**HFNT #13: State of the University**

**Episode Transcript**

[INTRO MUSIC]

Scott: Happy Friday, North Texas. I'm Scott.

Alicia: And I'm Alicia.

Scott: And today is Friday, November 22nd.

Alicia: For today's show, we'll have an interview about the UNT care team, a mental health resource for students, faculty and staff. And then, we'll have an extended segment featuring U.S. President Harrison Keller's first state of the university address from last week's investiture ceremony.

Scott: Can't wait to hear about President Keller's vision for the future of UNT. But you know what we need to do first, Alexia?

Alicia: We have to catch up. Hey there, Scotty.

Scott: Hey, Alicia. What's new?

Alicia: Well, the holiday season is upon us, so I'm just getting pumped for all the festive activities and traditions that come with it. I'm thrilled to ‘tis the season, and I can't wait to spend some extended time with the parental units, eat some delicious food, and watch a bunch of cheesy holiday cinema. I'm going to try to soak up every single minute because it always goes by so fast.

Scott: I know we've got fall break next week, then we're back for the first week of December and then it's finals week. I can't believe the semester's almost over.

Alicia: It truly does go by so fast and, you know, coming out of the election and then going into finals and then the holidays, it can be a really stressful time for everybody. That makes it the perfect time to think about taking care of your mental health.

Scott: That's right. And that's why I spoke to Associate Dean of Students Kaycey Sebeniecher from UNT’s Care Team. The care team is a collaborative interdisciplinary committee of university officials that helps connect UNT students, faculty and staff with mental health resources. We talked about how the care team helps community members and tips for handling stress this time of year.

[TRANSITION MUSIC]

Scott: All right. So, Casey, thank you so much for joining us for the podcast. First question I wanted to ask was just kind of get a broad overview of what the Care Team is and as a resource for students and faculty and staff.

Kacey: Yes. No, thank you for having me. I'm happy to give you an explanation of the Care Team. So essentially, the Care Team assesses students who may be a danger to themselves or others or they're exhibiting concerning behavior either in the classroom or at work if they work on campus. Also, families and other students can refer students who they just may have concerns for and so the Care Team is meant to provide intervention and assess a student based on, like, what is happening, but also assess what resources could be helpful to them. So, we connect students to resources when we meet with them, and also give faculty, staff and students guidance on how to handle a situation that they may be unsure of, or let them know if, if there are more concerns, please let us know. So, it really does help connect students who need resources to those resources. So that's kind of kind of how the Care Team functions.

Scott: Nice. I know your associate dean of students, but what's your role as it as it relates to the Care Team?

Kacey: Yeah. Good question. So, I oversee intervention services, which includes the Care Team. It also includes our Seeking Options and Solutions Team, which is, also provides intervention and resources to students who may have like lower-risk or low-level concerns. It could be financial, housing insecurity, low-level mental health concerns that, that really with preventative care could prevent something from becoming a care issue or a more severe issue. We also oversee the Withdrawal Intervention Team, so we assist students who need to withdraw from the semester for various reasons. And I also oversee the Survivor Advocate. And then, so that's all intervention services. And then, I also oversee the RISE Center, which is our substance-use education department, as well as our Collegiate Recovery Program.

Scott: Sounds like you're very busy.

Kacey: Yes, it does.

Scott: Yeah. And that was a lot of student services. The Care Team, is it a separate care team for faculty and staff or is it all one team? One unit?

Kacey: So, if there is a faculty or staff member who needs intervention or support, sometimes they do get referred to the Care Team and we would connect them to Human Resources, and Human Resources along with various other departments, like the police department, the provost, International Affairs, as well as, like, our Counseling and Testing Center, we all collectively form what we call the BIT Team or Behavior Intervention Team. And so, we make we meet weekly and assess care referrals that we receive and kind of assess risk for either the individual or the campus at large. And so, anytime there's a faculty or staff that's referred or we discuss that with them and what resources that they have support for, so it can support faculty and staff in getting them to the right resources.

Scott: Great. It's a stressful time of year. We're coming out of a very long, polarizing election cycle. Do you have any, you know, when you go through something that's, like, sustained level of anxiety, do you have any tips for how to kind of, I don't know, unwind from that or undo all of the tension that builds up as leading up to the election?

Kacey: Yeah, I mean, I think I would correlate with any stressful or traumatic life event in that once you have resolution to a situation, whether it's positive or negative, allowing yourself to disengage from it and take a break, right? So, you know, we've been through, you know, the past few months have been maybe uneasy for people. Whatever outcome they were hoping for in the election, there was a lot of stress involved in the buildup. And then, following could still be stressful for people. So, I would say allowing them to take a break from consuming information about it, allowing themselves to focus on other things that they care about. It could be hobbies, family, friends, you know, their schoolwork, their jobs. It's OK to take a break from things that are that are important. It doesn't mean that you're not engaged or that you don't care. But, as human beings, we can't be engaged in really stressful situations for long periods of time without there being, you know, some consequences. You know, it could be physical or mental.

Scott: Yeah. And then, you know, coming out of the election, we're going into the holiday season and that can be a really stressful time for a lot of people. And, you know, that may be ratcheted up in some cases following the election. There can be, you know, tension at the dinner table. What are some good ways to set kind of healthy boundaries for family gatherings to keep things from getting too tense?

Kacey: So, I recommend -- and this is this can be very challenging for some folks -- but I recommend being very direct and upfront about what your boundaries are and just saying like, `I prefer we not talk about politics this holiday season,’ or, `When I come over or when my family's over, let's focus on things other than the election, or other things going on,

like, you know, my recent breakup. I don't want to talk about it.’ It's OK to make those boundaries known to people. I think a lot of us know what our boundaries are, but we're hesitant or even fearful to say what those boundaries are. And, again, I don't want to diminish the difficulty in voicing that to family and friends, but really saying it is, it can be empowering. And then, when those boundaries are not met and you choose to leave, it may not resonate with the people you're walking away from in those settings, but it can make you feel validated and just feel like you're advocating for yourself in those moments, and that can be really healing. So, even though that conversation may have occurred and you didn't want it to, you setting yourself up to be able to say, `I'm not engaging in this, I set my boundary and now I'm leaving because my boundaries are crossed,’ that can be healing.

Scott: Yeah. So, obviously, Care Team is a really valuable resource and a lot of what you do is connecting students in need to other resources. Are there any other resources that kind of come to mind that you think would be really good for students to be more aware of? Or, you know, be able to take advantage of?

Kacey: Yeah, I mean, the first one that comes to mind is the Counseling and Testing Center. Now, you know, they obviously offer one-on-one therapy services to students, but they also have really great groups and workshops that can be helpful for students who, you know, collectively, you know, as a group are impacted by something. So, just to get in a setting where people who have common struggles or challenges can talk about them and, with guidance from a licensed professional, that can build community, but also give you some, like, coping skills, they have really great resources on their website, on their social media. They had, following the election, they sent out a post-election stress kit and it gave guidance that I even found helpful in myself just, you know, giving to the advice of stay off the social media for a few days or, you know, do things you enjoy, engage in self-care. And so, they have really great tips and advice that you don't have to have an appointment to access. So, I would say look into their website, their social media. And then, if you want to meet with someone, definitely reach out to them. They're a great resource.

Scott: Great. Yeah, we’ll definitely link to that in the show notes for this for sure. I think those are all the questions I have. Is there anything I didn't cover or anything, like, that that you'd like to get out there?

Kacey: Oh, goodness. I think overall and we touched on it a bit throughout, but I would really encourage people to allow themselves to take breaks from consuming information. I think they're, right now, following the election, there's a lot of, like, news that can be scary and our future may feel unknown or uneasy to a lot of folks and that can be, you know, distracting you from your goals, whether it's academic or otherwise. And it can also impact your mental health and take away from self-care. And I'm speaking, you know, myself, I do the same thing I get. I see an article and it can change my mood, or it makes me start thinking of, `Well, what is this and what if that?’ So, really keeping yourself, you know, in the present moment. It's OK to focus on positive things, even if something negative is happening. So, just give yourself permission to focus on positive things to get you through the hard times.

Scott: Absolutely. Love that. I think that's a good one to end on. Kaycey, thank you again so much for taking the time to talk to us today. I really appreciate it.

Kacey: Of course. Thank you for the invitation. And I'm happy to help.

[TRANSITION MUSIC]

Alicia: Love all that good advice. And, I will definitely be using some of those techniques.

Scott: Yeah, it was great to talk to Kaycey and learn more about the Care Team and get those tips. Listeners who want to learn more about the Care Team can check the show notes for a link to their website.

Alicia: Up next, we want to share President Keller's State of the University address from his investiture ceremony last week.

Scott: For those who don't know, like me, an investiture is a ceremony where the president is formally invested with the official position, and it typically takes place during the first year of a new leader's term.

Alicia: Yes, and it was really cool to see how a college president was officially installed in office. There was a lot of pomp and circumstance to it, similar to a commencement ceremony, and had very sentimental and uplifting moments within it. We hope you enjoy President Keller's speech and his vision for the future of UNT.

[TRANSITION MUSIC]

President Keller: Thank you, Dean Bimper. And thank you to my friend, Chancellor Williams, Chair Wright, and our Board of Regents for their strong support and the opportunity to lead our great university. Now, we have several state and local officials and senior staff are here today, and I know some of you all delayed your post-election vacations to be here. So, I want to say thank you for being here to celebrate with us. Also, thank you for your willingness to serve our community and our great state. I have many of my family and my friends and my colleagues and my mentors here today. I'm grateful to my wife, Gena, and my children, William and Elizabeth and Emily, my sister, my mother and I, my aunts and uncles, friends from high school, college, higher education, state government and I want to thank each of you all for your love, for your encouragement and for your patience, especially your patience. I'd also like to acknowledge our UNT team who helped plan and produce this week's events, including today's beautiful ceremony. So, without their commitment and attention to detail over the last several weeks, today would not have been possible. Thank you.

From the day I arrived, this community has embraced me with a warm and generous welcome and across our UNT community, I'm so inspired by the dedication and talent of our faculty, our staff, our in our incredible students, including the members of my Student Advisory Committee, who are here today. I'm also grateful for the meetings that I've had with our Denton and Frisco mayors and with city leaders and regional employers, higher education leaders, alumni, donors, and our fans. So, today, I'd like to share some insights from those conversations, tell you about some of the things we're already working on and propose a new vision for our work together at UNT. Before I do, I'd like to share just a few things that aren't in my official bio but give you a sense of how I approach this work. As you may have heard, I'm a proud sixth-generation Texan from a West Texas farming community called Plainview. One of my grandfathers was a cotton farmer and the other one was a jazz pianist and a career Army band director. My parents were both public school teachers. Now, my dad was an elementary teacher up until the day he died, and he taught gifted and talented students. But, he was the sort of teacher who believed all his students were gifted and talented. And I still get emails from his students about how important his influence was. My mother became a public-school administrator and she founded an international nonprofit called the Military Child Education Coalition that supports the children of our U.S. military service members around the world. Now, Plainview School District was what the state of Texas calls property poor. And that just means that we didn't have the same kinds of resources that some of the other schools had. So, I had excellent band directors, I had excellent individual teachers, but I ran out of advanced math classes to take after my junior year of high school, and that made my own transition into the honors program at Notre Dame very difficult. So, I took the train up from Texas to South Bend, Indiana, and when I arrived, I was sitting next to students from some of the very best high schools in America. And it took me about three very challenging semesters to recalibrate. Now, fortunately, it's Notre Dame, so you get purgatory time off for your suffering, right?

But that experience stuck with me. And, since then, improving our students transitions from high school into college has become an area of passion for me -- even a personal obsession, as I've found a dual enrollment and college advising initiatives that designed new state policies and financial aid programs, and developed new partnerships across the state of Texas. And, over the last 25 years, I've had opportunities to work on almost every aspect of Texas public and higher education, finance and policy, and that culminated in nearly five years serving as commissioner of higher education. And that career path gave me unique opportunities to get to know colleges and universities across Texas and across our nation. So, when this opportunity came up for me to come to the University of North Texas, I knew it was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, because what we have here is special.

Now, I know there are a lot of you all here are from out of town. So, for some of you, this may be your first introduction to UNT. So, let me tell you about the University of North Texas. We were founded in 1890 as the Texas Normal College and Teacher Training Institute with 70 students meeting over the hardware store in the Denton town square. So, in the words of our founding president, Joshua C. Chilton, whose name is the first on the chain of office that I'm wearing now, `It will be our aim to become leaders in the education of the young men and women of Texas, fitting them to credibly fill the most important positions in business and professional circles. We desire the cooperation of all who believe in higher education and who want to see our state in the very front of intellectual as well as material progress.’ These words, which you'll see in our student union today, are profound, they're audacious, and they're part of our DNA.

UNT was founded just before the dawn of the 20th century with a bold vision to transform the Texas frontier through higher education and a public commitment to educate both men and women as the professionals that Texas would need to be a leader at the forefront of intellectual and material progress. Now, today, both the state of Texas and the University of North Texas are fundamentally different and far beyond what our founders could possibly have imagined. But, so are the public expectations, needs, and responsibilities for UNT. Today, UNT has grown to serve nearly 47,000 students. And, unlike most American research universities, our students look like our state. We're recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as a Hispanic-Serving and Minority-Serving Institution. About 40% of our undergraduates are eligible for Pell Grants. More than 40% of our students are the first in their families to attend college. We have about 480,000 alumni and nearly 70% of them are right here in the North Texas region. We're also more than a billion-dollar-a-year university and a Carnegie R1 institution, which means we're counted among the nation's 146 leading research universities and one of only about 100 public universities that are organized to advance knowledge, creativity, and innovation at scale.

We're working with industry to develop and test new materials that can withstand the most extreme environments. We're innovating the future of logistics for our region and beyond. Using artificial intelligence and autonomous vehicles, our faculty are earning national recognitions in physics, chemistry, business and design. And ,of course, we have one of the finest colleges of music in the world, with nine Grammy nominations this year so far. So, this is who we are. We are the largest university in the region, leading the way for the most dynamic state economy in the strongest national economy in the world. We are tens of thousands of first-generation students blazing trails to opportunities for themselves and their families. We are an army of Texas educators, innovators, scientists, entrepreneurs, artists, and creative problem solvers. We lead with our values. We take insights and inspirations from what's already been accomplished, and we improvise and innovate towards a better future. We're strong, we're scrappy, and we're just getting started now.

Now, it's important for us to honor the progress we've made -- from our humble beginnings to becoming a great Texas public research university -- both to remind us of our audacious founding vision and the hard work that set the stage and because the next challenges we face will test our ingenuity, our resources, and the depth of our commitments to our founding vision. And, of course, UNT is a large institution. So, the issues we encounter on any given day are legions. But today I'd like to focus on a complex set of challenges that are already reshaping American higher education. The accelerating pace of change in technology and information dissemination is driving enormous economic, cultural, social, scientific, and political changes across our region and beyond. Over these past three months, I've met with dozens of North Texas employers, donors, and community and state leaders, and what I've heard from them is strikingly consistent. Our workforce needs are expanding rapidly in directions that require education and training beyond high school. The pace of change has accelerated faster than anyone expected and, in some cases, faster than we understand, especially because of rapid advances in AI. The growing number of the job functions and processes are being automated, including many functions that have been the mainstay of entry-level professional jobs, from communications specialists to bank tellers to financial analysts. And, the rapid pace of these changes is in deep tension with two traits of most American research universities. First, the traditional institutional and regulatory structures -- including curriculum committees, support structures for teaching and learning, criteria for promotion, academic calendars, and institutional accreditation standards -- are not organized to facilitate the rapid experimentation, innovation, and feedback we need to meet the needs of today's students, employers, and our communities. And, second, there is significant misaligned merit between the conventional strategies for pursuing excellence at most research universities and the scale of the challenges we face. The traditional orientation of great American universities emphasizes selectivity to drive quality, but at the expense of access and scale. And this approach has been incredibly effective for advancing discoveries within academic disciplines and for selecting and nurturing elite talent in science, philosophy, the arts, and athletics. In fact, one of the standard measures of research universities strength and reputation has become how selective they are. So, great American research universities produce amazing advances in research and discovery and incredible educational opportunities for the students who are selected to attend. No other nation rivals the United States in our ability to work at the frontiers of knowledge and information through our research universities. Although it's worth noting that other countries, particularly China, have been investing heavily in the education of their top scholars and in their own research universities to advance economic competitiveness and their national security. Yet, even as our economy is racing forward in directions that require more people to be educated to higher standards and ever before, some of our great universities issue press releases boasting about the tens of thousands of students they turn away. Now, to be clear, these great universities serve an essential purpose. But we're not going to exclude our way to the highly educated workforce that Texas needs. Now, those more traditional universities need to be complemented by a new class of universities with capabilities and a commitment to provide excellent educational opportunities, solutions, and impact at scale. The state policymakers and the people of Texas understand the importance of strong research universities to our state's future. That was the major factor that led to the creation of the Texas University Fund. So, as we consider our history and the challenges we face, what are our primary responsibilities as we build the next era of UNT? How should we expand opportunities and bolster public trust? For us, a conventional orientation towards an exclusive pursuit of excellence won't be sufficient, given our values and given our founding vision. So, how might we pursue excellence in an inclusive way with a bold vision to advance UNT as a new kind of great American public research university?

Now, designing the future of UNT will require deep reflection on who we are, the changing needs of our state are, who we should serve, and the capabilities that we need to develop. So, this year we will launch a university strategic planning process, engaging our entire UNT community alumni, employers, policymakers and the public, inviting all of them to contribute their insights to the design of the next iteration of the University of North Texas. And, as we begin this work, I'd like to lay out a vision for how we proceed -- not as a finished blueprint, but as five design principles to guide our plans, our decisions, and our investments. And I'll go through each of these quickly. First, embrace our public responsibilities with courageous integrity to understand and address the needs of our region, our state, and our nation. Second, create transformative value for students through educational experiences and programs that demonstrate our genuine care by equipping all our youth and students for productive and purposeful lives. Third, unlock individual potential across our community through a commitment to high standards and high support for every student, faculty and staff member, so our UNT community will serve as the platform that allows every individual to unlock their potential and truly be better together. Fourth, transcend the traditional academic boundaries to accelerate the pace of innovation, so UNT will be a preferred destination for individuals to show their fire through their scholarship, their discoveries, their entrepreneurship, and their creative contributions. And five, prioritize partnerships for the public good through close collaboration with K-12 schools, community colleges, universities, employers, and governments all working together in a spirit of genuine curiosity and mutual respect to improve lives across our region and beyond. Together, these principles will guide us towards a fundamentally different orientation than the traditional model as a public research university, determined to put our core values into practice in ways that serve the public interest. Our new model will build on our founding vision of 1890 and establish UNT as a public research university committed to advance both excellence and access to serve the people and the public interest of the North Texas region, across our state, and beyond.

Now, the formal work of strategic planning will unfold over the next few months, including a specific planning effort focused on our Frisco campus. The foundational work is already underway across three major fronts. Earlier this year, we launched an initiative to develop a new strategic budgeting process so we can have a university budget that provides a clear line of sight between our priorities and our resources. This is a whole community effort, and I appreciate the leadership of our CFO, Clayton Gibson, Dean Bimper, Kassie Grubbs, and all the members of our steering committee and our technical committee. Now, most universities spend a year or more thinking about this sort of project before they start to move. But that's not how we roll at UNT. So, we're going to start to implement changes in the next cycle, starting in January, and we'll continue to iterate on and improve our model. We're working together. We're taking inspiration from other universities. We're putting our best ideas on the table and we're moving forward. We're also laying groundwork for new investments in research excellence. Now, these investments start with the new funding distributions from the Texas University Fund, about 60 million dollars over the next three years. We'll accelerate our work in specific areas with the legislature and the people of Texas to set priorities and establish major research funds cancer, semiconductors, and space and aerospace technologies. And we'll also build on our established strengths in other fields, including a new interdisciplinary institute for data science and artificial intelligence that will support UNT researchers and innovators across our UNT campuses and beyond. Together, these strategic investments will allow us to draw down more sponsored research funding. But, more importantly, they will allow us to make even greater contributions as a public R1 university working for the public good, especially in areas critical for public health, national security, and economic competitiveness. In developing our strategies across all these thematic research priorities, I appreciate the leadership of Vice President Pam Padilla.

And finally, and closest to my heart, I'd like to discuss our work to advance UNT student success. Now, since I arrived on August 1st, my main focus has just been getting to know this great university, meeting with faculty and staff and alumni and donors and, of course, our inspiring students. Now, one of my favorite moments was our freshman convocation during the First Flight week. So, our freshmen filled more than half the Super Pit, and they were all wearing the t-shirts from their dorms, and you could feel the energy and their excitement. And so, as part of my welcome, I asked students who are the first in their families to attend college to stand to be recognized, and thousands of first-generation students stood up. That was nearly half that audience, and that moment was incredibly powerful. Throughout our work to redesign the future of the university, we must embrace our fundamental responsibility to advance the success of every student we enroll. Many of our UNT students come from low-income backgrounds. They're the first in their families to attend college. They might not have had an experienced or even a certified high school math or science teacher. Their adolescence included profound learning losses, emotional distress, and even losing loved ones. Across our region and across our state, we have a crisis in college readiness. This year, about 20% of our incoming UNT students did not meet the state's basic criteria for college readiness, which unfortunately is not equivalent to the kind of academic preparation you need for a competitive degree program at a major research university. Before the pandemic, we had about five sections of developmental reading and writing classes. Today, we have about 40. All these things are true. It's also true that our UNT students bring amazing talent, resilience, and grit, not despite but because of the challenges that they and their families have navigated. When UNT students have opportunities to engage with our talented faculty, connect with their fellow students, push beyond what they thought was possible and unlock their potential. What can happen at scale is like what you've seen here on the stage today with our College of Music students and with the 1 O’Clock Lab band -- true, inspiring excellence. It's no wonder that employers all over this region love their UNT interns, and they love to hire our graduates. They’ll all tell you UNT students are smart, they work hard, they're not entitled, and they are excellent.

Now, over the last few years, we've made some progress to improve student success at UNT but still, more than one out of five first-year students does not persist into the second year. Now, for each one who takes the risk to enroll with us and leaves with no degree, especially if they have debt, they can leave worse off than when they arrived. If we're truly committed to our core values, we can’t accept this outcome, and we can't lower the bar. Instead, we have to reimagine how we provide our students with high support to meet high standards, where our calendars and curriculum, teaching, advising and support structures all work together in new and more effective ways. We need to focus our resources on what works, be willing to stop doing things that are less effective, keep driving improvement and commit to providing the transformative 21st century higher education that every UNT student deserves. Now, across the country, many universities have been working to improve student success, and there are powerful lessons we can learn from them. So, we're sending out teams to engage with leading institutions, and we're bringing notable innovators here to work with us, and I am especially grateful to our friends from Georgetown University, from Arizona State, from U.T. Austin, and from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. At most universities, student success just means keeping students enrolled and on track to graduate on time, and those are important measures. And be clear, at UNT, we must improve our student’s persistence and four-year graduation rates. At a minimum, UNT’s graduation rates should be on par with graduation rates of similar students at the leading public universities. But, by themselves, those targets won't be sufficient to realize UNT’s responsibilities to our students. Our core values imply a much broader duty to care for our students by advancing their success. We must consider not only how to streamline their pathways to graduation, but also what kinds of courses, mentoring, internships, and short-term credentials expand their professional opportunities and boost the value of their UNT degrees. At UNT, we should hold ourselves accountable for a broader conception of student success. From our first contact with students through their time enrolled with us and into their early careers, we should equip all UNT students with the knowledge, skills, experiences, and credentials they need to take their talents as far as they want to take them. Empower them to lead healthy and productive lives of meaning and purpose. Unlock their potential to build a better future as the men and women Texas needs to be in the forefront of intellectual as well as material progress. This is a bold vision. So, we're engaging our whole UNT community. We're taking inspiration from our best current work in academic and career support and Mean Green Athletics, from our Emerald Eagle Scholars program, from the First-Generation Success Center, and other initiatives. And we've already received thousands of suggestions from across our UNT community, from specific ideas about course scheduling to broad insights about the importance of supporting our student’s mental health. We're mapping a new analytic strategy to make sure we're using all the available data to serve students and drive continuous improvement. As part of that work, our college and university leaders are already accessing new tools to analyze data about graduate’s earnings and debt by program. We're also learning from and partnering with other like-minded universities to help us move faster. And all of this work will help us develop a UNT model for student success that leverages innovations in teaching data analytics and technology, and supports excellence at scale. There's so much to do, but we're underway. And, in this work, I appreciate Vice Provost Lisa McIntyre's leadership and the close collaborations with our CIO, James Garrison, Vice President Shannon Goodman and Senior Vice President Elizabeth With.

Now, this is a celebration today. So, before we continue our celebration, and as I formally continue my service, I'd like to conclude my remarks by emphasizing my commitment as your UNT president. To our UNT students: I commit to work with you and with our faculty, staff, alumni, employers, and partners, to provide you with world-class, transformative educational experiences. Your UNT education should be distinguished by high expectations worthy of your talents, coupled with high support to help you unlock your full potential. Also, let me say to any prospective UNT student, if you're a creative problem solver who thrives on thinking outside the box and you want to unleash your talents to make a difference for your family and build a better future, we want to be your university of choice. To our staff: I commit to work with you to make UNT a university that not only honors your dedication and your love for a great university, but also gives you opportunities to develop and use your talents to do your best work. Your insights and your creativity are essential in our work to build future of UNT. To our faculty: I commit to work with you to make UNT a leader in supporting your work at the frontiers of knowledge and the translation of your insights and discoveries into scholarship, creative production, solutions, startups and innovations in teaching and learning that will transform lives and expand opportunities for our UNT community across our state and beyond. To our alumni and donors: I commit to work in partnership with you to build the future of UNT. Your accomplishments, your generous support, and your networks of UNT alumni and leaders from every sector will help us move faster, be bolder, and increase our impact. To our employers, community leaders, and our policymakers: I commit to work together with you to take responsibility for the talent, the innovations, and the cultural opportunities that our companies, our communities, our state and our nation require to prosper. We will not be satisfied with incremental progress.

As the pace of change accelerates, we will work across disciplinary and institutional boundaries to build new strategic partnerships, organizational structures, and innovative solutions for a better future. As other great universities close their doors to qualified students at UNT, we will measure ourselves by how well we serve any qualified student who commits to learn with us as the platform that allows them to take their talent as far as they want to go. As families, employers, policymakers, and the public ask, `Who in higher education will hear and respond to our needs,’ the University of North Texas is here to be your partner, and we are ready to serve in the vanguard of a new generation of great American universities.

My new Mean Green family: There is no place I would rather be than unity, and I am all in. Thank you, and Go Mean Green.

[TRANSITION MUSIC]

Scott: Well, that was an inspiring look at the work we have to do for our students. Alicia, what were some of your reactions to what President Keller said?

Alicia: So, the biggest thing that stuck out to me was the stat about first-generation students. He said more than 40% of our students are the first in their families to attend college. That really stuck out to me because as someone whose parent is a first-generation college graduate, it really makes me proud to see the institution I work for value environment where everyone has the opportunity to thrive and succeed. It really makes you think about the impact UNT has on the trajectory of those families. What about you?

Scott: Yeah, I love that first-gen stat, too. It's, like, the epitome of the American dream. I also really liked where you called out other universities for bragging about how many students they reject every year.

Alicia: Yeah, that felt a little feisty and I wasn't opposed to that.

Scott: I also liked that he used the word `risk’ when he talked about students who take the risk to enroll with us. I never would have thought, you know, associate a college with taking a risk, but that's because I've been really fortunate and privileged. I think that's a really honest and important way to look at things to emphasize the responsibility UNT has to our students.

Alicia: Yes. And, he talked about when students take that risk and end up leaving with no degree and in debt, they leave worse off than they came to us. That's not the rosy, fun, learn-and-grow-opportunity picture of college we usually try to put out there. But, I like that he acknowledged that reality, and wants to lead you UNT in meeting those students where they are.

Scott: Yeah, two phrases I really liked that he used were, one, we can't accept this outcome, and we can't lower the bar. And then, he also said we need to provide high support to meet high standards. Going back to the exclusionary practices of other universities he mentioned in the first half, I think a lot of that gets justified as a kind of survival-of-the-fittest mentality, and you've got to weed out the people who can't cut it. No, if someone quote `can't cut it,’ you make sure they have the right tools and teach them how to cut it. We don't have to leave anybody behind.

Alicia: Consider me inspired. I completely agree. We'll have a link to the investiture recap and full video in the show notes. But now, it's time for our Q&A segment, Scootle. What are we talking about today?

Scott: Well, based on our first segment, our question today is, what do you do to take care of your mental health?

Alicia: Personally, I go on walks every other day or so to really decompress from the work week. I also enjoy a good movie when I'm feeling overwhelmed -- or any other time of the day. It kind of takes my mind off things and helps me refocus on the important things in life. What about you, Scotty?

Scott: Yeah, I like movies, too. I also try to work in a couple of short walks throughout the day. You know, when I'm in the office, try to get out and walk around the building, get some sun and touch some grass. Christiana, who's been on the show a few times, has meditation breaks that she does for the office during the week. I like to try to join those. After I had my stroke, I used you in his employee assistance program to start going to therapy, and that's helped a lot. It's something I always thought would be good for me, but just never really prioritized until my brain broke, and I said, `I should probably do something about this.’ Our intrepid student reporter Anthony Simone took today's question out to campus so we could also hear from some students on how they take care of their mental health.

Alicia: Let's go, Anthony.

[TRANSITION MUSIC]

Anthony: So, finals approaching. Obviously, it's a very stressful time for students. What are some ways you decompress, keep your mental sanity and kind of just keep yourself centered throughout the bombardment of assignments?

Student 1: I’m a big nature guy, I’d say. I like going out on hikes on blocks just to clear the mind, de-stress. I'd say that's, like, the biggest thing for me. I like going out fishing with my friends if I have time. Just being outside. I'd say that's a good, good way to de-stress. Declutter the mind.

Student 2: I'm a huge hot tea drinker, so I do a lot of loose-leaf tea. So, I will go home. It's, it's getting cold, so, it's either loose-leaf teas or hot chocolate. I will put on any sort of, like, calm YouTube video and just, like, lay in my bed, like, just let my body decompress. Really just, like, be intentional and mindful about really resting, and then I pass out and I wake up and I'm ready for the next day,

Student 3: A routine thing in the morning, I like getting up early and working out. I feel like it energizes me to get through the day. And also, when I'm studying, I like taking breaks, standing up because I get tired looking down or at the screen. It's important to rest your eyes. I forget to do that, but I would suggest other people do it. Also, just, like, the mealtimes as well. Like, when I'm eating, I like to separate that from studying. I'm not very good at this because I like multi-tasking, but I try to eat at least one meal without looking at stuff. Like, minimize the stress or take time off from the school stress.

Student 4: I really love to run, so I love running in the morning and that kind of helps me de-stress, because I love running. I love not thinking or sometimes just thinking about music while I’m running. I like that to destress. And probably, like, cooking. I love cooking. Cooking’s fun. It's really a good way to keep my mind off of things.

Anthony: Any notable dishes that you make?

Student 4: I really tried to get into baking because I like savory food, but I really love sweets, too. But I'm just a horrible baker, so I've been trying to I've been trying chocolate chip cookies for a little bit. So, yeah.

Student 5: So, taking things one day at a time is very important because you want to, that'll help you decompress and not be overwhelmed by overthinking. Eating healthy is also very important because you'll feel a lot better while taking these exams. And, another technique I would like to use is studying, but not studying for long periods of time, just chunks throughout the day and I think that will help you get the knowledge through your head easier.

[TRANSITION MUSIC]

Alicia: All right. Well, now that you know how we take care of our mental health and got some tips from UNT students, we want to hear all about your mental health life hacks. So, email us at podcast@UNT. edu or call us at 940-565-4341.

Scott: And, as always, don't forget to tell a friend about the show, share it on social media or leave us a rating and review wherever you listen. Until next time, we hope you have a Happy Friday, North Texas.

Alicia: And, Go Mean Green.

[OUTRO MUSIC]

Scott: Happy Friday. North Texas is a production of the University of North Texas. Today's show was produced and edited by Scott Brown with original reporting by Scott Brown and Anthony Simone. For more information, visit UNT.edu/podcast.

Scott: To emphasize the responsibility UNT has … I’m too tired and lazy.

Alicia: (Singing) Don’t leave me tongue-tied …

Scott: You know this is going in the bloopers, right?

Alicia: I’m just trying, like, I’m trying not to embarrass you. I’m gonna sing a song to you instead.

Scott: To emphasize the responsibilities … Dude …

Alicia: Do you want me to sing to you again?

Scott: All right. Here we go. I’m going to get it this time.

Alicia: I’m talking like a robot.

Scott: Hopefully it’ll, like, ring a bell that ...

Alicia: Hopefully they’re listening.

Scott: Hopefully they made it this far.

Alicia: Yeah. If you made it this far, consider me inspired.

Scott: I think a lot of that gets justified as a kind of survival-of-the-fittest … I need to enunciate better.

Scott: Sorry I interrupted you. … I was thinking, `Let’s go Anthony’ would go before we cut to the clips.

Alicia: Well, I can say that and you can grab that and put it in the front.

Scott: Yeah. So, start with `All right’? Sorry.

Alicia: No, that’s OK. It’s funny. I’ve done that multiple times. It’s OK. I don’t blame you. So, what do you want me to say now?

Scott: Just start with `All right.’

Alicia: All right. Well, now … I don’t know how to say it. It’s like I’ve forgotten how to read. All right, well now that you have … what? I’m sorry. All right.

Alicia: Caaaawww!

Scott: I’m gonna put that in there. I don’t know if anyone is gonnas recognize it as a caw.

Alicia: Do it!

Alicia: Caaawww! It doesn’t even sound like a caw.   
Scott: It sounds like, `Gawww!’