

Minutes of Special Meeting of the Faculty Senate February 22, 2006

Convened 4:00 PM

A special meeting of the UTHSCSA Faculty Senate was called in order to discuss a possible response to the administration regarding the draft of the institutional strategic plan that has been distributed during the previous week to the faculty. Upon gathering comments from the senators, as well as the faculty-at-large, the following represents the main points made at the meeting. Following this brief outline, is the entire report submitted to Dr. Theresa Chiang, Vice President for Administration.

It should be noted that Senate officers followed up on the submission of this report by meeting with Dr. Chiang in order to discuss its contents. Dr. Chiang has agreed to present the faculty's concerns to the UTHSCSA Executive Committee at its next meeting, and to meet with the Senate at its next scheduled meeting time (**Wednesday, March 8, 2006 at 4:00 PM**) in order to discuss the EC's response.

Major Points Coming From Senate Discussion

- _ The UTHSCSA Faculty Senate is anxious to provide whatever support it can as the Administration strives to create a Strategic Plan that is useful and well-respected by all at the UTHSCSA, as well as by the University of Texas System.
- _ "Top-down" planning misses areas of concern to both the Administration and the Faculty; perceived by the Faculty as a fragmented wish-list of the Administration and not an actual strategic plan.
- _ Need for each school to provide school-specific strategic plans that funnel into and support the institutional plan.
- _ Resources/funds to support the plan unclear; priorities need to be set.
- _ Format of plan unconventional; No section focused solely on faculty issues.
- _ Ambiguous Objectives; Should avoid vague language.
- _ Quantitatively specific Strategies only if appropriate justification can be documented.
- _ Outcome Measures should provide precise descriptions of how outcomes are to be measured; clearly stated assignments of accountability.

Complete report submitted to the Office of the VP for Administration:

**Response of UTHSCSA Faculty Senate
Regarding Proposed Strategic Plan
February 22, 2006**

The following is the response from the UTHSCSA Faculty Senate to the request by Dr. Theresa Chiang, Vice President for Academic Administration, for faculty input into the strategic planning process that is in progress at this time. This report reflects the conclusions reached following discussions among senators, as well as comments gathered from the faculty-at-large.

I. General Observations

A. The Planning Process

The Faculty Senate is concerned that the process and resulting product of the recent strategic planning efforts appear to be unconventional, compared with other strategic planning activities performed over the years at the UTHSCSA, both at the institutional as well as school levels. It is commendable to seek alternate and improved strategies for getting this very laborious undertaking accomplished; however, it appears that the result is a document that many members of the faculty find confusing and without rationale.

A model of strategic planning with which members of the faculty are familiar includes a number of very structured steps. In past planning efforts, rigorous assessments have been performed of factors in the internal and external environments of the UTHSCSA that have potentially dramatic influences on us as we attempt to accomplish our institutional missions. This scan of the environment typically included a cataloging of UTHSCSA strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that would provide authoritative, documentable information serving as a springboard for the design and development of credible realistic strategies for implementing a strategic plan.

An example of such a planning strategy can be found at: <http://www.des.calstate.edu/processmodel.html>

It is understood that the strategy of performing “top-down” planning was intended to guarantee a complete buy-in to the plan by those with a big picture view of institutional needs and who have most control over the purse strings (i.e., vice presidents and deans). It was hoped that this would provide significant fuel for driving objectives to completion. However, it is of considerable concern that details needed to effectively target crucial elements of the institutional missions might have been missed due to the lack of a thorough assessment of the external and internal environments influencing the missions of the UTHSCSA, as well as early inclusion of insights and vision that could have been provided by the grass roots (e.g., the faculty). It is acknowledged that seeking agreed-upon goals, and appropriate strategies for accomplishing those goals, that include areas of concern to both the administration and to the faculty, is not a simple matter. Thus, it is laudable that the administration has sought input from the bottom of the pyramid. However, it may have been preferable to have sought that input sooner, rather than to expect faculty insights to be inserted into a pre-existing framework provided by the administration. This is likely to result in an awkward and inefficient combining of efforts.

B. The Planning Document

The Faculty Senate is concerned that the document representing the recent strategic planning efforts appears to be unconventional, based on comparisons with strategic planning documents developed over the years at the UTHSCSA, both at the institutional as well as school levels.

Models of strategic planning documents, with which members of the faculty are familiar, typically include a number of very structured sections. Such documents begin with a small number of Goals that are crucial to the successful pursuit of the main missions of the UTHSCSA and concern broad areas such as Administration (Organizational Effectiveness), Clinical Care, Education, Faculty, and Research. For each broad goal, a small set of Objectives are indicated that lead to progress toward the goals. Each Objective would be accompanied by one or two strategies (action items) for accomplishing the objective. Finally, an indication of how the strategies are to be implemented, how success of that implementation is to be measured (i.e., Outcome Measures) and who, exactly, is to be held accountable for reporting these measures.

Goals _ Objectives _ Strategies _ Implementation _ Outcome measures/accountability

In the current draft of the Strategic Plan document, Goals follow the familiar pattern of mirroring crucial elements necessary for accomplishing the missions of the UTHSCSA. Objectives, however, are often stated ambiguously. In particular, certain verb choices leave uncertainty with regard to what exactly is to be accomplished. For example, the very ambiguous word “enhance” is used quite frequently. In each case, it would be useful to define what enhance specifically refers to. Another example is seen in the first objective referring to clinical care which states, “The UTHSCSA ‘will transform’ the processes that we use to deliver clinical care”. What does “will transform” mean? Transform into what? There are other instances of this type of ambiguity throughout the document.

With regard to Outcome Measures in the current document, these are written like strategies and should perhaps be called just that. Further, there are numerous references to specific numerical projections or predictions that are without obvious rationalization or justification. Strategies should be quantitatively specific only if appropriate justification can be documented. Although a document like this should be kept relatively brief and to the point, appendices can be added that document sources of data from which rationales were derived for how strategies were chosen. This would include the specific aspect of our academic environment that prompted the strategy to be developed, and how certain specific numbers cited in the plan were chosen (e.g., clinical practice will increase by 3.5%). Strategies should then be followed by additional sections, perhaps also as appendices, containing precise descriptions of how outcomes are to be measured, including clearly stated assignments of accountability (i.e., the exact individual or department or office responsible for implementation of the stated strategies). There are no true Outcome Measures presented in the current document.

Finally, the UTHSCSA Strategic Plan should provide a clear description of an integrated “big-picture”, justification and prioritization of objectives, and clear connections with each/all of the

missions of the institution. The current draft of the Strategic Plan appears fragmented. Based on the language used in each section, it can be surmised which of the vice presidents or deans had a major role in the writing. The document needs to be seamless, using consistent understandable language and definitions, so that it reads like a cohesive description of a single plan, rather than a bunch of little unrelated plans just stuck together.

II. Specific Concerns Regarding the Current Draft

The following are derived directly from comments made by senators and/or other members of the faculty:

A. Resources and Support

There are no objectives related to the need for each school to provide individual strategic plans that funnel into and support the institutional plan.

It is not at all clear from where resources/funds to support the Plan will come. Are there guarantees from the President or others that resources will be available to the vice presidents and deans to insure successful implementation of strategic objectives?

B. Faculty

There is no goal/section focused solely on faculty issues or the faculty's ability to support the missions of the UTHSCSA.

There are no clear descriptions of how this Plan will directly improve the faculty's circumstances. That is, there are no objectives relating to the recruitment and retention of faculty, salary and benefits issues (compensation plan), communication with the administration issues, faculty development and mentoring issues, time and effort issues, faculty wellness issues, etc.

The faculty has certain responsibilities for supporting the planning and missions of the UTHSCSA. Where are these delineated?

Define and clarify clinical care as a service with regard to Promotion & Tenure criteria, including clarified formatting of the UTHSCSA CV to reflect these criteria (i.e., service to the institution, to the profession, and to the public).

Junior Faculty will have a mentor by 2007? Why would it need to take that long to ask one faculty member to mentor another?

C. CLINICAL CARE SECTION

Where is it specified what role/responsibilities faculty will play in obtaining the stated objectives?

The 5th stated primary role of UTHSCSA (top of Strategic Plan) "address health disparities" seems under-developed in the Plan, relative to the other primary goals. Perhaps some of the developments

at the RAHC could be framed in terms of fulfilling this role by providing health services to underserved populations.

Objective 1, p.2: Clarify “will transform”, and indicate why such a transformation will benefit the UTHSCSA

Objective 1, p.2: How will the Patient Management System interface with VA, RAHC, Laredo, other?

Objective 1, p.2: To have Evidence Based Practice implemented by FY07 does not seem realistic.

Objective 2, p.2: Add neuroscience as a signature program.

Objective 3, p.3: “and beyond”? Beyond what?

How is progress toward meeting community health needs to be measured?

Why is the systematic addressing of uncompensated care going to take 5 years?
Is this not a critical issue that needs an immediate solution?

Objective 5, p.3: What is the configuration, charge, and funding stream of the Annual Wellness Fair mentioned.

Strategies for “enhancing” the health of its employees and students must take insurance into consideration.

Is oral health included?

What does it mean to “enhance” Student Health Services?

D. EDUCATION SECTION

Where is it specified what role/responsibilities faculty will play in obtaining the stated objectives?

If Education is a primary mission of this institution, should not the institution provide incentives to teach, rather than de-valuing time and effort spent on educational activities in comparison with the perceived greater value placed on research and clinical activities?

Given Texas’ demographics, where are educational objectives that speak to efforts to interact with students in the middle and high school levels, under-represented in health and biomedical sciences professions, in order to encourage them to enter these professions?

The 5th stated primary role of UTHSCSA (top of Strategic Plan) "address health disparities" seems under-developed in the Plan, relative to the other primary goals. Certainly educational initiatives can address this issue. Community awareness may have importance in addressing health disparities.

Objective 1, p.4: Under outcome measures, why were the 15% values chosen? Rationale and documentation are needed for this choice, as well as other numerical projections cited under the Education section.

It is not clear what Outcome measure #1 is getting at. What is the definition of “capacity”?

Objective 4, p.5: Include the establishment of clear guidelines for academic integrity and ethical practice for all faculty and students across the five schools.

Objective 6, p.6: What does it mean to “establish an identify” for ACET? Who is to “engage” the ACET steering committee? What was the rationale for Outcome Measure #7?

E. ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Where is it specified what role/responsibilities faculty will play in obtaining the stated objectives?

Objective 1, p.7: It is unclear who is to be doing managerial assessments (is there a role for faculty in some of this?). No provision, following managerial assessments (i.e., upward evaluations), for downward reporting of findings.

Objective 3, p.7: Where is money coming from needed for equipment replacement or facilities renewal?

Objective 6, p.8: Does this refer to the HOP? There is no indication of when or how faculty input might be sought by the EC.

Objective 8, p.9: It is unclear what the objective is. What is a “branding system”? What is “consumer awareness”? Which consumer?

F. RESEARCH

Edit to the 2nd bullet in the Mission Statement to read: play a major regional, national and international role as a leading biomedical education and research institution in the discovery of new knowledge **and the translation of that knowledge into the community setting in order to address** society’s health care needs.

Where is it specified what role/responsibilities faculty should play in determining the feasibility of the stated objectives?

A nutrition program should be considered that supports research efforts.

Objective 1, p.10: In outcome measure 3, should it read **e.g.**, rather than **i.e.**, regenerative medicine.....

Objective 2, p.10: How were all of these projected numbers chosen; Is there documentation suggesting that these projections are consistent with reasonable expectations? Does Objective 2 take into account the deteriorating funding climate? What institutional support/funding can be expected to drive these objectives?

Objective 3, p.12: The strategic research areas should be better defined. Since this Objective is to be achieved by FY 11, perhaps design an annual plan, for example, to implement a different specified research area in each year?

Objective 4, p.11: Where's the money coming from?