

**The College of Liberal Arts
and
*Vision 2020: Creating a Culture of Excellence***

An Assessment of Progress

May 26, 2007

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Liberal Arts Vision 2020 Advisory Committee Assessment Process

Background

Imperative #4

“Build the Letters, Arts, and Sciences Core: *Texas A&M University has historically placed less emphasis on the letters and arts. ...the best public universities have stronger and deeper liberal arts programs and a fuller range of such programs with a significantly higher institutional commitment. ...It is abundantly clear that we will never be seen as a premier institution nationally without a far stronger letters, arts, and sciences program.”*

—*Vision 2020: Creating a Culture of Excellence*, p. 34 (1999)

At the beginning of the 2006–2007 academic year, Dean Charles A. Johnson created a college-level advisory committee composed of faculty, staff, and current and former students to examine the College of Liberal Arts’ progress in addressing the goals in *Vision 2020: Creating a Culture of Excellence (Item 1)*. The dean gave the committee four charges:

- Highlight significant accomplishments and progress by the College toward *Vision 2020* goals.
- Determine what steps are necessary to sustain and accelerate movement toward these goals.
- Identify areas where progress toward *Vision 2020* goals is lagging.
- Suggest adjustments to approaches taken by the College to achieve *Vision 2020* goals.

The Vision 2020 Advisory Committee chose to assess the college’s performance against the original 12 imperatives and the Vision 2020 Arts and Science Theme Group recommendations. *Vision 2020’s* Imperative #4 stressed the essential role of the college in the university reaching its goals of national and international prominence in research and in providing an excellent educational environment for students. It also stated the need for the university to invest in improving many areas of the college, in particular the performing and fine arts, graduate research programs, and faculty, staff, and student diversity.

The guiding questions for assessment were:

Where was the College at the start of the *Vision 2020* endeavor in the 1999–2000 academic year?

What is the situation of the College currently in the 2006–2007 academic year?

What still needs to be done for the College to achieve *Vision 2020’s* goals?

For summary purposes, the committee has grouped the *Vision 2020* imperatives into four general areas:

- 1. Building and Supporting a National and Internationally Visible Community of Scholars,**
- 2. Enhancing the Intellectual Opportunities and Environment for All Students,**
- 3. Fulfilling Its Commitment as Part of a Land Grant University to the State of Texas through Diversity and Community Outreach, and**
- 4. Reviewing Resources.**

Then and Now

As the committee gathered data from departments, research centers, university administrative offices, and individual faculty and students, they learned that at its starting point in the 1999–2000 academic year, the college often trailed behind the more mature colleges of liberal arts found at aspirational peer institutions (the College itself did not even exist in its current formation until 1965). The relative youth of many of the College’s departments and programs makes progress toward the goals of *Vision 2020* from 1999 to the

present even more noteworthy in terms of the University’s investments in the College, as noted in the table below.

1998–99	2006
309 tenured/tenure-track faculty	327 tenured/tenure-track faculty
Faculty salary averaged 88.5% of peers	Faculty salary averaged 92.75% of peers
8 faculty hires: 6 male, 2 female; 6 white, 2 African American	20 faculty hires: 9 male, 11 female; 11 white, 1 African American, 3 Hispanic, 5 Asian
5612 student enrollment (4595 undergraduate, 747 graduate)	6883 student enrollment (6097 undergraduate, 786 graduate)
11 departments	12 departments
5 interdisciplinary programs	9 interdisciplinary minors, 4 interdisciplinary majors
19.5:1 faculty/student ratio	18:1 faculty/student ratio
5 research centers and institutes	8 research centers and institutes

In 2006, the College had:

- a budget of more than \$43 million—augmented by \$5.6 million in competitively awarded extramural funding;
- an income of more than \$1.45 million from permanent endowments that totaled more than \$29 million;
- 11 endowed chairs, 23 endowed professorships, and 9 endowed faculty and graduate fellowships; and
- funding approval for a Liberal Arts and Humanities Building, which will house the Department of English and all Department of Performance Studies programs.

I. Building and Supporting a National and Internationally Visible Community of Scholars

“The reputation of any great university rests on the excellence of its letters, arts, and sciences faculty.”

“A dedicated arts performance facility should be planned and built. This is the single most important addition Texas A&M needs to make to improve its national standing.”

—Arts and Sciences Theme Group, Final Report, Vision 2020

Since *Vision 2020*, two university-wide events highlight the increasing strength of the liberal arts faculty and programs in terms of national recognition:

- In 2001, Texas A&M was invited to join the Association of American Universities.
- In 2004, the Texas A&M faculty was authorized to establish a chapter of Phi Beta Kappa.

Within the College during this period:

- Two new departments were created—performance studies and Hispanic studies. One department—journalism—was converted to an interdisciplinary program.

- Three new doctoral programs were added in communication, Hispanic studies, and philosophy.

Faculty Perceptions: Accomplishments

“I think the department has improved dramatically since I arrived here in 1988. The quality of the faculty (and the research produced) has improved; we’re publishing in more competitive venues; we have several people who enjoy international reputations; the quality of the graduate students has risen dramatically. As a result, I think we are now more competitive in our attempts to recruit top faculty (and to retain them).”

“We are a stronger, more diverse, and more internationally oriented department now than we were in the 1990s...so I go into each recruiting season confident that we’ll be able to attract our strongest candidates to join us.”

“In my 33 years here, Vision 2020 has been the most lasting and influential university document thus far produced. It has a specificity that has led to some clear benchmarks, and those have had a demonstrable effect on targets and goals.”

“I became aware of Vision 2020 during the application process. I was impressed by it, particularly the commitment to creating new faculty, and it played a positive role in my decision to come to Texas A&M. I figured that any university that was willing to make that sort of investment in faculty would be a good place to work.”

Accomplishments and Progress

- *Faculty Hiring:* The university administration granted the college 64 liberal arts faculty positions in Texas A&M’s faculty reinvestment program (some 30 of these new positions are currently in the search and hiring process). The addition of these 64 new positions, plus new positions resulting from previous allocations and expanded enrollments, means that the college will have approximately 380 tenured and tenure-track faculty positions by 2009.

“It is easier to recruit new faculty at the junior level. The numbers of quality applications have increased. We do not get all of our first choices when making faculty hires, but we get a number of them. The junior faculty hired in the last few years probably would not have even applied in the 1990s.”

—Patricia Hurley, professor and head of political science

“I was aware of the Vision 2020 plan (Dean Johnson and Associate Dean Larry Oliver enthusiastically explained it to me), and it indeed had a big positive effect on my decision to come here.”

—Yoosoon Chang, professor of economics and department head designate

- *Quality of Faculty Hires:* The Ph.D.-granting institutions of recent faculty hires are from top-ranked research institutions such as the University of California–Berkeley, Duke, Northwestern, Columbia, Harvard, Notre Dame, Yale, Brown, Rochester, Johns Hopkins, UCLA, Wisconsin–Madison, Princeton, Stanford and Rutgers, Penn State, Edinburg, Oxford, and Cornell.
- *Awards, Fellowship, and Grants:* In the last seven years, 46 faculty have earned prestigious external awards and fellowships, as recognized by the National Research Council, from the John S. Guggenheim Foundation, American Council of Learned Societies, Humbolt Foundation, Woodrow Wilson Foundation, National Endowment for the Humanities, American Philosophical Society, and Fulbright Program as well as national professional organizations. In addition, 32 faculty working in social and behavioral sciences and the humanities received research funding from federal sources such as the National Science Foundation, National Endowment for the Humanities, National Institutes within the

Department of Health and Human Services, American Council of Learned Societies, and the Library of Congress (*Item 2*).

- *National Rankings*: The Departments of English, History, Political Science, and Sociology improved their standing in the 2006 *US News and World Report* ranking of doctoral programs; the Department of Political Science moved into the top 10 (no. 8) among public institutions (*Item 3*).
- *Accountability Measures*: In 2002 the college initiated “Indicators of Success” annual reports, revised by the faculty in 2003. The reports link departmental “success or achievements” in the areas of the college’s priorities of national visibility, internationalization, and diversity. These reports formed the basis for differential allocations of merit moneys across departments.

Sustaining and Accelerating Movement toward Goals: Scholarly Communities

- *Research Centers*: Since 2000, the College of Liberal Arts has funded several projects providing centers for scholarly community sustained within the college (*Item 4*).
 - *Melbern G. Glasscock Center for Humanities Research*: Endowed in 2002 by Melbern G. Glasscock from Houston, Texas, the center is one of but a handful of endowed humanities research centers located at a public university. In 2005, the center moved into the Melbern G. Glasscock Building, where it serves as a hub for humanities research. It has supported the creation of 16 working groups composed of faculty and graduate students, many of which are interdisciplinary and some of which make connections across colleges. Its faculty seminars and individual support are acknowledged in publications from disciplines across the college, and it likewise supports graduate student travel to national and international conferences.
 - *Mexican American and U.S. Latino Research Center (MALRC)*: Approved in 2004, the center enables faculty to conduct research on issues that impact the quality of life of Mexican Americans and other Latinos in Texas and the United States, i.e., social, cultural, economic, health, political, educational, and demographic issues. To date, MALRC has funded 41 developmental grants involving 62 faculty. Some faculty grant recipients come from The Texas A&M University System, including Texas A&M University, Texas A&M International, the Health Science Center’s College of Medicine, and the School of Rural Public Health. Other faculty grantees are from The University of Texas–Pan American, University of Oklahoma, Princeton University, Arizona State University, and a university in Mexico and one in El Salvador.
 - *Center for Maritime Archeology and Conservation (CMAC)*: Established in 2005 in collaboration with the Institute for Nautical Archaeology, the center provides research space, equipment, and digital graphic facilities to support state-of-the-art maritime archaeology research. It also fosters connections between research and scholarship across the Texas A&M campus as well as nationally and internationally. CMAC forms an umbrella coordinating the activities of the CMAC laboratories and their interaction with the Nautical Archaeology Program, the Institute of Nautical Archaeology, and colleges at Texas A&M University. Maritime archaeology research projects are supported, and the next generation of nautical archaeologists is trained in state-of-the-art research facilities, all of which allows CMAC to play a significant role in making the Nautical Archaeology Program a premier graduate academic program.
 - *Center for the Study of the First Americans (CSFA)*: Moved to Texas A&M in 2002, the center explores—through research, education and outreach programs—questions surrounding the peopling of the Americas. The center features solid financial support through an endowed faculty chair, faculty professorship, and the endowed North Star Archaeological Research Program, which investigates the earliest archaeological sites in the New World to address issues surrounding theories about how the first Americans traveled to the Americas.

- *Race and Ethnic Studies Institute (RESI)*: Reconstituted in 2007, the Institute strives to foster an interdisciplinary community of social science and humanities scholars in the areas of education, immigration, politics, culture, and health.

College Initiatives Supporting the Infrastructure of Research

- *Library Resources*: Since 2001, the college has collaborated closely with the Texas A&M University Libraries to secure a \$2 million endowment for special collections of importance to scholars working in liberal arts. The College has made important purchases in electronic databases and resources key to scholarship in the humanities and social sciences (*Item 5*).
- *Digital Initiatives and Graduate Student Support*: The college likewise offers support and encouragement for humanities informatics and graduate student research. The University Libraries has for several years cooperated with the Melburn G. Glasscock Center for Humanities Research to promote the use of digital initiatives in humanities scholarship and in graduate student research in the humanities (*Item 6*).
- *Instructional Technology Training*: The college sponsors a summer institute for faculty interested in improving teaching methodology and the assessment of learning through the use of technology in the classroom.
- *Information Technology (IT) Support for Secure and Accessible Computing and the Faculty Workstation Program*: The college has worked to increase its capacity to provide faculty access to IT techs and network administrators who can help with backups, security reports (required by the institution), reliable web-based mail, and routine printer and computer repair. The college revised the university's faculty workstation program to shorten the time cycle and increase the number of faculty eligible to receive new computers.

Areas Still Needing Development

Faculty Perceptions: Concerns

"Both the departments and the college need to do more to advertise our achievements and how much Texas A&M has changed over the past decade. Colleagues who visit are often staggered by how intellectually vibrant we are, especially in comparison to their preconceived notions based on the university's old reputation. ...[the process] could be helped along by some simple changes to the main spots through which the public, prospective students, and colleagues outside the university engage and learn about us, particularly our web pages... Virtually all of our peer institution's [web] sites are phenomenally better...some pages in the college are very good...but others are woefully lacking."

"The climate change within the college has been uneven as some departments were identified for additional faculty and others were not. Faculty in departments that received positions are much more optimistic about Vision 2020 than those in departments that did not."

"Whereas previously there was a strong commitment to service within the department, on behalf of the department, this commitment no longer exists. It seems clear to all faculty that research and publication have become magnified in their importance within the College of Liberal Arts."

"I believe Texas A&M still lags seriously behind almost every institution of its stature in the development of the arts, and it is not evident that it is prepared, even with the guidance of Vision 2020, to make the kinds of investments required."

"I am still not convinced that the upper echelons of leadership understand what a top-notch humanities institution looks like...efforts in the humanities are piecemeal and even naïve at times."

- While the overall averages of faculty salaries in comparison to peer institutions have improved over this period, it still lags behind at all ranks. (*Item 7*)
- Uneven progress among departments in improving faculty and in receiving new positions and resources to implement Vision 2020 goals
- Lack of a center, comparable to the Glasscock Center for Humanities Research, offering technical and statistical support for social science research
- Lack of any arts program to complement newly created Department of Performance Studies
- Uneven recognition of and support for departments with heavy service teaching responsibilities over departments with less of a service load and more research accomplishments
- Need for more departmental staff to offset increases in faculty and to handle an increasing workload from a decentralization of previously held university tasks
- Uneven presentation by the College of people and accomplishments in public media, particularly department websites

II. Enhancing the Intellectual Opportunities and Environment for All Students

Strengthening the Graduate Programs

Imperative #2 in *Vision 2020* calls for strengthening graduate programs, especially to increase the quality and number of graduate students seeking advanced degrees, to improve the quality of life and opportunities for graduate students, and to improve the infrastructure for graduate education.

Accomplishments and Progress

- *Graduate Student Tuition:* As of 2005, Texas A&M began covering tuition (not fees) for graduate assistantships. This added between \$3200 and \$3500 to graduate student stipends and made recruitment packages more competitive than in previous years.
- *Ph.D. to M.A. Ratio:* The College of Liberal Arts has experienced a change in the ratio of Ph.D. to M.A. students. During a seven-year period, the college has added three new doctoral programs in communication, Hispanic studies, and philosophy. Thus, the number of Ph.D. students has increased, and the number of M.A. students has dropped slightly (*Items 8 & 9*).
- *Graduate Enrollments:* In the past three years, graduate enrollments have increased by about 50 students from the 2000 figure. Recent patterns suggest that the college is moving in the right direction, especially in numbers of Ph.D. enrollments (*Item 10*).
- *Graduate Program Quality:* Overall the quality of graduate programs in the college is improving, especially for some departments. Quality indicators include the average Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores of entering students, national awards that students receive, time to degree, placement of Ph.D. students after graduation, and rankings of graduate programs.
 - *GRE Scores:* For the 2006–2007 academic year, the average verbal score was 570; the average quantitative score was 639 (*Item 11*). In addition to rising GRE scores, graduate students are winning awards, giving papers at national and international conferences, and publishing in refereed journals.

- *Ph.D. Student Placement/Academics*: A comparison of figures from 2002 to 2006 reveals that the number of Ph.D. students placed in tenure-level positions in research universities is slightly higher than that of other schools. Although the distribution of students in these jobs is similar across the five years (*Items 12 & 13*), Texas A&M is placing more doctoral graduates at peer institutions—such as Purdue, Illinois, Iowa, Colorado, and Michigan State—than in previous years (*Item 14*).
- *Ph.D. Student Placement/Non-academic*: For several doctoral programs, placement in government and the private sector is very high (anthropology, economics, and clinical psychology), and some programs place students in post-doctoral medical and research programs (psychology) (*Item 13*). Thus, different missions of doctoral programs may distract from the overall goal of placing the best students in research/teaching positions.
- *Participation in National Initiatives*: The Departments of History and English took part in the Initiative on the Doctorate by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, a two-year process of examining the changing nature of doctoral education in the 21st century.
- *Quality of Life*: Overall the quality of life for graduate students is strong as reflected by the number of students with independent office space, availability of mentoring programs, provisions of travel funds and summer support, and increases in graduate student stipends.
 - Approximately 78 percent of liberal arts graduate students have exclusive office space (*Item 15*). All departments provide orientation and mentoring programs, teaching opportunities, and travel support.
 - Graduate student stipends have steadily increased in the past five years, and departments view their programs as competitive with peer institutions in financial support. Graduate directors continue to call for more merit fellowship dollars, but the University's diversity fellowship has provided a major boost in recruiting top minority students.
 - The annual expenditure for graduate program support has increased by about \$1,300,000 since 1999 (*Item 16*). Departments report that as much as \$600,000 comes from salary savings, fellowships, and graduate teaching outside liberal arts departments.

Areas Still Needing Development

- *Graduate Enrollments Still Lagging*: Graduate enrollments have not increased substantially since 1999 and are slightly lower in the overall ratio of graduate to undergraduate students (*Item 17*).
- *Graduate Degrees Awarded Unchanged*: The number of graduate degrees awarded and the ratio of graduate to undergraduate degrees awarded remain almost identical to 1999 figures (*Items 18 & 19*).
- *New Programs at Expense of Other Programs*: New doctoral program funding seems to come from converting M.A. dollars to Ph.D. stipends, rather than from an infusion of new money.
- *Comparisons with Peers*: Compared to peer institutions, Texas A&M is lower in graduate enrollments and the ratio of graduate to undergraduate students (*Item 20*).
 - In a sample of four peer institutions, Texas A&M ranked the lowest in the overall number of graduate students and in the ratio of graduate-to-undergraduate enrollments.
 - Minnesota had the highest number of graduate students (1339 for Minnesota and 786 for Texas A&M), while Wisconsin had the highest ratio of graduate to undergraduate students (20 percent for Wisconsin and 12.8 percent for Texas A&M).

Enhancing the Undergraduate Experience

Imperative #3 in *Vision 2020* addresses the undergraduate academic experience. One goal seeks to nurture students to ensure their success, as measured through retention and graduation rates. Another goal calls for enriching students' educational opportunities. As the leading provider of undergraduate education at Texas A&M, the college shoulders a significant responsibility for ensuring that students thrive and graduate. To this

end, the college has developed programs and activities for incoming freshmen and for students already in liberal arts degree programs. The College served more than 6000 undergraduates and more than 1200 freshmen in fall 2006, the second largest enrollment of undergraduates behind the College of Engineering. More than one-fourth of all women students, African-American, and Hispanic students who graduate with an undergraduate degree are liberal arts majors (*Item 21*).

“As someone who started out in architecture, I can say that I was (happily) lured into the College of Liberal Arts by outstanding professors who made topics in the humanities seem of utmost importance to understanding the world around me.”

—graduating senior

Accomplishments and Progress

Three themes from a series of university reports on *Enhancing the Undergraduate Experience* (March, May, and August 2006) exemplify the high quality of undergraduate experiences offered in the College of Liberal Arts: smaller class sizes, learning communities and quality academic experiences.

Retention and Graduation Rates of Students Who Start Their Studies in Liberal Arts (Item 21)

- The college retains 77 percent of freshmen majors and graduates 66 percent of its majors in six years.
- The university’s four-year retention and graduation rates of students who start their studies in a particular college are 73 percent and 45 percent, respectively.

Small Class Size

- Between spring 2002 and spring 2007, the average undergraduate class (section) size decreased from 54 to 50.4 per class.
- The average freshman class (section) size was 58—down from 65 in 2002.
- In fall 2006, more than 37 percent of liberal arts classes had 20 or fewer students.

Learning Communities

- *Common Ground*: This is a freshman reading initiative that emphasizes a serious, introspective consideration of timely and timeless topics. The college gives every incoming freshman a book and then offers panels, online discussions, courses, and other events built around the book. In the 2006–2007 academic year, students read *Typical American* by Gish Jen, which addressed immigration, education, and the pursuit of happiness.
- *Cornerstone Program*: This freshman learning community provides faculty mentoring to increase a freshman’s sense of belonging, develop critical thinking skills, create a “small school” atmosphere within the university and create a sense of identity in the international university community.

“It made a difference in my decision to come to such a large school. For me, it shrank the university.”

—freshman Cornerstone Program participant

Quality of Educational Experience

- *Honors Program*: The College Honors Program (LBAR) strives to foster an interdisciplinary outlook characteristic of the liberal arts. It consists of several facets including dormitories, peer leaders, a student council and listserves. Students work closely with some of the most distinguished faculty at Texas A&M and take part in a community of honors students. In the 2003–2004 academic year, the college doubled the number of freshmen taking honors classes.

“The subject of my honor’s senior seminar was Africana film and culture—which was cross-listed as an English, Africana studies, and a film studies course. The opportunity to approach learning through the synthesis of these areas was refreshing and relevant—it made me consider the importance of interdisciplinary approaches to understanding the structures that shape our culture and the texts that it produces.”

—graduating senior

- *Capstone Course:* 13 of 19 programs require a capstone or “summary experience” course for seniors.
- *“I” and “W” Courses within the College:* “Inquiry Rich” and “Writing Intensive” courses exist throughout the university, as mandated by the University Core Curriculum Review Committee (2000) and the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). All undergraduates must take two “W” courses to graduate (Faculty Senate Resolution 20.108). As the college that teaches a large portion of the university’s Undergraduate Core Curriculum and serves 6000 majors, the College of Liberal Arts can set the standard of excellence in undergraduate education. The college currently offers 52 approved “W” courses and is in the process of instituting an “I” course requirement for its graduating majors, the only college in the university to do so.
- *Special Topic Classes and Study Opportunities:* Students have the opportunity to address current social and political events in special topics courses, such as the “Sociology of Disaster: Katrina,” which provide a variety of educational opportunities.
- *Study Abroad:* The college maintains a high level of participation in international experiences for undergraduates, with the majority of students in the university-level Study Abroad Program enrolled in the College of Liberal Arts. More than 500 Liberal Arts students participated in 15 study abroad programs in the 2005–2006 academic year.

Areas Still Needing Development

- *Retention and Graduation Rates:* Although the college’s percentages are above the university’s figures, they still lag behind the *Vision 2020* goals of a 95 percent freshman retention rate and an 80 percent six-year graduation rate.
- *Enrichment Experiences:* While the College has initiated several educational experience opportunities, the National Survey of Student Engagement report bears out particular educational experiences the college should increase for liberal arts majors—research projects with faculty, internships/practicum, study broad, independent study, capstone experience, and learning communities.

“Language offerings in the College of Liberal Arts are pathetic compared to what you see in all our peer institutions. Lack of languages means that we cannot train undergraduate students for top programs... In addition, we only accept graduate students who work on English, German, and French sources.”

“Personally, I have been disappointed with my foreign language classes at Texas A&M... I think it’s important to look at our languages, regardless, because they are crucial to the liberal arts experience, and all liberal arts majors are required to take at least 14 hours of a language.”

—undergraduate major

- *Language Offerings:* Even though language offerings have increased during this time period, Texas A&M still offers far fewer language courses and at less advanced levels than its peer institutions. In 2006, Texas A&M offered 11 different languages; The University of Texas at Austin offered 31; Indiana offered 49; Ohio State offered 29; and Wisconsin–Madison offered 66 (*Item 22*).
- *Visual Arts:* While the establishment of the performance studies program is a major step forward, there are no plans to incorporate any elements of the visual arts into the college.

III. Fulfilling Its Commitment as a Part of a Land Grant University to the State of Texas through Diversity and Community Outreach

Diversity

The 2000 census clearly captures the increasingly diverse population that lives in Texas. Latinos and African Americans made up more than half (54 percent) of the Texas population 0 to 17 years of age. These two groups are projected to comprise three-fourths of all Texas citizens 0 to 17 in 2040 (*Item 23*). For Texas to continue to thrive in today's global society and economy, it must educate its increasingly diverse population.

"We still have far too few faculty and students of color on a campus in a state that is now demographically majority minority. This is a serious moral and practical problem for this historically white institution. We also have too few women faculty, and too little commitment to reducing racism, sexism, and homophobia among our students. We have made some very good starts on solutions in this regard, but much more needs to be done."

—Joe Feagin, professor of sociology and Ella C. McFadden Professor of Liberal Arts

The first part of *Vision 2020's* Imperative #6 calls for Texas A&M to attract and nurture a more ethnically, culturally, and geographically diverse faculty, staff, and student body. The College of Liberal Arts' leadership took this to heart and established the following goals:

- Recruit and retain diverse faculty and students.
- Increase diversity/international content and perspectives in the curriculum.
- Educate faculty and students on the value of diversity.
- Foster a welcoming and inclusive environment throughout the College.

Accomplishments and Progress

- *Liberal Arts Majors*: Latinos and African Americans constituted 13 percent of all majors in 2000 and 16 percent in 2006 as compared to 14 percent in 1999 (*Item 24*).
- *Faculty Hires (Item 25)*:
 - Slightly more than half of all new faculty hired since the 2002–2003 academic year have been women, compared to two-fifths between the 1998–1999 and 2001–2002 academic years.
 - Slightly more than one-fifth (22 percent) of the faculty hired since the 1998–1999 academic year were African American or Latino.
- *Graduate Students (Item 26)*:
 - About 14 percent of doctoral students were African American or Latino in 2006, up from 6 percent in 2000 (*Item 25*).
 - International students made up about 6 percent of liberal arts majors in 2006, a level that has been fairly consistent since 2002, with more focusing on doctoral education.

Actions That Accelerated Movement toward Goals

- Diversity and internationalization were two of the dean's three top priorities.
- Departments were awarded with base funds and merit increases for achievements in diversity and internationalization.
- In 2001 the college created a Dean's Advisory Committee on Diversity consisting of faculty, staff, and students.

Areas Still Needing Development

- *Women and Minority Faculty Still Underrepresented*:
 - Even though slightly more than half of all new faculty hired since the 2002–2003 academic year have been women, compared to two-fifths between the 1998–1999 and 2001–2002 academic years, women are still underrepresented among tenured faculty.

- Even though slightly more than one-fifth (22 percent) of faculty hired since the 1998–1999 academic year have been African American or Latino, these groups constitute only one-eighth (13 percent) of tenured and tenure-track faculty in liberal arts.
- Numbers alone do not create a climate of excellence in terms of a diverse university population. The climate on campus and in the community as a whole is still perceived as being hostile or resistant to changes.

Community Outreach

“The way that we relate to the local community, Houston, and other metropolitan areas of the state will have a powerful impact on Texas A&M University and the communities supporting and supported by the university. In addition, it is critical that the community in which we live provide opportunities for families to work and grow.”

—Imperative #9, Vision 2020: Creating a Culture of Excellence

Accomplishments and Progress

Although not a stated priority in either the university or college’s documents during this period, it is notable that several well-received departmental and center initiatives have addressed community outreach. Such endeavors contribute to the growing maturity of the college’s creative and scholarly community by promoting bridges among the college, university, and general public. These endeavors also bring greater public awareness to the college’s achievements and goals.

- *Performance on Campus: The Department of Performance Studies:* The department increased the number of arts experiences available to students, the campus community and the community at large by sponsoring and producing performances by nationally and internationally prominent and emerging artists.

“These events offer more than ‘entertainment’ but stand as exemplars of how the arts construct national identity, negotiate sociopolitical exigencies, challenge preconceptions, and expand aesthetic possibilities central to creative citizenship and leadership.”

—Judith Hamera, professor of performance studies and department head

- *Brazos Valley Reads:* The Department of English began this program in 2005 as part of the “One Book, One Community” program promoted by the Center for the Book at the Library of Congress. The program fosters community involvement and discussion as part of collective learning.

“Our goal [is] to promote a community-wide endorsement of the value of reading good books, to achieve a broad and deep participation in the experience, and to stimulate opportunities for all segments of the community to have reading and discussion groups about a book that is important both as literature and for its insights into the human condition.”

—Paul Parrish, Regents Professor and head of the Department of English

- *Psychology Clinic:* Established in 1986, the clinic is a not-for-profit training facility for the clinical psychology doctoral training program. The Texas A&M Psychology Clinic offers services in comprehensive psychological evaluations; consultation with schools, physicians, allied health personnel, and agencies; and specialized therapy for adults, children and adolescents, families, couples and groups in the community on a sliding fee scale.

“While one of our primary goals is to train psychologists, we also feel a responsibility to provide quality, cost-effective care to people in the Brazos Valley who might not have funds or insurance coverage for psychological services.”

—Robert Heffer, clinical associate professor of psychology and director of the clinic

- *Center for the Study of the First Americans (CSFA)*: The Center has about 1000 dues-paying members, but it also disseminates the results of academic research on the first Americans to the general public through its publications—a quarterly news magazine the *Mammoth Trumpet*, an annual journal *Current Research in the Pleistocene*, and scholarly books published through the Texas A&M University Press.
- *Public Policy Research Institute (PPRI)*: The institute delivers empirical research on projects that impact public policy. Over the past few years, PPRI has completed projects for select state agencies and state offices on the disproportional assignment of minority students to special education, the incentives and disincentives created by current policies that govern services to children with severe disabilities, and the disproportionate sentencing of minorities to juvenile detention facilities (*Item 28*).

“Philosophically, the PPRI mission is very consistent with the land grant concept of providing all citizens access to the fruits of university research.”

—Charles D. Johnson, institute director and professor of psychology

IV. Reviewing Resources

To fulfill the goals set forth in *Vision 2020*, the College must have the financial and resource support to do so. Imperative #11 addresses four areas that impact the resources that come to the university: public support, state resource flow, strategic alliances, and private giving. The College of Liberal Arts has addressed and been impacted by two of these four: state resource flow and private giving.

Accomplishments and Progress

- A substantial increase has occurred in the base allocation (i.e., budget from the university) since the *Vision 2020* report (*Item 28*).
 - In absolute terms, the base budget has increased by 45 percent since fiscal year (FY) 2000 (to approximately \$43.6 million in FY 2007).
 - In inflation adjusted terms, this equates to an increase of approximately 22 percent over the same period.
 - At the same time, the number of weighted semester credit hours (WSCH) taught in the college has increased modestly (3.5 percent), while the number of majors in the college has increased substantially (15 percent).
 - Thus, the real (inflation adjusted) resources available to the college from the university have increased by 20 percent per WSCH and 7.5 percent per major since the *Vision 2020* report was issued.
- The college benefited from a near tripling of indirect cost returns to the college. This source now contributes almost \$300,000 per year.
- Substantial improvement has been made in fundraising (*Item 29*).

“Vision 2020 works!”

—John Knudsen, senior development officer for liberal arts

 - The College exceeded its \$35 million capital campaign goal by almost 20 percent, raising \$41.6 million.
 - Of the funds raised, 82 percent (\$34 million) are endowment gifts with either current funds or bequests, funding six new chairs and one new professorship, numerous fellowships and scholarships and research.
 - Total endowment has more than doubled since 1999. The total endowment is now at \$41.2 million, which provides roughly \$2 million a year in income for the college.

Areas Still Needing Development

- University data suggests that Texas A&M is still below national norms for resources expended per student relative to its aspirational peers.
- Given the relatively young age of the college and its brief history as an active private fundraiser, its endowment probably falls well short of its aspirational peers. For example, The University of Texas at Austin enjoys a liberal arts endowment almost six times larger than that of Texas A&M, and the University of Illinois is three times larger. As a result, both schools have considerably more endowed chairs and professorships.

Anticipated Actions That Will Accelerative Movement toward Goals

- The college's base allocation is expected to grow in line with the overall university budget.
 - This assumes that the Texas Legislature continues to provide both general and supplemental funding to the university as it has in the past and continues to allow the university to set tuition levels.
 - This assumes that the university continues to place importance on the improvement in the college as encouraged in *Vision 2020*.
- Private fundraising will continue to grow in importance.
 - Planned gifts (bequests, remainder trusts, annuities, and the like) constituted more than 56 percent of the college's campaign goal. The college endowment will grow as these gifts "mature" (*Item 30*).
 - The number of living alumni now exceeds 39,000 (30 percent of whom graduated before 1990 and are thus reaching their "early giving years"). This number is small by national peer standards but is growing rapidly as the number of liberal arts majors increases.
 - Texas A&M plans at least one more university-wide capital campaign to be completed prior to the year 2020.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

The College of Liberal Arts has made progress in addressing the aspirations in *Vision 2020: Creating a Culture of Excellence*. Because the college is central to the imperatives and plays an essential role in advancing the national and international stature of the university, the university made significant investments in the college during the period assessed. The college responded by increasing productivity and prominence of its faculty, enhancing the educational opportunities of its students, monitoring professional placement after graduation, and creating a more diverse college community. Over the last six years, the college formed a community of scholars, connecting faculty, students, and staff in ways that bridge departments and disciplines and offering possible models for creating even larger networks of scholarly, intellectual community among the university's colleges.

However, all of the highlighted accomplishments are at risk if the university does not continue to support Imperative #4 to build the core letters, arts, and sciences. While the college has journeyed far from its starting point, there is still a significant distance to travel. A number of departments have developed exceptional programs, but the college must continue this development until it achieves excellence across the college, a characteristic of a mature intellectual community.

When measured by the growing numbers of faculty, graduate students, programs, and awards, the College of Liberal Arts is succeeding in building a dynamic academic community. The college, however, must also devise innovative strategies to sustain diverse scholarly intellectual communities and sustain a climate of

inclusiveness for its new students and new faculty. To create a vibrant and sustainable culture of excellence, the college must look closely at the ways in which the liberal arts will engage with critical questions raised by advances in the technologies of research and information, as well as responding to the changing needs of 21st century students and the roles they will play in society.

Recommendations

In order for the college to continue its path of progress, the committee strongly urges that the College begin a series of college-wide dialogues and forums that will assess the ways in which the following issues should shape its future planning:

- *Creating a Culture of Excellence across the College:* The College must continue to reward success in the areas of diversity, internationalization, and scholarly and creative accomplishment at the national level while also creating a culture of excellence across all departments—a culture of excellence does not arise from the success of individual departments alone or from faculty acting in isolation.
- *Promoting an Inclusive Educational Environment:* To foster dynamic intellectual communities, the college must explore not only what creates an unwelcoming or negative environment for students, faculty, and staff, but also what sustains a climate of well-being and inclusiveness.
- *Building an Appropriate Level of Professional Staff and Infrastructure Support:* The College must address the infrastructure and staff needs that are critical in supporting an increasingly productive faculty and an increasing body of student majors.
- *Maintaining Faculty Hiring Momentum:* The College must maintain the momentum created through the faculty reinvestment hires to sustain and development dynamic, productive scholarly communities, which in turn create the intellectual environment that attracts competitive graduate and undergraduate majors. It should seek to attract key senior faculty in addition to strong junior faculty. One key element will be to continue to strive to bring faculty salaries in line with those at peer institutions.
- *Continuing to Build the Resource Base of the College:* The recommendations outlined will require substantial additional resources. The College must continue to promote itself—its current strengths and its aspirations—so as to enhance university base funding as well as public and private financial support and avoid backsliding in its progress toward excellence.
- *Addressing the Implications in the Changing Nature of Graduate Education:* The College must discuss this report’s implications about graduate education (including the shift to Ph.D. education in the college), placement issues, the goals of Ph.D. programs, the number of students placed in non-academic sectors, how to retain the highly valuable diversity fellowships, and—in cooperation with the university—raising the amount of merit fellowships to improve the college’s competitiveness for top graduate students.
- *Developing the College’s Investment in the Undergraduate Experience through Improvements in Course Offerings and Enrichment Opportunities:* The college teaches a large percentage of all Texas A&M University undergraduates and can deliver rich intellectual and creative opportunities that bridge disciplines and prepare students for future careers both within and outside the traditional classroom setting. One area where *Vision 2020* proposes improvement is in the expansion of offerings in the fine arts and in the improvement of offerings in foreign languages. The college must continue to expand these two programs.