

Good morning everyone! It's great to see you all back on campus and ready to start a new academic year!! I am incredibly honored and glad to be here starting this next chapter with all of you. The energy and excitement here remind me of what makes Lamar University such a special place.

Before we dive into what's ahead this year, I want to take a moment to talk about something that's been a priority for us--and that is making sure your hard work is reflected in your compensation. I'm very pleased to announce that this year, we're adding another 3% raise to keep the momentum going.

Over the past three years, we've made real progress on this front.

- This is the third 3% raise since I have been here, bringing the total to approximately \$7.5M per year in base salary increases.
- In addition to these raises, over the past two years we've committed about \$2.75 million annually to address Faculty and Instructor salary inversion and compression, as well as Staff market equity.
- And when you factor in benefits, Lamar University has committed a total of \$12M in additional funding to our annual budget in salary adjustments.

These cumulative increases underscore how much we value what you do. However, these raises would not have been possible were it not for the work all of you have done to boost enrollment, improve student success, and make our operations more efficient. We've also had incredible support from the Texas State University System and the Speaker of the House Dade Phelan; without that support, these changes would not have been possible.

So how do we keep this progress going?

Well, first, let me just share a quick story about a university that might remind you of our own. This university had brilliant faculty, dedicated staff, and talented students, all working hard to achieve their respective goals. But despite all that effort, they really struggled to move the needle on student success and community impact. Year after year, their results didn't quite match the level of talent and dedication within their community--not because they didn't care, but **because they were each focused on working their own piece of the puzzle**. The issue wasn't a lack of effort or intelligence. The problem was isolation. Departments worked hard, but they often worked independently. Initiatives were launched, but they lacked coordination.

This story might hit close to home because it's a challenge that many institutions face--including, at times, our own. But here's the key takeaway: If we want to achieve more than just incremental progress, we have to embrace the power of teamwork--not just in theory, **but in practice**.

I know I've talked about teamwork pretty much non-stop since I arrived at Lamar University, and there's a very good reason for that. In academia, we tend to focus too much on individual achievement. After all, at the end of every term, we conclude the business of educating students by awarding individual grades and individual credentials and degrees. So for us, it's not much of a leap to think that what happens in one department doesn't affect another. But the truth is, our successes and failures are all connected. The efforts of our admissions team directly impact our faculty, who then shape the experiences of our students, which in turn influence our alumni relations, and so on. Each of us plays a role in the larger ecosystem of the university, and our collective impact is far greater than the sum of our individual efforts.

But let's be honest: teamwork is hard. It's why our students hate it so much when we ask them to work in groups. [SMILE] It means listening as much as we talk, being open to ideas that challenge our own, and finding common ground even when it's easier to stand apart. Most importantly, it requires us to step outside our comfort zones, engage with colleagues across units and departments, and see ourselves not just as specialists in our fields, but as co-creators of something much bigger.

Real progress—transformational progress—rarely happens in a straight line. It happens when we step outside our silos, embrace the messiness of collaboration, and trust that the process will lead to results far beyond what we could achieve alone.
Teamwork is a force multiplier!

At Lamar University, we've already seen what's possible when we align our efforts . . . whether it's **Excellence** in research and discovery, our recent **Successes** in major fundraising, a strong **Community** that has been energized by a transformed athletics program, or the **Value** expressed in initiatives that have improved student retention.

And so, as we move forward TOGETHER, our next chapter is about telling our story to the world. Over the past ten months, our marketing team has been working on a new brand campaign that presents who we are and where we're headed. It's called "See for Yourself," and it's more than just a campaign. It's an invitation to experience the Excellence, Opportunity, Community, and Value that Lamar University offers.

But how do we bring these ideals to life? How do we demonstrate that Lamar University is a place <--is this too much, too repetitive?

- where **excellence** isn't just expected, but cultivated;
- where **success** isn't just celebrated, but shared;
- where **engagement** isn't just encouraged, but embraced;
- and where **effectiveness** isn't just about doing things right, but doing the right things?

This is where the new campaign comes in. The focus is on shining a light on the incredible things happening here so the world can see the opportunities we create every day. Teamwork is what multiplies our efforts, turns our vision into reality, and makes "See for Yourself" a campaign promise we can proudly stand behind.

This campaign is also a call to action. How we show **Excellence**, cultivate **Success**, foster **Engagement**, and prove our **Effectiveness** isn't just for the world to see; it's for each of us to live and demonstrate every day.

As we launch this campaign in the coming weeks, we'll be asking each of you to take part in this challenge. There will be fun giveaways and activities, but more importantly, this is your chance to be part of something bigger than any one of us—a collective effort to show the world what Lamar University truly stands for.

And now, let's take a look at a video preview of this campaign.

[SHOW VIDEO]

As we look to the future with optimism and determination, it's crucial to remember that our progress is driven by the tangible support we provide to one another. At the heart of this collaboration is the belief that everyone's work truly matters. The dedication you bring to your roles doesn't just fulfill responsibilities—it shapes the lives of our students and strengthens our community. Helping others and achieving our goals together are key drivers of happiness and fulfillment.

We know we can do a better job of helping everyone see the profound impact their work has on our students' lives. We also want to do a better job of celebrating the work you do and making sure you feel connected to the larger mission of Lamar University.

To that end, Human Resources and Marketing will be launching an "internal pride" campaign across campus. This initiative will recognize and celebrate the hard work happening every day at Lamar, spotlighting the contributions that make our university a place of real opportunity and growth.

As we launch our "See for Yourself" campaign, remember that it's not just a message for the outside world—it's a reflection of the excellence, success, engagement, and effectiveness that we live and breathe here at Lamar.

Thank you for being such an important part of this journey and for your unwavering dedication to our students and community. Our students will remember and appreciate what you've done for them for the rest of their lives!

We have some special items for all faculty and staff located in the Cardinal Club room.
Please stop by on your way out to pick them up.

Thank you.