



THE TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

Picking up the Pace

*The Texas State University System
Chancellor Brian McCall, Ph.D.*

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*“Now here, you see, it takes all the running you can do, to
keep in the same place. If you want to get somewhere
else, you must run at least twice as fast as that!”*

-The Red Queen in Alice in Wonderland-

As the Texas State University System celebrates its centennial year, there is much to be proud of:

- We are the fastest growing university system in Texas having grown by 46 percent in the past ten years.
- We have realized the largest percentage increase of any university system in six year graduation rates (up 22 percent) in the past ten years. (This being a bigger challenge for our system than some others in that the average age of our students is higher at 23 and 71% of our students have jobs).
- The system has seen the largest increase of any system in the number of degrees awarded (up 81%) in the past ten years.
- In that same period, all of the institutions within our system have decreased administrative costs as a percentage of operating expense (most by double-digits).
- The system has the most efficient and productive faculty of any system with the average number of credit hours taught by the faculty being over 25 percent higher than other system averages.

We do more—with better result—with less, than any other university system in Texas and perhaps the nation. Our average per-student state appropriation of \$4,974 is the lowest of any system in Texas. By far. In fact, the state values a student at UT-San Antonio by approximately \$1,100 more than a student just up the road at Texas State—San Marcos; and, a student at Stephen F. Austin is appropriated \$1,198 more than a student at Sam Houston; and, a student at Texas A&M Corpus Christi is funded \$2,658 more than a student at Lamar. Despite these funding inequities, we succeed because our talented and dedicated presidents, administrators, faculty and staff determine that we shall.

To be sure, the more one knows about higher education, the better we look. Yet, we must and will continue to improve. With major challenges confronting higher education (state disinvestment, tuition increases and resulting increases in student debt, ever-increasing student loan defaults, lack of tuition revenue bonds for construction), we must continue to be nimble, flexible and open to new ways of doing things. We cannot wait for this storm to blow over. We have to learn to work in the rain. Now is the time to find ways to cut costs without sacrificing services.

When the United States emerges from the current financial recession, there will be no return to the way things were. In addition to public moneys being harder to compete for, fundraising will remain difficult; yet, fundraising will be all the more important for the creation and augmentation of endowed scholarships.

We must be crystal clear about each of our institution's strengths and weaknesses, aggressively building upon our strengths and eliminating, or vastly improving areas that are not strong. And, we must continue to specialize in particular courses of study or student population groups that are unique to each campus. Low performing programs as defined by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board must be eliminated or quickly re-justified. Such actions may involve collapsing such programs into larger, more robust programs; or, eliminating them altogether.

We must ensure that all academic programs require only absolutely needed courses for graduation. To do otherwise needlessly extends the time to graduate and increases the money that students must spend for a college degree. We shall reduce the hours in programs which require more hours than the state mandated 120 hours and many more hours than similar programs and degrees at other universities in Texas.

Paving New Ground

"Higher education institutions work with a population that is environmentally aware and active.

To meet the needs of these stakeholders, schools must be able to demonstrate and account for their environmental performance.

They also need to enhance their environment-related programs to provide students with the education credentials they need to drive this agenda in the community at large."

-Michael Pentland, Deloitte-

Our administrators aren't the only ones who will be aware of the environmental impact of water usage, temperature controls, insulation, and greener construction going forward. Our environmental performance will be increasingly scrutinized by the media, the public at large and our students. And, well it should! Therefore, I ask that each university president develop a detailed, campus-specific plan of action to improve environmental efficiencies.

In addition, I have asked the Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs to work with each of our provosts and presidents to develop unique and specific goals particular to each institution in the following areas:

- *Increased retention rates in all programs.* Students and Texans are not served well when students are admitted into our institutions, leaving without a degree or certificate. Student debts are increased and state resources are lost. Therefore, the Chancellor and the President of each institution will establish ambitious, yet achievable retention goals for each institution. These goals shall be reported, monitored and specific plans of action for achievement developed.
- *Increased graduation rates in all programs.* In the final analysis, this is what they come for. Similarly, these goals shall be reported, monitored and specific plans of action for achievement developed.
- *Require merit evaluation systems based on quality outcomes across the system.* All faculty and staff within the system must be evaluated annually on the basis of performance outcomes and expectations. Such reviews of the faculty are integral in decisions as to the awarding of tenure as well as in post-tenure reviews and decisions. These annual merit reviews must be related directly to salary increases, decisions to tenure, as well as to decisions to remove tenure. The equitable and efficient distribution of our scarce resources demands no less.
- *Assure that all programs have learning outcomes with indicators of success which provide feedback for improvement.* All academic programs must establish the expected learning outcomes and have a feedback loop that indicates which outcomes are being achieved—or not—and why.
- *Assure that all institutions have a credible and reliable process for evaluating teaching and advising.* Teaching is the primary responsibility of faculty at our institutions and it should be comprehensively evaluated (taking into account student perceptions as part of the review). Likewise, advising is critical to the successful retention and success of students and must also be evaluated.
- *Assure that all assets are being optimally utilized.* An ongoing analysis of the use of our assets will be increasingly important as we go forward. This analysis includes; but, is not limited to: classroom utilization, sharing of facilities, Friday and Saturday classes, private-public partnerships, construction practices, investment returns, disposing of surplus assets and monetizing existing assets.

*“If your assets are poorly deployed, ignored, or decaying,
It’s as if you are destroying them, and you have failed.
If you waste stakeholders’ goodwill and respect by taking shortcuts
in exchange for short-term profits, you have failed.
If your organization prematurely abandons important work
because of internal resistance or a temporary delay in
market adoption, you have failed.
If your management chooses to focus on work that doesn’t create value....
you have failed.
If your organization sticks with a mediocre idea, facility,
or team too long because
It lacks the guts to create something better, you have failed.
And, of course, the most self-referential form of failure is the failure to see
when you’re failing.”*

–Seth Godin, Harvard Business Review–

- *Seek greater collaboration across the system.* There are collaborative research efforts such as the invasive species research at Sam Houston State, at Texas State and at other system institutions that hold great promise as a system-wide research effort and system level institute. By combining expertise from across the system, we can elevate our image and increase our grant opportunities. A grants coordinator within the system office may have considerable capacity to increase grants involving multiple institutions.

As connectivity across the system has increased, we are better able to consolidate financial and enrollment data and encourage cooperation among institutions in key areas including campus disaster and business continuity, network management and security, and email and help desk support. All of these efforts could reduce costs while improving quality.

An important area of cooperation is the transfer of students among the institutions in the system. We must assure transparent and efficient articulation among system institutions.

Good collaboration involves learning from one another and adopting best practices from our sister institutions. As Sam Houston has a great orientation and advising center, Texas State has an outstanding enrollment management and marketing effort, and Lamar has had great success in growing distance learning enrollments.

- *Assure that all technologies developed at our institutions are commercialized to the optimal degree possible.* The innovative Ph.D. in Materials Science, Engineering and Commercialization at Texas State will provide students with a unique skill set in engineering and entrepreneurship. As the only such program in Texas and one of the few in the world (coupled with the new research and commercialization park which will open in 2012), it will allow for an acceleration of start-up companies in nanotechnology, biotechnology and clean energy.

We must continue to lead in this area. Lamar’s partnership with the Department of Defense has resulted in a project for developing carbon nanotube composites for military applications requiring greater strength with less weight. This has great potential for commercial applications. And, Sam Houston State’s recent transaction to significantly monetize the patents it holds in Advance Water Science demonstrates what is possible and how we shall proceed with other developed holdings.

To be sure, much has been done, and done well. There is much yet to do. Exactly one hundred years ago when Texas’ first university system was founded, Texans created a wellspring of opportunity that would cultivate the state’s most valuable resource—her people.

As we now begin our second 100 years, let us remind ourselves that the future is the result of what we do now. Each day we sow the seeds that we must one day harvest. It is this continuous commitment to a long-term vision of excellence that will keep our colleges and universities moving forward through the decades. As we go, let us advance in all areas. And let us pick up the pace.

***Our work is important.
The needs are great.
The possibilities—unfathomable!***

**The Texas State
University System**

Lamar University
Sam Houston State University
Sam Houston State University-The Woodlands
Sul Ross State University
Sul Ross State University Rio Grande College
Texas State University-San Marcos
Texas State University-Round Rock Higher Education Center
Lamar Institute of Technology
Lamar State College-Orange
Lamar State College-Port Arthur