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### Daily Texan Interview with Faulkner

Editor's note: The following is a selection of a Daily Texan interview with UT President Larry Faulkner on Tuesday. The material is transcribed from an audio recording of the interview.

The Daily Texan: Is [Tuesday] the first day you've been letting everyone on campus know?

Larry Faulkner: I haven't been letting everyone on campus know. No, we've only told two groups really. We've told the staff who work in this office ... And then we've told the vice presidents yesterday. But I am notifying various people. I mean, I've notified the governor, notified the lieutenant governor and the speaker, various people in the state, the regents.

DT: Do you have any say in who's going to be interim president, or do you know who that might be?

LF: Well, my hope is that we won't have an interim. I think that what you will hear is the chairman and the chancellor will announce revisions for a search pretty quickly here ... But I think the commitment is to try to get it going, and they believe they can get a search to conclusion in six months or something like that, and they'll be some overhead associated with getting a person from wherever that person is right now to this office. But my hope is that we'll make a smooth handoff and I'll hand directly to the next person. I'm not pledging to go arbitrarily far. But if it's comfortable I will be willing to serve until that handoff can occur, even if it's in the summer. On the other hand, I don't have any concrete plans of my own, and whatever develops for me might demand something of that. So, there's a possibility we'll have an interim because of the circumstances as they develop. But, my hope actually is that we will not have an interim, and that I will serve until the handoff.

DT: So you don't have another job lined up after this?

LF: No. I have no specific plans.

DT: Looking back on this most recent Lege session [did] that make it easier to make your decision?

LF: No, it wasn't any specific issue, David. There's a lot of wear and tear in the process. That's been true of essentially every legislative session I've been in. And it really goes into the overall measure of whether my wife and I have what I call the resilience to go through three years. When I talk about the legislative session has a rhythm, you shouldn't translate that into the legislative session is everything ... You know you're active constantly, you're on constantly. You have a lot of demands from a lot of constituencies. And really, when I say, we have the resilience to go through the session, what I'm saying is the fundamental timing is session dependant, but the job is everything. And the question is, do we really have three more years in us? Not do we have one more legislative session. I think the answer is to us, we don't feel

like we do. There's not question that the sessions are probably the most stressful and the most difficult aspect of this job.

DT: Was this last one the most difficult?

LF: It was in the running. The second one I went through was also a pretty tough session.

DT: Have any other things having to do with your job been particularly trying recently? Like the appointment of a new vice president of student affairs or diversity provost?

LF: No. You know me, all aspects of whenever you're going for appointments you try to get the best people you can get. I don't find that terribly stressful. You just have to work through it.

DT: What are some things you don't think you're going to get to? Any task forces still out, or any other special measures?

LF: Well, I think there are a lot of things we will get to ... A question Zach asked a little earlier was how long have I been thinking about this. Actually, I've been thinking about this for a while. Not necessarily at the level of action, but I brought together a small group of people who are close to me to talk over this very question of what should be a reasonably target about two years ago. And the discussion had to do with what commitment do I have to give to the follow-up of the Commission of 125. All of the people I was talking to were active in the commission of 125, and they're anxious as all commission members were that this not just be a book on the shelf. And so I did understand what they said. And I did agree that yes I needed to serve some significant length of time after the commission report to get things moving. And I think one of the big sets of agenda items that are in the picture are: 'Well, what about the follow up to the commission report?' Well, we've got the curriculum review under way. And they will report in Oct. But the process of actually adopting a new curriculum will bridge over into a new presidency. It won't get done before I get through here.

DT: Are you disappointed that you won't get to have a hand in how it operates....

LF: Well, I'm not necessarily disappointed by it; I think the idea that curriculum is fashioned by a community for a community is something I believe in. And having another president involved adds to that from my point of view. I have never had my own curriculum model that I'm trying to get enacted. What I've had is a commitment to ask this community to take on the question as to what the curriculum ought to be?

DT: Will you retain any other responsibilities, like maybe an advisory position?

LF: I'm the UT System designee on the Sandia board. And I think as long as I maintain a credible relationship with the UT System, I don't think I would have to be an employee of the UT System, but I shouldn't be in conflict. I shouldn't be working for somebody who's in conflict. But as long as I maintain a credible relationship with the UT System, I think I'll continue to do that. It's an area that I have a technical background. I think it's something I can make a contribution and I have an interest. So, I'd like to follow through and help build that relationship. And the chancellor's

already indicated that he wants me to continue that relationship.

DT: To clarify, does that mean that if a position came open, something you'd be interested in in the future, that was in conflict with your relationship with the System, would you be willing to give up that post at Sandia?

LF: Yeah. A good example would be that if I were to take a government post in Washington or something like that, then I'd be required to do that.

DT: Have you thought about a government post? Have you thought about being in government?

LF: People have raised that with me

DT: You're not opposed to it?

LF: It would be thought about. I mean there's nothing on the table. Don't translate that into I'm thinking about this, that or the other thing. But people have raised the question about whether I would think about something in Washington or elsewhere.

DT: Do you have any major disappointments or things you would've done differently just over your tenure here?

LF: I mean, there are always things you would do differently. I don't make a catalog of them.

DT: Nothing stands out in your mind? There's nothing really burning?

LF: No, I don't think there's anything that really stands out.

DT: When you got here, were you prepared for this sort of activism or this sort of energy that was building up on campus at that point about staff pay?

LF: That was a big deal. When I got here, I certainly knew that it was a big deal that it was important before I got here. I probably didn't know while I was interviewing. But between the interviews and actual arrival, the human resources issues that were front-burner items when I first got here became clear that they were front-burner items.

DT: Something kinda blew up I believe about a couple weeks into the time you were here...?

LF: Anyway, we had a lot of tension in the fall of 98 over affirmative action. When I first got here, it was really the rock bottom psychologically, and there was tremendous tension about the loss of affirm action about pressure to reinstate affirmative action. So, we had some building occupations. We had various things during the fall. But that was affirmative action orientated. The employment issues really blew up over a period. We had this sort of virtual walkout. It could have been the fall of 99; it could have a little later. But anyway, I think we've been able to attend to a lot of things and I think the most important aspects of that were just paying people better and we put a lot of emphasis on that.

DT: Are there any significant disparities or problems with staff issues that remain to

be fixed that you tried to fix?

LF: The situation is much better with respect to the staff issues. We've addressed the lowest paid employees; we've created a staff council. We've given eight straight years of raises that have allowed us to gain ground against the rest of the world. And we still, I think, have to keep an eye on that. Talent is at the absolute center of what a university can do, and you have to pay a lot of attention to holding on to the talent that it takes to make a place like this run. And I think the new president is going to pay a lot of attention to it to.

DT: Back to the building occupation in 1999. That was a really interesting scene. Is there a way that scene could've been avoided? I mean you diffused it on a Saturday morning when you agreed to have a town hall meeting. But then even the town hall meetings...

LF: They were stormy.

DT: I know a lot of people just wanted to know your personal opinion on affirmative action, which you argued wasn't relevant to the issue. Would you have handled it differently? Do think that knowing what you now know about the UT student population you could've navigated those waters?

LF: No. I don't think so. I think it had to do with the passion at the time. There was just tremendous passion. I think there was a lot of desire to get from me indications. I was an unknown quantity at the time. I think a lot of the community or a large sector of the community who was most passionate about these issues wanted to see a commitment from me. I think I've given that commitment over time. The passions were so high that I don't know that we could've done a whole lot more than we did. At the time, in fact, it played out in a pretty healthy way. If you go look, you'll find that they had planned to have three town hall meetings. But they abandoned the third town hall meeting. I remember the leaders of the folks who were pushing me on this said, "Well, I think we've beaten him up enough." And they decided they didn't need to have the third town hall meeting. So, after a while I think they felt like they had a chance to give their message. They had a chance to make me understand how they felt about it. I think they felt a little more confident with my commitment. A lot of that had to do with new people getting to know each other. As far as the building occupation is concerned, that's nervous time. I'll tell you. But we had a couple hundred people in this building... So we let them stay in the building overnight. And they was some controversy over that. But I don't think it would've been beneficial to try to strong-arm people.

DT: Do you think the next president could face any explosive issues like that?

LF: Sure. In fact the next president will face explosive issues like that. This university has always been a place where there's a lot of passion and activism, and it's just a matter of what the subject will be. That will happen. The next president will get that. I may get it again. Who knows what will come up?

DT: Do you have a suspicion? Is there anything on horizon that you see?

LF: No, I'm saying it with knowledge of the history of the University of Texas and its character. Don't forget I go back to this place as a student 40 years ago. I've watched this place for a long time, and its essential character has remained intact

over decades. I can bet that it's going to remain another decade.

DT: In 1966, you were a student at SMU. But you were here on Aug. 1 [the day of the Tower shooting]?

LF: I was. I graduated from SMU in May. I started graduate school here in June. I started here like a week after I graduated SMU.

DT: Aug. 1 was the Charles Whitman shooting. What was that like from your perspective? Where were you on campus?

LF: Well, I had just walked off of campus. I had a class in the morning over in Welch. I had a national science foundation fellowship that was payday. I went to the Bursar's office which is exactly where it now, to pick up a check. They had a sign right at noon. They had a sign that there was no check. It wouldn't be available until 2 o'clock. By the time I got home, (I was married already). And my wife said there's a guy shooting on the campus. And that was 10 minutes after I walked off the campus. I was not actually physically on the campus. But it was a stunning thing. In America of that time, it was inconceivable. Unfortunately, it's become less inconceivable.

DT: The bursar's office was usually open at noon?

DT: So what was the atmosphere like the next couple of days on campus?

LF: Oh, it was people were stunned ... People were just stunned. I don't know what else to say.

DT: So, when you made the decision that you want to reopen to Tower observation deck about 40 years later, how does that memory play out in your mind as you do that? And are there people calling you and saying how could you do that? Is anybody mad that you're opening the observation deck?

LF: I had one or two calls. They were all of the character of, "How can you reopen the observation deck when it's such a dangerous place?" It was that and not, "Given the memory you shouldn't do it." I felt really strongly; let me back a little bit. Not only was I here on Aug 1, 66, but I was a student; I graduated here. I was a faculty member back in the 80s. I've never really lost contact with the University ... When I came in as president, I really came in with a strong personal agenda. I don't think it's the most important thing in the life of the University. But I believed it was important to get the Tower reopened. From this perspective you might not be able to feel what it was like. But for like 20 years, every time people looked at the Tower from below, talked about the Tower, it was always like, "Whitman was up there, and there was a shooting, and here are the bullet holes are over here. And you ought to be able to go up there." It was a forbidden place. And it was unhealthy. It was like a festering wound in the life of the University. And I felt like it was the only way to cause it to heal was actually to take away the forbiddenness. And I think I was right... We went through a period when we had constant reruns on television of the Whitman tapes and so forth. Now when you see families going up there, they're not all talking about bullet holes and rifles. And when people are walking around down below, they're not all talking about Whitman up there with his gun. It's not as though we've forgotten it altogether, and there's no reason to forget it. But the obsession is gone. And that's healthier for the University ... I will tell you that historically I've

always been fascinated by the interest that people have in the Tower. One of the reasons I've been fascinated is there are a lot of high places in the world. You know the Tower is not unique as a high place. What the Tower is unique as is a place that looks down on the central heart of the identity of the state of Texas. And Texans resonate to that in a way that is unique and meaningful and special to them. That's what I think the Tower's about. That's my theory.

DT: One of the things I was reading is back when you were either a finalist or coming to this position, the officials here nixed a plan to have a diversity officer. They decided that ...

LF: That was probably before I came.

DT: Well, you were quoted in a Texan story.

LF: Well, I wasn't party to the decision.

DT: No you weren't. They called you for comment, which must've meant that you were the incoming president at the time. And you said that diversity was a very broad subject and you didn't think that one office could really harness that and hold it together.

LF: I think that's still an issue. And it's still going to be an issue for Greg Vincent.

DT: But obviously being here has changed your opinion somewhat or the past few years have changed your opinion somewhat. What has made you...?

LF: Well, I think it's still a hard problem...I think you see this argument constantly, as an organizational argument, you see it constantly in the literature, in the press, as to whether creating an office like this takes away from the sense of responsibility that everyone ought to have to make progress in this area or whether the office gives a focus. What I've done in the racial respect and fairness report response is to try to create a hybrid structure where there's a network that's set up. I forgot the name of it, but it's a committee of people that are designated in each portfolio area, and Greg Vincent will be the chair of that. So it's a way of trying to spread the responsibility or preserve the sense that everybody has responsibility. But I have come to believe that you need somebody who's thinking about what to do about this everyday. And there are situations where if you try to make something everybody's responsibility, it becomes nobody's responsibility. And that I think I'm more won over to the view that you need somebody who's thinking about it everyday. So, maybe I have transformed my views some.

DT: Do you know what won you over? Was it the task force report? Was it the incidents that happened?

LF: No it wasn't anything specific. It probably had to do more with all the dimensions of this. Trying to recruit a more diverse student population, trying to recruit more faculty, trying to pay attention to how we develop staff. And realizing how many elements there are in this and trying to maintain pressure on it. I mean these are themes that have been with me since I've been here. They're central to where Texas is going. The state, not just the University. I'm a lot more experienced with these things than I was when I walked in here.

DT: When you first started, you said eventually UT needed to represent the state racially both in its faculty and in its students. The state of Texas is becoming even more Latino than we expected. And UT is trying to keep up. It's obvious we're not there yet.

LF: I feel pretty good about where we've gone. I think that one thing that is almost never mentioned in stories about this is we have to work with what the schools produce. In the end, I'm talking about students now, not faculty, but we have to work with the representation that exists in the upper quarter of the high school class. And that doesn't look like Texas. So, I think given what the schools are producing right now in the upper quarter of the high school class, I think we're doing fairly well. But that's not the same thing as saying that we're producing the share of leadership for those population sectors that is going to be needed in the future. That's a long-term goal and a long-term issue for Texas. But all of it is not in our hands. It's really important to understand that the schools have a lot to do with this. And I think we can try really hard to do a lot better than what the schools give us, but we can't do infinitely better. We can't multiply by three. That's pretty hard to do.

DT: How do you see things like enrollment strategy and top 10 percent working out for the next president?

LF: Well, I think the University will always have tension on how big it will be. I don't think the final chapter on that has been written. I do believe that we made big steps with enrollment strategy on creating a rational concept on how big this place should be, and I think we'll try to work through those principles even as I think we should. But the ultimate resolution of the top 10 percent will have a lot to do with conditions against which the University has to operate. I don't know where that's going to go. I thought the Legislature this time would do something about the top 10 percent law. They didn't. I think it will come back; it'll certainly be on the burner next time and we'll see if they do. If the top 10 percent law isn't changed over time, I see the University becoming very much larger. Because it will not be possible to restrict enrollment to just top 10 percent qualifiers. We'll always have to have some latitude to go beyond that group. So your incoming class will always be whoever's qualified under top 10 percent plus whatever that increment needs to be. And as growth occurs, as the state gets bigger, that's going to cause pressure for the class sizes to become bigger. That'll cause the university to grow.

DT: If you had some power to set policy on the state level what would you do with the numbers we're seeing right now with the top 10.

LF: I'm on record as saying that I think the best thing to do is to limit it to half the number of the incoming class...I think that if I had a frustration out of the last legislative session it would be that both polar ends of this argument - those who didn't want to change the law at all and those who wanted to repeal it - would've gotten probably 95 percent of what they were looking for if they'd just gone to the 50 percent cap. But I think it was the reality of this law as far as its effects are that it's with a moderate position, with a compromise position, you can get practically everything you're looking for. No matter where you started.

DT: With enrollment strategy, one of the things that's been talked about since you've been here is the four-year graduation rate. It was 12.7 credit hours students were taking. It went up to a little over 13, but that's still relatively low. Is that something

you're going to try to improve before you leave?

LF: We've made big progress on the four-year graduation rate. When I came here it was 29 percent. It's now about 46 or so. We've been moving about 2 or 3 percent per year. We could be close to 50 this fall when the new numbers are in. I don't know that we will be, but we could be. Most of our real competitors among leading public universities in the country are graduating 55 to 65 percent in four years. And we're not that far now away from there, whereas we were a long way away from there. So I think a good bit of progress has been made. I want to reinforce that this has to do with how much it costs people to go to school here. Not just with lost revenue but with accumulated debt. Because you accumulate debt on the tail end of your experience, not on the front end. When you talk about affordability, this question is important.

DT: Do you think we'll ever see any of this policy, the more inflammatory ones that were in the enrollment strategy report. Five years and you're out on undergraduate, 14 hours to be in an honors program.

LF: I think you might see some of them. I think that will be talked about. When I was at Illinois, we had a 10-semester limit. And it didn't create problems. There were waiver problems for people who had good reasons...

DT: Do you think students' civil rights have become more secure or less secure in your time here?

LF: I think they've become more secure if only because I think that the task force on expression and assembly was one of the most advanced efforts that's been taken on any university campus to examine the law in full and to lay out principles for operating that are in accord with the laws that exist and the best traditions with civil liberties. I think that we actually are now a model for operating within principles guiding these matters. In that sense, I think there's a lot of security that comes from having fought through all of this recently and having it expressed...I think all of this has also been done in the backdrop of post-9/11 activities in which there are federal requirements that are more intrusive than they were. I think as far as the University's actions in this sphere, I think we've created greater security. Actions posed by the outside world, I think have comprised civil liberties in this sphere to some extent.

DT: In your time here has your perspective on the involvement of the federal government and what happens on a campus changed?

LF: Yeah, although not so much as from UT-specific activities. I see this on two levels. One is what does the federal government do at UT, and frankly I'm not seeing a heck of a lot. The federal government's not overwhelmingly present here, and I'm not seeing anything I would call really repressive here. On the other hand, at the national level, which is another place I see this, or perspective that I have, the movement of the federal government toward policies that, especially with respect to the practice of research, will turn out to be counterproductive for the United States is a serious concern. A lot of this has to do with the ability of foreign students to enter the United States and participate in activity here and their ability to actually have access to the tools of research. Some of this has to do with regulations still being debated in Washington. There are concerns about that.

DT: When you came here, it seems like some of the conservatives in town, the Mark Levin's of the world, were excited to have you. They liked you on first glance. The radical liberal element on campus was not so excited; they didn't know you. So, you were seen as somewhat of a conservative on campus. Did you feel like a conservative when you first came here? Has that changed?

LF: I probably haven't changed, but who knows. You can't ask anybody whether they've changed, you have to observe that yourself. I think probably the least reliable authority on whether anybody's changed is the person themselves. You know, I have always believed that I have a relatively moderate view of things and that I think before I act. Depending on the issues, sometimes the liberals will see me as conservative, and sometimes the conservatives will see me as liberal. I don't know if there's anything I can do about that. I think some of it has to do with getting to know me. And maybe as I've gone along here people who thought I might be in one camp felt that I'm not as much in that camp. I don't really know; you guys probably ought to judge that.

DT: Did you believe in the necessity of university systems to set their own tuitions? Did you believe in that before coming here?

LF: Sure. Actually it's the way almost the entire world works. I know that Texas thinks that it invented tuition deregulation, but it didn't. Most other states operate that way. So, I mean, it's the way I've seen it. I personally still believe it's going to be and will be and is a more accountable system. All the pressure that was put on in the political process as tuition issues were considered this year are clear indicators that now it's visible whereas before it was fragmented and invisible the process of setting costs. So, I think in the end, people are going to find this is actually going to be a more accountable.

DT: Before we go, we haven't even talked about the infrastructure fee, which was the issue when I first came to campus. The same year that UT proposed the infrastructure fee and the regents approved it was also around the same time that John Jackson put \$25 million into the We're Texas campaign. Do you think, looking back, there might have been a better way to operate the We're Texas campaign or raise more money? Do you agree that that might have looked bad for the University to have that dichotomy?

LF: I think there's a lot of misunderstanding over it. And I'm not sure that it's avoidable, frankly. A presumption when that question is usually asked that way is that if we only had run the We're Texas campaign differently we could've gotten the donors to give to different things. That's probably not true. Fundraising is not a matter, mostly, of asking people to give to particular targets. It's approaching people who have a desire to give and trying to match up what they want to give to more or less with prime targets for the University. But you can't steer them infinitely. Jack Jackson wanted to give his money to create a permanent geological sciences program. Period. Even though you might think you'd like to spend it on something else, you're not going to get to spend it on something else. He either will give it to that or he won't. Or he'll give it to somebody else to do that. A donor who wants to give scholarships to students is often motivated by the thought that the University was very important in my life, and I'm going to give that opportunity to somebody else. If you need money to fix the roof, you're not going to persuade somebody who has that motivation to give money to fix the roof. What you can do is if you got somebody who comes and says they want to give money for a building and they'd

like to build a building in an area... My job is more like a traffic cop. It's really like trying to match up what people are doing. What they want to give to to what we need. But it has to be something they're comfortable with. You can't just say, "Give me the money, and we'll spend on something we need."

DT: One more. "What did you think of Man of the House?"

LF: Oh, I thought it was funny. I thought it was OK. I think what I told Don [Hale] that it reminded me when we saw it, it reminded me of the relationship that "Legally Blonde" has to Harvard. It gave a lot of visual exposure to Harvard, and nobody was actually going to confuse that Harvard was this way. So I felt though people are worried about our image in "Man of the House," I wasn't too worried about our image in "Man of the House," and I think did give us some visual. So, it was OK.