



## **Student Affairs Strategic Plan 2016-2020**

**Mission:** The Division of Student Affairs encourages development through equitable, student-centered, and community-engaged opportunities that enhance student success.

**Vision:** Create a community where students can thrive

## **Overview of Texas A&M University-Central Texas**

For more than thirty years, Central Texas community leaders pursued an unwavering vision that their communities would someday be served by a public institution of higher education. Created by the Texas Legislature in May 2009, Texas A&M University-Central Texas (A&M-Central Texas) is now in its seventh year as a member of the Texas A&M University System (System) and serves an exceptionally diverse, highly mobile, and rapidly growing population across an equally diverse and expansive geographic area. With a student enrollment exceeding 2,500 students, including a full-time student equivalent (FTSE) enrollment approaching 1,500 students, A&M Central Texas has now graduated well over 4,000 students with bachelor's and master's degrees.

Texas A&M University-Central Texas traces its roots back to 1973 when the American Technological University (ATU) was formed. In September of 1973, more than thirty years before it would become known as Texas A&M University-Central Texas, the American Technological University opened its doors, marking an historical effort on behalf of citizens in the area to establish upper-division higher education in the Central Texas area. While the early curriculum placed a great deal of emphasis on technological programs, offering baccalaureate degrees in programs such as general technology, computer science, and industrial technology, among others, ATU's courses had continued to progressively take the shape of a liberal arts college, with degrees in counseling, psychology, criminal justice, and social work. Therefore, in September, 1989, ATU officially changed its name to the University of Central Texas (UCT), and concurrently experienced a growth in enrollment from approximately 550 students in 1988 to more than 1,000 in 1997. In October of 1998, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) supported Tarleton State University's proposal to create a university system center in Central Texas. The organization of the new public university included UCT, gifting more than \$7 million in assets to Tarleton.

Texas A&M University-Central Texas was formed on September 1, 1999, as Tarleton State University-Central Texas. It became a stand-alone university on May 27, 2009, one of eleven universities within the Texas A&M University System. A&M-Central Texas is an upper-level institution offering the junior- and senior-level coursework needed to successfully complete baccalaureate degrees and all coursework leading to the completion of graduate (master's and specialist) degrees. A&M-Central Texas became a separately accredited institution in June 2013 through the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), retroactive to January 1, 2013.

Texas A&M University-Central Texas is located on 672 beautiful acres of land at the intersection of State Highway 195 and State Highway 201 in Killeen. The land was transferred to the Texas A&M University System from the U.S. Army in the summer of 2009. In addition to classes being offered on the main campus, classes are also offered at several other convenient sites, including Fort Hood and the East Williamson County Higher Education Center in Hutto, TX. The university provides a wide range of flexible course schedules, including online, hybrid, evening, and weekend classes.

## Overview of the Strategic Plan

This plan employed the University Five-Year Strategic Plan as a foundation, and to ensure stakeholder buy-in, the strategic plan was further enhanced through student recommendations and a Student Affairs Leadership Team. The planning team consisted of representatives from each office within the Division of Student Affairs. The strategic planning process began in 2015 after a comprehensive review of the previous 2011-2015 Student Affairs strategic plan. Review of this previously existing plan provided a foundation to build upon for the 2016-2020 cycle. The planning sessions included a review of: national best practices and benchmarking, current research, student development theory, SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis, data analysis, university strategic alignment, and long-term strategic forecasting for the division. This plan was developed as a result of staff meetings, retreats, and feedback from faculty, staff, students, and community stakeholders.

The Division of Student Affairs Strategic Plan 2011-2015 serves as a tool to guide the Office of Student and Civic Engagement, Office of Career and Professional Development, Office of Student Success, Office of Access and Inclusion, and the Division itself for future planning and decision making. Therefore, each of the offices will specifically use this plan to address budgets, space, personnel, and programs in future operational plans. The plan establishes three distinct and bold imperatives: **Enhance Student Success and Career Connectedness, Strengthen a Sense of Community, and Provide Leadership for Civic and Community Engagement.** Supporting goals and strategies provide clear direction for our imperatives, while the stated performance measures detail criteria needed for success.

## **I. Enhance Student Success and Career Connectedness**

Two key challenges emerged through the National Survey for Student Engagement (NSSE), A&M-Central Texas Student Campus Life Surveys, and Career and Professional Development Program Review: – (1) students need to assume ownership of their personal and career development and (2) there needs to be an increase in support for students transitioning into A&M-Central Texas. Focusing on applying best practices in student development theory, including positive psychology--such as but not limited to strengths-based initiatives--can empower students to achieve and thrive at rates higher than ever before.

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's 60x30TX initiative calls for 60% of Texans ages 25-34 to have a certificate or degree in order to support the economic future of the state. In answering this call to action, A&M-Central Texas is not only awarding degrees, but also aims to create a community in which students thrive. Schreiner's (2010) research on Thriving in Community finds that students perceive thriving in college through the formation of positive relationships with others. This imperative strives to encourage the formation of positive relationships for thriving in career connectedness and student success. This Division will therefore focus on the following goals:

- a. Ensure student development programs are grounded in positive psychology.
  - i. *By FY16, create an intentional marketing initiative that promotes accessing services and professional skill development within all units.*
  - ii. *By FY16, create a division-wide identity that demonstrates a united vision supporting positive psychology with key philosophical aspiration statements.*
  - iii. *By FY17, 100% of students utilizing Career and Professional Development will be made aware of the benefits of a strengths-based assessment to enhance their ability to market themselves to employers.*
  - iv. *By FY18, create, through collaboration with Instructional Enhancement & Innovation, resources that help faculty teach to students' strengths and learning styles.*
  - v. *By FY20, increase the NSSE mean of cultivating positive relationships between students, faculty, and staff defined as Supportive Environment from 29.6% (TAMUCT 2015 mean) to 33.4% (2015 Carnegie Class mean).*
- b. Enhance monitoring and predicting of student progress/success, engagement levels, and career success. Ensure all operations are optimized for student success.
  - i. *By FY16, develop a plan for collecting first destination assessments that aid in the gathering and reporting of data with detailed demographic data that will measure career success.*
  - ii. *By FY17, draft and develop a common definition, measures, and outcomes for career connectedness with institutional leadership, employers, and students via a Career and Professional Development advisory board.,.*
  - iii. *By FY17, collaborate to draft and develop a common definition, measures, and outcomes for student success.*

- iv. *By FY17, implement, through collaboration with Technology Enhanced Learning, a new early-alert technology platform that aids in identifying students at risk and provide each with timely services to promote greater learning and success.*
- v. *By FY17, 100% of programming will include general awareness of transferable and marketable skills (skills identified by employers in NACE's Job Outlook 2015 survey as most desirable skills) and communicating those skillsets to key constituents.*
- vi. *By FY18, through collaboration with Undergraduate Advising and Technology Enhanced Learning integrate incoming student assessment to identify new transfer students' strengths, weaknesses, needs, and concerns.*
- vii. *By FY20, programming will be created and implemented to address those new transfer students' strengths, weaknesses, needs, and concerns.*
- viii. *By FY20, 50% of graduates will indicate completion of at least one internship, co-op, field experience, student teaching experience, or clinical experience via the graduation survey.*
- c. Provide a comprehensive array of student support programs that are accessible on campus, online or at a distance and that align with high-impact practices.
  - i. *By FY18, work with faculty and instructional technology staff to incorporate online tools into course instruction on the institution's learning management system via departmental websites.*
  - ii. *By FY18, identify and implement strategies to increase the success of students who are at risk academically or who are underprepared.*
  - iii. *By FY19, through partnerships with Access & Inclusion and Career & Professional Development, collect and analyze the degree of support needed to close gaps in equitable career opportunities and job readiness.*
- d. Enhance student learning.
  - iv. *By FY17, create a divisional plan to assess student learning outcomes.*
  - v. *By FY17, assess the learning outcomes of face-to-face and online programs, which will be shared with faculty, staff, and students and will be utilized to enhance services in the future.*
  - vi. *By FY20, increase the NSSE mean of students engaged in Collaborative Learning from 25.4% (TAMUCT 2015 mean) to 42% (2015 Carnegie Class mean).*
- e. Develop a comprehensive new student transition plan.
  - i. *By FY18, create a career development component in the new transfer student experience that educates students on experiential education options, marketable skills and how to acquire them as a student, and instructs them to start the application and internship search process during their first semester.*
  - ii. *By FY18, create an equitable and comprehensive new student experience plan.*
  - iii. *By FY20, increase the NSSE mean of students engaged in Student-Faculty Interactions from of 16.6% (TAMUCT 2015 mean) to 24% (2015 Carnegie Class mean).*

## II. Strengthen a Sense of Community

Students have consistently ranked the need for greater community enhancements at A&M-Central Texas, as indicated from data such as Campus Life Surveys, biennial alcohol and drug review, and SWOT analyses. Two consistently emerging themes from these data are a need for the institution to seek greater student voice in decision-making, and increasing partnerships with the community to achieve common goals. This has created an opportunity to build upon the four domain framework of the Psychological Sense of Community as developed by Schreiner (2010): membership, relationship, ownership, and partnership. This imperative is important as we enhance a sense of community both on and off campus. Student Affairs plays a vital role in developing partnerships within the community. We support fostering mutual respect for each person's contribution, a commitment to goals that transcend individual interests, and reciprocity of fulfillment of needs. These features build powerful partnerships that strengthen the sense of community a student experiences as a member of the A&M-Central Texas campus community. To strengthen a sense of community, the Division will therefore focus on the following goals:

- a. Enhance the environment and facilities such that it is conducive to building community
  - i. *By FY16, complete a housing study with a timeline for the implementation of campus housing.*
  - ii. *By FY17, create a residential housing plan in which students can live and learn.*
  - iii. *By FY17, each office will continue to improve an innovative office, work, and community space that is conducive to creativity, productivity, and efficiency as evidenced in the continuous improvement process.*
  - iv. *By FY18, implement recreational and fitness spaces for students and forecast long-term needs.*
  - v. *By FY18, create a marketing plan to faculty, students, and staff informing them of resources and encouraging a sense of community. Develop and implement a division-wide integrated branding and marketing plan.*
- b. Cultivate an equitable institutional environment
  - i. *By FY17, complete a campus climate survey to create a baseline of the current social inclusive climate.*
  - ii. *By FY18, ensure wide-scale assessment results and outcomes are announced and made available to students.*
  - iii. *By FY18, advocate the use of gender-neutral language in all Student Affairs marketing and programming and remove pronoun specific language.*
  - iv. *By FY18, leverage the expertise of the Office of Access & Inclusion to ensure accessible spaces within the university.*
  - v. *By FY19, develop a comprehensive programmatic plan that drives the efforts of Student Affairs for diversity, inclusion, and accessibility.*
- c. Develop and encourage a community focused on health, safety, and well-being
  - i. *By FY16, through collaboration with the institution's Title IX Coordinator, provide 2 awareness campaigns around sexual assault and sexual violence each year.*
  - ii. *By FY17, implement recommendations of the 2014-2015 biennial alcohol and other drug review.*
  - iii. *By FY18, create a social norming campaign directed at the use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.*
  - iv. *By FY19, increase student use of eCheckup by 10% and implement programs that address student concerns.*

d. Emphasize a students' sense of community

- i. *By FY 17, create opportunities for regular dialogue between students and the senior leadership of the university.*
- ii. *By FY17, ensure students are able to rate their levels of satisfaction with all aspects of the university and give appropriate feedback where necessary.*
- iii. *By FY18, ensure all departments within Student Affairs create opportunities for students or student groups to set "stretch" goals for the year and to engage in projects that require high levels of collaboration that will have a positive impact on the campus, as evidenced by continuous improvement plans (CIP).*
- iv. *By FY18, create effective internal communication for students to ensure awareness of programs on campus, where to find assistance, and how to become involved. Develop a division-wide integrated branding and marketing plan.*
- v. *By FY18, create a comprehensive plan for academic, social, and cultural aspects to be successfully integrated across the curriculum and co-curriculum. Increase campus life events and new student programs.*
- vi. *By FY2018, collaborate with the Student Government Association to develop university-wide spirit and tradition initiatives. Incorporate the use of rituals, traditions, honor codes, symbols of the university, and telling the campus "stories" to enhance membership of the Warrior community, as evidenced by the CIP.*
- vii. *By FY19, implement strategies that enhance the celebration of accomplishments of the university and its students, as evidenced by the CIP.*
- viii. *By FY19, helping 75% of new students find their niche on campus, whether in clubs and organizations or in specific opportunities on campus, such as service-learning, work-study programming, learning communities, etc.*
- ix. *By FY-19, create a comprehensive plan for academic, social, and cultural aspects of campus life to be successfully integrated into the residential experience.*
- x. *By FY-19, cultivate partnerships with students by working with faculty and staff to identify students at risk and provide timely support to them before they experience disillusionment or failure.*
- xi. *BY FY-20, ensure partnerships are created that propel civic and community engagement initiatives across the division, as evidenced by the continuous improvement plan.*

e. Emphasize staff members' sense of community

- i. *By FY17, develop a purposeful model to guide professional development opportunities across the division.*
- ii. *By FY17, collaborate with other offices to enable staff members to rate higher levels of satisfaction across the university and give appropriate feedback where necessary.*
- iii. *By FY17, develop collaborative opportunities to enhance effectiveness through team building and staff appreciation throughout the year. Staff members will be able to rate an average of 90% satisfaction with team building, staff appreciation opportunities, and professional development.*
- iv. *By FY19, create strategies, as evidenced by the continuous improvement plan, to enhance the celebration of accomplishments of staff.*
- v. *By FY19, enhance the cultivation of partnerships with other offices across campus and organizations within the community. as evidenced by strategies within each office's continuous improvement plan.*

### **III. Provide Leadership in Civic and Community Engagement**

Thomas Ehrlich (2000) states, “civic engagement means working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values, and motivation to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and nonpolitical processes.” (p. vi). Institutions of higher education are called to engage students in civic responsibility to create future leaders in communities.

Student Affairs is committed to creating opportunities for students to engage their communities fully as partners in the learning process. Kuh (2008) identified several high impact practices that contribute to increased student retention, learning, and engagement. Three important engagement and learning elements measured by the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)--reflective & integrative learning, discussions with diverse others, and collaborative learning--are indicators that the Division of Student Affairs can impact directly through this imperative. Additionally, the Division of Student Affairs is able to collaborate with Academic Affairs to impact students’ critical thinking skills, which is an area of growth for A&M-Central Texas, according to the institution’s 2015 NSSE results. To further provide leadership in civic and community engagement, the Division will therefore focus on the following goals:

- a. Prepare for the 2020 application for the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification.
  - i. *By FY17, develop institutional capacity for monitoring and measuring community engagement activities and perceptions of community engagement.*
  - ii. *By FY19, ensure community engagement initiatives within student research are implemented and present in the continuous improvement process.*
  - iii. *By FY19, ensure community engagement initiatives within the study abroad program are implemented and present in the continuous improvement process.*
  - iv. *By FY19, ensure community engagement initiatives within internships are implemented and present in the continuous improvement process.*
  - v. *By FY19, ensure community engagement initiatives within student organizations and volunteer efforts are implemented and present in the continuous improvement process.*
  - vi. *By FY19, embed the Civic Engagement AAC&U VALUE Rubric and associated learning outcomes across the division to assess and demonstrate civic learning.*
- b. Continue to develop students as ethical leaders and positive change agents that feel empowered to positively contribute to their local and global community
  - i. *By FY17, implement a university “day of service” led by students.*

- ii. *By FY17, leverage student involvement software to provide co-curricular transcripts documenting leadership, service, internships, and engagement of students.*
  - iii. *By FY17, develop leadership development training and certificate opportunities.*
  - iv. *By FY18, create a student-led service proposal initiative in which students accomplish large-scale community service projects.*
  - v. *By FY19, provide opportunities within study abroad programs in which students can better understand their strengths to promote greater positive cognitive and interpersonal growth.*
- c. Leverage external partnerships to enhance Student Affairs' initiatives
- i. *By FY17, include community partners in the biennial alcohol and other drug review and implementation of future programming.*
  - ii. *By FY18, establish a community engagement advisory board that provides input to the institution's efforts and areas of focus in regards to service-learning and civic engagement.*
  - iii. *By FY19, have each functional area within Student Affairs develop key strategies in enhancing partnerships within the community in the continuous improvement process.*