

September 4, 2017

Dear members of the Texas A&M University at Galveston Board of Visitors -

Howdy! After watching the news reports, you may have wondered if we were still here or if campus had washed away. We have been through hell and high water, but are excited to have begun this academic year! Though the faculty, staff, and students have returned to campus, there is still much work to be done to return to pre-hurricane status. With that, I'm sure you will each understand the need to postpone the upcoming September 14, Board of Visitors meeting to a later date.

I could not be more proud of the way everyone endured and persevered through the impact of Hurricane Harvey. Our Aggie Core Value of Selfless Service, which shined so brightly through the storm and muddy aftermath, is a great source of motivation and inspiration! I'm proud of our students and Residence Life staff who evacuated and represented us in College Station. I'm proud of our staff and cadets who rode out the storm on the T/S General Rudder to ensure her safety. I'm proud of our volunteers who set up camp in the Sea Life Center to monitor the support systems for our research animals. I'm proud of the Incident Command Team who mobilized to College Station in order to provide continuity of communications and support for worried families and students, and the members who remained on the Galveston campus to monitor, respond and provide constant contact and information from regional emergency operations personnel. I'm proud of our faculty experts who offered their professional insight to be shared across a multitude of media outlets. And I could not be more proud of our heroes who rescued families from the floods and mobilized to start the cleanup and recovery efforts as soon as the waters receded! Your professionalism, perseverance, compassion, and hard work have been recognized across our country as a model of what we can be at our best. Aggies helping Aggies; neighbors helping neighbors; strangers reaching out a hand of love and compassion to those in need. These are hallmarks of greatness which change lives for the better in the midst of tragedy.

When we evacuated campus a week ago, we were fearful of what we would find when we returned. We were very fortunate and have nothing more serious than some water leaks with which to contend. However, many of our students, staff, and faculty were not so fortunate and have suffered crippling losses of homes and possessions. We are working to get short-term assistance for those in need until more substantial help arrives.

As we put this storm behind us, I am excited about the year ahead! We welcome aboard the Class of 2021 – the largest group of freshman ever on our campus – which increases our total number of students to almost 2500 (also a record)! While many of you who were busy this weekend helping mucking out flooded homes, the campus is coming back to life with trucks, boxes, and eager students. Soon we will be back to normal and can concentrate on classes, Midnight Yell, and cheering for the Fightin' Texas Aggie Football Team!

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The following lines from Professor Stephen Curley's book, *Aggies by the Sea*, have taken on new meaning: *"Texas A&M University at Galveston is of, for, and by the sea. It educates men and women about the science, engineering, business and humanities involving the ocean. It measures time by the names of tropical storms and hurricanes...."* Indeed it does. The most recent, named Harvey, will never be forgotten by those of us who witnessed its fury. Life will bring more storms and more challenges, but we will be stronger as we face the challenges ahead because we have weathered this storm with unity and grit.

Our thoughts and prayers are with each of you who have, yourselves, experienced loss during the fury of Hurricane Harvey. We also send wishes for safety as you assist your friends, family, or neighbors through the rebuilding process. Come hell or high water, we are in this together! We are Sea Aggie Strong!!

Gig'em!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Fossum". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Col Mike Fossum '80  
Chief Operating Officer, Texas A&M University at Galveston  
Vice President, Texas A&M University