

***EXECUTIVE SUMMARY***  
***REPORT ON PROPOSED***  
***INITIATIVES***

to

**WILLIAM H. CUNNINGHAM,  
CHANCELLOR  
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS SYSTEM**



by the

**TASK FORCE ON U. T. SYSTEM/PUBLIC  
SCHOOL COLLABORATIONS**

**July, 1994**

#### NOTE

The proposed initiatives described in this report represent potential areas for U. T. System involvement with the elementary and secondary schools in Texas. None of the proposals have been adopted as of the date of the report, although many elements of the proposed programs currently exist in some form at one or more of the component institutions within the U. T. System. Initiatives proposed in this report are for consideration by the Chancellor, System Executive Officers, Chief Administrative Officers of the U. T. System component institutions and the U. T. System Board of Regents for potential implementation and future development.

# TASK FORCE ON U. T. SYSTEM/PUBLIC SCHOOL COLLABORATIONS

## BACKGROUND AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Background

As the State of Texas prepares to meet the challenging requirements of the 21st century, it becomes increasingly clear that an integrated commitment of human, technical, and intellectual resources is necessary to assure that all Texans prosper. Tomorrow's leaders are in the elementary and secondary schools of Texas today. A number of variables have combined to produce an extremely complex school environment in which schools must deal not only with traditional academic matters but also with increasingly problematic social and economic issues. To expect that elementary and secondary public schools can successfully address these issues alone, is simply not reasonable.

Dramatic changes are occurring in Texas schools today. Many children in school are likely to be members of ethnically identified "minority" groups, who come from homes where the first language is not English and who live below the poverty level. Furthermore, many children continue to reside in a single-parent homes. As a result, today's public schools are often expected to be centers for meeting complex health, social, and personal needs of students -- as well as sites for addressing students' academic development. These forces have an impact on how teachers and other school personnel are trained, on the community's involvement in education, and on the delivery of educational, social and health services.

In response to these concerns, the Chancellor of The University of Texas System initiated a process to bring a greater sense of awareness, direction, and purpose to the interactions between the component institutions of The University of Texas System (U. T. System) and the state's public schools. The first step was to prepare an inventory of existing collaborative programs between the U. T. System and the public schools. Over 200 programs,\* ranging from one-day specialty camps to intensive summer teacher training programs to numerous mentoring and tutoring activities, were identified during the fall of 1993. The second stage of the process was to convene a two-day conference in December 1993 to examine existing current activities and to suggest new ways that the resources of the U. T. System could be used to support activities which would help the children and public schools of Texas be as successful as possible. Representatives from each of the U. T. System general academic and health-related component institutions and representatives from the elementary and secondary public school sectors and other education interests were

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\* Over 150 programs were identified in the initial survey conducted in the fall of 1993. A follow-up survey conducted in June 1994 resulted in the identification of over 50 additional programs. Program expenditures increased from over \$18 million to over \$25 million annually in the June update. The survey of university/public school collaborative activities will be updated on a regular basis.

conference participants. Following the December conference the Chancellor continued the process by appointing a task force and charging it with developing specific proposals for the expansion of collaborative activities and programs between the U. T. System component institutions and public schools.

### **Proposed Initiatives**

The Task Force, through the work of three subcommittees, proposed several initiatives for university involvement with elementary and secondary schools. The Task Force was especially enthused and supportive of successful field-based teacher training programs such as the Centers for Professional Development and Technology. These programs provide innovative instruction techniques in the preparation of new teachers and innovative interaction with public school faculty and students. The Centers have a potentially long-term beneficial impact on the quality of instruction and learning in the public schools. The U. T. System also must identify new ways to utilize the resources of all applicable university disciplines to prepare today's education professionals. For these reasons, the Task Force recommended that Centers for Professional Development and Technology be implemented systemwide. This is a natural extension of teacher preparation centers already underway at several U. T. System component institutions.

The need for innovative, professional development training programs for public school personnel was addressed in a proposal to establish Educational Leadership Institutes. The Institutes would address the need for principals, teachers, and other professionals, to work with each other and with their respective communities, in addressing the needs of schools within the context of the community, to learn to work more effectively and appropriately with the diversity of participants, and to gain specialized knowledge and skills to enhance their personal and professional effectiveness.

Because the public schools often are involved in the process of meeting a variety of health and social needs for both students and families, the Task Force recognized the need for a wider implementation of school-based or school-linked health and social services to meet these needs. The Task Force concluded that the U. T. System can continue to make a substantial contribution in this area. Large numbers of professionals involved in providing education, health, and social services for Texans are trained at U. T. System general academic and health-related institutions. Therefore, the Task Force recommended that U. T. System component institutions continue, or become, active leaders and participants with established groups, such as the Texas Communities in Schools program, and enter into cooperative efforts with other state agencies or entities to enhance school-based or school-linked health and human services programs.

A principal component of other proposals was the recognition of the need to nurture and encourage students to remain in the elementary and secondary schools and to pursue postsecondary education. At present, such initiatives take many forms, including *University Outreach*, *TexPREP*, *MedPrep*, *Hispanic Mother-Daughter* programs, and *Upward Bound*. Other direct student intervention programs, such as *Reading: One-One* (a structured tutoring effort to improve the reading skills of young children), were recommended as a means not only to improve vitally important learning skills, but also as a way to bring a very powerful education resource to the public schools -- university students.

Highlights of the initiatives recommended by the Task Force are listed below.

- (1) In examining ways to support and train school professionals and community-based family service professionals using all appropriate university disciplines, the Task Force recommended that the U. T. System should:
  - Implement the *Centers for Professional Development and Technology* systemwide.
  - Establish *The University of Texas Educational Leadership Institutes*.
  
- (2) In examining ways to demonstrate tested concepts that positively affect student learning, the Task Force recommended that the U. T. System should:
  - Establish model schools or programs that support a comprehensive set of collaborative efforts in the areas that have a proven successful impact on student learning.
  - Promote increased U. T. System faculty involvement in collaborative curriculum development and related efforts.
  - Create an underlying liaison at each U. T. System component to coordinate collaborative efforts with the public schools.
  - Collaborate with other state agencies and entities, such as the Texas Communities in Schools Program, to develop prototypes for the coordinated delivery of school-based or school-linked health and human services to students and their families.

(3) In examining ways to support directly students and their families in attaining educational success and pursuing career objectives, the Task Force recommended that the U. T. System should:

- Establish the *University Connection* as an initiative to increase the number of students from groups historically underrepresented in higher education who will be prepared to enter and succeed at Texas colleges and universities.
- Encourage and assist component institutions to work with elementary schools in their areas to establish *Reading: One-One* programs.

The Task Force also identified several other issues critical to the overall success of the existing programs and any other new initiatives. Higher education faculty need to know that the U. T. System and its institutional leadership are strongly committed to these collaborative efforts and are willing to consider quality work in public school collaborations in making faculty tenure and promotion decisions. Improvement in information technology was also identified as a major bridge between the schools and the universities in support of all collaborative programs. Technology can assist in professional training, curriculum development, sharing of higher education subject matter expertise with public school professionals and students, as well as providing counseling assistance to students and families in making higher education and career decisions.

The Task Force recommended that the U. T. System Administration should:

- Work with each component institution to undertake a review of the incentive structure for higher education faculty who participate in collaborative efforts with the public schools.
- Strengthen the existing telecommunications networks with the public schools (THEnet and TENET) and create new consortium efforts to facilitate electronic information exchanges.
- Evaluate and identify, through its institutions, education research components of each of the collaborative efforts.
- Provide a coordination and communication function which would support collaborative efforts with the public schools.

- Encourage each Chief Administrative Officer of the U. T. System components to conduct an institutional evaluation of existing collaborative programs with the public schools and develop a plan for coordination of such activities on an ongoing basis.
- Conduct regional and statewide conferences on critical issues relating to the university/public school collaborations.

## **Conclusion**

The public elementary and secondary schools must have the coordinated support and assistance of all the state's resources. The U. T. System's leadership has begun to explore ways that the U. T. System can enhance its relationship with the state's public schools by working collaboratively with schools and communities as well as with parents, school professionals, state leaders, and others. The appointment of the Task Force on U. T. System/Public School Collaborations is evidence of the commitment of the leadership to strengthen these relationships.

Activities of the Task Force have already generated widespread interest and have heightened enthusiasm among the individuals and groups involved in the initiatives. The process has also elicited interest and cooperation from several external education-related groups. The report of the Task Force is not a final plan, but rather an advisory report with proposed initiatives to the Chancellor of the U. T. System. The report is a working document for continued discussions and refinement. The University of Texas System stands ready to continue this work and to move forward with the collaborative efforts.

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