

*“The future has several names.
For the weak, it is impossible.
For the faint hearted, it is unknown.
For the thoughtful and valiant, it is ideal.”
- Victor Hugo, novelist, poet, dramatist*

*“For the Horned Frogs, it is transcendent.”
- Victor Boschini, Chancellor TCU*



Vision in Action:

Defining TCU's Preferred Future

A comprehensive review of the
Academic Planning Process 2003-05

TCU

Vision in Action

Project Report

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Executive Summary

In June 2003, TCU embarked on what would turn out to be a 26-month transformational journey. *Vision in Action* (VIA) set out to define a strategic agenda to accomplish the key priorities articulated by Chancellor Boschini early on in the VIA process, when he stated that TCU will:

- Become ranked near the top of Tier II national universities
- Have a strong residential presence in and around its campus
- Seek modest increases in the number and types of quality graduate programs
- Work to enhance its national visibility

As the process proceeded, VIA changed:

- The institutional culture—incorporating greater campus participation in planning at both the input and feedback stages through a variety of consultative tactics, including town hall meetings and web conversations;
- The operating philosophy of the University, by more closely aligning resource allocation with strategic priorities; and
- The University’s vision of its preferred future and strategic pathways necessary to achieve that vision.

To begin its work, VIA built on significant foundations, especially *The Commission on the Future of TCU*. An evaluation of progress on *The Commission’s* recommendations served as a jumping off point for VIA. Furthermore, VIA also connected to recurring institutional planning activities, e.g., physical master planning and Institutional Technology planning, in order to provide a big-picture framework that served as a lens for deliberation and decision-making.

An economic review, including the development of financial model for scenario testing, was a key element of the big picture framework, as was a comprehensive look at the external environment in which TCU operates and the anticipated environment in which it will operate during the next decade. The work of six faculty-led strategy groups is the heart of VIA, as these groups provided the basis for beginning the construction of an institutional strategic agenda through the development of a document that synthesized the work of the strategy groups.

One key organizing principle that emerged from the strategy group work was the requirement to deliver on the **TCU Promise**, especially the importance of commitment to renewing that promise.

The TCU Promise is a multifaceted commitment that covers the expectations and responsibilities of all members of the TCU Community. Students and parents expect TCU to commit to providing (i) interesting and useful curricula, taught by ethical, engaging—and engaged—faculty, (ii) a safe environment, and (iii) an invigorating social milieu. Similarly faculty expects

incoming and continuing students to commit to being intellectually curious, to have high ethical and moral standards, to be active learners, and to be willing to engage with the world around them. The faculty also has an expectation that the University will commit to providing an environment that sustains and encourages creative activity and scholarship.

One of the high points of VIA was the Fall 2004 Symposium, “Putting Our Vision into Action: The TCU Promise,” where more than 200 members of the TCU family, including faculty, staff, students, alumni, deans, and trustees, discussed the TCU Promise and how it might impact the University’s future.

The remainder of 2004 saw work on Graduate Education Vision and Strategy and the beginning of work on separate school/college Strategic Plans, using the evolving TCU Strategic Agenda as a framework.

Planning should always be a facilitator of, not an impediment to, timely decision-making. During the VIA process, several critical areas were defined within the TCU decision agenda:

- Size of undergraduate enrollment
- The number and proportion of students in residence
- Graduate education strategy, including size, mix, financial aid, and standards
- Campus Master Plan and initial facilities investment priorities
- School/college positioning
- Future pricing strategy
- Future faculty model
- Centers/institutes strategy (framework for developing distinction)
- Allocation of initial VIA funding

Decisions in some areas, such as capital spending, size of undergraduate enrollment, and residence target were made during the spring of 2005. Others, such as graduate education strategy, school/college positioning, and future pricing strategy, remain under development.

The Trustees made one of the most important VIA decisions in April, when they authorized dedicating a percentage of tuition revenue for VIA investment. The initial investments (for the 2005-06 academic year) include:

- A significant increase in funding selected graduate stipends with the strategic intent of increasing the number and quality of individuals who are attracted to the TCU graduate programs;
- Commencement of “Successful Graduation” initiative, a program that aims to significantly decrease undergraduate attrition within five years;
- An academic CD, whose purpose is to better prepare incoming freshmen for the challenges of their new environment. This CD links to the “Successful Graduation” initiative (above) and to more robust strategies with respect to

- academic advising and preparation;
- Establishment of a Center for Child Development, emphasizing the training of personnel who can give direct aid to children from challenged backgrounds; and
- Support for aspects of the Transitions program for undergraduates, a program that takes a holistic approach to the problems and possibilities facing our students.

In addition, a number of initiatives are under active review and will be implemented during the next few months. These include a major commitment to undergraduate creative activity, the establishment of carefully selected graduate programs in our professional schools, a commitment to literacy (both for students and the greater community), and support for carefully selected Institutes and Centers. Further recommendations remain under discussion.

In summary, TCU has emerged from the 26-month *Vision in Action* project positioned for greater success, with a clear and simple vision:

TCU will become an increasingly more significant private university with a greater international presence.

In detail, the Preferred Future of TCU emphasizes that the University ethos will embrace:

- High Quality
- Brave Visions
- High Purposes

In practical terms, this means that the University will accelerate its commitment to:

- An expansion of the boundaries of knowledge,
- A literate response to the solving of problems and engagement with possibilities,
- An assumption of responsibility,
- A commitment to ethical standards
- A deep respect for human dignity and human rights, and
- A commitment to the development of the full potential of all members of the University.

At the same time the University will constantly reference a heritage that is both firmly rooted in academic tradition and rich in personal history. In effect, TCU will embrace a vision that connects its origins with its future.

The TCU community accepts that accomplishing this vision will depend on the dedication and commitment of the entire TCU family. Specifically, it will require the alignment of strategies with goals, and the shrewd investment of resources in those activities and initiatives that present the greatest opportunity for achieving the vision.

In this way TCU can transition with confidence to a dynamic and well-planned future.