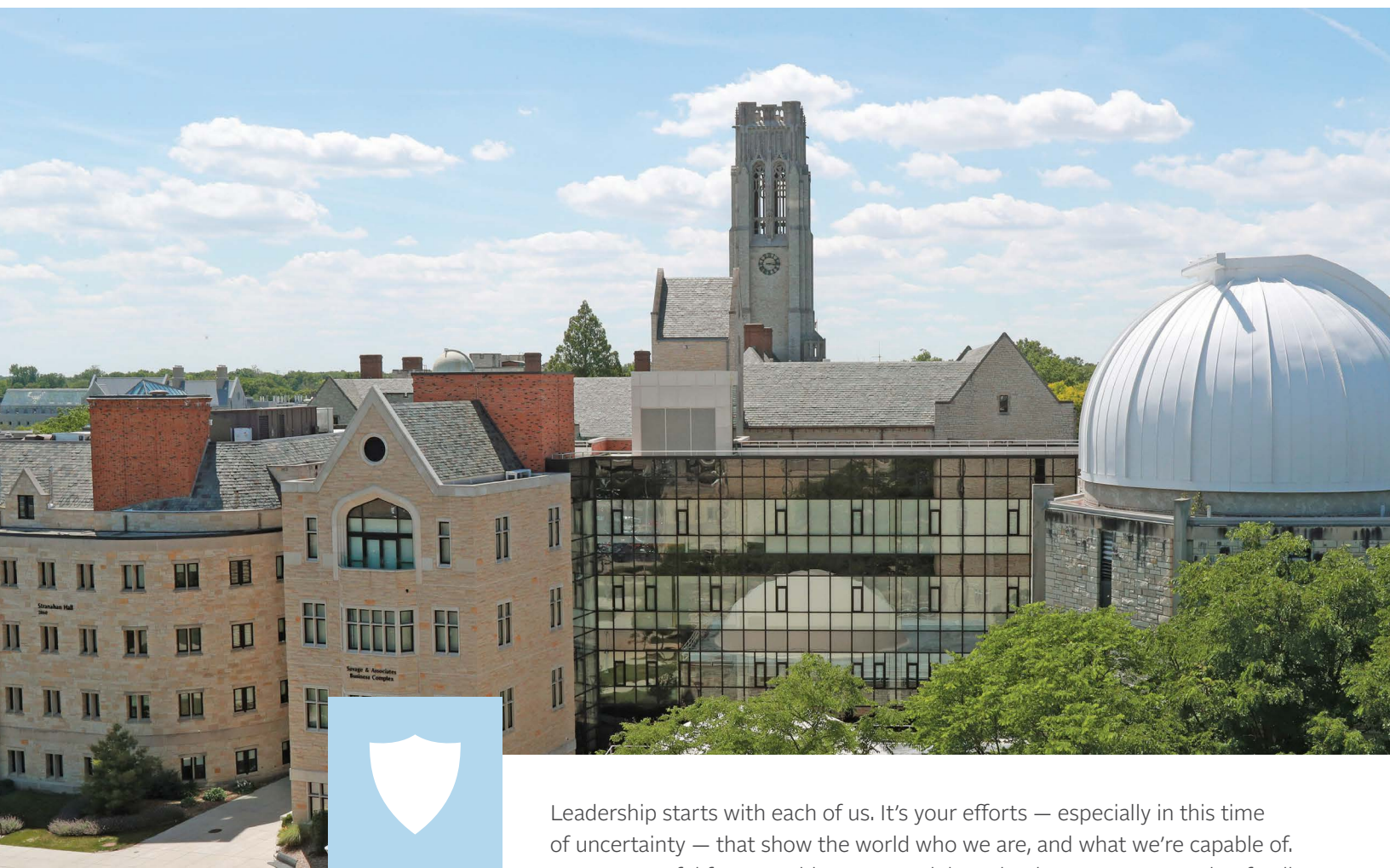
In fact, two of our team members in the hospital's pathology department collaborated to develop the method needed to do this testing. Thank you to molecular specialist Dr. Ji-Youn Yeo and lead technologist Heather Kvale. I'm proud to say Yeo is a UToledo graduate and worked as a post-doc in the College of Medicine and Life Sciences. Additionally, faculty and staff from the College of Medicine and Life Sciences worked to create the needed viral transport media, a key material for testing that is in short supply across the country.



Head football coach Jason Candle recently donated food to Toledo's first responders and our medical students started a local chapter of Masks for Docs to get safety gear to local hospitals. There are so many stories like this, showing exactly the kind of Rocket spirit that has brought us this far, and will propel us into the future.



FUELING **TOMORROWS**



Leadership starts with each of us. It's your efforts — especially in this time of uncertainty — that show the world who we are, and what we're capable of. I am so grateful for everything you are doing. Thanks to you, our Rocket family will get through this coronavirus challenge together.

I can't wait to join you all back on campus – again enjoying our favorite traditions, and creating new ones, as soon as we're able.

Thank you, and Go Rockets!



WE ARE THE UNIVERSITY OF TOLEDO

[CLICK IMAGE TO WATCH THE ENTIRE ADDRESS](#)

