UH SYSTEM ACHIEVEMENTS

- 6,634 students are graduating from the four UH System universities this spring:
  --UH 2,371 bachelor’s, 954 master’s, 108 doctoral, 452 professional, **3,885 total**
  --UHCL 556 bachelor’s, 540 master’s, 5 doctoral, **1,101 total**
  --UHD 1,140 bachelor’s, 15 master’s, **1,155 total**
  --UHV 288 bachelor’s, 205 master’s, **493 total**

I am grateful to our Regents for participating in all the commencement ceremonies and bringing greetings on behalf of the Board and of all UH System students, faculty, and staff to our graduating students and the literally tens of thousands of parents, family members, and friends who proudly watched their students “walk”.

- Heartfelt thanks to our Regents who have made many trips to Austin during the session to make our case for funding, even as the state faces dramatic revenue shortfalls. Most of the legislative work is still in flux, but I would like to report very briefly on three items of interest:

  --Both the House and the Senate have passed their version of the Appropriations Bill. The House version cuts funding to the UH System by $97 million (19%) for the FY2012–2013 biennium, while the Senate version cuts $80.9 million (16%). A conference committee will try to come up with a version that is acceptable to both the House and the Senate.

  --There are several options being considered for the disbursement of NRUFR (National Research University Fund) monies, with variables such as amount of money to be disbursed among one, two, or three qualifying universities. There now seems to be general agreement that 4.5% of the net market value of the fund would be allocated for disbursement, and that this should be distributed to qualifying universities on an equal-share basis. The remaining issue to be decided concerns the formula for this distribution. Final agreement is anticipated very soon.

  --Another topic being debated is of great importance to our students. A few weeks ago we received the bad news that the Texas Grants program was being drastically cut. We now know that the House has included funding for Texas Grants at $365.7 million in its version of the Appropriations Bill. This funding covers renewals, but not new enrollees. The Senate version of the Appropriations Bill includes funding of $559.5 million – $193.8 million over the renewal amount – to bring funding to 90% of the FY2010-2011 biennium amounts.
We will continue our visits to Austin and our efforts to preserve as much funding as possible for our universities and our students.

- Two UH System universities – UH-Clear Lake and UH-Downtown – have been named to the 2010 President’s Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll for exemplary, innovative, and effective community service programs. The Honor Roll is a program of the Corporation for National and Community Service, and is supported by the U.S. Departments of Education and Housing and Urban Development, Campus Compact, the American Council on Education, and other higher education associations.

**UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON ACHIEVEMENTS**

- Four general commencement ceremonies and four professional college ceremonies marked the University of Houston’s 77th commencement last weekend.

Honorary degrees were awarded to:

--- **Mr. Walter Kase**, a Holocaust survivor, for his work on behalf of world peace and tolerance and for the many lectures he has delivered to Graduate College of Social Work students.

--- **Dr. Herman Suit**, UH alumnus and former chief of radiation oncology at Massachusetts General Hospital, for his pioneer work in medicine and his support for the College of Naturals Sciences and Mathematics.

--- **Mr. Kenneth Parr**, former of engineering student, for his work with NASA, including the fabrication of the lunar rover, spacesuits, and the design and fabrication of the flagpole for the U.S. flag left on the Moon’s surface by the Apollo 11 crew.

Presidents Medallions were awarded to:

--- **Dr. Richard Wainerdi** for his leadership of the Texas Medical Center and his advocacy to include UH as a member institution of the TMC.

--- **Dr. Bernard Harris**, double UH alumnus and former astronaut, for his work with NASA, his philanthropy, and his support for UH and the College of Technology.

--- **Mr. Ronald Harrell**, petroleum engineering professional, generous donor, and founding member of the Cullen College of Engineering Petroleum Engineering Advisory Board.
UH’s youngest and oldest students, both graduating from the Cullen College of Engineering, were recognized.

--Mr. David Levy received a dual degree in mathematics and mechanical engineering, and he is only 16 years old!

--Mr. George Hall, a UH alumnus who drives a bright red SUV with plates that read “Sr Coog,” received a master’s of industrial engineering degree at age 86!

Student success was not limited to the graduation stages at Hofheinz Pavilion, Cullen Performance Hall, and other campus locations. Various UH students and groups have won national acclaim at various competitions recently:

--Nicholas Eastham, junior chemistry major, and Thomas Markovich, junior physics and mathematics double major, have been named Barry M. Goldwater Scholars for the 2011-2012 academic year. Mason Biamonte, a sophomore physics and mathematics double major, and Abdulrahman Ibrahim, a junior chemistry major, received honorable mentions. One of the most prestigious awards available to undergraduate students, the Goldwater Scholarship provides funding to sophomore and junior students majoring in mathematics, the natural sciences or engineering who plan to pursue a career in research.

--UH student teams swept top honors in computer game designing at the U.S. finals of the 2011 Microsoft Imagine Cup competition. With the annual contest drawing more than 74,000 of the nation’s brightest technology students to Microsoft’s headquarters, UH made quite an impact with three of its four finalists winning in game design. The winning teams were mentored by game developing instructor Jose Baez and by research assistant professor Chang Yun.

-- Two years ago, the Moores School of Music Concert Chorale took top honors in the chamber choir division at Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod in Wales. That performance left a lasting impression on the festival’s audience and helped enhance the group’s international reputation. In two weeks, the group will return to Europe to participate in France’s prestigious vocal competition Florilège Vocal de Tours. Under the direction of Betsy Cook Weber, the chorale is among nine international choirs selected for this exclusive festival. The chorale will be the sole U.S. representation at the event.

The Center for Measuring University Performance has listed the University of Houston among the “Top 50 Research Universities” in America in its latest report, released by TARU (Top American Research Universities). This is the third recognition for UH as a nationally competitive research university in the past five months.
**UH-CLEAR LAKE ACHIEVEMENTS**

- “StateUniversity.com” recognized UHCL for the second year in a row as one of the top 25 safest public universities in the nation. UHCL ranked as the fourth safest bachelor degree-granting university in the nation and the safest bachelor degree-granting university in Texas.

- “Hospital Turnaround Practice in the United States: Value and Role of Consultants,” an article authored by UHCL graduate student Amrita Shenoy, Distinguished Alumnus and adjunct lecturer Raymond Khoury, and Professor and Director of Healthcare Administration Ashish Chandra, was selected for the McGraw Hill/Irwin Distinguished Paper Award.

- Alumna Stephanie Weaver (’69) was one of three finalists nominated from Texas for the Presidential Award of Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching. This is the highest honor that a kindergarten through 12th grade mathematics or science teacher can receive.

**UH-DOWNTOWN ACHIEVEMENTS**

- The College of Business has won a four-year grant totaling $545,100 from the U.S. Department of Education for a new program to increase the number of minority and Hispanic students completing a Master of Business Administration degree. The university’s MBA program was launched recently.

- Brian R. Chapman has started his duties as senior vice president and provost.

- Carol Tucker, director of Institutional Research, has been named vice president of the Texas Association for Institutional Research. She will spend one year as vice president before a one-year term as president of the organization.

- Damaris Cortez, a senior majoring in social work, has been named 2011 Social Work Student of the Year by the Houston Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers. She is a member of the first cohort of students in UHD’s new Bachelor of Social Work program.

**UH-VICTORIA ACHIEVEMENTS**

- An all-online Master of Education in Adult and Higher Education will be offered beginning in the fall through the School of Education & Human Development.

- Two former UHV presidents visited the university as part of the “Celebrating the Legacy of UHV” events. Karen Haynes, who served as president from 1997 to 2004, visited in February, while Glenn Goerke visited in March. Goerke was UHV’s president from 1986 to 1991 and also served as president of UH-Clear Lake, president of UH, and interim chancellor of the UH System. He holds the titles of president emeritus at UH, UH-Clear Lake, and UHV.
The Jaguar Pledge is being extended for a second year to make higher education more affordable for new Texas freshmen coming to UHV from outside the Victoria region. The financial aid opportunity will cover at least 33 percent of the cost of tuition and fees for these students during both their freshman and sophomore years. The Jaguar Pledge is being extended for current freshmen who will be second-year students in the fall.

Staff members in UHV’s Letting Education Achieve Dreams (LEAD) program have created a scholarship endowment to benefit first-generation college students. The endowment has been funded with the proceeds of two softball tournaments that raised more than $10,000.