

**Remarks of Chancellor James B. Milliken
Investiture of President Sandra Woodley
UT Permian Basin
November 5, 2018**

Introduction

Good afternoon everyone.

I'm pleased to be with you on this special day, as we observe the important, historic tradition of installing a new university president.

My wife's family is from West Texas, and I've visited many times. But this is my first visit to the Permian Basin and the University of Texas institution here. Of course, like most Americans, I have become increasingly familiar with this part of the world.

It has long loomed large in the imagination of people around the country and the world...as a place for people with big dreams, and the courage to chase them....

a place of determination, pride, optimism, and a willingness – an eagerness, in fact – to play for the highest stakes.

This land is also, of course, home to one of the great universities in Texas.

It may be the smallest of the UT schools, but I can attest that the University of Texas Permian Basin is a source of pride for the entire system and our state.

Recognized for its excellence by, among others, Newsweek and U.S. News and World Report, it has consistently ranked among the top universities in Texas at placing graduates in their careers of their choice.

Thanks to UTPB, ambitious young scholars can get a world-class – and affordable – education and continue to chase their dreams right here in West Texas.

The Permian Basin

It's no exaggeration to say the eyes of the world are now on the Permian Basin.

If it stays on its current growth trajectory, this region will – on its own – rank as the fourth largest oil producing country in the world by 2025 ...

lifting the United States to true energy independence, and changing the game of geopolitics in ways we haven't yet imagined.

But even before the growth we see on the horizon, this region – home to just 4% of Texans – already makes an outsized contribution to our state, and importantly, to the education of our people.

Last year alone, oil and gas exploration in the Permian Basin contributed more than \$1.7 billion in funding for elementary, secondary and higher education in Texas. What happens here is helping educate millions of young people, from every corner of this state.

The University of Texas System, in its current form, simply would not exist without the hundreds of millions of dollars we receive each year from the Permanent University Fund made possible by the oil and gas extracted from West Texas land set aside in the state constitution.

So thank you!

You can rest assured, this region – its people, and certainly this great university – are never far from our thoughts.

And I couldn't be happier that in Sandy Woodley, UTPB has a president who is deeply qualified, smart, committed, and charismatic.

She is a woman with all the qualities you hope for in a leader, of any university.

But more important, to my mind, she has the qualities that make her the right leader, at the right time, for UT Permian Basin.

Sandy Woodley

Sandy and I have a few things in common.

We are both new in our jobs.

We both took long, winding roads – with plenty of stops along the way – to get to the jobs we had been preparing for all along.

We are both in love with the transformative power of public higher education. We chose a life's work of bringing talent and opportunity together, because we know that despite the challenges, of which there are many, there is no more important work we could be doing.

For us, public higher education is a calling – and I can tell you that for many years, few people anywhere have pursued that calling as skillfully or effectively as Sandy.

She honed her expertise in finance and strategic planning while helping lead higher education systems in Alabama, Kentucky, and Arizona. For three years, she shared what she learned with the UT System, as our vice chancellor for strategic initiatives. And most recently, she was chief executive of the University of Louisiana System, one of the biggest higher education systems in the country.

Her resume is way impressive. But credentials alone don't make her the perfect fit for UTPB. It's the personal journey she took in earning those credentials.

Sandy did not ascend to the highest ranks of academia in what we used to think of as the traditional path. Like so many students, then and now, her higher education journey began in community college. Like so many students, then and now, she had to juggle school and work.

And ten years went by. Not four, but ten – with two beautiful babies born along the way – before she became the first person in her family to earn a university degree.

Sandy faced and overcame many of the same obstacles confronting the aspiring scholars of this region. She identifies with, and understands those obstacles – and takes personally their removal in a way that few presidents can.

She has a passion to make sure every student, whatever their circumstances, has an opportunity to learn, thrive, and earn a degree.

And she knows that outcome is important, not just for individual students, whose livelihoods in the global, knowledge economy depend, increasingly, on education beyond high school.

It's important for everybody in the Permian Basin, whether they realize it yet or not.

More college graduates means a bigger, stronger, healthier workforce for a region that's already facing a shortage of qualified workers. It means more taxes paid, fewer social services consumed, longer and healthier lives, more civic involvement and more giving to noble causes.

No wonder Sandy's excited. Her passion is contagious, and it helps explain why she's off to a terrific start.

UT System Support

As Chancellor, I can tell you I'm excited about her vision, and the strategic thinking she is going to lay out for you in just a few moments.

And though I'm too new to take credit for it, I'm also proud of the support the UT System provided, to help Sandy hit the ground running.

The Board of Regents provided financing that gave her the wherewithal to build the team she needed around her. They also allocated the tens of millions of dollars necessary to build the D. Kirk Edwards Family Human Performance Center kinesiology building, which should be up and running in 2020.

I know Sandy is appreciative of the assistance she and UTPB received from her colleagues at the UT System – in everything from human resources, to information technology, fund raising, business processes, all the nitty-gritty that goes into operating a university.

Sandy, you know you can count on our continuing, and unwavering support.

Conclusion

But I know you're going to need more than that.

The greatness of any university is sustained and enhanced by the community that supports and cares for it.

It is great to see so many community members here this afternoon. Part of why I'm here is to tell you that in Sandy Woodley, you have a tireless champion. My fervent hope is that you will be her champion as well. Because she deserves nothing less.

In leading this university, Sandy has taken on a big job, one she can't do alone.

Fortunately, she doesn't have to. One of her greatest strengths is her wonderful family – which is very well represented here today!

Honoring us with their presence in the front row are, in order of seniority, Sandy's father, Jack. Her husband, Stan. Their three children, Leah, Johnathan, and Rebecca. And we even have two grandchildren with us, Caleb and Kendall.

If Sandy's entire family would please rise, we would like to recognize and thank you for all the love and support you provide President Woodley.

Let me just conclude by thanking everyone here, and everyone throughout the Permian Basin, for your continued support.

I am convinced that Sandy Woodley is the right President at the right time to take this university to new heights.

And I know she is going to continue to earn your admiration and support for many years to come.

I look forward to cheering her on and supporting her every step of the way – and I know you do too.

Thank you very much.