

The University of Texas System Compact Process

Compact Background. In 2003-04, the UT System instituted a Compact process with each UT System institution. The Compact Process has become a key element in the System's overall planning framework, which includes identification of state, regional, and local needs, overall System priorities, strategic and long-range plans for each institution, presidential work plans, and accountability and performance studies.

Within this framework, compacts highlight an institution's short-term priorities, with specific statements about the tactics that the institution will use to reach its goals and specific measurements of its progress.

What Is a Compact? A Compact is a succinct written agreement between the Chancellor and an institution president that summarizes the institution's major goals and priorities, strategic directions, and critical issues. It describes specific action plans necessary to achieve important goals, summarizes the institution's progress and outcomes, and articulates System Administration's commitment of resources and time to support particular initiatives. This is a System-wide, institution-level process. However, unlike regulations, the Compact does not impose a single set of rigid rules on each institution. Within a standard format, it reflects the unique goals and character of each institution.

Designed primarily to support alignment and sound management, the Compact framework fosters a shared plan and vision and helps develop and articulate pressing issues and standards of excellence for each institution and for the System as a whole. The process must engage faculty, staff, and students in local-level decision making. Designed to promote transparency, the Compacts are also posted on the Web and are available for reference within or outside the UT System.

The time frame for a Compact is 18 to 24 months, somewhat shorter than the scope of most strategic plans. In this respect, Compacts complement, but do not replace, an institution's longer-range plans. They also relate to but do not replace the President's annual work plan and reports. Indicators used in the compacts are also related to the System's broader accountability and performance framework.

Compact Contents. A compact contains the following elements:

1. Introductory material about the institution's mission and areas of activity.
2. Major short-term and ongoing priorities and initiatives: priority and scope, objectives, and strategies; resources, progress measures, and any obstacles to progress; and connections to institutional, System, and state priorities.
3. Future initiatives of high strategic importance: objectives, strategies, resources, and progress measures.
4. Other critical issues: impact of initiatives on such areas as enrollment management; diversity; community relations; finances, facilities, and technology; and discussion of any unexpected opportunities and/or crises.
5. System and state priorities: if not discussed in sections 2-4, a brief description of ways the institution is addressing collaborations among UT institutions; enhancing student access and success; and increasing research funding, tangible marks of academic and health care excellence, development, and alumni relations.

6. Compact development process: a description of the consultation process to arrive at the final Compact document.
7. System contributions: a description of the services the System is asked to provide to support the institution's initiatives, e.g., assistance with fundraising, facilities planning, community relations, academic program development, etc.
8. Appendices: budget and key statistical information that provide a ready reference and context for the discussion of priorities in the Compact.

How Are Compacts Developed?

Institutional consultation. It is vital that each institution consult actively with its faculty, staff, students, and appropriate external constituencies throughout the planning process. The Compact includes a section that describes the consultation strategies the institution used to prepare this document.

Compact briefings. Overviews and updates about the overall Compact Process continue to be made to the System Council, and Councils of Academic and Health Presidents.

Compact meetings. Each institution meets with its respective Executive Vice Chancellor to outline initial priorities, issues, and questions in advance of drafting the Compact and with System staff to review the draft Compact document. The final Compact reflects the mutual discussion and agreement on these issues among the President, his or her institution's respective Executive Vice Chancellor, and the Chancellor.

What Is the Compact Timeline?

The Compact covers a two-year cycle. Compacts for the fiscal years ending 2006 and 2007 were completed in summer 2005, with updates on progress made to that point. The next round of compact revisions and updates will begin in winter 2006, with preliminary drafts due in early May 2006 for review and discussion in budget/compact. The next set of Compacts will be completed in August 2006.

For More Information about the Compact Process.

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Link to UT Institution Compacts.

The UT System Compacts are available on the Web at:
www.utsystem.edu/ipa/compacts/2005/