

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON

May 11, 2004

We concur with the Washington Advisory Group's (WAG's) assessment that the next decade will be critical in determining whether UTA can achieve Tier 1 research status. Our many strengths position us well to pursue this goal; the major challenge we face is to secure the resources necessary to make strategic research-related investments in faculty, graduate assistants, facilities and equipment. Development initiatives, managed enrollment growth, and carefully planned tuition increases will fund new investments in research capacity. Strengthening our research capacity will pay dividends in increased funds from federal and state agencies, foundations and industry and also will contribute significantly to regional and state economic development.

In September, the UTA community will engage in the development of a new strategic plan with a focus on enhancing our research capability. This plan will incorporate recommendations from the WAG report; specifically, their suggestions for high priority areas of selective investment. The plan will also be responsive to their recommendation that *all departments* be raised to a level of being capable and competitive in the realm of funded research. We recognize, however, that the broad range of programs at UTA has highly differential opportunities for pursuit of external funding. Active, well-published researchers/scholars operating in disciplines with limited funding opportunities are also essential to the future vision of UTA as a comprehensive, Tier 1 institution.

We are a strong Carnegie Research Extensive University with the realistic though challenging goal of becoming a Tier 1 research university. Research is synergistic with instruction, resulting in improved undergraduate and graduate curricula and programs. Both are central to our mission. We will carefully shepherd our resources to build on our research strengths, foster strategic investments from the private sector and further develop those areas currently deemed less strong.

We are optimistic regarding our Tier 1 research university goal. As Clifton R. Wharton, Jr. stated in his keynote address at the recent President's Investiture and Academic Excellence Convocation, "What fascinated me most in reading about your institution is the phenomenal drive that energized its steady pursuit of the goal of becoming a first class university. ... the campus has forged a manifest sense of purpose and a tradition of self-confidence that has and will meet every challenge."

## **The University of Texas at Dallas Washington Advisory Group Response**

The University of Texas at Dallas (UTD) compliments the Washington Advisory Group (WAG) for its thorough and insightful report, and for its confidence in the university's continued progress toward Tier-One research status. The details in the report that pertain to UTD are consistent with the analyses of senior university faculty and academic administrators. The areas of research and collaboration recommended in the report are completely consistent with the strategies developed at UTD during the recent past.

UTD's efforts for the next five years will focus on achieving the goals of our Engineering and Science Research Enhancement Initiative, "Project Emmitt." This will require significant increases in the ranks of faculty members with active, well-funded research programs in science and engineering, and in the numbers of highly qualified graduate students in these same areas. Concurrently, UTD is also committed to a major capital campaign, with a goal of \$100 million. The major thrust of the campaign will be the creation of endowed chairs and graduate fellowships that are crucial to the recruitment by UTD of the additional outstanding faculty and graduate students that are essential to achieving the goals of Project Emmitt.

As the WAG noted, UTD needs to increase the sizes of its student body and its faculty by factors of two, approximately, in order to be competitive with public Tier-One universities, particularly in the research areas critical to Project Emmitt. In concert with this growth, UTD also concurs with the WAG recommendation that the university selectively broaden its profile of programs. In particular, we plan to proceed energetically to add programs that are vital to Project Emmitt and collaborations with U.T. Southwestern and U.T. Arlington. Primary attention, in accord with WAG recommendations, will be given to strengthening the Erik Jonsson School of Engineering and Computer Science by adding several new departments, with Mechanical Engineering, Materials Science, Chemical Engineering, and Bio-Medical Engineering being possibilities under consideration.

UTD's organizational links and geographic proximity to U.T. Southwestern offer great opportunities to productively leverage resources and create synergy by building research programs in which the areas of expertise of medical and general academic institutions complement and reinforce each other. Likewise, the critical sizes of faculty cohorts necessary to compete in the international arenas of frontline research can be reached most rapidly by creating as much cooperation as possible between U.T. Dallas and U.T. Arlington. UTD intends to continue to strengthen current joint programs with U.T. Southwestern and U.T. Arlington in the areas of speech and hearing, imaging science, neuroscience, information processing, and materials sciences and engineering, including nanotechnology, and bio-nanotechnology. The continued leadership of the U.T. System in encouraging and facilitating such collaborations will be of critical importance.

Finally, UTD concurs with the explicit comments of the Washington Advisory Group that continued progress of UTD toward Tier-One performance depends on securing the funding necessary for the required expansion and enhancement of the faculty, and that the only practical source of such additional funding appears to be further increases in tuition and fees. Success in the critical domains of adequately funding annual operations and in raising \$100 million in the capital campaign will require, as also noted in the WAG report, that the next president of UTD possess the stature and ability necessary to meet these challenges.

**Initial Response of  
The University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP)  
to the Report of the Washington Advisory Group (WAG)  
May 13, 2004**

UTEP is very pleased with the report of the Washington Advisory Group (WAG) on research and the potential for its expansion on this campus. Commenting that UTEP has already achieved national “research prominence,” the report shares our conviction that UTEP is well-positioned to achieve recognition as a doctoral-research extensive university and to become a top-tier research institution.

UTEP has had remarkable success during the past 15 years in expanding research programs and attracting federal research funding. As the report points out, UTEP is one of only two UT System academic institutions (UT Austin is the other) that appear on a list of the Top 200 American research universities, based on federal research expenditures.

We are also pleased that the report reaffirms our vision that UTEP can be a model of excellence while offering access to higher education for students who have been historically underserved. Calling our twin goals of access and excellence “nontraditional but exciting,” the report points out that educating Hispanics is of national, as well as regional importance.

Several key elements must be present for a university to reach the top ranks of research institutions. The report states, and we agree, that UTEP has many of these critical building blocks already in place. For example, UTEP:

- Attracts federal funding that leverages our unique assets of location and student demographics
- Wins research grants in open competition with other research universities
- Has built a solid research base that is poised for expansion
- Has demonstrated success in recruiting high-quality new faculty
- Has developed a strategic research focus that cuts across disciplines to address the social and economic issues facing our border region, including health, biomedical science, security and the environment

We are also pleased that the report acknowledges the strong support UTEP receives from the community we serve, and the private fundraising success we have achieved. We know that many of our recent accomplishments have been the result of support from our alumni and friends.

However, for UTEP to become a top-tier research university, we must also see significant short- and long-term investment from both the UT System and the State of Texas. We believe that the single greatest constraint on UTEP’s continued institutional development has been a lack of state funding to build and renovate facilities, acquire technology, support graduate programs, serve as grant matches, and recruit and retain outstanding faculty. Without such investment, UTEP will not only fail to achieve its aggressive goals, but also lose the momentum that has been built during the past 15 years.

UTEP is pleased that the University of Texas System commissioned this WAG review of its academic components in El Paso, Arlington, Dallas, and San Antonio. The report provides us with an in-depth assessment of where UTEP stands today and what we need to do to continue moving toward our goal of becoming a top-tier research institution. As we continue to develop our research strategic plan, with broad-based participation from UTEP faculty and administrators, we will consider carefully the many observations and recommendations contained in this report. We also look forward to working with the UT System to develop the resources and strategies that will be critical to our continued progress in achieving UTEP’s full institutional potential.

## **Response to the Washington Advisory Group Report University of Texas at San Antonio**

1. UTSA is most appreciative of the support of the Washington Advisory Group (WAG). In many instances, the recommendations they have made support initiatives already underway at UTSA, and in other cases they affirm our current plans for future development. In still other cases, they provide ideas that we can build on in achieving our goal of Tier 1 Research status. We will take all of their recommendations quite seriously.
2. As the report indicates, our most glaring weaknesses involve the “sub-critical” size of our faculty and the lack of doctoral programs in some basic fields of science and engineering. We are aware of the faculty shortage and are currently conducting 90 faculty searches. We anticipate hiring at least 70 faculty members this year and a similar number each year over the next five years. Hiring in Science is especially strong this year.
3. We are likewise rapidly moving our doctoral programs forward. We anticipate Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board approval for our doctoral program in chemistry within the next six months, our doctoral proposal in public policy is now at the University of Texas System, and our doctoral proposal in physics (proposed jointly with Southwest Research Institute) will be up for consideration by the Board of Regents at the August, 2004, meeting. We implemented doctoral programs in Environmental Science and Engineering, Cell and Molecular Biology, and Biomedical Engineering this past fall, and doctoral programs in applied mathematics, neuroscience, and other areas are currently under development.
4. The WAG report also recommends the hiring of a scientist or an engineer in a senior-level administrative position. Even as the report was being written, we were recruiting a nationally known scientist for such a position. We anticipate that his person will begin at UTSA in December 2004, and we plan to evolve our current administrative structure to include a Vice President for Research over the next year.
5. The WAG reports recommends that we improve our strategic planning process, with specific suggestions for what should be included. This is currently being addressed through the compact process.
6. As the WAG Report notes, we need to upgrade and expand our research development infrastructure and our development office. We have plans for doing both beginning September 2004. We are also continually reviewing and revising our capital plan in light of our program development and faculty hiring plans.
7. The WAG Report suggests that the Computer Science Department is not as strong as it needs to be. We are currently hiring at least two additional research faculty for Computer Science and looking for ways to link the department more closely with the College of Engineering.
8. The WAG Report includes an unfortunate factual error and an unfortunate misconception. The report suggests that the Department of Applied Mathematics had been found “in deficit” in teaching. It is not clear to us to what the report is referring in this case. Applied Mathematics is certainly not running a budgetary deficit at this time, and their teaching is solid. The report does not indicate who is supposed to have found them “in deficit,” so we are not sure what it means. The assertion is factually inaccurate and unfair to the department. A misconception in the WAG Report regards the Break Even Analysis Report (BEAR) that is used as a management tool at UTSA. The report misunderstands both how the BEAR works and also its purpose (it is designed for departments and colleges, not for individual faculty members). Unfortunately, the WAG visitors received their information from someone who did not fully understand the concept rather than from the Provost’s Office.
9. Finally, the WAG Report makes two suggestions with which we respectfully disagree. First, it suggests that we limit our faculty hiring to 30 per year. At the same time, it recommends providing faculty with smaller teaching loads. While we agree that teaching loads should be reduced, they cannot be substantially reduced if we hire only 30 faculty members per year – even if we freeze enrollment at current levels. We now have 450 tenured/tenure-track faculty members and typically experience a retirement/resignation rate

of about 5% per year (roughly the national average). In other words, we lose about 23 people each year. If we hire 30 faculty per year, we have a net gain of only 7 – not enough to make a significant difference either in faculty teaching loads or in research capacity. Hiring 50-70 faculty a year will clearly be a challenge for us and we will have to be vigilant in maintaining high standards for faculty, but we believe that is the only realistic way to address the “sub-critical” size of our faculty.

Second, the WAGS Report recommends that we slow enrollment growth and that we rely less on the income that growth provides. We acknowledge that rapid enrollment growth provides significant challenges, and at times handling it appropriately has been a struggle. However, the issue is somewhat more complicated than the report suggests. Four points deserve further consideration.

- The current enrollment growth at UTSA might seem unplanned and unchecked, but a large part of it is actually the result of a carefully developed plan (1) to increase graduate enrollments (at a 50% greater rate than undergraduate enrollments), (2) to increase retention rates, (3) to increase the percentage of fulltime students, and (4) to increase the percentage of students from outside Bexar County. Since 1999 graduate enrollments have grown by 44%, a rate that is 52% greater than the rate of undergraduate growth. Between Fall 2002 and fall 2003, our graduate enrollment grew by 971 students, or 37%, while our undergraduate enrollment grew by 1678, or 9%. Graduate students now comprise roughly 17% of the total enrollment; ultimately, we would like for them to comprise 25%. Likewise, since 1999 our retention rates have increased from 59% to 65%, and the number of students who are fulltime and from outside of the home county have increased by 7% and 14% respectively. We believe that this type of enrollment growth strengthens UTSA considerably and should be maintained.
- CAP students comprised another large component of the enrollment growth over the last two years. The 1136 CAP students comprised two thirds of UTSA’s enrollment growth at the undergraduate level between Fall 2002 and Fall 2003 and 43% of our total enrollment growth. While we strongly support the CAP program and are delighted to participate in it, it provides significant challenges for enrollment management. It is difficult to plan for the number of CAP students, and while CAP provides us with some of our best students, it also has provided students with a mechanism for working around our admission standards. Again, we strongly support the CAP program, but it accounts for a large part of our enrollment growth that was unplanned.
- We are currently implementing an expanded provisional admissions program at UTSA that will help us raise our admission standards while still maintaining our commitment to access. An experimental version of the program was implemented this year and was very successful.
- While the WAG Report recommends less reliance on formula funding and tuition, it unfortunately makes no recommendations about other sources of revenue. We are open to all suggestions. It also ignores the role that enrollment growth has played historically as public universities move to Tier I status. For instance, during the 1960s and early 1970s, a period during which it made substantial progress in its research development, UT-Austin added just under 1500 students per year. In 1960, UT-Austin had an enrollment of 20,396; in 1975, its enrollment stood at 42,598. Likewise, during the 1970s and early 1980s, a period during which it added a number of new doctoral programs and grew its research capacity substantially, Texas A&M-College Station added almost 1600 students per year. In 1970, its enrollment stood at 14,221; in 1984, it was 36,669. During the critical 5-year period between 1970 and 1975, Texas A&M grew by some 10,000 students. Enrollment growth provides public universities with many (although certainly not all) of the resources they need to build a nationally prominent faculty, and it is faculty who propel a university to Tier 1 status. Our current period of enrollment growth provides a unique opportunity for UTSA to hire the faculty that will allow it to move in this direction.