Dr. Flores Remarks
UHD Community Breakfast – Nov. 9
Junior League of Houston

Thank you –
   Ed Gonzalez for introduction
   Elissa Rivas for serving as our emcee
   Elected officials for your support
   Thank you to our students for hosting our guests.

Thanks to all of you for joining us to learn more about UHD’s recent successes and our vision for the future – a future that is intertwined with that of our dynamic city.

I’d like to begin by sharing an inspiring story of three UHD graduates pursuing their Major Opportunity in the field of medicine.

The Lam siblings – Mai, Vien and Blake – grew up with very limited resources, but they didn’t let that stop them. Their father passed away when they were young and their mother worked full-time in the grocery business while raising her children. She set an example of the value of hard work and determination in the face of personal challenges. The Lam siblings chose to attend UHD because it was close to home and offered affordable tuition. They stayed and thrived because of the small class sizes, opportunities for undergraduate research and hands-on involvement of our faculty.

Each of the Lam siblings graduated from UHD and now pursue careers in medicine. Blake credits UHD with providing him the foundation to be competitive at UT Southwestern - one of the nation’s top medical schools. Blake is following in the very successful steps of his older sisters. Mai is a physician assistant in the Emergency Center at Texas Children’s Hospital and Vien is a physician, completing her residency at UT Medical Branch in Galveston.

The Lam siblings credit their success to the “Major Opportunity” they found at UHD.

UHD is the Opportunity University for Houston, America’s Opportunity City! As the second largest public institution in Houston, graduating more students than several local private universities combined, UHD is proud to be both a Hispanic-Serving Institution and a Minority-Serving Institution. We look like Houston; and we are one of the most diverse universities in the country according to U.S. News and World Report.

Today, I want to focus with you on three key areas:
   UHD’s recent successes
   Our immediate plans
   Our vision for UHD in 2020

**RECENT SUCCESSES and ACCOMPLISHMENTS**
UHD’s record-setting enrollment this semester is just under 14,000 students, an 8% increase over last year. Statewide, enrollment in public universities grew by almost 13,000 students. So, one of every 13 new students in Texas’ four-year public universities chose UHD this Fall.

Houston’s metropolitan region covers over 10,000 square miles, so we recognize that we must create opportunities for students to study across a broad region – both online and at distance locations.

Our growth in online degrees is significant. We now offer 14 online degrees. In fact, online and hybrid courses now make up 22 percent of our semester credit hours, and we expect it to continue to grow due to increasing demand for access.

UHD has also expanded its distance education sites. Two years ago we opened UHD Northwest - a campus at Lone Star College–University Center where we now offer 11 face to face degrees. We also provide courses and degree completion opportunities at Lone Star Kingwood, Cy-Fair and Atascocita. We’re in discussions with other local community colleges to expand our distance ed collaborations further.

This flexibility of location and course delivery lowers costs and increases access for UHD students like Lt. Lofton Harrison who is with us today and took advantage of these opportunities to complete his degree. Like 70 percent of our students, Lofton worked while attending classes and finished his degree last year.

Pres. Honor Roll
One of the great accomplishments of UHD in 2012 was recognition received from the Corporation for National and Community Service. UHD was named to the 2012 U.S. President’s Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll with Distinction. We are among only 110 universities in the country – and the only public university in Texas – to receive this honor, which recognizes our students’ and faculty’s commitment to community service. The integration of service learning and volunteer efforts into the curriculum was a unique factor in this recognition and set UHD apart from other applicants.

Recognition
We are proud that various publications and journals have recognized our accomplishments in graduating Hispanic and African-American students.

Hispanic Outlook Magazine ranked UHD 32nd in the country for awarding bachelor’s degrees to Hispanics, and 8th for awarding business, management and marketing degrees to Hispanics.

These are only a few of the significant rankings, I could site others, but this is what you need to know...

UHD has graduated over 34,000 students since its founding in 1974, and we've graduated over 2,000 students annually in each of the last three years. These alumni are now working as teachers, police officers, bankers, accountants, social workers and in many other professions. The contributions and accomplishments of each of these alumni are more significant to their families and our city than any rankings I might cite.

**Affordability**

UHD is consistently sited for its affordability. A recent analysis of UHD students who graduated in six years found that 42 percent paid less than $10,000 out of pocket for tuition and fees. And, 27% graduated with zero out-of-pocket expenses!

Our tuition and fees are among the lowest in Texas - under $6,000 for 30 hours annually. That’s $24,000 for a bachelor’s degree. Quite a personal and economic value when you recognize that each of those graduates increases their lifetime earning potential by one million dollars.

Over 80 percent of UHD students are awarded financial aid, yet much of that is in the form of loans and state or federal aid. The fact is that we simply don’t have adequate scholarship support and this shortage of funds often means that students must take longer to graduate. Scholarship contributions and strategic use of institutional resources are helping us address this need. A recent gift from Taiwanese businessman, Dr. Yung-Fa Chang is providing support from across the globe to fuel our students’ success. Yet the need continues to grow, and as we all know, the future of Pell grant, state and federal aid is tenuous. We pledge to grow our scholarship awards and to work aggressively to support our students with reasonable tuition and access to aid.

**IMMEDIATE PLANS**

Before I outline our strategic plan that takes us through 2020, I want to share with you just two of the initiatives taking shape for the current academic year.

**High-Impact Practices**

Last year, a committee of faculty and staff guided us through a process to identify the high-impact practices UHD provides our students. These include research opportunities with faculty, study-abroad, civic engagement, capstone courses and similar initiatives that allow students an opportunity to pair their classroom learning with “real life” experiences, helping to keep them engaged in earning their degree.

Even our faculty was surprised to learn that our students benefit from over 8,000 high-impact initiatives annually. We plan to continue building these co-curricular opportunities and have committed to provide our students a high-impact experience during each year of their study at UHD.
Just last week, Rep. Sylvester Turner joined me for breakfast with some of our students who are working with nonprofits in the Acres Homes community. One young man made quite an impression on several of us. I wasn’t alone in wondering if he might have a future as a politician or a preacher!

Carlon Johnson and his siblings were raised in Humble by a single mother. Prior to attending UHD, he had never attended school apart from his twin brother. He grew up in a neighborhood where many choices could have taken him off track, but Carlon focused on his goal – a college degree.

When he arrived at UHD, he became part of the African American Male Mentoring program, and through that program he’s been volunteering at Booker T. Washington High School, encouraging young men like him to consider their futures and set their sights on college. Carlon has been so moved by his work at Booker T. – a high-impact, real-life experience – that he is considering how his career choice can help him to support his community. Carlon is evidence that these types of high-impact experiences can transform the lives of our students.

Admission Standards
You may know that beginning in Fall 2013, UHD will implement Admission Standards for first-time-in-college students.

Though the six-year Graduation Rate is based only on first-time, full-time in college students (less than 7 percent of our entering class in 2012) – we are aware that our graduation rate is not where it needs to be.

Our goal with Admission Standards is to provide all students a pathway for success. For some students, that pathway will begin at UHD as freshmen. Other students will be best served by beginning their college career at one of our partner community colleges utilizing our joint admission and articulation agreements and transferring to UHD when they have completed a minimum number of hours. For those students, UHD will offer the “Gator Guarantee” – a guarantee of admission to UHD following completion of community college coursework, with scholarship aid to support their pursuit of a bachelor’s degree. We believe that these admission standards will support the success of our students, and ultimately will improve our retention and graduation rates.

It is important to note that over 80 percent of our total student body is comprised of adult students returning to school, transfer students, and part-time students. We play an important role in providing educational opportunity for these students and serving them will continue to be a priority.

STRATEGIC PLAN 2012-2020
Finally, let me give you a few highlights of our strategic plan for 2020. In the last 12 months, faculty, administrators and students have worked together to create a new comprehensive strategic plan for UHD and to translate that plan into a new mission statement:
“UHD will become a premier city university where all students receive high impact educational experiences and graduate with 21st century skills.”

Now, how will we accomplish that – and what highlights can I share with you in the short time we have left this morning?”

First, we will attract, retain and graduate more students. We are working hard to raise our graduation rates to the midpoint of our state and national peers. By 2020, we expect to enroll 18,000 students and we anticipate that these students will continue to reflect our city’s diversity. Our growth will keep us all busy, and our hallways (and cyber ways) humming with students. But, Houston and Texas need these educated graduates and UHD will be ready to serve.

Secondly, UHD will continue to focus on a balance of theory and reality in our students’ educational experiences. Utilizing High Impact Practices, we will produce well-rounded citizens who have been exposed to international travel, research, service learning and internships as part of their education.

Working closely with industry leaders, we will develop new degree programs to serve our region. In the past several years, we have successfully developed new bachelors programs in Insurance and Risk Management, Social Work, and Masters in Business and Nonprofit Management, collaborating with business leaders to develop relevant curriculum. These degrees are only the beginning, and more programs will be developed to serve our region’s highest needs.

We will expand our community connections with alumni, friends, corporate leaders, local elected officials and legislators. We are grateful to all of you who have joined us today, but we recognize that we must strengthen these relationships and continue to be an engaged and meaningful member of the Houston community.

In the past year, our Major Opportunity branding campaign has helped to fuel public awareness of our university, but we must continue this initiative and build on it. Our Major Opportunity students have hosted you at your tables today and you’ve seen firsthand their enthusiasm. I’m sure they have convinced you of the quality of their UHD education. With greater recognition, we will increase our fundraising, engage our alumni, and strengthen our community relationships in order to accomplish our goals and provide Major Opportunities for all of our students.

Finally, we must develop the tools to support our growing student body, faculty and staff. We will develop campus environments – at our downtown location and our distance education sites and online – to support our students whatever they may choose to learn.

Legislature
In keeping with our strategic plan, we have made two special item requests of the Texas Legislative Budget Board.
First, a new Science and Technology Building. UHD is nationally ranked in graduating Hispanic and African American students in technology, engineering and related fields. But many of these students leave because our laboratories and facilities are inadequate. I know that when you hear from A'Tondra Gilstrap, one of our Scholars Academy Students, in a few moments you’ll know exactly why she and other STEM students deserve expanded facilities. Our students and faculty need it and the local economy demands it!

Secondly, we have requested funds to expand our Student Success Initiatives. These funds are vital as we enhance our advising, mentoring, counseling and student scholarship funding.

**ECONOMIC OUTLOOK/CLOSING**

We are proud that this Fall UHD is contributing positively to Texas’ “Closing the Gaps” goals in terms of student participation and success. But, the challenge is a large one for Texas and for UHD. We must remain focused while we grow our university in quality of education and quantity of students.

Together, we can build a stronger university – focused on student success and founded in the diversity that reflects our city.

Many years ago, John Darvey said that “Public Universities are public not only because they receive public funds, but most importantly because they serve the public good and produce the next generation citizens and leaders.”

With your support, we will serve the public good, produce the next generation of citizens and leaders, and provide a Major Opportunity for students and for Houston.

Thank you for joining us today and thank you for your support of UHD—