

# *Vision in Action*

## *Project Report*

### **Chapter II: Synthesis**

#### **II.1 Beginning Strategic Agenda**

During the summer of 2004, the staff of Kaludis Consulting prepared a synthesis of the Strategy Group reports that would eventually provide the basis for a beginning strategic agenda for TCU—a synthesis that would itself be vetted through campus discussions and trustee deliberations. In late June, the Steering Committee and Strategy Group Convenors met to review the Synthesis Document prior to securing Cabinet approval. On July 1, 2004, the document was posted to the VIA website for review.

The following excerpt from the Synthesis Document, prepared by Kaludis Consulting, highlights the convergence of thought and congruence of ideas in the position papers:

The Vision in Action (VIA) strategy groups ... created a set of position papers that will help Texas Christian University (TCU) define its preferred future and the paths to achieving it. In so doing, TCU will be responding to the needs of the university community (students, faculty, staff, alumni, and other supporters) and managing the impact of the numerous external forces involved in shaping its future.

The position papers postulate assumptions, propose strategic recommendations, and identify policy and/or resource allocation implications. They present points of convergence of thought and congruence of ideas in the context of the decisions that TCU must make. There is fairly broad agreement on several points:

- Importance of doing everything at the highest standards of quality, defined by national criteria and implemented through TCU-specific definitions
- Primacy of undergraduate education as the building block for increasing the national recognition of TCU
- Importance of retaining and enhancing TCU's position as a national university
- Desire for increased residentiality and creation of true living and learning environment in and outside of the classroom, with access to this experience for all undergraduate students
- Physical, academic, and support infrastructures have been stretched beyond normal limits
- Need for more explicit criteria for resource allocation and a more open (transparent) process

- Need for growth in graduate enrollment through addition of new graduate programs
- Value of interdisciplinary/multidisciplinary programs
- Increasing intra-institutional collaboration/synergy (undergraduate/graduate; across units; Centers/Institutes)
- Requirement to maintain an environment rich in personal interaction
- Need to recognize and value the Fort Worth communities as an important resource to TCU and for the community to see TCU as a valued neighbor and resource.
- Importance of building and integrating strategy across the University's critical priority areas to make best use of available current and future resources.
- Need for increased availability and utilization of technology in teaching and learning
- Requirement to deliver on the TCU Promise. The commitment to renewing the TCU Promise finds consensus as an organizing principle in many of the subcommittee reports.

The Synthesis Document noted that excellence must be intertwined with all aspects of TCU and used as an example the student athlete model employed by the University. This model includes well-defined goals and performance standards with related high graduation rates for student athletes. The Synthesis Document cites that athletics is one of the units within the University that can help TCU achieve higher national visibility and provides another means to develop and promote excellence. The report on *Strategies for Athletics* recommends that “the University should continually seek ways to leverage the investment in the ongoing role of Intercollegiate Athletics in support of other University priorities...”

The Synthesis Document also disclosed that imbedded in the Strategy Group reports was a recognition that critical decisions that will drive the programmatic and economic future of the University have to be made in the following areas:

- Meeting the TCU Promise
- Developing Graduate Education and Research/Creative Activity
- Building “Excellence” into the Fabric of the University
- Acquiring, Allocating, and Managing Resources in Support of Quality

The Synthesis Document is presented in **Appendix L**.

## **II.2 Delivering the TCU Promise**

"Putting Our Vision into Action: The TCU Promise—Fall 2004 Symposium" was held Saturday Sept. 11, 2004. More than 200 members of the TCU family, including faculty, staff, students, alumni, deans, and trustees, attended and discussed the TCU Promise and

how this Promise might impact the future of TCU.

During the symposium, participants were involved in small group discussions, and the major points of the discussion were recorded and synthesized into documents with input from separate cohort groups (faculty, staff, alumni, students, trustees, and deans). The discussions were wide-ranging and fruitful.

The following VIA Strategic Goals emerged from the conference:

- Recruit and retain students, faculty, and staff who can achieve their full potential at TCU;
- Design a vibrant learning community characterized by distinctive curricular, co-curricular, and residential programs;
- Sustain an environment in which rich personal interaction is enhanced by outstanding facilities and appropriate technology;
- Accelerate our connection with the greater community: Fort Worth, Texas, the nation, and the world; and
- Couple wise financial stewardship with a well-planned entrepreneurial approach to academic opportunities.

In addition to these 5 Strategic Goals, a series of strategic themes were identified as important for achieving TCU's vision:

- Emphasize quality over quantity in undergraduate enrollment
- Recapture TCU's residential heritage
- Develop academic programs of distinction
- Improve undergraduate retention and graduation rates
- Prepare graduates for the global village and the world of work
- Develop centers/institutes as magnets for recognition, for curricular innovation/integration, and for interdisciplinary research and creative activity
- Accomplish faculty reshoring (adding both faculty and the required operational infrastructure) and develop a faculty model (size and mix) for the future
- Develop standards and new operating models for specific types of graduate programs
- Enhance the support infrastructure for research and creative activity
- Elevate the philanthropic plane
- Link resource acquisition and allocation with directed investment in strategic priorities

Collectively, these themes speak to a renewed commitment to excellence and offer a blueprint for TCU's continued success. An overview of the major ideas put forth by each of the six cohort groups as a basis for important, ongoing discussions of the TCU Promise is presented in [Appendix M](#).

### **II.3 Graduate Vision and Strategy**

After reviewing the reports from the Strategy Work Groups, the Provost determined that more work was needed in the area of graduate education before the deans would be able to adequately address graduate vision and strategy at the school/college level. The Provost convened the Graduate Education Vision and Strategy Group to prepare a position paper that would explore a set of critical questions related to graduate education (e.g., size, mix, markets, collaboration, and competitive positioning) and that would propose a vision and strategic goals for graduate education at TCU that could serve as a guide for deans as they define the developmental paths for graduate education in their colleges/schools. That group was composed of:

**Lazelle Benefield**, Harris School of Nursing  
**Joseph Butler**, School of Music  
**Bill Cron**, M.J. Neeley School of Business  
**Bonnie Melhart**, College of Science and Engineering  
**Michael Slattery**, Institute of Environmental Studies and Department of Geology  
**Dan Williams**, Department of English  
**Melissa Young**, Department of Communication Studies

The group's report, presented in **Appendix N**, provides a series of recommendations for reviewing existing graduate programs, evaluating proposals for new graduate programs, enhancing interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary programs, improving the research/creative activity support infrastructure, and developing seed funding and incentives for increasing external funding.

#### **II.4 Defining TCU's Preferred Future--Academic Strategy Synthesis**

In the fall of 2004, Provost Donovan asked TCU's academic deans to provide their current thinking about academic strategy in the form of draft school/college strategic plans. These plans were to be developed using the guidelines presented in the Provost's planning charge to the deans (**see Appendix O**). This charge was intended to serve as a framework for connecting strategic thinking about the schools/colleges to the larger institutional strategic backdrop.

The focus on academic strategy is a critical element of VIA because academic distinction and distinctiveness—the positioning of TCU's schools and their undergraduate and graduate programs in both the marketplace and the national academy—will determine whether the vision and goals for TCU's Preferred Future will be realized.

Five major elements of an academic strategy that can enhance TCU's recognition and reputation as a national and international university emerge from a look across all seven school/college strategic plans:

- Refining the undergraduate and graduate program portfolios
- Making TCU the university “of Fort Worth” not just “in Fort Worth”
- Increasing the opportunities for interdisciplinary activity across the TCU curriculum
- Strengthening learning in the global community

- Continuing reshoring of the academic infrastructure

### **Refining Program Portfolios**

Each of the school/college strategic plans underscores, in its own way, the need to refine its academic program offerings, and each also acknowledges that—along with faculty scholarship and creative activity—the recognition generated by academic programs, both undergraduate and graduate, plays a key role in enhancing the University’s distinctiveness.

Recommendations for undergraduate programming were, for the most part, not degree-specific:

- Raise the academic profile
- Maintain steady-state enrollment
- Increase residentially to 2/3
- Reduce reliance on adjunct faculty
- Increase academic and talent scholarships
- Add more experiential learning opportunities
- Increase the number and breadth of first year seminars
- Increase undergraduate research and creativity activity opportunities
- Quantitatively measure TCU against *U.S. News & World Report* peer private institutions

An intriguing proposal to raise the academic profile comes in the form of the proposed Neeley Fellows Program that would include expanded scholarships; enriched courses, including study abroad; an extracurricular leadership program; and expanded placement opportunities domestically and internationally. The concept of a “fellows” program more broadly applied has the potential to provide a measure of distinction and distinctiveness in the undergraduate programs. Rather than being school-based (e.g., Neeley School of Business Fellows, AddRan College Fellows, etc.), thematic fellows programs could potentially have broader appeal and enhance interdisciplinary efforts. Possibilities for Fellows programs would include Leadership and Ethics, Latin American Studies, Human Biology, Environmental Management, Broadcast Journalism, and Music Performance.

Two recommendations were made for specific new experiential learning opportunities that could fit right in with the Fellows concept:

- Establishing an advertising/PR agency where teams of students would provide communications services to community organizations; and
- Establishing a student-run business consulting firm where teams of students would take on actual consulting projects.

New degrees were discussed in the area of Arts Administration, which was identified as being worthy of further exploration for a 3+2 BA plus MBA or a 4+1 option.

In the area of graduate education, the general theme was targeted growth, with a variety of recommendations for new programs, including:

- Doctorate in Mass Communication
- Masters of Social Work
- Doctor of Nursing Practice
- Ph.D. in Human Biological Sciences
- M.A. in Public History
- M.F.A. in Creative Writing
- Masters of Engineering Administration
- M.S. and Ph.D. in Environmental and Biological Conservation

Reinstatement of degrees was a second dimension of graduate program development found in the school/college plans. The M.S. and Ph.D. in Mathematics and the M.F.A in Dance were identified as candidates.

Development of skill and competency certifications was identified as a third dimension of graduate program development. The opportunity to redefine public perceptions of liberal arts education by offering skill and competency certifications in such areas as technology, writing, language, and other professional assets was discussed. Additionally, a specific graduate certificate program in Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and an Artist's Diploma Program (two-year credential for dance professionals) were recommended.

### **Making TCU “of Fort Worth”**

Although TCU was born in Fort Worth in 1869 as Fort Worth Male and Female Seminary, and although it has occupied its current location on University Avenue since 1911 (with brief stops in Thorp Springs and Waco in between), many would argue that—though it may be “in” Fort Worth—it is not “of Fort Worth.” While some would call this an artificial distinction, those who know TCU best agree that there is a difference. During the past 30 years significant progress has been made to make TCU the “University of Fort Worth,” but there is more work to do. In their separate school/college strategic plans, the deans reinforced this conclusion, proposing several initiatives to enhance a sense of “ownership” of and pride in TCU as a member of the greater urban community. An excellent place to start would be the approximately 22,000 TCU alumni living and working in Fort Worth. In fact, nearly half the principals and administrators in the FWISD have at least one degree from TCU.

One key strategy would be to increase the number and variety of opportunities for Fort Worthians to come to the TCU campus, particularly through campus-based professional development programs. Building on (and strengthening) professional lab situations, such as Kinderfrogs and Starpoint School, was mentioned as priority in this area. Another strategy would be to increase the “reach” of TCU across the area by expanding the number and variety of internships and service learning opportunities available to TCU students.

There are other potentially fertile areas of increased interaction with external communities through existing outreach programs, such as the Center for Texas Studies and the Center for Civic Literacy. Further examples include the School of Education administered (and federally supported) Upward Bound program throughout the year on campus, the M.J. Neeley School of Business youth oriented initiatives through both their Entrepreneurial and Finance programs, and the Office of Extended Education's coordination of a scholastic camp for area selectees as part of the Duke University Talent Search Program.

As public school funding for the arts continues to dwindle, revival of the dance preparatory program was another idea gleaned from the plans that could strengthen TCU's connections to communities. In addition to increased visibility, such an initiative could have an additional payoff in student recruitment.

The whole area of culture—TCU's cultural programming and Fort Worth's cultural institutions—was identified an opportunity for building stronger bonds and for establishing mutually reinforcing activities. In particular, enhancing the educational value of Fort Worth's cultural institutions to TCU students and the strategic value of the University Art Gallery internally and externally were presented as priorities.

### **Increasing Interdisciplinary Activity**

School distinction and curricular distinctiveness—the ability to differentiate from the competition—is key to TCU's achieving the desired level of recognition and regard and also attracting the right number of the right kinds of students. Innovative program development must be a key ingredient in TCU's recipe for success, and interdisciplinary programs provide dynamic paths for innovation. Breaking down barriers to collaboration has always been a challenge, because it often requires attacking fundamental tenets of the institutional culture. Yet the TCU community is committed to meeting this challenge.

The school/college strategic plans call for two important kinds of interdisciplinary development: centers and institutes and as well graduate programs. Both are excellent mechanisms for achieving “product” differentiation, and the former is increasingly essential for stimulating the level and kinds of research and creative activity that TCU needs to further its “positioning” objectives.

New centers and institutes with interdisciplinary potential proposed in the school/college strategic plans include:

- Center for Ethical Leadership and Responsible Citizenship
- Institute for Sports Media
- Center for Conflict Resolution
- Center for Latin American Arts
- Center for Health and Human Development
- Center for Supply and Value Chain Studies
- Texas Center for Community Journalism
- Institute/Center for Special Education/Early Childhood Intervention

- Center for Cognitive Engineering
- Center for Molecular Design and Nanoscale Engineering

In addition to such new centers and institutes, the school/college strategic plans acknowledge improvements in intra-institutional collaboration are needed in existing centers and institutes, such as the Center for Texas Studies, the Center for Civic Literacy, the Institute for Mathematics, Science and Technology Education, the Center for Urban Education, and the TCU Leadership Center.

Several of the proposed new graduate degree programs would represent internal and, in some cases, external collaboration. These include: MBA/Ed.D, Doctorate in Science Education, Masters of Engineering Administration, MSN for nurse educators and for nurse executives, and M.S. and Ph.D. programs in Environmental and Biological Conservation (Biology in cooperation with BRIT, IES, and the Fort Worth and Dallas zoos).

Undergraduate minors and graduate concentrations would provide additional possibilities for enhancing interdisciplinary collaboration, especially in such fields as Studies in Civic Action (Political Science, Social Work, Business, Engineering, Nursing, History), Studies in Gerontology (Sociology, Kinesiology, Social Work, Psychology, Nursing), Studies in Genetics (Biology, Nursing, Social Work, Philosophy, Business), and Studies in Sports (Sports Broadcasting, Athletic Training, Fitness Management, Sports Consulting). Arts Administration would also be another area where the possibility of adding an undergraduate minor exists.

### **Strengthening “Global” Learning**

Three thrusts related to the “learning in the global community” theme also appeared in the school/college Strategic Plans. The first was increased bilingual education, driven by the compelling demographic projections for the State of Texas that forecast continued growth in the Hispanic population through immigration and higher birth rates. [Note: the case can be similarly made for increased multilingual education as the size of other non-English-as-first-language communities increases in Texas, such as the Vietnamese and Thai communities.] Among other recommendations in the school/college Strategic Plans were establishing a bilingual ESL and reading graduate program in the School of Education, expanding the bilingual program in Speech Language Pathology, and creating a center to support bilingual initiatives across the University.

The second thrust was increased participation by TCU students in study abroad programs by increasing the financial aid resources available to students and by increasing the quality and quantity of overseas programming.

The third thrust was enhanced foreign language instruction coupled with greater TCU faculty participation in summer and full-term study-abroad programs.

### **Call for Continued Reshoring**



A fifth important element of academic strategy—reshoring the TCU academic infrastructure—appears, to varying degrees, in all school/college strategic plans. Although this element is remedial, and not developmental, it is nonetheless critically important to TCU’s success. The “reshoring” process at TCU actually predates VIA’s launch by more than two years and continues as a capital budget priority. A new dimension of reshoring, however, did emerge from VIA—the need for faculty (and in some cases staff) reshoring, acknowledging that the growth in the “human infrastructure” has not keep pace with the growth in enrollment. The University’s decision to hold undergraduate enrollment steady to allow time for the physical and human infrastructures to catch up is integral to the success of TCU’s academic strategy.

Although the need for reshoring that human infrastructure is undeniable, addressing it remains a facet of the University’s budget-allocation process, not VIA. From the beginning, funding for VIA projects has been intended to provide seed money to develop and test innovative programs. Such funding can and will include multiyear investments to cover start-up costs, including salaries and benefits. These VIA-funded projects will be evaluated at appropriate intervals against defined milestones, and at the end of the seed-funding period, the revenues and costs of successful programs will be integrated into the University’s operating budget.

## **II.5 VIA Update**

In January 2005, Drs. Donovan and Munson reviewed the results and preliminary recommendations resulting from the strategic planning process with the campus community in an afternoon session, “VIA: Finalizing Our Strategies.” The PowerPoint presentation from that session can be found in [Appendix P](#).