

The University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College Response to Washington Advisory Group Report

From its establishment in 1992 as a unique partnership between a university and community college, The University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College has upheld access and excellence as core values in fulfilling our mission as an open-door community university on the South Texas border. UTB/TSC is pleased to have the consultancy viewpoint of the Washington Advisory Group to help in strategically focusing our research-building capacity at this 12-year juncture of our institution.

Recognition by the WAG of our extraordinary research potential in physics and biology and our innovativeness as exemplified by our initiatives at the International Technical Education and Commerce Campus helps us realize how far we have come. Recommendations in other areas deserve elaboration.

Collaborations--In recent years, collaborative work with sister components has helped to increase degree offerings, research projects, and student outreach programs, and it has allowed us to leverage our library resources and achieve savings in purchasing. Partners in these collaborations have included UT Health Science Center in San Antonio, UT Pan American, UT El Paso, UT Health Science Center in Houston, and UT Dallas.

Articulation--A seamless transition to upper-level classes was paramount in obtaining the partnership. The largest percentage of students remains at the lower level; however, our growth in upper-level enrollment has increased by 32.4%, since fall 1998. UTB/TSC led the state in developing the Bachelor of Applied Technology and the Bachelor of Applied Arts and Sciences degrees to help students with applied associate degrees to achieve a baccalaureate degree by maximizing their technical credits.

Retention and Graduation--Our first-time, full-time, fall-to-fall retention rate is 60.8%, which is the third highest retention rate of any community college in Texas and compares favorably with many other four-year state universities. Of the first-time, full-time freshmen who enrolled in fall 1992 in TSC, 28.1% received their bachelor's degree within 10 years. An analysis of Coordinating Board figures indicates little change between the six-year and 10-year rates at all UT components, except for UTB/TSC, where the 10-year rate is 187% higher than the six-year rate. This persistence often includes developmental classes that bolster their skills. Almost 28% of our students who received master's degrees in education in 2002/2003 began as undergraduates requiring developmental classes. Our most recent cohort of undergraduate students in education preparation passed the EXCET certification examination at a 92% rate. Even with figures showing that UTB/TSC students complete their goal when given more time, we are strengthening our work to compress graduation time by hiring additional academic advisors, promoting incentives, increasing financial assistance, and cooperating with area school districts to provide college credit to high school students.

Faculty Hiring--UTB/TSC is proud of the diverse faculty we have attracted through national searches. Hiring quality faculty to sustain present academic programs and to grow critically needed new ones is a top budgetary priority in FY2004-05. The ratio of FTE faculty to our 10,954 students is 1-to-32, as compared with the 1-to-17 ratio for our "accountability peer group." To reach parity with peers, we should have 295 more professors – now. Revenues from small tuition increases for fall 2004 are earmarked mostly for 23 new, strategically identified faculty lines.

We are "pushing the envelope" in research, education, innovation and service, and we shall continue to do so. In complete agreement with the WAG Report, it is our goal to achieve the Carnegie Classification of "Doctoral/Research Intensive" within the next 10 years. We are grateful to be included, for the first time ever, in a study that recognizes our potential to contribute to advanced research in Texas.

Washington Advisory Group Recommends Research Road Map for UT Permian Basin

The University of Texas of the Permian Basin has four strategic initiatives it is pursuing for the future—Growth, Research, Quality, and Partnerships. The University is making significant progress in each of these areas. We believe that there are some factual errors in the Washington Advisory Group (WAG) report in the areas of faculty research productivity and in teaching loads. For example, the April 2004 Texas Higher Education Coordinating Report on Research and Development reported that UT Permian Basin realized a 38% increase in research and development funding compared to the statewide average of 27% for the four years reported of universities with enrollments of less than 5,000. While faculty have achieved considerable success in recent years in strengthening research, we are not satisfied and are implementing recommendations by the Washington Advisory Group in creating a road map for future research growth at the institution.

The Washington Advisory Group has recommended a goal of \$4 million in annual externally-funded research for the year 2010. We believe that, while this is a stretch goal, it can be achieved and will use the WAG recommendations to create a road map to reach the goal. Some of UT Permian Basin's strengths, recognized by WAG, will be developed for future research. These include the scholarship by faculty in the disciplines of:

- Business Administration
- Bilingual Education
- Chemistry, specifically cited was research in biomass to fuel conversion conducted by Chemistry researchers under the sponsorship of the University's Center for Energy and Economic Diversification and with grant funding from the state's Advanced Technology Program.
- Computer Science
- The John Ben Sheppard Public Leadership Institute

The WAG consultants also cited the University's Art facilities as being "one of the best of its kind at any university in the country." Another area where UT Permian Basin was cited as a regional and national leader was in Distance Education, especially web-based instruction.

The road map for research enhancement recommended by the WAG consultants contains the major elements:

- Strengthening the research support services of the University's Office of Sponsored Programs.
- Development of a Faculty Hiring Plan to "focus on developing strong research, creative, and educational priority programs."
- Completion of the current effort to revise the University's policies for promotion and tenure, annual faculty evaluation, and research support to clarify research expectations for all faculty members and to provide clear accountability.
- Revamping strategic plans to "ensure space and facilities become central to such a plan." This is needed to provide for various space needs, including the need for modern, well-equipped research space. The need for a science and technology building was noted long before this report was undertaken, and a facility planned to meet this need is ready to be presented to legislators.

The University of Tyler's Response to The Washington Advisory Group Study

May 13, 2004

The WAG report provides independent confirmation of the quality of UT Tyler people and programs.

- Our student body is of high quality. Our entering classes are among the very best in the state with an SAT average near 1100. Nearly one of every four at UT Tyler is a graduate student—and one out of every three programs is a graduate program. This quality student body and considerable number of master's students will be a tremendous asset to our faculty as we increase research.
- Tyler is one of only three cities in the state where a UT university and medical center are co-located. (Dallas and San Antonio are the others.) WAG characterizes UT Tyler's collaboration with UTHCT as "meaningful" and currently in development is a joint *Institute for Biotechnology and Health Science*. This will expand opportunities for sponsored-research at both institutions.
- UT Tyler has long engaged in successful partnerships with other universities to award Ph.D. programs. WAG concludes we can use these partnerships to "bootstrap" the creation of our own doctoral programs. This is essential to strengthening our research performance. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board has deferred our request to bootstrap our Texas A&M partnership to offer our first stand-alone Ph.D. degree, in Human Resources Development. WAG urges the Coordinating Board to approve our request and we are hopeful they will do so.
- WAG notes that UT Tyler and the city of Tyler and all of East Texas already recognize the University's important role in the region's health, education, and economic development. Quality faculty and high-ability students can generate life-changing research and raise standards of living.

UT Tyler will address several challenges to improve its research capability.

- The Washington Advisory Group noted UT Tyler has outgrown classroom capacities. Likewise, WAG labeled research laboratory space as "inadequate." The University is seeking PUF and TRB allocations to:
 - Complete the Engineering, Sciences, and Technology building;
 - Add an academic excellence center (classrooms) to the new residence hall;
 - Relocate education and psychology to for UT Tyler's first dining services;
 - Enlarge the art studio so that students can move out of a portable building; and
 - Build a new classroom facility to accommodate significant future growth.
- The report also points to the limited on-campus housing currently available on our campus. Student apartments, a residence hall, and small theme houses are under construction or in planning with a goal of providing on-campus housing for 15% of our student body.
- WAG also identified the important role played by junior college transfer students who represent a large portion of our enrollment. UT Tyler has spent most of its history as a campus where all undergraduates were transfer students. Yet, we will seek to strengthen our collaborations.

WAG experts see promise for the future of research at UT Tyler.

The prominent WAG experts conclude UT Tyler can become a "Doctoral/Research University-Intensive" within a decade. The report provides an excellent roadmap for accomplishing this objective.