

Mark J. Zoran, Dean

February 24, 2025

RE: Arts and Sciences Strategic Plan: A Foundational Future

Dear Dedra, Ophelia, Pam, Cheryl and Stefanie,

Thank you for agreeing to co-chair our Strategic Planning **Valuing People and Missions Working Group** as we craft the first strategic plan for the College of Arts and Sciences. Your group is one of four created that will focus on critical activities we pursue to achieve national and international preeminence across the college. Your group is particularly broad and will plan for ***elevating the value of our people and missions and visibility of our people and missions outside Texas A&M University***. This is an exciting moment as this plan will help chart our path for the next 10 years.

The objective of the strategic plan is to develop a framework for goals and actions that cement our newly formed College firmly as the **foundational future** of the Arts and Sciences at Texas A&M. Dramatic changes are occurring in higher education and across the nation as views on education in general are shifting due to new challenges in communication, globalization, funding and the relationship between the people and missions of a public university and the citizenry of Texas and the United States. Our strategic plan must engage these challenges if we are to create a strong academic foundation for Arts and Sciences' research and instruction.

My **charge** is that your Working Group develop a set of recommendations that account for the emergent challenges posed by our rapidly changing educational landscape and will position best position our college to positively impact the future of Texas, the nation, and the world. The question that drives our strategic planning conversations is simple, ***“What is the shared vision in Arts and Sciences for creating national and international prominence in our research, teaching, and outreach?”***

Your Working Group will have access to the **Area-Specific Idea Papers** produced by each of your associated teams: Alumni Affairs and Development, Marketing and Communications, Centralized and College Staff Support, and Faculty Affairs. I charge the Working Group to review any applicable data, conduct meetings with focus groups, incorporate Dean's External and Development Council (DEADC) input and generate a report that includes potential goals, objectives, strategies and actions, as well as assessment metrics, that support our vision for the future of Arts and Sciences.

I leave it to this group of co-chairs and your individual or collective teams to define the conduct for initial aspects of your work that will produce the initial **Area-Specific Idea Papers**. You each have the latitude to structure your independent team meetings and processes in a way that fits the unique aspects of your assigned areas. However, to ensure a shared approach and inclusivity in the formulation of our ultimate strategic plan, please follow the steps outlined below and illustrated in the accompanying graphic.

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- **Create a Working Group.** The five of you may be sufficient, but others could be added.
- **Individual teams should identify Focus Groups** that reflect the diversity of key stakeholders germane to their area, such as faculty, staff, students, and administrators as they create their **Area-Specific Idea Papers.** Develop strategies for engaging these key stakeholders regarding their perception of your area and future possibilities.
- **Continue to reality test your evolving set of goals, strategies and actions,** understanding approaches will change over time as you deliberate. Reassessment of the utility and viability plans is important as university constraints or emerging societal trends may disrupt and challenge our thinking.
- **Track cross-cutting issues and overlaps that may be relevant to other Working Groups.** Each Working Group has a particular focus, be mindful of ideas that arise that might impact other groups' planning and pass them along to the appropriate chair.
- **Produce a preliminary report by April 11, 2025.** Please include a brief executive summary in your **Working Group Reports.** These brief overviews will be posted on a college website, so as to inform planning progress. Following the completion of preliminary reports, coordination meetings among the Working Group Co-Chairs will be scheduled to explore cross-cutting issues and how the college may address them as well as provide updates on the progress of the Working Groups.
- **Submit your final report on strategic planning by May 30, 2025.** Note that the preliminary and final report have no required format or template at this time, but more guidance will likely be forthcoming. Again, final executive summaries of the reports will be posted to the website.

For the Valuing People and Missions Working Group, I ask that you consider the following issues and questions in your deliberation:

Elevating our Alumni Relations and Former Student Engagement: What practices or policies are particularly effective at enhancing our former student engagement? What are the challenges to expanding our relationships with our graduates? What actions might we take to engage and educate former students to our continuing and new missions? What can the college do to more effectively enable our graduates to become ambassadors for our strategic plan?

Advancing our Development of Financial Support from Donors and Former Students: Given the College of Arts and Sciences' central role in teaching, research and service, how can we best develop potential donors to value our people as well as our research, teaching, and service missions? What best practices exist at TAMU and our peer institutions to promote missions and expand our endowment funding base? Are there novel or innovative opportunities for enhancing our engagement with potential donors at both the department and college level?

Enhancing our Marketing and Communications Efforts: How can the college and departments support a more visible and broader championing of the value of our people and their missions? What are the opportunities to better align our college marketing and communications goals with those of our departments and the university? What innovative or novel approaches can we develop to market our missions to the university and beyond?

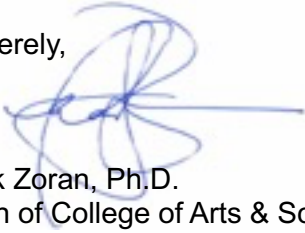
Developing an Effective Staffing Structure for the Future: What opportunities currently exist or might exist in the future for developing the professional skills of our staff? What concrete steps can the college take to foster better interaction among our college and centralized staff members? What are the current challenges, and how might they be addressed, in promoting the value and career success of our staff members? What innovative or novel approaches can we develop to better demonstrate our staff appreciation and make the college a preferred destination to work? Advancing the Valuable Missions of our Faculty (and their students and research personnel): What practices or policies are

particularly effective at enhancing our faculty and their missions? What are the challenges to better promote our faculty across the university and beyond? What actions might we take to engage and educate the citizenry of Texas and the United States regarding the value of our faculty and their missions in higher education? How can the college better message the value of our foundational missions of education and research, while advocating and supporting our faculty conducting them?

Certain issues and questions may be more relevant than others for individual teams. There may also be overlap in some areas among the teams. I encourage you to focus on those issues and questions that are important to the work for each team.

Thank you for leading this working group and your individual areas. I greatly appreciate your willingness to undertake this important task for the college. I strongly believe that the talent and resources we have in the college give us the opportunity to become one of the leading colleges of arts and sciences in the nation and I look forward to working with you to make this a reality.

Sincerely,



Mark Zoran, Ph.D.
Dean of College of Arts & Sciences