



Provost Memo
August 11, 2026

Dear Colleagues,

As we close another academic year, I hope you will take a moment to pause and appreciate all that we have accomplished together. There is so much to be proud of at East Texas A&M University (ETAMU). We have grown, innovated, strengthened our academic programs and student support, expanded opportunities for our students while we decreased barriers, and continued to build an institution that is increasingly recognized for the transformational work happening here. I am excited about what lies ahead for ETAMU and confident in the University's future. Given the transition ahead—and because this will be my final Provost Memo—I want to provide some updates, but also use this email to look back with gratitude and reflect on what we have built together.

A few important updates as we prepare for the fall semester:

Academic Affairs Leadership: I am pleased that there will be continuity throughout areas of Academic Affairs.

- Dr. Ricky Dobbs will continue to serve as Acting Dean of the Graduate School until a permanent dean is appointed. He will also continue in his role as Vice Provost.
- Dr. April Sanders will continue as Acting Dean of the College of Education and Human Services until a permanent dean is appointed. She will also continue to lead the Center for Innovation and Design.
- Dr. Andrea Graham will serve as Acting Provost during the transition. I am confident in Andrea's leadership and know that she will continue the important work underway across Academic Affairs with care, thoughtfulness, and a strong commitment to our students, faculty, and staff.

The President's Office has started work on the Provost Search. Searches for the permanent leadership of the Graduate School and College of Education and Human Services are continuing, and I am grateful to everyone who has invested time and care in those processes.

Importantly, the work already underway will continue. Initiatives such as the faculty workload policy, faculty evaluation work, and other ongoing Academic Affairs priorities remain important, and I am confident they will continue to receive attention and move forward during the transition.

The East Texas Center for Competency-Based Education: This year marked the first full year of the East Texas Center for Competency-Based Education (CBE), and it has been exciting to watch the Center develop its identity and extend its reach throughout Texas. The Center has served as ETAMU's public face for competency-based education, building partnerships with the College of Education and Human Services, Texas Woman's University, Dallas College, and institutions across the Texas A&M University System. It also hosted several important convenings, including a CBE Overview Day and a Financial Aid Overview session that brought colleagues from institutions across the state together to learn, share, and collaborate.

The Center's work reflects something I have always appreciated about this University: we are willing to think differently about how higher education can better serve students, while also being willing to share what we learn with others. I am proud of the foundation the Center has established and look forward to seeing how its reach and impact continue to grow.

The Transformative Learning Commons—Building on Our Momentum: Thanks to the deans and leadership of Dr. Erin Webster-Garrett, this summer we launched the Transformative Learning Commons (TLC) in Waters Library, Suite 173. The Commons brings together programs, people, and resources that support high-impact learning in a more coordinated approach to student success.

The TLC builds on tremendous work that was already happening across our university. It brings together the Honors College, Undergraduate Research Opportunity Collaboration (UROC), Career-Connected Learning/QEP, and the Faculty Success Center, along with the Transformative Learning Inventory, Student Transformative Learning and TELI Awards, and technologies that support student engagement, reflection, and digital credentialing. Together, these efforts clearly focus on career readiness for our students, and connect faculty development, undergraduate research, Honors education, experiential learning, and student recognition within a shared framework.

And the momentum is already significant. Hundreds of courses have been reviewed through the Transformative Learning Inventory to identify high-impact learning already embedded in our curriculum. Honors is preparing to welcome its largest incoming class and pilot new Honors-designated pathways. Undergraduate research opportunities and faculty mentoring are expanding. Career-connected learning is increasingly helping students connect their academic and co-curricular experiences with the competencies they will need beyond ETAMU.

In the upcoming year, the University will continue building on that progress as we prepare for a spring **Transformative Learning Summit**, bringing faculty, staff, students, and campus leaders together to think about the next chapter of a student-ready ETAMU. Preparation for the Summit will begin this fall with a variety of activities, including the *Hacking College* Brown Bag Series and Book Group in October. This will be a cross-divisional conversation bringing together colleagues from Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, and Enrollment Management to explore the findings from *Hacking College* and consider the implications for advising, career readiness, and student success at ETAMU.

Hacking College Brown Bag Series and Book Group

When: Wednesdays at noon in October

Where: Transformative Learning Commons, Suite 173, Velma Waters Library

What: A cross-divisional discussion of *Hacking College* and its implications for our work with students

Why: To connect colleagues across Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, and Enrollment Management around student success and the future of higher education

Contact Michelle Woodard (michelle.woodard@etamu.edu) to reserve your place

Looking Back with Gratitude

As I write this final Provost Memo, I find myself thinking less about individual accomplishments and more about the people who made them possible. When I became Provost, I knew there was tremendous talent and potential across this University. What I have come to appreciate even more deeply is the willingness of our faculty and staff to roll up their sleeves, take on difficult challenges, try something new, and keep moving forward—even when the path was not always clear. Together, we have accomplished a great deal.

We strengthened student success and built a more coordinated student-ready approach. We expanded our reach through Dallas and dual credit. We grew competency-based education and created new ways for students to earn credentials. We launched new academic programs and expanded opportunities for high-impact learning, undergraduate research, career preparation, and experiential learning. We strengthened faculty development and made significant progress on faculty compensation. We navigated accreditation, changing state and federal policies, financial pressures, and countless operational challenges. And through all of it, we continued to ask an important question: **How can we make East Texas A&M a better university for our students?**

I am deeply proud of what we have accomplished together—not because of any one initiative or metric, but because of what those accomplishments say about this University and the people who make it what it is. I have spent the last several years working alongside extraordinary faculty, staff, administrators, students, and community partners, and East Texas A&M has become an important part of my professional life and my life personally. There are people here who have challenged me, supported me, taught me, encouraged me, and made me laugh along the way. I will be forever grateful for those relationships.

Thank you for trusting me. Thank you for your partnership. Thank you for your patience when the answers were not easy or immediate. Thank you for your willingness to engage in hard conversations and, just as importantly, to celebrate the good things together. And thank you for everything you do every day for our students and in moving this university forward.

I leave with enormous gratitude for what we have accomplished together and also with tremendous confidence in where East Texas A&M is headed. We have worked hard to make the University stronger and better positioned for the future. And while there is still more to do, I have full confidence that the people who will lead that work are exceptionally talented and deeply committed to this institution—and that they can count on everyone to continue bringing the same dedication, creativity, and commitment that have brought us this far.

I am excited about my next chapter, but I will always be grateful that one of the chapters in my career was written here, with all of you.

Thank you for allowing me the privilege of serving as your Provost.

With gratitude and very best wishes,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "T. Vacha-Haase". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

tvh

Tammi Vacha-Haase, PhD

Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

[Texas A&M University-Commerce](https://www.tamuc.edu/Provost)

