

The City of Tolleson was established among the underlying principle of “Honoring Our Past, Positioning Our Future”. Founded in 1912, this community continues to value diversity, leadership and family which has allowed us to flourish together. Downtown Tolleson *Paseo De Luces* is a place of communal gathering where all are able to assimilate into one cohesive society. *Paseo de Luces*’ Central Plaza of the town consists of bright, lustrous lights that illuminate this small city similarly to the innovative minds of the youth within the Tolleson Union High School district.

Within this district is the college preparatory school, University High, which enforces this standard of innovation among its students. We are pushed beyond our limits to overachieve academically, improve as people intellectually, have an intelligent say within society and ultimately gain a deeper understanding of the world. We have been taught to believe in “harnessing the power of dreams” which has driven us towards a future that once seemed impossible. Along with Tolleson Union, which continues to fulfill its mission of “Excellence in Teaching and Learning for All”, we reside on one unified campus and continue to thrive upon the same values our community was established among.

As adolescents who seek to understand the life surrounding us, we continue to maintain a lively and dynamic community by bringing forth new ideas that allow the town to prosper. Therefore, we must continue to “Honor our Past” as it is part of the Tolleson culture to remember one’s roots by never forgetting where it all began because T-Town is our home and always will be. Most importantly, we must continue to “Position our Future” by further enhancing the underlying values and principles this community has instilled within us and by demonstrating our ability to be resolute.

For many of us, we have overcome the so-called “inevitable” reality we were destined to face not only as low-income, first generation college students but as minorities within modern American society. As minorities, we have witnessed first hand the financial reality our families continue to face which allowed us to truly recognize the importance of completing a rigorous honors level curriculum. We chose to be pushed to reach our maximum potential to prove to ourselves, and ultimately society, that we are capable of obtaining success and we will continue to be in pursuit of prosperity despite our socioeconomic background. Along the way, we will

continue to represent T-Town and eventually return to inspire Tolleson's youth in the same sense that this "Opportunity City" established an outstanding foundation for success within us.

All thanks to Tolleson's "Tradition of Excellence", this ideology sets the standard for the generations of Wolverines that are yet to come. We are encouraged to pursue our dreams, to go beyond and seek to understand the world away from home. Not to be held back, but instead to thrive and make it beyond this *Paseo de Luces* towards a greater city with brighter lights that will illuminate our journey like no other.

Thank you.

Irene Franco Rubio- Class of 2018