



THE TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

Michael D. McKinney, MD
Chancellor

June 29, 2007

Dr. Ray Keck
President
Texas A&M International University
5201 University Boulevard
Laredo, Texas 78041-1900

Dear Dr. Keck:

Now that the Legislative Session is behind us and I am more than halfway through my first year as Chancellor, I am seeking your input on my annual evaluation of your performance. I see this process as a collaborative opportunity to review past achievements, evaluate the challenges that you face, set new goals and objectives, and develop new ideas on how we can continue progress toward excellence in education, research and service for the state of Texas.

Review for accuracy the attached "Presidential Evaluation Measures" form for your institution. Fill in any shaded areas for which we did not have data available. In addition, please answer the following questions:

1. What are your major accomplishments for the past year? (Attach supporting data as deemed appropriate.)
2. What goals and projects were not addressed, are incomplete, or have suboptimal results?
3. What barriers do you regularly encounter that prevent you from achieving your institutional goals?
4. As a manager, how would you rate yourself in the way you have nurtured and developed your administration and staff? Please include examples and identify any strengths or weaknesses.

Please send your responses to Janet Smalley at janetsmalley@tamu.edu by Friday, July 20th. After I have reviewed them, we will schedule a face to face meeting to discuss. It is my intent that in the future, the compacts that are being developed in the Strategic Planning process will be used for evaluations.

Sincerely,

Michael D. McKinney M.D.

slp
Attachment

R.K

- + • Legislators support (+ restraint) penalties for Interstate Supp dis
 - Re accredit GACS (AACSB?)
 - Research emphasis (+ budget Dec)
 - * • Community relations
 - Fund Raising (esp College of Business)
 - Intervention program ground
 - Early College HS. (2)
 - Student Success Program (+ facilities)
 - Active Recruitment of Students (in Museum town)
 - Openness / Communication
 - 75%+ 1st generation graduates
 - Minimal Δ tuition
-
- • Delayed / Deferred system upgrade
 - Minimal K-12 support
 - Difficult recruit / retain good faculty (location, Environment, etc)
 - Faculty / Admin(?) resistant to any focus (Research delay / time, Publish, R class size)
 - 65 Grad rate ≈ 43%

Presidential Evaluation for Ray M. Keck III
FY 2007

I. Major accomplishments of the past year:

(By far, the most complex and demanding part of my role as President of TAMU is to manage the political environment. Laredo is a city of intense and unforgiving alliances, friendships, rivalries, implacable enemies. The University must remain the advocate and precinct of all, partisan of none. I think I have, for the most part, maintained our identity as friend-to-all. Unique among our other challenges, the responsibility for our external profile rests almost entirely upon me, requiring sustained, daily effort during this and all years.)

A. As a University, our major accomplishment this year has been to institutionalize the procedures and expectations which grew out of our re-affirmation process completed for the Southern Association in 2006.

The process required nothing short of a rethinking and remaking of the University, an undertaking strenuously resisted by faculty. I now realize that the SACS model, like recent developments in technology, envisions a fully integrated institution, held together by procedures which encompass planning, scheduling, and budgeting in one fully articulated, yearly cycle. While we were doing many of these things, an integrated whole was not easy for the SACS visiting team to find. We are now well on the way to accomplishing that worthy goal of a coherent system, and this fall begin our second year of a fully operational Banner system to manage information, data, and records.

It was not until Commissioner Paredes pointed it out to me that I realized how unusual it is for an institution to be re-accredited, as TAMU was, without any recommendations of any sort whatsoever. In truth, we began the re-accreditation drill woefully deficient in procedures and processes; the happy outcome reflects once again what has become this University's accustomed response to a serious challenge.

B. This year we developed a plan for a comprehensive first-year experience for all freshmen. The planning process and structure for this program was provided by John Gardner's Foundations of Excellence. The program includes a required freshman course for all entering students, integrated into learning communities, anchored in the basic CORE courses. The idea is of course not wholly ours; many universities offer similar first-year experiences and learning communities. The plan we will follow is our own adaptation, and all freshmen entering the fall of 2007 will enter this program. The Provost and I will each be teaching one section of the

freshman course.

C. This year, following the Chancellor's visit in February, we restructured our institutional procedures for supporting faculty research. The goal we have embraced is for research grants to fund the cost of faculty release time for research. The first step, to be implemented in the fall of 2007, will require each faculty member receiving release time to submit a grant which, if funded, would cover the cost of that release.

The one performance measure we have lagged behind many other institutions in addressing has been sponsored research for faculty. We have been extremely successful in attracting federal, programmatic grants, but few faculty have evolved into the grants-seeking mode. An institutional change is needed, one that is at present massively resented and resisted. I am confident that we are on the right track, with a five-year plan both reasonable and comprehensive. (See below, **Barriers**)

D. This year the University received from Webb County custodianship of Casa Ortiz, the most important surviving building from eighteenth-century Laredo. This magnificent structure, on the river and next door to La Posada, will house our Small Business Development Center, and serve as the venue for numerous educational, cultural, and social events related to our life as an institution. This project was four years in the making, and reflects the community's great respect for and confidence in Texas A&M International University. By the terms of this agreement, the University occupies Casa Ortiz rent-free for twenty-five years, paying only the accustomed monthly expenses. All major maintenance remains the responsibility of Webb County. In addition, the former owner has left in place for the University's use a large portion of the period furnishings.

E. This year marked our first collaboration with the Smithsonian Institution, an exhibit called Our Journeys, Our Stories which occupied the rotunda of the Student Center for three months. Fully funded by the Ford Foundation, this exhibit should be the first of many future collaborations with Smithsonian. The opening of the Alameda Museum in San Antonio, Smithsonian's first out-of-Washington site, served as our point of contact, and discussions are under way to bring to Laredo future exhibits scheduled first to be shown in San Antonio. (See below, **Barriers**)

F. This year for the first time we developed an outreach program for the Killam Library. In March we opened in a remodeled portion of the second floor a Regional Archive, a repository of historical documents, pictures, and memorabilia. In June we opened the Willard F. and Edmund L. King Romance Seminar Room to celebrate the gift of the King Collection of Spanish literature to the University. At the same time, we announced the creation of the Friends of the Library and a \$50,000 donation to create the University Library Memorial Fund. These activities should stimulate both use of our library and support for its work. Neither the City of Laredo nor the County of Webb offer any archival storage or custodianship, a serious need in a community as old as Laredo.

G. This year we vastly expanded our international programs. At a time when most

American universities experience difficulty establishing new programs abroad and maintaining those now in place, we are at TAMU experiencing what I hope will prove a major breakthrough in our international offerings. First, thanks for a generous gift from a local foundation, we are in a strong position now to offer generous scholarships for students eager to study abroad for a semester or a summer. Second, the slow process of identifying productive international partnerships is now bearing fruit. An agreement with a university in Mansoura, Egypt promises to put in place new opportunities for our MBA and Executive MBA program, as well as opportunities for our College of Education to partner with its Egyptian counterpart. The Egyptian university has also facilitated the identification of other Arab partners, and this coming year should see several of those internationally-delivered programs begin. Discussions with several universities in China and Taiwan also put us on the brink of beginning joint programs in those countries. These efforts go far beyond the signing of perfunctory and somewhat meaningless articulation agreements, of which we have dozens throughout the world. Improvement in this area is a direct result of having recruited a little more than a year ago a new leader for international programs.

H. This year we began on campus, in collaboration with the Laredo Independent School District, Early College High School, the initiative designed and funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, managed by the Texas Education Agency and The Texas A&M University System. Laredo was chosen as one of twelve potential sites for this program, and we eagerly accepted the invitation. The mid-year testing (December, 2006) of these 100 students shows them by far the most advanced group of high school freshmen in Laredo. In the fall of 2007 we bring an additional 100 to campus, and assist LISD as they begin construction of a permanent facility for classrooms. A possible purchase of adjacent Killam land by LISD has languished as a result of the landowner's very aggressive demands, and should the District prove unable to negotiate purchase of the required four acres, we will have to look to build, with District money, these additional classrooms on our campus. I hope this last alternative will not prove necessary, and the District will be able to build space needed for these 200 students on adjacent acreage.

I. This year we completed our first year of provisional membership in NCAA-Division II. To move from NAIA to NCAA requires a serious reworking of the entire athletic program, a process that has led to the establishment this fall of our first athletic fee. With a new AD in place as of May, 2007, and a community eager to see the University a full member of Division II, I am confident that we will continue to move successfully through the process. We have just been notified (July 2nd) that rules governing probationary status have been modified, that we could be admitted as full members of Division II at the end of 2008.

J. This year we continued discussions with a local philanthropist, one interested in establishing a permanent endowment for the College of Business. Separate from plans to create an endowment, this donor funded and we this year built both a state-of-art, high-tech classroom to teach value investing, as well as a trading room which will place our students into direct interaction with the New York Stock Exchange. Both the McCombs and the Mays School of Business enjoy similar facilities, necessary for high quality instruction in finance. We hope this fall to announce a name for the College of Business, a response to a very large and transforming gift now agreed upon between the University and the donor.

and business. We cannot effectively recruit students from other parts of South Texas. The perception, fed by much media coverage, and sadly for us, not excessively exaggerated, warns people off Laredo. Meetings, conferences, programs, and visitors, all scheduled to come, have changed their plans. The City is in serious trouble, and so are we.

Second, our public schools in Laredo are in the worst condition I have seen in recent memory. The Laredo Independent School District has had five superintendents in five years. The test scores are embarrassing, and the United Independent School District does not offer a much better picture. Every year we lose excellent, young faculty because as parents they are unwilling to keep their children in Laredo public schools. I was just told last week by an outstanding, departing teacher-administrator that in two years in Laredo, his bright son in grades seven and eight had yet to bring home any homework.

The most frustrating part of this dilemma in our schools is how little I/we can say without risking complete alienation of the groups we most need as partners to fulfill our mission. The problems are cultural and political, all of which I understand, and some of which we as a University can attempt to address carefully, gingerly, protecting fragile egos, petty interests, and parochial understandings.

Third, the quality of life in Laredo, especially since Nuevo Laredo is no longer a safe destination, is very disappointing to those we recruit to teach and work at the University. One very fine faculty member told me, just before leaving, that he had "in Laredo no place to take my children for a walk except the one big mall." I realized he was quite right. Three years ago, following a very unfavorable picture of Laredo in a national survey of the best places to live, the University led a survey to assess our citizen's perceptions of quality of life, one in which several thousand Laredoans participated. At the top of the list of serious deficiencies identified by respondents was the lack of park or recreation space. After months required to administer the survey, then careful compilation of the data by our Texas Center for Border Economic Development, the City Council responded by becoming defensive and evasive. The survey past with no action and no response except the accustomed: "Things aren't as bad as they say." Unfortunately, they are.

A necessary strategy to combat what is an inhospitable environment for faculty and administrative recruits includes keeping salaries as high as we possibly can. For many years, our average faculty salaries at TAMIU have been second only to College Station in the System. (In the area of our PhD, International Business, the field itself has pushed salaries to the highest levels. Our Special Item appropriation for that PhD program is now inadequate to sustain an offering of the highest quality.)

Finally, leaders in the Laredo community are of limited help in addressing the serious obstacles listed above. Together they have no control over the situation in México, little control over the poor schools (the majority of our population resents being told that our public schools are poor), and limited interest in the quality-of-life issue. After long reflection, I have come to realize that those citizens with the education and resources to address the quality of life issues themselves do not feel the problem. Laredoans of the middle class and above commonly keep

condominiums on the Gulf coast, in San Antonio, in Austin, the Hill Country, Aspen, and in México. They do not look to Laredo for entertainment or weekend activities.

The devastating result: young professionals coming here to live and work at the University see a community with little to offer them or their children. It is very, very difficult to recruit and retain high quality faculty and staff. And the pool of talent for competent adjunct faculty is a very shallow one. 7

The last external barrier is a threat of fluctuating intensity. In the last three legislative sessions, we have faced powerful legislators who are determined to eliminate Special Items. This time the Governor joined those ranks. We continually point out that that method of funding was chosen by previous legislatures to create this institution. A change of funding without a Hold-Harmless provision would strip out of TAMU all the gains of the last decade.

Internal Barriers:

TAMU is a young institution whose various parts are at wildly different stages of development. At a time when both accreditation processes and advances in technology argue for a coherent, integrated whole, we are a group of disparate parts, like a family with children of many different ages.

On our faculty are productive teachers and researchers whose work would hold its own with colleagues in any Research I university. Those faculty are found largely in the College of Business, beneficiaries of the Special Item funding that College receives and the strict accreditation standards of AACSB. In other parts of the University, especially in Education and in Arts and Sciences, we have faculty, many tenured and full professors, who today would find the tenure process a serious challenge. Among this group, as one might expect, we find excellent teachers who even in the later years of their professional life do not really understand or engage in publishable, referred research.

I do not think the challenges posed by a faculty of diverse experience and divergent professional expectations is altogether unique at TAMU; however, the circumstances surrounding our creation and development clearly exacerbate this phenomenon. "Continuous improvement," the hallmark of our SACS processes, becomes especially difficult for an institution in transition, one whose faculty cannot agree upon measures of sweeping importance precisely because of the sweeping differences in faculty credentials, experience, expectations, and needs.

The two most significant initiatives/innovations of recent days, the re-accreditation process and the enhanced focus on sponsored research, have both been undertaken against stiff faculty opposition, resentment, anger, and distrust. Our older, seasoned faculty members want to continue teaching the small classes they remember from previous days when we were a different institution, together with release time not clearly tied to successful participation in the grants process. Younger faculty understand the present circumstances, but for the reason enumerated above under "External Barriers," are often hard to recruit and retain.

anything to change. What we have accomplished in just twelve years is exhausting even to enumerate. I delight in pointing out to visitors that everything they see on this campus has happened in the last twelve years.

At least for me, there is no other way. At a recent NCAA conference, I heard the following story told of an old and famous track coach. "Boys, just run as fast as you possibly can, and then gradually increase your speed." My view exactly of what we do and how we should do it at TAMU.

The challenge for me is to create an environment in which such strenuous effort can be undertaken willingly, enthusiastically, productively. For the most part, I think we have together achieved that environment. But those who serve on the Executive Council would be the ones to declare this most important goal one I have achieved, or one which still needs serious attention.