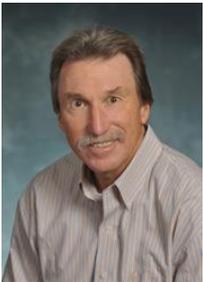# Texas A&M Strategic Planning 2015-2020

Forum - #3: Strategies for Excellence at Texas A&M

Friday, March 13, 2015
601 Rudder
Hosted by Faculty Senate & Council of Principal Investigators

<u>*Moderator for Forum #3:*</u>

Jim Woosley, Speaker, Faculty Senate
Department of Health & Kinesiology
College of Education & Human Development
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Forum # 3 Details:
Mr. Jim Woosley, Speaker of the Faculty Senate, welcomed nearly 100 participants to the third Strategic Planning Open Forum, held from 11:30 am – 1:00 pm in Rudder 601. In addition, participants joined the discussion online via Live Stream viewing.

Mr. Woosley made an initial statement on the rules of decorum and the format for the discussion. Following Forum 2, Provost Watson asked the university community to submit strategies for achieving the objectives outlined in the working document. Fifteen people responded with an array of strategies and ideas.

Presentation for FORUM #3: Dr. Karan Watson, provost & executive vice president

Dr. Watson reminded participants that we have a twofold opportunity with our strategic plan. First, the State requires all state agencies, including universities, to submit a strategic plan by the end of the year. Second, and perhaps more importantly, incoming president Dr. Michael Young will be arriving on May 1. He is already involved in learning about the university. But, he is particularly interested in hearing the outcomes of these forums as part of his briefings. All of our input will be valuable to him as he assumes his responsibilities as president.

Dr. Watson reiterated that the goal is not to achieve a specific ranking; it is to be widely recognized as a great university.

Provost Watson presented a PowerPoint incorporating the ideas and suggested strategies into the Working Document. [Presentation may be downloaded from the http://stratplan.tamu.edu website.] Thirty-two participants offered questions/comments in person or by email [vision2020@tamu.edu]. She asked participants to focus on the strategies presented and let her know if your strategies and suggestions were captured correctly. In addition, she welcomes ideas you come up with today. Some strategies can help achieve more than one objective. If that's true, it may help us decide if some of the objectives need to be collapsed into each other. We are happy to bounce back to whichever one you want to consider. We just wanted you to get an idea of what people are telling us; so you can tell us if we are accurately capturing your suggestions and strategies.

Mr. Woosley, moderated the discussion

Forum #3 Dialogue: Highlights of Questions & Comments (Q/C) Expressed by Participants

[NOTE: These are offered as summary of comments/questions. For fuller understanding of context and content of the dialogue, please view the video of the forum by visiting the Strategic Planning website: http://stratplan.tamu.edu]

Q/C: Objective 1, Strategy 1—about doctoral students completing no less than 18 hours in course work in a year. I don't think that should apply after they've finished their final exams. That would put a huge financial burden on them. There needs to be a clause in there about that.
- *Jeff Haberl, College of Architecture*

RESPONSE: (Watson) Could it be changed to read "until they reach candidacy"?

Q/C: Something like that.
- *Jeff Haberl, College of Architecture*

Q/C: Objective 1, Strategy 1—as a former student I have a hard time seeing how creating a university culture by mandating from the top down is going accomplish anything. The strategy of taking more hours is more plausible than creating a tag line. I think we need to have incentives.
- *Faith Stringer, College of Architecture*

RESPONSE: (Watson) We are not trying to create a rule and assume that people will just do it. The effort is to create a new norm through incentives not trying to punish. But, that's incentives are one type of tactic and there are many potential tactics that could be used.

Q/C: I just think it comes across the wrong way.
- *Faith Stringer, College of Architecture*

RESPONSE: (Watson) So, if we included after the word culture, in parentheses, "through incentives more than rules", would that help?

Q/C: Sure.
- *Faith Stringer, College of Architecture*

Q/C: Objective 1, Strategy 1—I have a question about the asterisk. We've been a resident school historically. We haven't had many part-time students. But as our community grows and Houston grows closer, we have more opportunities to have part-time students. Does this asterisk imply that we want to embrace part-time students? Or are we going to continue to focus on full-time students.
- *Gene Hawkins, Dwight Look College of Engineering*

RESPONSE: (Watson) We have lots of students in the College of Education who take graduate courses on a part-time basis. This is no hidden attempt to drive the mix of full-time and part-time students; but we are open to the idea. It is acknowledging that you may have students, who are employed full-time, that want to take courses part-time.

Q/C: It's not necessarily a goal; but you're not trying to exclude . . . .
- *Gene Hawkins, Dwight Look College of Engineering*

Q/C: Objective 1, Strategy 3—enhance practices for recruiting graduate students. I believe recruiting the best students depends on rankings. When I was looking at schools, I sent all my applications to the top schools. Ranking does matter. If you want good students to come, rankings matter
- **Jorge Alvarado, Dwight Look College of Engineering**

RESPONSE: (Watson) There is no university ranking for graduate school. Graduate rankings are done by program. The rankings in magazines are undergraduate rankings. To be in the top-10 in undergraduate rankings, we would have very few students and charge a whole lot more. So, you can't say that those rankings apply across the board.

Q/C: For the record, I was talking about department rankings. But, another area is financial aid. The resources we provide to incoming students. A really nice package is quite attractive. For instance, I had a tuition waiver for five years.
- **Jorge Alvarado, Dwight Look College of Engineering**

RESPONSE: (Watson) I think your point is "don't just admit them; get them to come" with financial aid, etc.

Q/C: Objective 1, Strategy 3—One of the tactics on this is to ask corporate donors to increase the number of internships. Get them some good experience while they're here so that when they graduate they are more experienced and have better placement.
- **Doug Biggs, College of Geosciences**

COMMENT: Following a lull and no comments regarding Objectives 2 and 3—(Watson) I want to emphasize to you that if we did really well on Objectives 1 and 2 our students may really value the experience. We may just need to talk to them more explicitly about it. May be Objective 3 gets collapsed into another.

Q/C: I was going to say the same thing. If we do a good job with 1 and 2, this one's going to get collapsed.
- **Helene Andrews-Polymenis, College of Medicine**

Q/C: Objective 4—a quick observation. This appears to be more of supporting objective than a top-line objective. I see it more as a strategy that could be folded into Objective 8. This seems to be more internal or process-related.
- **Joel Thorn, University Libraries**

RESPONSE: (Watson) Again, I think you're saying that if we do really well at 1 and 2 this one can be collapsed. But, I think it is important for us to make a statement about our commitment to diversity and accessibility. We don't want it to get lost.

Q/C: This is partly about diversity and partly about the expansion of 25 by 25 and the ability to attract enough talent at the undergraduate level. Is part of the plan to attract a lot of foreign students that have to pay out-of-state tuition? Is that part of the plan for 25 by 25?
- **Ken Dykema, College of Science**

RESPONSE: (Watson) At the graduate level we are already over 40% international. At the undergraduate level we have a miniscule number of international students and a miniscule number of out-of-state students, for that matter. Nothing about this plan is considering significantly changing that number. We have not included that as a strategy for raising finances.

Q/C: In a climate of limited state resources, I know we wouldn't be the first public university to turn to out-of-state students to increase revenue.
- **Ken Dykema, College of Science**

RESPONSE: (Watson) But we are one of the public universities that has state-imposed restrictions, at a fairly low level. It's very low. It's not a law. It's a restriction that was placed on UT and we have always believed that if we came close to it, the restriction would be applied to us.

Q/C: I encourage you to keep Objective 4 at this level. It is very important; it keeps it in front of us and reminds us and others how important it is. It keeps us committed.
- ***David Ford, Dwight Look College of Engineering***

Q/C (email): Very important to maintain promoting a student body, faculty and staff that is as diverse as possible is important to maintain as an independent objective.
   Perhaps one way to think about doing better in this area is to closely examine the practices at those institutions that do really well at diversity at all levels.
- ***Helene Andrews-Polymenis, College of Medicine***

RESPONSE: (Watson) Let's take a moment to talk about this. We are working on this. There has not been a year since I have been here that we haven't espoused working on this. We have managed to increase the African-American enrollment to about 3%. We have to do something to change our image in the African-American community. We need to uncover our blind spots and improve the culture, not just for African-Americans, but for other groups, women for example, and at all levels. Throwing money at it is not the answer. There are a lot of things about our culture that we really need to examine. (Woosley) I'm hearing it's important, that it will always be important. (Watson) But maybe we've haven't captured it well. What's different about this than just recruiting students?

Q/C: Missing in Objective 4, and it may be there and I'm not seeing it, is the idea that the university can go outside of its boundaries into neighborhoods where there are families with students who could be the first generation to go to college. We need to work with them to know that they can go to college and they can go here. I don't see that. Maybe it's in 8.
- ***James Burk, College of Liberal Arts***

RESPONSE: (Watson) Perhaps it should be in both 4 and 8. When we get to 8 make sure it is in there.

COMMENT: (Woosley) Objective 5. I can start off with an email.

Q/C (email): A Few Suggestions about Objectives 5/6/7

Objectives:
Combine current objectives 5, 6, and 7 into a single objective:
Recruit and retain, and facilitate the work of highly productive faculty and staff.

Several strategies that might fall under this objective:
1. Identify and promote the benefits of being TAMU faculty.
2. Collect and analyze faculty hiring/recruitment data. Systematically identify factors contributing to successful recruitment and factors contributing to failed recruitment. Address these deficiencies in future hiring, use the strengths to inform (1).
3. Identify resources to compensate recruited faculty competitively with peer institutions.
4. Develop mechanisms to ensure equity in compensation within departments.

Retain
1. Develop a transparent methodology and funds to incentivize high performance in a faculty member's primary area of emphasis (research, teaching, etc.).

2. *Develop and emphasize programs for career development for faculty. (teaching institutes, leadership institutes, faculty development leave wouldn¹t all have to be developed here, could be as simple as setting aside $$ to send faculty elsewhere to take a course).*
3. *Improve research support infrastructure (SRS, compliance) to reduce time spent on administrative tasks. Bring TAMU policies in close alignment with NIH and other applicable guidelines (TAMU frequently goes far above and beyond the federal guidelines).*
4. *Develop a proactive system for nomination of faculty for local, national and international awards.*
5. *Develop proposal development support in the office of the Vice President for Research (personnel skilled in preparation of large grants that actually work on the grant itself)*
   - ***Helene Andrews-Polymenis, College of Medicine***

RESPONSE: *(Watson) Let me talk a little bit about why we have them broken out. Making sure our faculty—who we hire, how they are nurtured—is a very core part of what any university has to do and do well. But, we are writing the strategic plan to focus on the outcomes of having those great faculty, not what are the processes or the headcount or the things we do for the faculty.*

We're trying to merge many good ideas about how we look at this from the inside—in terms of practices—with how the external audiences sees it. It's important that the external audiences who provide us with many of our resources see and understand what we are trying to achieve through our hires, start-up packages, retention efforts, these new facilities and equipment—all the investments we make to get there. One of our dilemmas is that external constituencies do not understand publications. All they have heard is publish or perish and that is a bad thing. Our problem is--for our scholars to be perceived as thought leaders in their fields, we need to do a much better job at making sure they are viewed in the field, and that they are cited, and what they have discovered in their labs is cited and used. And then we need to make sure they are getting the proper funding, invitations, inclusion so they can do the work they need to do to get the citations and are part of the national conversation that is driving where the field goes. Finally, they need to be getting the awards—highly prestigious awards—in the fields that acknowledges that they are indeed there.

We fully recognize that these all are linked together. Our problem is that if we collapse them into one, with a lot of our constituencies, we lose the importance of the fact that there is more to this than just hiring, or getting funded. There's a whole lot of complexity to this. So while I recognize that they are all so interrelated, so is having students graduating on time.

If we are not careful, our objectives come down to three.
1. *Do great things with the students*
2. *Make sure your faculty do great things*
3. *And do great things for the public.*

We can do that if we want. But, we keep breaking the points out because even though they are very interrelated, they are not always linked. In some fields you don't get funding, you only get cited.

It's not just that we don't want to collapse them. We just want everyone to recognize that all three aspects of this cycle are very, very important to the university. That's why there has been a level of resistance on my part. But that doesn't mean we won't do it.

Q/C: *Objective 5, Strategies 1 and 2—I concur with strategies 1 and 2, but I am concerned about how we are going to provide funding opportunities to our junior faculty.*
   - ***Rafael Lara-Alecio, College of Education & Human Development***

RESPONSE: ***Discussion about combining parts of Objective 5 and 6.*** *(Watson) Objective 6 has a lot about funding. Funding opportunities and amounts are very different from one field to another. And we absolutely have to recognize those differences.*

Q/C: Objective 5, Strategy 2—most impactful publications. We need to think about getting into open access publishing so we can get to our faculty's work without paying the huge amounts to companies that publish research. The open access movement would allow our faculty's work to be seen in more than one place and would create greater visibility.
- ***Michael Smith, College of Medicine***

RESPONSE: (Watson) I think that would be a tactic.

Q/C: Objective 5, Strategy 1—I would like to recommend that we continue to keep the program level visible because so many of the research areas are multidisciplinary, cross-disciplinary that they focus on teams. Dollars per faculty, publications per faculty need to go hand-in-hand with centers and programs level.
- ***Doug Biggs, College of Geosciences***

RESPONSE: (Watson) So along with the evaluation of faculty member's work, we should include programs. OK.

Q/C: Objective 5, Strategy 2—I need some clarification about support for faculty members to share work in the most impactful publications. Does that mean the generation of the work? Because that gets into core facilities and these sorts of issues.
- ***Paul Hardin, College of Science***

RESPONSE: (Watson) NO. I don't think it was meant to imply that. But if you think that's important, send it to us. I think it was just meant to enhance the support we provide to faculty members to get their work published.

Q/C: But clearly there's a need to have the highest level facilities to support the faculty as they do the research that would get them into the most impactful journals.
- ***Paul Hardin, College of Science***

RESPONSE: (Watson) Yes. So let's talk about that. That's kind of hidden beneath the faculty and the programs in the budget. Budget could include investments in new positions, start-ups, facilities, equipment, etc. Budgeting is hiding a whole bunch of possible tactics. Do we need to bring it out more explicitly as a strategy?

Q/C: I would say so.
- ***Paul Hardin, College of Science***

Q/C: Objective 5, Strategy 2—I suggest you substitute the word venue for publications because publications is too narrow. Then you could accept contributions from faculty who work on national standards, national guidelines, and those who exhibit and produce art. They get no credit for that.
- ***Jeff Haberl, College of Architecture***

RESPONSE: (Watson) So then this is best broadened to say venue.

Q/C: So, let me provide a counter argument to that. Here's the problem. Let's look at the numbers. Among AAU members were near the bottom in terms of citations—250,000 or so for the whole university. It's a huge problem. However, the number of citations is a reflection of another problem. It's the end product. We need to make a strong effort for faculty to be more productive.
- ***Jorge Alvarado, Dwight Look College of Engineering***

RESPONSE: (Watson) So as a university, I think it would be appropriate if we made room for those work in creativity is not typically published. But, in those areas where work is published, we shouldn't back off on our efforts to become even stronger. We have to find a way to word that right as a university.

Q/C: I believe that as part of this strategy the word "staff" is missing because as staff we publish, although it is not necessarily part of our job. We do it because we want to and because it contributes to our fields and because it brings prominence to A&M. I like the word "scholars" in the objective because that covers everyone. But in the strategy it just says faculty.
   - ***Donna Lee Sullins, Division of Student Affairs***

RESPONSE: (Watson) Our students publish too. So, that's a good point.

Q/C: I want to talk about the opposite ends of the spectrum. We have to look at each person as a whole. There may be faculty members in fields where publications are important but who make great impacts to the profession through other kinds of activities.
   - ***Gene Hawkins, Dwight Look College of Engineering***

RESPONSE: (Watson) We need to work on making sure that we capture the programmatic expectation that that the team delivers at the highest level and that every member of the team does not have to be doing the exact same thing. We need to get that right.

COMMENT: (Watson) So we didn't really resolve whether 5, 6, and 7 should be collapsed, but if you have further thoughts as we go through, speak up.

Q/C: I think the conversation we are having shows the jeopardy of coming up with a broad document that covers everything. But, I am concerned about the evaluation of faculty members. I think we are already over-evaluated. That word shouldn't be "enhance"—may be is should be "focus". Writing internal reports only takes a way time from writing publications.
   - ***Sharath Girimaji, Dwight Look College of Engineering***

RESPONSE: (Watson) OK. Enhance sounds like expand.

Q/C (email):   Related to strategy 5, has consideration been given to graphics design support for scientific and other authors who do not have the software or the skillset to prepare publication quality drawings?
   - ***John Bowman, Irma Lerma Rangel School of Pharmacy***

RESPONSE: (Watson) I'll take that as a tactic and move on.

COMMENT: (Watson) I want to talk a little about this and you will see my hand in Strategy 5. The problem is we are not at the center of gravity where a lot of action is happening and giving our scholars the visibility and the access to opportunities and prestige. Almost all of these ideas are saying we need to get better at getting our faculty and what they are doing out to a much higher level than their societies and such. In Texas last year, one person was added to the National Academy of Engineering. There were 67 of them nationwide, and the vast majority of them were on the two coasts. That happens with prestigious awards, too. They have great scholars, but we have great scholars. Our scholars are just not as visible. A lot of this is saying we need to be much more systematic and better. When someone suggests collapsing these, I'm concerned that we will lose the emphasis on what we need to do.

Q/C: Objective 6, Strategy 3—May be this is a tactic, but I know there has been discussion at CPI that our sponsored research services aren't at the level they should be. There have been multiple problems. It's also the case that a lot of successful universities have strict policies and better infrastructure for working on grants. On Strategy 4, as part of the interdisciplinary programs, this is still a challenge. Can we break down some of these traditional barriers and get departments to push interdisciplinary programs.
   - ***Spencer Behmer, College of Agriculture & Life Sciences***

COMMENT: (Woosley) I would like to point out that when we talk about support, we are not just talking about money. We are talking about structures and processes, too.

COMMENT: (Watson) I want to emphasize that I can see how 5, 6, and 7 can be collapsed. I want to hear your ideas.

Q/C: You may want to think about collapsing 5 into 7 and not collapsing all three into one.
- **Doug Biggs, College of Geosciences**

Q/C: Objective 7, Strategy 2—As a geographer, I have to point out that geography is not destiny. So just because we are not on either coast…, but there is something we can do. In our ADVANCE group, we've been talking about tactics that we can use to help each other. One tactic is establishing an awards office and strategize about nominating people for awards and support the nomination process.
- **Sarah Bednarz, College of Geosciences**

RESPONSE: (Watson) The concept of awards offices at the department and college levels for internal awards to groom nominees for higher awards is a good idea. But we really need university level office that work on higher level awards—prepare nominations and packets. The department- and college-level offices would be a feeder for the university-level office

Q/C: Objective 7, Strategy 2—Our department has a continually successful awards committee. A tactic might be to identify some of these efforts that have been successful and layout a protocol or process for nominations and how they are effective.
- **Spencer Behmer, College of Agriculture & Life Sciences**

Q/C: In the items put forward so forth I'm detecting only a half a feedback loop. At some point everything needs to come back to the faculty.
- **Jeff Haberl, College of Architecture**

RESPONSE: (Watson) On the plan? That's what will happen in Forum 4. The ideas that these dialogues are happening for you to give us comments and feedback and we are making refinements.

Q/C: There needs to be a formal mechanism for the faculty to get back together and determine how this plan is impacting the faculty. A monitoring and feedback loop after the plan is developed.
- **Jeff Haberl, College of Architecture**

RESPONSE: (Watson and Woosley) That makes sense.

Q/C: I think we have work to do. We need to take a fresh look at the way we do things and determine what we can do to take us to the next level.
- **Jorge Alvarado, Dwight Look College of Engineering**

Q/C: We have a goal for diversifying the student body, but I didn't see anything about the faculty or staff. I think that needs to be included.
- **Amy Glass, College of Liberal Arts**

RESPONSE: (Watson) it's supposed to be in Objective 4.

Q/C: Objective 8—we had a high-level strategy of reemphasizing our land-grant stewardship, included in that should be our sea- and space-grant stewardship.
- **Doug Biggs, College of Geosciences**

RESPONSE: (Watson) We will.

Q/C: Objective 8—I was asked to come back and suggest that community outreach to the families of potential first-generation students should be included explicitly in strategy 1 of objective 8. Long-term commitment over time.
- **James Burk, College of Liberal Arts**

RESPONSE: (Watson) Maybe we mean this as pre-college or maybe we mean this as image. But what I think your saying is that we need to be strategic about how we engage in the community for a long time—long-term commitment to whole communities.

Q/C: On the original plan, there were two subpoints to objective 8 that I don't see now. Are those coming?
- **Paul Hardin, College of Science**

RESPONSE: (Watson) No they kind of fell out with all the suggestions. I think they're in there, but I don't know.

Q/C: Well the second point, accelerating the translation of existing and new knowledge.
- **Paul Hardin, College of Science**

RESPONSE: (Watson) Somebody said I need to move that; so moved it up to objective 3 or somewhere like that—making sure our scholars work is used.

Q/C: As written, it seems to promote translational research, and not generating new knowledge.
- **Paul Hardin, College of Science**

RESPONSE: (Watson) It is in strategy 3 of objective 6; but, what I think we may have lost from 8 is that this is a public good.

Q/C: Exactly.
- **Paul Hardin, College of Science**

Q/C: Objective 9—I really don't like this one. It makes us look like we're not being great stewards of resources.
- **Helene Andrews-Polymenis, College of Medicine**

RESPONSE: (Watson) Our constituencies expect us to be great stewards of our resources. If we don't say that that is one of our objectives, we set ourselves up for criticism. This gives us a chance to tell people how good we are at it. But, frankly, all of you are not good at it. If you take this out you lose a platform for talking about it.

Q/C: Objective 9, Strategy 3—I would add the word "efficiently" after university resources—"spend university resources efficiently as if they were their own."
- **Amy Glass, College of Liberal Arts**

Q/C: If this document is for outside consumption, I think we have to specify that our research funding helps add to the State's resources. That's not appreciated at any level.
- **Sharath Girimaji, Dwight Look College of Engineering**

RESPONSE: (Watson) I think I agree with you. But, what this is saying is that the State measures our economic impact only at a university level. That's valuable, but it doesn't measure a whole lot of other things that we would like them to measure.

Q/C: I suggest "extremely cost effective." "Extremely low cost" is not always better.
   - ***Jeff Haberl, College of Architecture***

RESPONSE: *(Woosley) Yes, that's better.*

COMMENT: *(Watson) As we continue working on this stay at the strategic level don't go to the tactical level except if discussion of the tactics helps us to clarify that we are at the strategic level. What we are trying to do is show that we have resource needs.*