

**From:** The Liberal Arts Faculty and Staff Announcement List [mailto:LIBERAL-ARTS@LISTSERV.TAMU.EDU] **On Behalf Of** Johnson, Charles  
**Sent:** Thursday, September 18, 2008 8:41 AM  
**To:** LIBERAL-ARTS@LISTSERV.TAMU.EDU  
**Subject:** Academic Master Planning in the College of Liberal Arts

September 17, 2008

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Faculty and Staff in the College of Liberal Arts  
**FROM:** Charles A. Johnson, Dean  
**RE:** Academic Master Planning in the College of Liberal Arts

You have received, and I have attached below as Attachment 1, a memorandum from Dr. Jeffrey S. Vitter, executive vice president for academics and provost, initiating the university's Academic Master Planning process. This Academic Master Plan will structure decisions about the direction of Texas A&M University in the coming years. That direction will be largely informed by the goals outlined in *Vision 2020 – Creating a Culture of Excellence*.

Consistent with the process discussed in Dr. Vitter's memorandum, the purpose of this memorandum is to outline a college-level process that aims to achieve three goals:

- Identifies 3 to 5 research strengths in the college that are important today and can be sustained for the next 5 to 7 to 10 years;
- Promotes the development of compelling “white papers” that propose landmark areas of research for Texas A&M University that substantially draw on the scholarly leadership of faculty in the College of Liberal Arts; and
- Advances the college's goals of building programs of national prominence, creating an environment supportive of diversity, and extending the international reach of faculty and students

The college-level planning process will involve significant engagement by the faculty during the fall semester. I know that the fall semester can be quite busy with faculty searches and with promotion and tenure considerations, along with the demands of scholarship, teaching, and service activities. Let me urge, however, that faculty members devote time to participating in this academic master planning process. Your participation will be important for all who are committed to the college as one of the cornerstones of Texas A&M.

### University Academic Master Planning Process

In addition to giving a general overview of the university's planning process, Dr. Vitter's September 11<sup>th</sup> memorandum specifically outlines steps for developing a “Research Roadmap”

for Texas A&M. For this process, colleges have been asked (a) to identify 3 to 5 major research strengths and (b) to encourage the development of white papers proposing landmark research areas for the university. The process outlined by Dr. Vitter encourages openness and sets a tight schedule for the fall, followed by a series of deadlines and meetings that will occur in the spring 2009.

### **College of Liberal Arts Planning Process**

To engage faculty and to meet the tight deadlines set by the provost, I have had discussions about a college-level planning process with the college's Executive Council, the Liberal Arts Council, and the Interdisciplinary Council. With their input, I have developed an internal college process outlined below in Attachment 2 that will lead to the designation of major research areas for the college and the development of white papers for university-level consideration.

Faculty guidance will be important in this process. I will be appointing an ad hoc Research Strengths Advisory Committee composed of 6 to 8 senior faculty members who would bring a variety of scholarly views to this process. The committee will be appointed by September 26<sup>th</sup>. I would be pleased to receive nominations for this committee through Monday, September 22<sup>nd</sup>. Please send me a brief email with the nomination.

Inevitably, research strengths for the college will be interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary. One of our major challenges will be translating the many individual and departmental research strengths across the college into ones that speak to overall strengths that also suggest landmark areas for the university. There are many grand challenges facing society that are rooted in the scholarly agendas pursued by faculty in liberal arts. On September 16<sup>th</sup> members of the college's Executive Council discussed possible research strengths and topics for white papers. The following terms capture several concepts that might provide starting points for departmental and faculty discussions about possible research strengths and white paper topics:

- |                     |                    |                       |
|---------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| * Diversity         | * Transnational    | * Community           |
| * Heritage          | * Borders          | * Consensus/Dissensus |
| * Culture           | * Communication    | * Democracy           |
| * National Security | * Leadership       | * Disparities         |
| * Global            | * International    | * Social Statistics   |
| * Ethics            | * Textual Analysis | * Public Policy       |

During the Council meeting, for example, participants suggested such themes as “diversity, disparities, and democracy,” “transnationalism and cultural conflict,” “the preservation, understanding, and transmission of heritage,” “communication across cultural borders,” and “decision-making in a democracy.” Obviously, there are many ways to frame concepts on this list that might be addressed in faculty white papers.

Prior to this meeting, department heads submitted research strengths and fields for their respective departments. Copies of these research strengths can be found at the following website: <http://clla.tamu.edu/collegeinfo/keyissues/academic-master-plan/>.

I urge that faculty work to identify and to collaborate with programs and colleagues in similar or allied areas as they develop white papers proposing a college research strength. The ad hoc Research Strengths Advisory Committee and the dean's office will make every effort to link social science, humanities, and the arts where appropriate in setting college-level research strengths.

### **Significant Dates for the College Planning Process**

The outline of the college's planning process (Attachment 2 below) sets forth a tight schedule that invites faculty ideas for the college's plans. Important dates in that process are as follows:

September 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Submission of nominations to the dean for the ad hoc Research Strengths Advisory Committee
October 6 <sup>th</sup>	White papers are due to the dean's office proposing a particular research strength as one of 3 to 5 research areas for the College of Liberal Arts. The papers are distributed to the ad hoc Research Strengths Advisory Committee and are posted on the college website.
October 27 <sup>th</sup>	With guidance from the ad hoc Research Strengths Advisory Committee, the dean identifies possibilities for research strengths in the college and invites further development of revised white papers.
November 10 <sup>th</sup>	Revised white papers are submitted to the dean's office. The papers are submitted to the ad hoc Research Strengths Advisory Committee for review and are posted on the college website for comments.
November 24 <sup>th</sup>	After consultation with the ad hoc Research Strengths Advisory Committee and reviewing comments received about the proposed research strengths, the dean posts college research strengths on the college website for comments.
December 1 <sup>st</sup>	College reports research strengths to university.

I anticipate that this process will be an iterative one, and perhaps even a bit messy. But, I also imagine that widely supported research strengths for the college and compelling white papers will emerge from faculty in this process. We have the opportunity to draw on the wisdom and creativity of outstanding faculty and to build on exceptionally strong departments and programs in the college to define landmark research areas for the university.

Thank you for your participation in planning the future of the College of Liberal Arts and Texas A&M University.

Attachments

cc: Jeffrey S. Vitter, Executive Vice President for Academics and Provost

**From:** Vitter, Jeff  
**Sent:** Thursday, September 11, 2008 11:52 AM  
**To:** EVP - Deans CS Campus  
**Cc:** EVP - Provost's Administrative Team  
**Subject:** Invitation to the research roadmap process for the Academic Master Plan  
**Attachments:** AMP\_Process2008sept10.pdf

[Please forward to all faculty and staff in your college or school.]

To: All faculty and staff (forwarded via the deans)  
 Re: The Texas A&M Academic Master Plan—*Accelerating Excellence*  
 Date: September 10, 2008

Howdy!

Texas A&M is a university recognized for rich tradition, vibrant culture, and high achievement. Nine years ago, the university community developed a long-range transformative vision, appropriately called *Vision 2020*, to position TAMU in the top echelon of U.S. universities within two decades. I am writing to seek your involvement in creating a bold Academic Master Plan, which will serve as our roadmap—with goals, strategies, and metrics—for achieving the key elements of *Vision 2020*.

Developing the Academic Master Plan will be an exciting campus-wide effort. Success will depend upon your participation. For the past few weeks, I have been working closely with the deans and various campus groups and organizations to design a structured process that will foster broad participation and grass root efforts, fully engaging the faculty, staff, and students of the university as well as key partners among former students, the community, and the Texas A&M System.

In this email, I will describe the process, governance, and timeline for the Academic Master Plan. This email is a “call out” of sorts to motivate people to get involved now. The process has started.

Texas A&M, like all great land-grant institutions, is founded upon three fundamental pillars: teaching, research, and engagement. Accordingly, our Academic Master Plan will be composed of three roadmaps:

1. a teaching roadmap for excellence in education that will take a fresh look at the core curriculum and address the recommendations of the Murano report;
2. a research roadmap to develop “landmark” areas of excellence where Texas A&M will command worldwide distinction in the creation and dissemination of knowledge;
3. an engagement roadmap to lay out A&M’s role in impacting society through developing pathways to higher education, community and government engagement, and entrepreneurship and commercialization.

Common to all three roadmaps will be overarching issues involving

- developing human potential via recruiting and mentoring for excellence, building diverse communities, and improving quality of life;
- international programs and globalization;
- facilities and infrastructure; and
- marshalling financial resources.

To oversee the overall process of the Academic Master Plan, we will be forming a steering committee with membership that reflects broad and deep participation from across the university. If you have suggestions for

steering committee membership, please contact your dean; I have requested the deans to submit nominations for membership by September 17. The steering committee will then appoint three committees for the three roadmap areas, each co-chaired by a faculty member and an administrator. The three roadmap committees will interact regularly with the steering committee and relevant councils.

I will focus the remainder of this email on the process we will follow to create the *research roadmap* and its research landmark areas. This roadmap is most time-critical and fundamental to our planning efforts. Identification of the research landmarks will play an important role in guiding our deployment of resources—such as hiring superstar faculty, seeding major center initiatives, and prioritizing building and renovation. For that reason, we have designed an open process that emphasizes wide input, and we seek your participation. Below is a snapshot of the upcoming events that form the process.

As input to the process, but not formally part of the process, I have asked the dean of each college (or school) to lead an open, inclusive effort for identifying the college's key long-term priority areas, which will be the basis for the college's future decisions on hiring faculty and allocating resources. These college research plans should identify where the college can achieve renown, especially where it can address the grand challenges impacting society. Grand challenges generally cannot be solved by any one paradigm or within any one discipline, and thus by nature they require a multidisciplinary approach. My hope is that college plans will identify how they can play a key role in addressing certain grand challenges. The college plans are due December 1, 2008, and they will be disseminated and prominently featured on the Web.

In the next few weeks, as the colleges start work on their research plans, the research roadmap committee will issue a formal call for short (3–4 page) white papers, due January 12, 2009, that propose landmark areas for the research roadmap. Any group of faculty or staff members can submit a white paper. The white papers will form the basis for what will become our research landmarks, the central feature of the Academic Master Plan's research roadmap. It is very important for the work on the white papers to start soon, and I encourage you not to wait for the formal call for white papers, but rather to start discussions with your colleagues now. This email lays out the basics of what we're looking for to allow you to start those discussions.

I first want to emphasize that the white papers will be submitted *by groups of faculty and staff directly to the research roadmap committee and not through departments or colleges*. Copies of the white papers should, however, be sent to the deans of the colleges that have faculty involved in developing the white papers. The college plans due December 1 should help inform the white paper authors, who will formally submit their papers the following month on January 12. The most successful white papers will be those that leverage the priorities in the college plans, and so it is important that potential white paper authors get actively engaged soon in their college planning. These two processes—college plan development and white paper development—are separate yet synergistic and should inform one another.

The white papers will be judged upon the following seven specific criteria:

1. Merit and potential for societal and scholarly impact;
2. Multidisciplinary nature of topic—participation and leveraging potential;
3. Alignment with *Vision 2020* and College plans;
4. Existence of critical mass and excellence at Texas A&M and availability of an external candidate pool;
5. Space and infrastructure feasibility (including proposed plans);
6. Corporate, federal, and foundation interest and award potential; and
7. Needed resources and cost effectiveness.

The formal call will include a standardized template to use for organizing the white papers; the template will mirror the seven criteria so that it addresses each criteria as directly as possible.

The white papers will be reviewed by the research roadmap committee and by some councils and advisory groups who will provide feedback and recommendations. The roadmap committee will use this input to select a smaller set of “finalists.” The submitters of the finalist white papers will be requested to expand them in more detail to be put on the web.

The finalist white papers will be explored, discussed, and analyzed at an all-day University retreat, tentatively scheduled for April 17, 2009. The format will include a mix of parallel presentations to small groups and single discussions in the large group. The roadmap committee will gather feedback and incorporate a final recommendation of research landmark areas to the steering committee. While I expect the retreat to be especially productive in terms of planning outcomes, I am also confident that it will be memorable for its intellectual stimulation and contribution to campus discourse.

This semester my goal is to attend a departmental meeting in each department on campus so that I can start to get to know people, find out what’s important to them, and work collaboratively on ways to move their units forward. I also want to use each visit as an opportunity to encourage participation in this Academic Master Planning process and clarify any aspects where there are questions. I have already met with some departments and am pleased with the level of interest and enthusiasm in the planning process and potential. I have also started meeting with key groups such as the Council of Principal Investigators, the University Research Council, and the Distinguished Professors Executive Committee to get their feedback. These groups will serve as important resources to the steering committee and roadmap committees throughout the planning process.

I’ve attached an overview of the Academic Master Plan and a detailed timeline of the process for creating the research roadmap. The best time to start the discussions needed for a successful white paper and ultimate research landmark area is now, and I encourage you to pursue those discussions.

Academia is an exciting place to be, because it is a world of ever-evolving ideas. Having the freedom to develop and explore ideas is probably an important reason why many of us were drawn to academia. I hope you find this Academic Master Planning process to be one that helps energize the campus in a discourse about a bold and exciting future of our own creation. I look forward to your comments and involvement.

Gig ‘Em!  
--Jeff

Attachment: AMP\_Process2008sept10.pdf

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**Jeffrey S. Vitter**  
Provost and Executive Vice President for Academics  
Texas A&M University

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***Welcome to Aggieland***

## Texas A&M Academic Master Plan 2008–2009

### *Accelerating Excellence*

*Vision 2020* lays out the long-range vision for excellence at Texas A&M University. We are commencing an Academic Master Plan, *Accelerating Excellence*, to identify goals, strategies, and priorities that will fully advance key components of *Vision 2020*.

#### Academic Master Plan Roadmaps:

##### A. Teaching Roadmap

- a. Realizing the Goals of the Murano Report
- b. Curricular review and assessment

##### B. Research Roadmap

- a. Identifying Landmark Areas

##### C. Engagement Roadmap

- a. K–12 outreach and developing pathways to Texas A&M
- b. Government and community partnerships
- c. Entrepreneurship
- d. Professional service
- e. Student advising

Common to the three roadmaps are overarching issues that we need to address in order to enable success:

#### Overarching Issues

- a. Human development
  - i. Recruiting and mentoring for excellence
  - ii. Diversity
  - iii. International studies
  - iv. Quality of life
- b. Facilities and infrastructure
- c. Resources

The remainder of the document focuses on one important component of the Academic Master Plan: the research roadmap that identifies university landmark areas for faculty development.

## Research Roadmap and Landmark Areas

### College Activities

#### September–November 2008

- Deans and their department heads will work with faculty to develop their College’s 10-year research plans and processes, which will ultimately help identify priority landmark areas at the University level.

#### Process characteristics:

- Open and transparent
- Engages faculty, staff, and students and demonstrates buy-in.

#### Plan characteristics:

- Written and available on-line
- Globally focused with collaborative potential identified
- Strong connections with *Vision 2020*
- Highlights components that may define or relate to University landmark areas.
- Serves as planning mechanism for hiring
- Documents the process followed in development of plan, especially reporting how faculty, staff, and students were involved.

#### Key questions for deans/department heads/faculty to ask when developing research plans for their colleges:

- What are your College’s three to five greatest research strengths?
- What “rare” research strengths are in your College that set it apart nationally and internationally?
- How do your College’s research strengths contribute to the foundational excellence of the University?
- Does your College have the interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary strength to meet society’s grand challenges? Elaborate on the potential and priorities for the College. This information will be especially important for development of landmark areas.

#### December 1, 2008

- Completion of 10-year research plans for each College.
- Reports will be made available online and in hard copy and distributed campus-wide.

## Provost Activities

### September–December 2008

- Meet with departments of all Colleges to seek input on research priorities and issues, share information on the process for developing the Academic Master Plan, and encourage broad participation.
- Form steering committee for Academic Master Plan
  - Design and oversee master planning process for identifying priorities where university can distinguish itself and achieve international stature.
  - Chaired by Provost.
  - Committee members drawn from all Colleges, and appropriate administrative offices, staff, students, and partners.
  - Create subcommittees representing Academic Master Plan priority areas—research, student success and curriculum, and others to be determined.
  - Engage and seek input from university stakeholders: faculty, staff, councils of Faculty Senate, Texas A&M administration, System administration, Board of Regents, industry, community leaders, and alumni.

## Research Roadmap Committee Activities

### Fall 2008

- Establishes and publishes input report, criteria, and metrics for university priorities.  
White paper criteria:
  1. Merit and potential for societal impact.
  2. Multidisciplinary nature of topic—participation and leveraging potential.
  3. Alignment with *Vision 2020* and College plans
  4. Existence of critical mass and excellence at Texas A&M and availability of an external candidate pool.
  5. Space and infrastructure feasibility (including proposed plans).
  6. Corporate, federal, and foundation interest and award potential.
  7. Needed resources and cost effectiveness.
- Issues call for white papers due January 12, 2009 that draw upon priorities identified in College research plans. Specifies template to use and issues to address.

**January 12, 2009**

- White papers due on university landmark area priorities.

**February 27, 2009**

- Steering committee oversees key committees' input on white papers and selects "finalists." Submitters of white papers on the superset are asked to expand white papers in more detail.

**March 31, 2009**

- Expanded white papers are put online for public review and comment.

**April 17, 2009**

- Steering committee hosts all day University retreat on the finalist white papers with presentations and discussion groups.

**April–May 2009**

- Research roadmap committee makes final recommendation of research landmark areas to the steering committee.
- Steering committee incorporates research roadmap recommendation and retreat inputs into report on landmark areas.

**Appendix****Inputs to consider:**

President Murano's six priorities:

1. Elevate the faculty
2. Enhance undergraduate and graduate experiences
3. Increase diversity and globalization
4. Improve space
5. Attain resource parity
6. Enlightened governance.

Recommendations of the Committee on Implementation of the Task Force on Enhancing the Undergraduate Education Experience (*Murano Report*).

Texas A&M "Dean's Goals:"

- Enhancing Study Abroad and Globalization
- Enhancing Graduate Education
- Facilities Reinvestment Program
- Research Acceleration—Hiring Top Faculty
- Increasing Minority Student Enrollments and Graduation from Texas A&M University: Establishing a "Pathways to A&M" Program
- Advanced Study Institute

**Outline of College of Liberal Arts Planning Process  
Research Strengths and White Papers for University Landmark Research Areas**

**September 22<sup>nd</sup>**

Nominations sent to the dean for faculty to serve on the ad hoc Research Strengths Advisory Committee

**October 6<sup>th</sup>**

Submission of white papers proposing a particular research strength that is important today and can be sustained for the next 5 to 7 to 10 years.

The white paper should address the following items and questions:

1. Describe briefly and succinctly the particular research strength.
2. Briefly list the academic programs and faculty in the college and university who would contribute to the research strength.
3. What evidence best demonstrates that the proposed area of scholarship or creative work is a research strength that is both broad and deep in the college?
4. How would the proposed research strength contribute to the university's development of a landmark research area that addresses a grand challenge facing society?

The white paper should be submitted in Word format, and it should not exceed two pages in length – 500 words maximum. White papers exceeding this limit will be returned for editing. Email white papers to Shannon Prescott at [sprescott@tamu.edu](mailto:sprescott@tamu.edu). All white papers will be posted to the college website on October 8<sup>th</sup> for review and comment by faculty, staff, and students.

Include the following in the white paper:

- Title of paper
- Author(s), academic title(s), academic unit(s)
- One sentence description of white paper (will be used to describe paper when posted online)
- Brief description of proposed research strength
- Brief responses to Questions 2-4 above
- NO supporting documents (i.e. attachments, appendices, charts, diagrams, web links, etc.)

Paralleling the criteria to be used in the university-level reviews of white papers, the criteria to be used in evaluating proposed research strengths include:

- The merit and potential for societal and scholarly impact

- The possibilities for multidisciplinary involvement in the research area within the College of Liberal Arts and with faculty in other colleges at Texas A&M
- Alignment with Vision 2020
- Existence of a critical mass of faculty expertise and demonstrated excellence
- Availability of or plans for space and infrastructure to support the research area
- Possibilities for external support from governmental, corporate, or foundation sources through competitive grants (e.g., NSF, NIH, NEH, NEA), awards (e.g., Guggenheim, Humboldt, Wilson), or contracts (e.g., DoD, DoEd, HHS)

The white papers will be evaluated by a faculty committee and the dean's office with particular emphasis on responses to questions 1 through 4 and the bulleted criteria listed above.

### **October 27<sup>th</sup>**

The authors of white papers presenting a strong case are invited to submit revised white papers for further consideration in defining college research strengths. In some instances, the authors of white papers with similar topics or with topics that seem linked in some way will be asked to collaborate and to prepare a single white paper for further consideration.

### **November 10<sup>th</sup>**

Revised white papers are due for review and comment by the faculty committee and are posted on the college website for comments.

### **November 24<sup>th</sup>**

Proposed college research strengths are posted by the dean on the college website for comments.

### **December 1<sup>st</sup>**

College reports research strengths to university.

### **January 12<sup>th</sup>**

White papers prepared by faculty, especially those specifically encouraged by the college in developing college research strengths, are submitted to the Research Roadmap Committee in response to the university's call for white papers proposing university landmark areas.