

Teachers College State of the College Address
President Tom Bailey
November 15, 2023

It's great to see you and be with you all in community—today and everyday. A strong community of our people—staff, faculty, and students—is what builds up the fabric and culture of our College. It's what helps us to achieve our mission and contribute to the long legacy of TC on which we all stand. And today, we're here to honor that community.

I want to start my remarks with an acknowledgment of the war in Israel and Gaza, a source of intense grief and emotion, ever-present over the last six weeks. Our hearts go out to all of the innocent Palestinians, Israelis, and indeed many others who will be killed, injured, and devastated by this conflict—and of course to those of you who are both directly and indirectly affected by this war.

I know the pain and fear we all feel as this rages on.

Let me say here that Teachers College unequivocally rejects all forms of antisemitism and Islamophobia—hate crimes of any groups—even as we are aware that they are on the rise for Israelis, Palestinians, Jews and Muslims.

We can't control what happens in the world, but we can continue to make sure that our own campus is safe, welcoming, inclusive and collaborative—even when we disagree. This is our priority. This is how we live our values.

To provide support for our community, we have assembled a crisis response team in constant touch here, as well as with Columbia and Barnard.

We are providing a variety of university resources in case you experience or observe any incidents of bias or doxxing. These resources are accessible in several different places on our website, including our HR and Student Affairs pages.

What's been a source of pride and comfort to me personally is the compassion and care I've seen you show one another on our campus. And I want to thank you all for that.

Now, it is very hard to transition back to business after starting with something as wrenching as this. I know many of you find it hard to focus. I do, too. And so I want to acknowledge that fact.

Again, what's important to me is that we are a community, so that's where I want to focus today: who we are.

I have been at TC for more than 30 years and like many of you, this feels like home. It **is** home. I live here, with many students and faculty.

And that sense of community comes when so many staff and faculty (and frankly, some of our students) remain, often for decades. In fact, 244 full-time staff, not including faculty, have been with the College for more than 10 years. Eighty of you have been here for more than 20 years.

This is an amazing testament to Teachers College itself.

And that's not to give short shrift to newer staff who joined us more recently. In fact, in the year since our last State of the College address, 98 full-time staff have joined TC. We've also had a record 22 new faculty, lecturers and professors of practice join us this semester.

That says quite a lot about TC as well—you chose to come here, and you all bring new vitality and strengths to our strong institution. In fact, this past April, TC tied for the #1 Best Graduate School of Education in U.S. News & World Report rankings. That is something to celebrate.

I want to take note of two leadership changes over the last year: Of course you know our new Provost, KerryAnn O'Meara, who joined us in July. And I want to also acknowledge Tamara Britt, who has been serving double duty as our General Counsel and overseeing the Institutional Advancement team since July. We've now launched the search for a new VP of our Institutional Advancement team and hope to have the position filled by the spring.

I want to turn now to some updates on our Five Strategic Priorities. These are priorities I first envisioned when I became president in 2018. They are about building on TC's exceptional foundation and history and continuing the work to chart our future course. They are about designing instruction, research, and practice that places us at the forefront of the fields of education, health, and psychology. They are about fostering and supporting a diverse and inclusive community for all of us. And they are about strengthening our research and securing our place at the vanguard of developing technologies. They draw on all parts of the College, with every Cabinet member leading the way.

I will report on just some of our accomplishments within these priorities. For a more complete picture of our progress, we've updated our website and we'll send around a link in a follow-up email.

The first priority is Building the Optimal Academic Organization—creating a strong foundation for an enriched faculty and student experience that ensures program excellence and public impact.

A foundational effort here was to clarify our common purpose. This culminated in June when the Board approved a new mission statement.

It is: To empower committed learners and leaders to build a smarter, healthier, more just and equitable world through multidisciplinary knowledge creation, policy engagement, and practice innovations across education, psychology, and health.

As you know, we have been rolling out this new mission and a refreshed brand identity that will play a key role in how we collectively tell our story and extend our impact.

I'm grateful to our entire community for participating in that effort.

We also reduced the credit requirements for Ed.D's, from 90 to 75. This aligns with peer institutions, keeps TC competitive, and also saves our students money.

And we've begun developing five new online programs in our efforts to be more accessible, align with the needs of working professionals, meet market demands, and reflect digital innovation.

Our second priority is to Institutionalize Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Here, our goal is to develop and cultivate a diverse community where everyone is supported as they meet their potential and also help us to lead the fight against systemic racism and advance social justice.

We have now published our 2nd annual DEI report, which you can find on our website, with a specific focus on inclusion. This report describes how we have strengthened the experience for TC's Lecturers; launched our Accessibility First campaign, engaged staff voices in our hybrid and flexible work policies and Faculty voices through our climate survey; and built out inclusive programs to meet the needs of our diverse and world-wide community of alumni.

We also reflect on our 2023 diversity data, which is beginning to show the impact of our refined hiring practices. I'd like to add that, as of this fall, our 22 new Faculty and Lecturers are 60% people of color.

And finally, of course our commitment to DEI includes our response to the June 2023 Supreme Court ruling on affirmative action in college admissions. As you all know, that decision rolled back decades of legal and societal progress and best practices that aimed to correct systemic injustices while ensuring equity in the admissions process.

We are bound by law to conform to the Court's decision. But we are equally bound by our mission and values of an equitable and just society.

You received an email a few weeks ago with an update on our Affirmative Action Working Group, which has broad representation from across the College focused on our compliance. We will continue to update you as we make changes to comply with the law, even as we also seek to reaffirm our core values.

Our 3rd priority is Improving Student Pathways. I couldn't be prouder of our success here. In July, we launched our new Division of Enrollment and Student Success, which brought together student affairs and enrollment management. This centralizes operations and gives full view and focus on the entire student journey in support of their success.

We're working to improve and increase our financial aid program. One example is our Teachers' Future Award, which provided financial support for those enrolled in teacher certification programs. This was launched as a pilot model to address the nationwide teacher shortage. And it's working. Our current teacher certification programs collectively saw a 27% spike in domestic enrollment as a result of this pilot.

Our fourth priority is to increase our research funding for the College. Here, we wanted to offer more opportunities and financial support for our students, and boost the impact of our faculty research on policy and practice. We have significantly strengthened and streamlined our research support and increased our funding from sources including the NIH, NSF, Spencer Foundation, and more.

Finally, our fifth priority is to develop TC's leadership role in Digital Innovation. Our goal here is to situate the College at the forefront of pedagogic innovation in technology. We want our faculty to be positioned as visionaries in this space. Over the last year, through our Digital Futures Institute, we increased access to Artificial Intelligence tools for faculty and K-12 teachers. We launched a new video series featuring our own faculty

and students on how they're successfully using these tools in their courses, research, and more.

So that's an update on just a few of our accomplishments within our five priorities. Let me take a moment now to thank all of our staff and faculty who have moved this agenda forward, from every part of the College.

We've gotten a lot done.

Of course, it goes without saying that we need students for all these efforts to be meaningful. And this fall, we welcomed more than 1,600 new students, and almost 4,500 students overall from 47 states plus Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia across the US and more than 70 countries.

Our enrollment projections for the full year look good.

And we are increasingly more diverse, with sizable increases over the last decade in the percentage of domestic students identifying as Asian, Hispanic/Latinx and Black, particularly at the Masters level.

I want to share 2 updates about our philanthropy.

In the fall of 2021, our Board of Trustees launched the *Trustees Scholars of Tomorrow* as a fundraising initiative to help TC become more financially accessible to all. I'm proud to say we completed this effort in 2023, surpassing our \$10 million goal.

And many of you know *Dr. Lambros Comitas*, who passed away in March 2020. In his memory, we are establishing the Lambros Comitas Chair in Applied Anthropology. This was made possible through a bequest of more than \$3 million by Prof. Comitas—a gift that is among the largest for a professorship in TC history. He had a transformational impact on Teachers College and this gift helps to carry on his important legacy.

And finally, I want to make note of some recent alumni events. Last month we had our first in-person alumni weekend in 3 years. About 250 alumni came to the campus for TC (Re)Unites, a fantastic weekend that included faculty presentations, games, and dance. We had another 700 online viewers for programming offered throughout the week.

And Tamara Britt and I are just back from Asia, where we met with very enthusiastic alumni in Seoul, Tokyo, and Hong Kong. Their experiences at TC are quite positive and the College is a continued source of pride for them. And they are a continued source of pride for us. It was wonderful to talk with them.

Now, I have been thinking a lot as I have begun my 2nd term as president about what's ahead for the College—and how significantly the landscape has changed over the last 5 years.

We have a new appreciation for remote work and new ways of teaching.

We are facing the reality of mental health issues affecting our students and community, the racial reckoning that began with the murder of George Floyd in 2020, the recent affirmative action decision, controversies even about teaching history and library books.

There's the alarming state of global warming, and the implications of changes in immigration and federal financial aid policies. And as noted, the situation in Israel and Gaza, plus the ongoing war in Ukraine: the world feels unstable.

But there are also opportunities.

There's the great potential of using new technologies in our classrooms, even as an intervention to address rising rates of depression.

We also have new ways to enter the discourse on the teaching of history and how schools might be reimagined. There are new approaches to conflict resolution, addressing gun violence, and literacy.

In this greater context, I have been focused on two broad questions:

First, what more can we do to strengthen our ability to address these global challenges, through our teaching, research, and partnerships with practitioners.

And second, what do we do as an institution to make sure that we can thrive in these changing times?

We have to prepare TC for a future that will continue to evolve.

And so, I am moving forward this year with three key initiatives:

First, TC's public good initiative: Last year, after discussions in faculty and other meetings, we chose several substantive areas of focus, with a particular emphasis on impact. We have four themes, all led by members of our faculty:

- Teacher education including a special emphasis on literacy
- Mental health and wellness

- Sustainability and climate change
- Digital innovations with particular emphasis on the implications of AI.

TC is already doing a great deal in these areas. Our first task is to publicize, both internally and externally, the progress and contributions that we are already making.

Our team is writing briefing papers on each of these thematic areas and we are developing several initiatives to promote and raise visibility of our work. We hope this will spur additional thinking and engage partners.

So stay tuned for that.

The second initiative involves our continued work toward Building the Optimal Academic Organization.

We are conducting a year-long analysis of our academic programs to determine our best design for the future. We have begun planning with Department Chairs and faculty, reviewing the content, size, and direction of their programs including course and program modality. We are taking into account our enrollments, market demand, trends in financial aid, faculty and academic staffing and other factors. Our goal here is to increase enrollment, and of course maintain and increase program excellence.

The third initiative is our series of community-wide dialogues in which some of you have already participated. This is led by Provost O'Meara. This initiative will define our commitments to our students, to our fields, to our schools and communities, and to each other in the context of our mission. The other initiatives I've mentioned are about what we do. This is about who we are, and how we live our mission and values.

So: five priorities that we will continue to work on and 3 initiatives this year that will set us up for impact beyond our campus. All these efforts work together, as all of you work together. It is an ambitious agenda that will help set up Teachers College for the next ten years and beyond.

This is what we need to do.

Why now? First of all, we are needed. These are the very societal issues we are prepared to address. Our history has led us here. Our future demands our collective response.

Second, we are operating from a position of strength. We have the strongest and most effective cabinet since I have been president. We also have a broad range of faculty, staff, and students, who bring a variety of complementary and outstanding skills.

Across the College, from staff to faculty to our trustees, I am confident we have the team to do this work—and do it well.

So I will end here as I started, with a focus on our community. The horizons ahead of us are expansive. The ground below us is constantly shifting. It will take each of us working together to determine who we are in this moment, and who we want to be.

What will be our contributions to the continued legacy of Teachers College, for future generations.

I ask you to join me in meeting this moment. I ask you to join me in building our future.

I'm excited to move forward with all of you.

Thank you.