Undergraduate Academics

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Theme Group Name
Undergraduate Academics

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Introduction
As we envision the future of West Texas A&M University, the Undergraduate Academic group has developed a series of Key Ideas that we believe will help the campus flourish amidst the projections of what our student population is now and will be in 2035. These are the six key ideas the Undergraduate Academics group has identified.
1. WT needs to strengthen its liberal arts roots by re-envisioning the core to engage students and develop key skills.
2. WT seeks to become a Top Choice university for students graduating in the Top 20% of their respective classes.
3. WT must also become a top choice for community college transfer students.
4. WT needs to support and involve students in as many experiential learning opportunities as possible.
5. Along with innovative face to face experiential learning curriculum, WT must develop and utilize innovative experiential learning pedagogies in distance education courses.
6. WT must embed itself into the culture, economy, and development of the Texas

Panhandle.

If attained, these goals will serve to re-brand WT as a regional university with an "honors college" experience for all students that embraces a strong liberal arts tradition while staying true to its regional roots. This re-branding will guide WT as it develops into the cultural center of innovation and creativity both within the TAMU system and the region where WT lives. The WT educational environment will support small group discussion, communication emphasizing courses that utilize innovative instructional strategies, course-embedded travel experiences both within the U.S. and abroad, and service learning and research experiences across the curriculum. West Texas A&M University will become known as the institution within the TAMU system that operates functions as a private liberal arts university while at the same time offering students impactful pipelines to careers supported and needed by the Panhandle region as well as regions like it across the country.

Innovation

Innovation in this context would be the transformation of a regional institution into a different and yet well-defined type of institution with a liberal arts feel and an experiential learning focus embedded into many facets of the curriculum and campus culture. West Texas A&M University currently has much of the infrastructure necessary for this type of transformation as we have endeavored to model various components of a liberal arts institution with the current and previous Quality Enhancement Plans (QEPs). However, the financial resources would be significant as this type of transformation takes place over time. Some of the actionable items below can be put into place immediately, others will take time. Many measurable outcomes have been defined that will ensure satisfactory, significant, and continuous progress is being made toward a full transformation.

Key Idea (1)

Key Idea (1)

Re-envision the core curriculum for maximum student engagement and development of critical thinking and communication skills. English, Communication, Political Science and Philosophy courses are interesting examples of re-envisioned humanities curriculum, all designed to meet the elements of the humanities core from different perspectives. Within these contexts, learning communities could be developed to enhance the student experiences.

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Goal 1:
Redesign how courses are viewed and taught within the University Core Curriculum, to include innovative instructional strategies and experiential activities.

> **Action 1.1:**
> Each course to be included in the core curriculum should be evaluated to ensure the use of engaging or innovative pedagogy to support student learning. These may include innovative curriculum, daily small group discussions, experiential learning activities, travel experiences, etc.
>
> > **Measurable Outcomes 1.1.1 – 1.2.1:**
> > * Number of redesigned courses within the core.
> > * Number of engaging course experiences financially supported.
> > * Student measures of critical thinking at the conclusion of the core.

Goal 2:
Expand unique educational travel experiences across the university curriculum, both within the University core and in major-specific courses, to a level of each discipline or major offering a travel embedded course either within the U.S. or abroad once every two years, allowing all students the opportunity to participate.

> **Action 2.1:**
> Increase the level of funding available for course travel experiences and develop these experiences within core and major specific courses. Example 1: A 3000 or 4000 level course collaboration between Philosophy and Mathematics that features a travel abroad experience to Greece and an experience of the Platonic Academy.
>
> > **Measurable Outcomes 2.1.1:**
> > * Number of embedded travel experiences within 3000 and 4000 level courses by discipline.
> > * Number of embedded travel experiences within core level classes.

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- Student measures of critical thinking at the conclusion of the core and upon graduation.

Goal 1:
Expand the number of real-life experiential learning experiences within a more traditional theoretical classroom. Many disciplines do this well, but there is room for expansion.

Action 3.1:
Increase the number of embedded experiential learning opportunities within 2000 through 4000 level courses. Example: In engineering, 3000 level discipline courses are design courses where students put their theory into practice throughout the course.

Measurable Outcomes 3.1.1:
- Number of embedded experiential learning opportunities within 3000 and 4000 level courses by discipline.
- Number of embedded experiential learning opportunities within the core.
- Student measures of critical thinking at the conclusion of the core and upon graduation.

Key Idea (2)

Key Idea (2)
West Texas A&M University will be a top choice for area high school students who graduate in the top 20% of their class.

Goal 1:
Recruit top high school students in the Panhandle area in an intentional, personal and effective way.

Action 1.1:
Continue to recruit top students through college fairs but re-evaluate the success of such events.

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Action 1.2:
Create a number of Top 20% Recruitment Teams consisting of WTAMU staff, instructors, alumni, students, and employers in the community. These teams will work with area high schools to identify top students. The teams will set up visits with and events for these students and their families on the high school campuses if permitted, or in other venues if high school campuses are not available. During these visits/events, the teams will promote WT and help with questions pertaining to applications, financial aid, academic expectations, campus life, leadership opportunities, innovative curricula, and so on.

Action 1.3:
In conjunction with Action 1.2, employ a paid recruiter within each WTAMU college. Each recruiter will also be a member of a Top 20% Recruitment Team.

Action 1.4:
Invite top students and their families to dinners to be held either at WT itself or at suitable venues in various towns. The Top 20% Recruitment Teams will attend, promote WT and help with questions pertaining to applications, financial aid, academic expectations, and so on.

Action 1.5:
Work with high schools counselors to identify top seniors who have not committed to any college after a certain time in the final semester of their senior year. Mail information about WT to these students. Follow up with a call and an invitation to these students and their families to visit the campus and meet with the Top 20% Recruitment Teams.

Action 1.6:
Develop scholarship packages that target middle income students. Make sure that academically-gifted middle income students know about these scholarships by developing brochures with information about these opportunities. These brochures will be sent to high school counselors and to students who meet the demographic. Post information about the

scholarship packages on the WTAMU website, on Facebook, and on other social media. Make sure this topic is covered by the Top 20% Recruitment Teams who visit with students and their families.

Measurable Outcomes 1.1.1-1.3.1:
- Number of top students who cite college fairs as an important factor in their decision to attend WT.
- Number of top students who cite visits with the Top 20% Teams as an important factor in their decision to attend WT.
- Number of students who attend these visits/events and percentage who subsequently enroll at WT.

Measurable Outcome 1.4.1:
- Number of top students who cite these dinners with Top 20% Teams as an important factor in their decision to attend WT.

Measurable Outcome 1.5.1:
- Percentage of these students who subsequently enroll at WT.

Measurable Outcome 1.6.1:
- Number of students in this demographic who attend WT and take advantage of the financial aid and scholarships.

Goal 2:
Show Top 20 students what WT has to offer them.

Action 2.1:
Send personalized letters and promotional materials to prospective students. Follow-up with phone calls.

Action 2.2:
Invite top area students and parents/guardians to Discover WT Days that are geared specifically for them.

Action 2.3:

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Give faculty members a list of students to call and invite to Top 20% Discover WT Days and/or other events geared toward the top high school students.

Action 2.4:

In the community-at-large, market specific programs that have ties with local employers who offer internships, mentoring and summer job opportunities. Marketing will include social media as well as more standard marketing via radio, television, brochures, ads in magazines and papers, and billboards.

Action 2.5:

In the community-at-large, market innovative curricula, including experiential learning opportunities. Marketing will include social media as well as more standard marketing via radio, television, brochures, ads in magazines and newspapers, and billboards.

Action 2.6:

Use social media to send out video clips, tweets, and other media messages during an array of WT-related events: social events, athletic events, academic events. Place the video clips on Facebook and also on the WT website.

Action 2.7:

Offer one 3-hour academic course tuition-free during the first semester to all incoming freshman and/or offer the IDS Freshman Success course for free.

Action 2.8:

Establish a program with area high schools whereby WT professors serve as guest classroom instructors several times throughout the school year.

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Measurable Outcome 2.1.1:
- Number of top students who attend WTAMU and cite one or more of these actions as important factors in their decision to attend WT.

Measurable Outcome 2.2.2:
- Compare the percentage of top 20% students attending WTAMU before and after these actions are implemented.

Goal 3:
Create an academic transfer pipeline that ensures the smooth flow of dual credit hours and AP credits into WT degree programs.

Action 3.1:
Maintain regular dialogue with high school faculty, counselors and administration about academic standards and expectations for dual credit and AP credit courses.

Action 3.2:
Establish a review team within each college that periodically reviews all the dual credit offerings of the high schools in the Texas Panhandle to ensure that each course offered meets the criteria for acceptance. Eventually, expand the high schools reviewed to incorporate schools in the DFW Metroplex and the Houston area. These courses would be reviewed annually on a rotating basis.

Action 3.3:
Work with high schools that are developing unique programs (for example, programs that AISD will create for its soon-to-be AISD STEM/Coding Academy) so that students can transition seamlessly from those programs into a major at WTAMU. Provide academic support including faculty lectures in the development process and application of these programs.

Measurable Outcome 3.1.1:

- Provide a lunch and learn meeting with the high school faculty, counselors, and administration twice annually to establish specific expectations pertaining to dual credit and AP credit courses and evaluate the number of courses students are attending.

Measurable Outcome 3.2.1:
- Track the number of dual credit programs reviewed each year with the goal of reviewing each school once every five years, but also establish a system whereby WT is informed of any new course offerings immediately.

Measurable Outcome 3.3.1:
- Track WT involvement in the development of these programs as well as the number of students who transfer to WT from these programs. Develop a goal percentage of students to transfer from these programs.

Goal 4:
Identify the qualities of the university experience that the top 5% of students in the Top 26 aspire to.

Action 4.1:
Develop a survey to address Top 5% student wish list and identify institutional qualities of their top choice institutions.

Measurable Outcome 4.1.1:
- Develop the assessment tool and administer it to students.

Action 4.2:
Ask our dual credit instructors to administer assessment tool to all dual credit enrolled students in the Panhandle or target region for WT to administer survey.

Measurable Outcome 4.2.1:

- Number of students assessed.

Measurable Outcome 4.2.2:
- Number of characteristics identified

Action 4.3:
Create a team of WT personnel to explore what would be needed to make changes so the university reflects the desired characteristics of the top 5% of students in the top 26.

Measurable Outcome 4.3.1:
- Program development

Key Idea (3)

Key Idea (3)
West Texas A&M University will be a top choice for area community college transfer students.

Goal 1:
Recruit community college transfer students in the Panhandle area in an intentional, personal and effective way.

Action 1.1:
Dedicate a WTAMU full-day advisor to all area community colleges in order to work with students who are interested in transferring to WTAMU.

Action 1.2:
Collaborate with community college faculty and staff to create a congruency between credits and classes taken at the community college and the requirements at WTAMU.

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Action 1.3:

Create a number of Transfer Student Recruitment Teams who work with prospective transfer students. Teams would consist of WTAMU staff, instructors, alumni, and representatives of employers in the community as well as students currently attending WT who have transferred from community colleges.

Action 1.4:

Under the supervision of the Transfer Student Recruitment Team, invite transfer students to special Discover WT events tailored to their needs in order to create a welcoming environment and to provide information about degree programs, financial aid, housing, and campus life opportunities.

Action 1.5:

In the community-at-large, market specific programs that lead to careers in the area. Marketing will include social media as well as more standard marketing via radio, television, brochures, ads in magazines and newspapers, and billboards.

Action 1.6:

In the community-at-large, market WT's innovative curricula, including experiential learning and internships. Marketing will include social media as well as more standard marketing via radio, television, brochures, ads in magazines and newspapers, and billboards.

Action 1.7:

Dedicate on-campus housing to transfer students at a reduced rate for the first semester.

Action 1.8:

Develop Junior and Senior-level ITV courses to be shown either on the campus of partner community colleges or at other venues near area

community college campuses. The WTAMU professor of record will visit the off-campus location on a rotating basis.

Measurable Outcomes 1.1.1- 1.8.1:
- Number of transfer students who attend WTAMU and cite one or more of these actions as important factors in their decision to attend WT.
- Compare the percentage of transfer students from area community colleges who attend WTAMU before and after these actions are implemented.

Key Idea (4)

Key Idea (4)
WT must develop innovative curriculum that focuses on the student experiential learning in and outside the classroom.

Goal 1:
Require each student to complete an internship/career focused project to graduate.

Action 1.1.1:
Changes to curriculum for each program will have to be made in order to accommodate 3 hours for internship/career focused project.

Action 1.2.1:
Funding will have to be made available to help students during the semester they carry out their internship/career focused project.

Action 1.3.1:
Campus leadership organize and support this initiative. It will be necessary to obtain student buy-in for the process.

Action 1.4.1:
Complete program development to a create pathway for students to

participate and obtain credit for the program. Develop partnerships with local/state/national businesses to create outlets for students to participate in paid internships.

Measurable Outcomes 1.1.1- 1.4.1:
- Measure number of WT students who complete an experiential learning program.
- Measured using reflections (pre – during – post) and data collections using software (S.O.C. or something similar.)

Goal 2:
Develop relationships with state/local/national businesses to create opportunities for students.

Action 2.1:
Connect with business leaders to create standardized agreement of expectations so students and partners will have a clear understanding of expectations.

Action 2.2:
Use software like S.O.C. to create repositories and searchable systems for students to find opportunities, and for faculty/staff to run assessments.

Measurable Outcomes 2.1.1- 2.2.1:
- Number of current relationships utilizing experiential programs.
- Number of new relationships utilizing experiential programs.

Goal 3:
Fund each student the semester they complete the required internship/career focused project.

Action 3.1:
Develop an "internship fee" that each student pays each semester, and can draw as income during the semester they conduct their internship/career focused opportunity.

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Measurable Outcomes 3.1.1:
- Number of students participating in public showcase presentation of internship/career focused opportunities.
- New community relationships developed with WT.

Key Idea (5)

Key Idea (5)
Find ways to implement experiential learning consistently via distance education courses

Goal 1:
Ensure program developed for internships/career focuses programs can work for distance education students.

Action 1.1:
Build campus wide program to ensure the requirements are standardized into face-to-face and distance courses.

Measurable Outcomes 1.1.1:
- Measure the number of students taking online courses.
- Measure the number of students participating in experiential learning program through a distance education program.

Goal 2:
With the steady growth of distance education, we must find ways to   ensure quality and rigor are in place.

Action 2.1:
Utilizing an approved experiential learning handbook.

Action 2.1:
Ensure that online courses meet the same standards of face-to-face courses, particularly when using experiential learning pedagogies.

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Measurable Outcomes 2.1.1 - 2.2.1:
- Measure number of students taking online courses.
- Measure number of students participating in experiential learning programs through distance education programs.

Key Idea (6)

Key Idea (6)
Embed WT into the culture, economy, and continued development of the Texas Panhandle by becoming the entity that addresses its issues and needs through education, development and research.

Goal 1:
Identify the needs of the people and industry of the Texas Panhandle.

Action 1.1:
Develop an Office of Panhandle Strategic Development on the WT campus. This office will participate and coordinate relationship development with industry leaders across the region. It will further explore identified Panhandle problems and coordinate the development of WT faculty/student research and utilize faculty/student experiential educational teams to develop resolutions.

Action 1.2:
Use the North American Industry Classification (NAIC) standards as guidelines for research and connection with local industry.

Measurable Outcomes 1.1.1 – 1.2.1:
- Identify NAIC industries in the panhandle region served by WT.
- Identify partnerships with the available NAIC industries in the panhandle region.
- Number of contacts with local industry made by Office of Panhandle Strategic Development.

Goal 2:

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Use WT resources and infrastructure to address identified community needs.

Action 2.1:

Office of Panhandle Strategic Development works with industry representatives and field experts at WT to identify well-defined problems or issues that can be addressed by WT teams.

Measurable Outcomes 2.1.1:
- Measure number of problems submitted to a team.
- Measure number of Solutions identified to the industry representative.
- Measure Satisfaction between partnership stakeholders.

Appendices and Additional Facts and Analysis