The Dallas-Fort Worth area – or the Metroplex, as it also is known — is one of the most dynamic, vital, exciting regions in the United States. It ranks sixth nationally in economic output, has superb restaurants and shopping areas and a burgeoning arts scene, boasts professional teams in all of the major sports, possesses an entrepreneurial, “can-do” spirit, is second, behind only San Jose and the Silicon Valley, as a center for high-tech industry and, if it were a nation, would rank 21st based on Gross Domestic Product, ahead of Norway, Turkey and Hong Kong, if you can believe it.

D-FW does not have a world-class, tier-one research university, however, as I have lamented on numerous occasions since I assumed the presidency of UTD on June 1. In fact, it is the only one of the nation's top 20 major urban areas that is not home to a member of the American Association of Universities – the nation’s elite club of the 62 top research institutions.

Having such an institution is not just a quaint nicety that gives a region bragging rights and fills out its Chamber of Commerce brochures. No, in the 21st century it is a critical necessity, a powerful economic engine that can help drive and determine the fortunes of a region. The Metroplex needs at least one world-class research university if it is to compete successfully in the global economy. It is as simple as that, and if you require proof, consider the fact that Boston’s eight research universities contribute $7 billion each year to that area’s economy.

I believe that The University of Texas at Dallas can be such a pre-eminent, global research institution; and that is why, despite the fact that I already have written about this issue in The Dallas Morning News and UTD Network magazine and refer to it in almost every speech I give, I have chosen to make it the focal point of my message in this, the inaugural issue, of The President’s Viewpoint.

From its prime location and synergistic collaborations with area businesses and other universities, to its strong undergraduate student population, to its superb faculty and innovative graduate and post-graduate research programs – programs that have attracted two Nobel laureates to our team – UTD is on a dramatic upward trajectory that has the potential to propel the University – and the Metroplex with it – to the next level of excellence. It is going to require a tremendous commitment on all of our parts to get there, and a broad and deep and enthusiastic community of support. But with that commitment and support, we can create a future of vitality and greatness. To settle for anything less would be unacceptable.