



Project South Texas: A New University for the 21st Century

The University of Texas System values the encouragement and opinions of every stakeholder of the new university and all of our interested friends and supporters. We appreciate your investment in this transformative process and we want you to be informed and engaged every step along the way.

To help ensure that, I will be writing regular electronic updates via email, and posting them on our Project South Texas website at www.projectsouthtexas.com. This e-newsletter will provide the most current information about the transition to the new university and provide details about the process.

The transition planning process aims to fulfill the vision of the UT System Board of Regents and Chancellor Francisco G. Cigarroa, M.D., of creating a university for the 21st century in South Texas by combining the best assets, programs and human resources of the University of Texas at Brownsville and the University of Texas-Pan American into an emerging research university with a medical school.

Every effort will be made to be transparent and informative about the transition and planning process, but we certainly won't be able to anticipate every question. To address that inevitable issue, we're planning to add a "Your Questions Answered" section to the Project South Texas website where questions can be posed anonymously. UT System staff will research the answers and we will post questions and answers for all to see on the website. We'll do our best to respond quickly, clearly and accurately. Until that function is available, please email your questions to projectsouthtx@utsystem.edu, pose it on the [UT System Facebook](#) page, or [tweet](#) us, using #projectsouthtx.

A New University for the 21st Century in South Texas: The Blueprint

There are two important documents basic to the creation of the new university: [Senate Bill 24](#) and the [Guiding Principles](#) approved by the Board of Regents. Together, these documents provide the framework by which the New University Transition Team is organizing the planning process.

Both SB 24 and the Guiding Principles highlight the need to streamline academic and administrative programs to create an efficient, effective university. To answer that charge, UT System leaders have pledged that there will be careful thought and deliberation by the transition team, in collaboration with faculty, staff, campus-based work groups and expert consultants, on finding ways to improve organizational efficiency to focus more resources on building a 21st Century university in South Texas. Part of achieving that organizational efficiency means the new university will establish single academic programs and single administrative units, which could require reorganization and reassignment of staff.

This consolidation of the best assets, programs and human resources of UTB and UTPA requires that academic and operational units of the two universities come together and examine ways of operating as a single unit in the new multi-campus university. With the able support and guidance of the provosts, vice presidents of business affairs and vice presidents of student affairs of both universities, the transition team has formed two sets of working groups. The Academic Working Groups are made up of 13 disciplinary groups with joint and equal representation of faculty from both universities. The Operational Working Groups consist of 29 groups with equal joint representation. A third Students-Only Working Group is currently being formed to provide a wide range of student stakeholders an opportunity for input. Altogether, more than 400 faculty, staff, administrators and students are involved in the process.

Both the Academic and Operational Working Groups held kick-off meetings last month and are now meeting regularly to examine ways of consolidating degree programs, functions and activities into single units with single administrative direction. They are expected to provide regular progress reports through liaisons to the transition team and the UT System Office of Academic Affairs.

Presidential Search

The Board of Regents recently announced the creation of the [presidential advisory search committee](#) that will screen applicants for the position of founding president of the new university. The committee will recommend candidates for final consideration by the Board. The committee is chaired by Dr. Pedro Reyes, Executive Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs. Dr. Reyes and the committee will be assisted by an executive search firm. The search process is expected to take several months, with the goal of appointing a founding president in spring 2014.

Medical School Dean Search

The search for the founding dean of the new university's school of medicine is in the final stages, with candidates making campus visits and being interviewed. Once the new dean is appointed, he or she will join the transition team.

New University Name

The Board of Regents is expected to vote on a name for the new university at a meeting in December. The naming is the first significant step that makes this new university real in the eyes of the people of South Texas and it is an incredibly important decision. The UT System Office of External Relations will soon launch an outreach campaign to solicit input on

proposed names and encourage new ideas that have not yet been introduced for the Board's consideration. Interested Valley stakeholders will have several weeks to participate in the process of suggesting names for the new university and can voice their opinions in a variety of ways, including social media, email or calling the UT System.

Timelines

The New University Transition Team plans to hold a New University Summit in April 2014. At that time, the transition team will present the recommendations of the working groups to Chancellor Cigarroa, Executive Vice Chancellor Reyes and, hopefully, the newly-appointed founding president of the university. The leadership will take the working groups' recommendations under consideration, along with any recommendations made by expert consultants, and will continue to the next stage of the planning process.

The timeline for the Working Groups themselves include the following:

- Jan. 31, 2014: Working Groups recommendations due.
- Feb.-March 2014: Recommendations to be compiled and reviewed by the transition team.
- April 2014: New University Summit presentation.

The next e-newsletter will describe the overall organizational chart of how the different groups at the UT System and the campus level are organized to move the transition planning process forward.

With gratitude,

Julio S. Leon

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