

Strategic Conversations Summary

Four separate meetings were held this fall concerning the strategic vision and planning priorities for UTA, including two open forums for faculty, a session with department chairs and program directors, and a conversation with the Faculty Senate. Approximately 130 faculty and academic unit administrators from across colleges, schools, and programs participated in the meetings and provided ideas, suggestions, and comments. Five sets of questions were employed to focus the discussions. A thematic summary derived from these discussions follows:

UTA Strategic Planning Conversation Questions:

Question 1 Theme: Tier I

- What will it take for UTA to achieve “Tier One” status within the next 10-15 years?
- Is this a realistic goal? How do we measure progress toward that goal? What are the barriers?
- Can UTA be a “first class” university without technically achieving “Tier One” status? * If so, what does that mean and how do we measure progress toward achievement of that goal?

Question 2 Theme: UTA Strengths

- What qualitative academic and research strengths will enable UTA to distinguish itself from other universities? What are emerging areas of strength?
- How do we capitalize on UTA’s location in the heart of the DFW Metroplex?
- What areas of strength lend themselves to the most promising partnerships and collaborations with corporations and communities in the Metroplex? Who are our most promising partners?

Question 3 Theme: UTA and DFW Area

- What is the appropriate role for UTA beyond the Arlington campus?
- In Dallas?
- In Fort Worth?

Question 4 Theme: Campus Life

- How do we create a more vibrant cultural, intellectual and residential life on the campus as increasingly more students live in university housing?

Question 5 Theme: SACS and QEP

- The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), our university accrediting agency, requires the development of a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). The QEP is “a carefully designed and focused course of action that addresses a well-defined topic or issue(s) related to enhancing student learning” (SACS Handbook for Reaffirmation of Accreditation). What topics or issues do you see as particularly important?

Thematic Summary of Responses

Research and Teaching Enhancement

- Improve salaries (and start-up and compensation packages) for faculty recruitment and retention
- Reduce teaching workloads to allow more time for research
- Make the tenure process less intimidating and more transparent in order to retain good faculty
- Develop a research “culture”
- Provide grant writing assistance and/or workshops
- Reduce research and funding-related paperwork
- Increase research collaborations internally and with other universities (UT Dallas and UT Southwestern were mentioned numerous times)
- Hire early corporate retirees as researchers
- Create a centralized faculty development program to improve teaching and provide resources for faculty
- Emphasize and reward good teaching

Student Enhancement

- Raise academic standards
- Increase critical/analytical thinking among students
- Increase oral and written communication among students
- Increase GTA/GRA stipends to attract higher quality graduate students
- Increase mentoring and other retention efforts
- Augment student learning with additional co-op programs, internships, service learning, and student research opportunities
- Internationalize the curriculum
- Include a foreign language requirement for all students

Infrastructure Enhancement

- Add public transportation (to Dallas and Ft. Worth, to D/FW Airport, shuttle bus system near campus)
- Add gathering places on or near campus (strip mall, theater, coffee houses, cafes, pubs)
- Improve means of communication with students about events (bulletin boards, Shorthorn)
- Add a faculty lounge

Perception Enhancement

- Improve marketing and visibility of programs
- Focus on strong academic programs and accomplished alumni
- Improve continuing education and corporate training programs as a form of outreach to the community
- Build on our “urban” identity

Other Topics

- Acquire a law school
- Improve service to the community
- Engage alumni more effectively
- Strengthen or add athletic programs (basketball, football, soccer)