

**TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY
QUALITY ENHANCEMENT PLAN
2002**

Prepared by the Quality Enhancement Committee
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Table of Contents

	Page Numbers
Executive Summary.....	4
Section 1: Introduction.....	6
Role of Quality Enhancement Planning Committee	6
Members of the Committee	7
Purpose and Scope	7
Institutional Planning	7
<i>Vision 2020: Creating a Culture of Excellence</i>	9
University Strategic Planning Process	10
Key Indicators of Excellence	11
Alignment with University Planning Efforts	12
Alignment with <i>Vision 2020: Creating a Culture of Excellence</i>	13
Alignment with <i>One Principle: Twelve Ideas</i>	14
Alignment with <i>In Pursuit of the Vision</i>	15
Planning Principles	16
Section 2: Present Status: Research, Diversity, Internationalization, and Technology.....	17
Research	17
Diversity	18
Internationalization	21
Technology	22
Section 3: The Texas A&M University Quality Enhancement Plan.....	24
Examples of the Process	25
Research Examples	26
Diversity Examples	27
Internationalization Example	29
Technology Example	29
Section 4: Recommended Implementation Plan.....	31
Quality Enhancement Planning Council (QEPC)	31
Target Achievement Levels	31
Colleges	31
Other Units	32
Unit Preparation	32
Timelines	32
Support	32
SACS Project Assessment	32
Deliverables	33
Section 5: Summary.....	34

List of Figures and Tables

	Page Numbers
Figure 1. QEP Integration with University Planning	5
Figure 2. Strategic Planning, Institutional Effectiveness, and Quality Enhancement	9
Figure 3. Vision 2020 Imperatives and Overarching Themes	13
Figure 4. Stages in the Quality Enhancement Plan	16
Table 1. Texas A&M University Fall 2001 Demographics	19
Figure 5. Schematic of the QEP	24
Figure 6. Research Education Example	27

List of Appendices

Vision 2020: Creating a Culture of Excellence
Closing the Gaps

Texas A&M University Quality Enhancement Plan

Executive Summary

In January 2001, the Executive Vice President and Provost charged a Quality Enhancement Planning Committee to analyze planning processes at the University, and to recommend a systematic approach to guaranteeing continuous improvement in the learning environments offered to students. The committee, composed of faculty and administrators from all campus units and Texas A&M University at Galveston, has recommended a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) to be used as part of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) accreditation process. If ratified, the plan will be used over the next decade to facilitate and monitor improved student learning outcomes at Texas A&M University.

The QEP builds on previous University planning, and uses existing University data collection mechanisms to create a planning process that aligns academic program planning with University themes for excellence. The basic components of the QEP are the current University strategic planning and institutional effectiveness goal-setting processes. Together these processes are designed to move the University toward its long-range goals for excellence as outlined in *Vision 2020: Creating a Culture of Excellence*.

The University engages in a university-wide strategic planning effort every four years. QEP themes are identified for special attention over the subsequent five years from department, college, academic, and academic-support plans. Our current themes for excellence development in student learning are research, diversity, internationalization, and technology.

Every academic program sets yearly *Institutional Effectiveness* goals with related assessment plans. In previous years, these goals have been either program-level target or student learning goals. In the QEP, academic units will be expected to identify student learning outcomes in some degree programs in every planning period.

The QEP committee recommends that the Provost select a QEP Council that will be charged to analyze themes from each subsequent strategic planning effort and, with wide consultation and advice including specific input from the Faculty Senate and the Council of Principal Investigators, to transform the themes into *Key Indicators of Excellence* for student learning with associated *Target Achievement Levels*. Academic units then will use the key indicators in their planning for student learning.

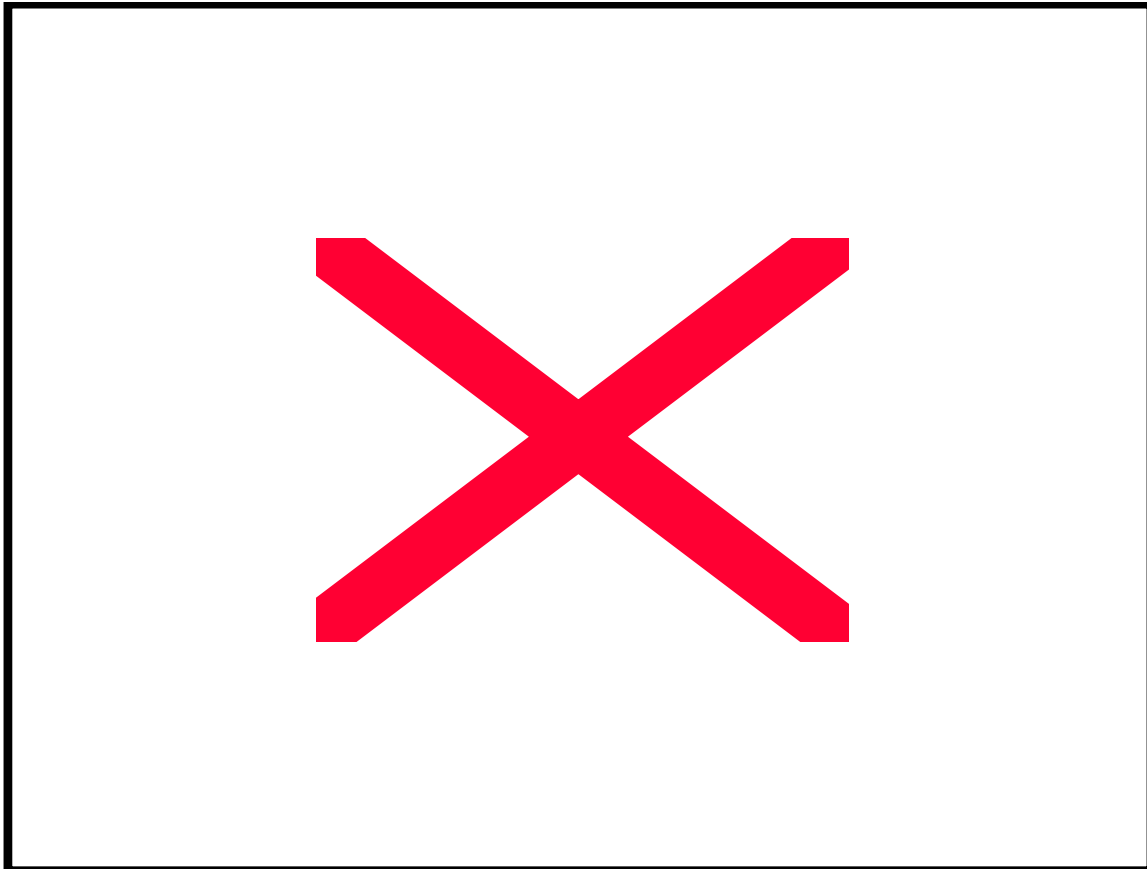
The QEP Council will provide feedback and input to the academic units regarding their identification of student learning outcomes and their assessment plans. Further, the Council will be responsible for organizing the data for use in ongoing strategic planning cycles.

The Faculty Senate will develop student learning outcomes for the University core curriculum.

Administrative divisions (e.g., administration, finance, and student affairs) and academic support areas (e.g., library, research, information technology, and international programs) will develop goals, strategies, and appropriate assessments for pertinent QEP themes. Although these units are not likely to plan specifically for student learning outcomes, their support is critical to the success of the QEP. The QEP will be implemented comparably at Texas A&M University at Galveston.

The recommended QEP process integrates with current planning at Texas A&M University's pursuit of long-term goals for excellence. Figure 1 illustrates the interaction among existing University planning processes with the QEP.

Figure 1. QEP Integration with University Planning



TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY QUALITY ENHANCEMENT PLAN

Section 1 Introduction

Role of the Quality Enhancement Planning Committee

The QEP committee, representing a wide variety of faculty disciplines and administrative offices across the University, met first in January 2001 to be given their charge by the Provost. In February, representatives from SACS met with the committee to present information about the pilot accreditation program in which Texas A&M University would be participating.

In summer 2001, the QEP committee began an intensive review of the new College strategic plans, with specific emphasis on the identification of exemplary programs involving the four key theme areas that positively affect student learning outcomes. Each committee member was asked to read and evaluate two College plans and to lead committee discussions on those documents. Subsequent small-group discussions on each of the four themes produced an evolving model that eventually became the recommended QEP.

In fall 2001, the QEP committee met weekly for a series of evening workshops to develop Key Indicators of Excellence, Target Levels of Achievement, and case examples for each of the four theme areas. Committee members with interest and experience in one of the four theme areas led the respective discussions at the workshops. Committee participation in the development of the QEP has been strong throughout the process.

After the QEP committee had developed the concept for the QEP, the co-chairs presented the model to the Provost's staff, Faculty Senate, and the Academic Program Council for their review. Suggested changes from these groups were incorporated into the plan. Initial implementation of the plan will take place in spring 2002.

As illustrated below, the members of the QEP committee are quite representative of Texas A&M University. Texas A&M University at Galveston is also represented. Academic and non-academic units at Texas A&M University and at Texas A&M University at Galveston are all invested in improving student learning outcomes. Input from the broad campus community was vital in developing a plan likely to engage the energies of faculty and other professional staff.

QUALITY ENHANCEMENT PLANNING COMMITTEE

John August co-chair, Professor, Veterinary Medicine
 Jane Conoley co-chair, Dean of Education and Professor, Educational Psychology
 Paul Busch, Professor, Mays Graduate School and College of Business
 Pierce Cantrell, Associate Provost for Information Technology and Associate Professor, Engineering
 Joe Estrada, Assistant Provost for Enrollment
 John Fackler, Distinguished Professor, College of Science
 Rick Floyd, Associate Vice President for Finance
 Rick Giardino, Professor of Geography and Dean of Graduate Studies
 Fred Heath, Dean of University Libraries
 Arthur Hobbs, Professor, College of Science and Faculty Senate representative
 Karen Kubena, Associate Dean, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and Professor of Nutrition
 Donna Lang, Assistant Vice President for Academic Services, Texas A&M at Galveston
 Mary Miller, Associate Vice President for Administration
 Henry Nemcik, Assistant Vice President, Texas A&M Foundation
 Jon Pitts, Special Assistant to the Provost and Professor, College of Science
 Marco Portales, Professor, College of Liberal Arts
 David Prior, Dean and Professor of Geosciences
 Arnie Vedlitz, Associate Dean and Professor, Bush School of Government and Public Service and College of Liberal Arts
 Karan Watson, Associate Dean and Professor, College of Engineering, and Dean of Faculties (designate)
 Mark Weichold, Associate Provost for Undergraduate Programs and Professor, Engineering
 Ward Wells, Professor, College of Architecture
 Jan Winniford, Associate Vice President for Student Affairs

Purpose and Scope

Texas A&M University is a public, comprehensive doctoral-extensive research university, dedicated to the development and dissemination of knowledge in diverse academic and professional fields. While continuing to fulfill its traditional mission as a land-grant/sea-grant/space-grant institution, the University is expanding its role to national and international communities. The University is committed to preeminence in teaching, research, and service.

Institutional Planning

Texas A&M University has a recorded history of institutional planning. For example, *The Aspirations Study* of 1962 and *Target 2000* in 1983 each identified major goals for the University to reach by the end of the century in order to fulfill its commitment to Texas to provide excellence in teaching, research, and public service.

These planning processes reflect both top-down and bottom-up approaches to achieving excellence. Currently, the most prominent of the Texas A&M University

planning efforts are our University strategic plans of 1997 and 2002, *One Principle: Twelve Ideas* and *In Pursuit of the Vision* respectively, *Vision 2020: Creating a Culture of Excellence*, and *Institutional Effectiveness Goal-Setting*. These four documents/processes establish a vision for international excellence in teaching, research, and outreach, while building on the University's rich history of service to Texas and the nation.

The University's strategic plan is constructed following careful review of the college-level strategic plans. Likewise, college-level plans are built upon departmental plans, which are influenced by the *Institutional Effectiveness* goals set by each of the academic units within the University.

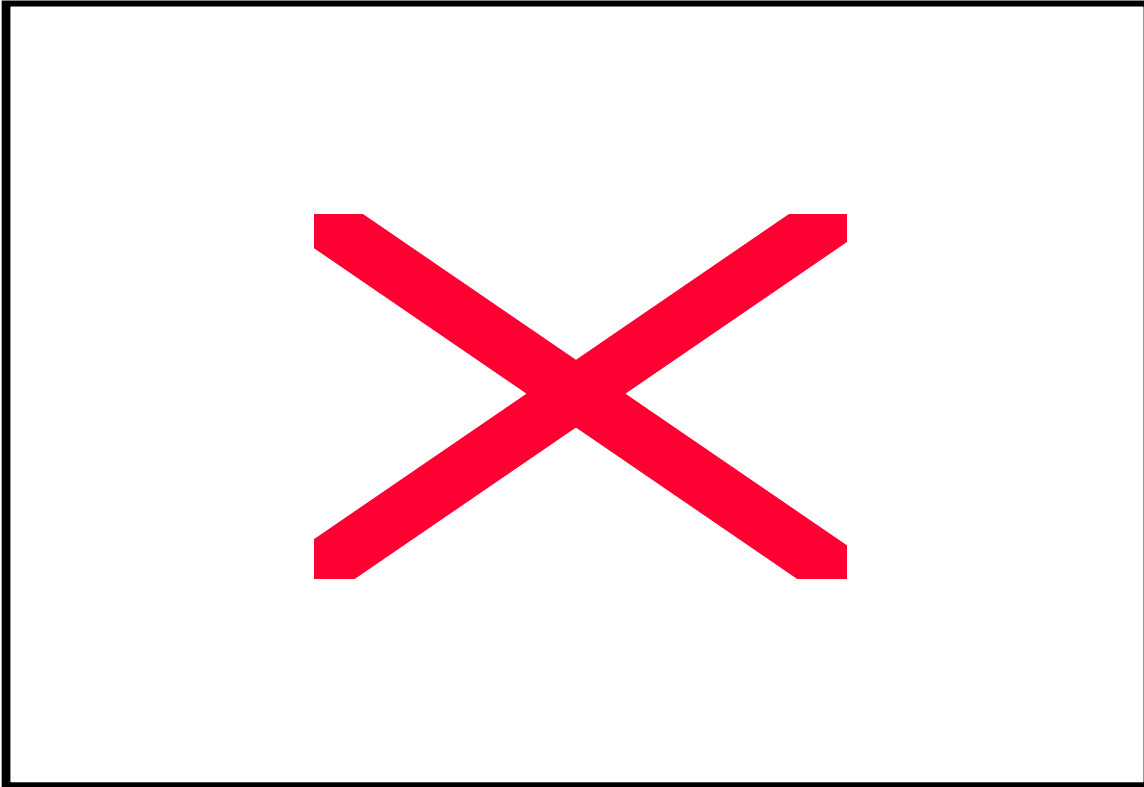
The plans represent, in varying degrees, broad faculty, administrator, and external constituency input. For example, the *Vision 2020* planning process involved hundreds of University faculty and administrators, former students, and influential community members from across the nation.

Institutional Effectiveness Goal-Setting was established two years ago as a process to involve the academic units in establishing goals and constructing assessment strategies particularly aimed at student learning. The Executive Associate Provost, in collaboration with the college deans, currently monitors the goals and assessment strategies from the Institutional Effectiveness process. A current report of our Institutional Effectiveness process is published on the web at (<http://rev.tamu.edu/ier/results.asp>).

The University's QEP will be implemented, assessed, and refined during the ten-year cycle of accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. Superimposed on this time frame is the University's Vision 2020 initiative, which guides the institution's planning activities in support of its goal of becoming a top-10 public institution by the year 2020.

Additionally, progress on the implementation and effectiveness of the QEP will be assessed at five-year intervals, as requested by SACS, or more frequently as indicated. Changing priorities in the University's academic programs at a later date, or the emergence of new challenges or opportunities during the ten-year duration of the accreditation cycle, may prompt changes in the themes of the QEP.

The recommended QEP provides a link between the strategic planning process and the institutional effectiveness goal setting. Figure 2 is a visual overview of the interaction among planning processes at Texas A&M University. The four-year cycle of strategic planning involves all units of Texas A&M University and Texas A&M University at Galveston.

Figure 2.

Vision 2020: Creating a Culture of Excellence

The goal of the Vision 2020 initiative is to continue the academic evolution of Texas A&M University so that it is generally considered, by its peers, to be one of the 10 best public universities in America by 2020. This distinction is sought while retaining, or even enhancing, many of the unique features that have differentiated the University in the past.

The Vision 2020 planning process was built on the foundation of the core values of the institution, the most central of which is the creation of a culture of excellence in all aspects of its academic programs. Other core values include the dedication to the search for truth, freedom of inquiry, and contribution to society; holding the public trust sacred; welcoming all people to the campus and preparing them for purposeful and productive lives; and, managing financial and human assets carefully to sustain excellence. Focus themes in the QEP are closely related to the core values of Texas A&M University, and to the 12 imperatives of the Vision 2020 initiative, which are:

- Elevate our faculty, and their teaching, research, and scholarship.
- Strengthen our graduate programs.
- Enhance the undergraduate academic experience.

- Build the letters, arts, and sciences core.
- Build on the tradition of professional education.
- Diversify and globalize the A&M community.
- Increase access to knowledge resources.
- Enrich our campus.
- Build community and metropolitan connections.
- Demand enlightened governance and leadership.
- Attain resource parity with the best public universities.
- Meet our commitment to Texas.

University Strategic Planning Process

The institution's new four-year strategic plan (2002-2006), *In Pursuit of the Vision*, is founded on a restatement of the University's basic land-grant covenant and a central theme of "Commitment to Our State and Nation." Emphasis is placed on the development of an environment in which all students will succeed across all dimensions, so that they may realize their full potential as individuals and future citizens of the state. Special consideration is being given, during the development of the plan, to the effectiveness of academic units in enhancing student learning outcomes. Units were asked to prepare the report using the framework of the 12 imperatives of Vision 2020, with special emphasis on diversity, internationalization, and technology.

Other sources of data that influence University planning include specially commissioned studies regarding the vital aspects of the University, and university-wide workshops. For example, a recently completed Campus Climate Survey provides critical information regarding the experience of students of color on the Texas A&M University campus. Other important data have been gleaned from the National Survey of Student Engagement. A two-day conference, "Creating a Culture of Evidence: Taking Assessment Seriously," was useful in increasing the sophistication of faculty and administrator use of data for planning purposes at all levels.

Further, the University planning is done within state and national contexts. In particular, University planning is responsive to the:

- Texas Higher Education Coordination Board's plan, *Closing the Gaps* (<http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/divisions/planning/HEPCmte/ClosingTheGaps.PDF>, October 2000) and,
- Governor's report from the Special Commission on 21st Century Colleges and Universities, *Higher Education in the 21st Century – Moving Every Texan Forward* (<http://www.governor.state.tx.us/Perry/75r/Itgov/Policy/21stCommit.htm>, December 2000).

These plans outline an ambitious State agenda to increase citizen participation in higher education; enhance the success/retention of students in institutions of higher learning; add to the excellence of state higher education organizations; and, promote the research and technology capacities at each of the State's research universities.

Other important state documents are influential in our planning. These include the Texas State Comptroller's report, *The Impact of the State Higher Education System on the Texas Economy* (<http://www.window.state.tx.us/specialrpt/highered/>) and the *Texas Economic Development Plan* (1998-2008).

The University also has been particularly cognizant of national reports from the Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land Grant Universities, which can be found at (<http://www.nasulgc.org/Kellogg/kellogg.htm>). The Kellogg Commission was created in 1996 by the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC) to help define the direction that public universities take in the future, and to recommend an action agenda to speed up the process of change. Particularly influential documents from this source include *Renewing the Covenant: Learning, Discovery, and Engagement in a New Age and Different World* (March 2000), *Returning to Our Roots: Toward a Coherent Campus Culture* (January 2000), and *Returning to Our Roots: A Learning Society* (September 1999).

Texas A&M University faces common planning challenges. These include creating alignment across its many units in pursuing overarching goals; ensuring that the goals set in its plans are monitored and accomplished; and processing massive amounts of data collected to refine strategies and goals continuously.

Key Indicators of Excellence

Texas A&M University is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). The SACS accreditation process has been revised and currently is undergoing pilot testing. Texas A&M University is one of the eight pilot sites and is the only research-extensive university among the participants. Texas A&M University's multiple missions have contributed to the formulation of the Quality Enhancement Plan for the University, one of the SACS accreditation requirements. As illustrated earlier, significant planning is in place continuously at Texas A&M University. The QEP has been designed to add a new element to the planning process.

The University's QEP leads to a course of action for University improvement by addressing issues that contribute to institutional quality, with special attention to student learning. The Texas A&M University QEP has been constructed as a process to ensure that overarching elements of the University's pursuit of excellence are infused and assessed at all levels of the organization, and that meaningful and manageable data are collected and used in program improvement.

An institution as large and complex as Texas A&M University must pursue excellence on dozens of fronts in order to meet long-term goals. Faculty credentials, physical facilities, research infrastructure, state support, endowment size, student selectivity, graduate student stipends, extracurricular opportunities, and faculty salaries are just

a few of the variables that require continuous monitoring and enhancement to ensure excellence.

The SACS accreditation process, however, facilitated a focus for our QEP – that of enhancing excellence in learning environments. Furthermore, the assessment of excellence in our QEP is based on student learning outcomes. Student learning outcomes refer to changes in student performance as a result of learning experiences offered by the University.

The four themes that form the foundation of the QEP were chosen because of their importance in the ongoing academic evolution of the institution.

- *Research.* As one of the two flagship doctoral-extensive public universities in the state, Texas A&M University recognizes its responsibility as a research institution.
- *Diversity.* To become a top-10 public institution, Texas A&M University must improve its record of attracting and retaining a more diverse student body and faculty. The choice of diversity as a QEP theme is designed to heighten awareness in all units about the priority placed on this issue.
- *Internationalization.* Texas A&M University understands that its graduates must be able to work in a rapidly changing environment, with skills that are suited for an increasingly global society.
- *Technology.* Students in all fields of study must now develop competencies in appropriate technologies to be successful at the University and in a technology-dependent workplace.

Alignment with University Planning Efforts

Alignment of the QEP with other planning efforts within the University is critical when judging whether or not the plan will receive the necessary resources and high-level support to be successful. The following sections outline this alignment and illustrate how the four overarching elements can add to the excellence of our students' learning environments.

These elements, research, diversity, internationalization, and technology, are prominent in *Vision 2020: Creating a Culture of Excellence* and in the University's strategic plans of 1997 and 2002. Examples of strategic goals are drawn from each of the strategic plans to illustrate alignment.

Alignment with Vision 2020: Creating a Culture of Excellence

Research Theme

- Imperative 1: Elevate our faculty and their teaching, research, and scholarship
- Imperative 2: Strengthen our graduate programs
- Imperative 3: Enhance the undergraduate academic experience
- Imperative 4. Build the letters, arts, and sciences

Diversity and Internationalization Themes

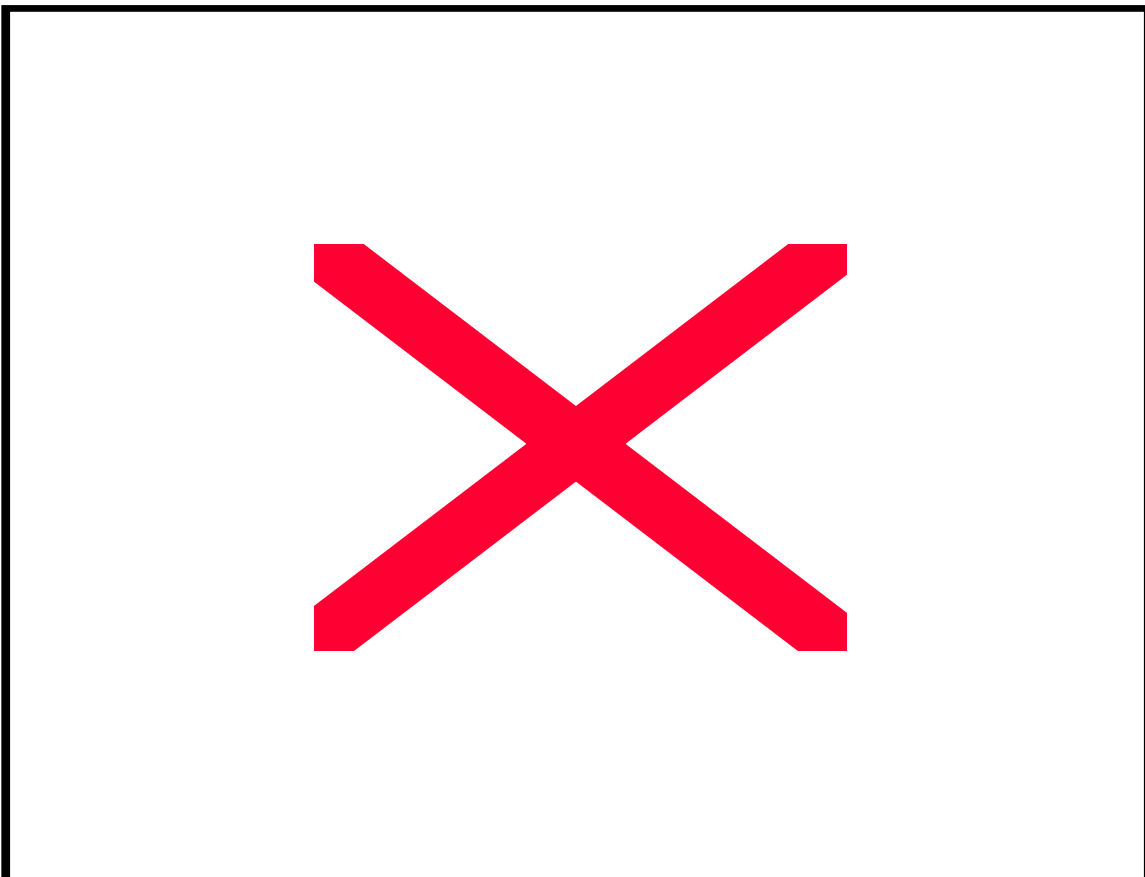
- Imperative 6: Diversify and globalize the A&M community

Technology Theme

- Imperative 7: Increase access to knowledge resources

The imperatives from Vision 2020 are clearly connected to the development of excellent learning environments for students.

Figure 3.



Alignment with 1997 University Strategic Plan, One Principle: Twelve Ideas

The crosscutting themes also are present in the 1997 University strategic plan, *One Principle: Twelve Ideas* as strategic targets.

Research Theme

- Nurture and cultivate a work life for faculty that allows and encourages the highest forms of teaching, creative and scholarly activity, and service. This will increase our ability to provide educational opportunity.
- Promote, administer, and fund interdisciplinary scholarship, research, creative activity, and teaching that address complex issues facing our state, nation, and world. This will provide cogent educational opportunity to our students.
- Heighten Texas A&M University's status as a powerful learning center that provides a high-quality student environment in which undergraduate and graduate students immerse themselves in all forms of educational opportunity.

Diversity and Internationalization Themes

- Aggressively seek, and warmly welcome, the fullest representation of the people of Texas and the world to be diverse, based on the belief that diversity produces vitality and intellectual vitality produces educational opportunity.
- Enhance Texas A&M University's reputation in the nation and world, strengthening the University's ability to provide educational opportunity.
- Actively participate in the globalization of knowledge and in learning and assisting students, faculty, and staff in relating to the shrinking world, thus providing sound and realistic educational opportunity.

Technology Theme

- Significantly increase our capabilities for, and expertise in, all forms of electronic information processing and communication, thus supporting our ability to provide educational opportunity.
- The University will provide state-of-the-art, fast, accessible, and powerful electronic communications capabilities to and from all the people it serves. Telecommunications will be used to improve the offerings of classes to undergraduate and graduate students.

Alignment with the University 2002 Strategic Plan, In Pursuit of the Vision

The 2002 strategic plan has a special focus on the crosscutting themes and specifically targets the enhancement of “student learning outcomes in research, diversity, technology, and globalization” as a strategic target for 2006. Additional targets related to research, diversity, internationalization, and technology are listed below.

Research Theme

- Attract and retain excellent faculty and create parity between Texas A&M University faculty salary structures and those of national peer institutions.
- Increase federal research expenditures.
- Work to retain 100% of indirect costs (e.g., the cost of infrastructure, such as facilities and overhead costs for equipment, utilities, and building maintenance) used to support research grants as investment in meeting our commitment to Texas.

Diversity and Internationalization Themes

- Increase the diversity of the student body.
- Increase the diversity of the faculty.
- Increase the number, quality, and diversity of international experiences for students and faculty.

Technology Theme

- Increase the number of master’s programs offered by distance education.
- Wisely increase information technology expenditures.
- Invest in information and service resources for the library that will enable the University to attain a position of national leadership.
- Enhance the technology that supports classroom and laboratory instruction.

Of course, many other elements in addition to research, diversity, internationalization, and technology contribute to excellent learning environments. For example, our libraries recently led a national study to identify library qualities that improve student use of, and appreciation for, library resources. The results of this study can be found at (<http://www.arl.org/libqual/data/spring2001/Long.html?TexasAMUniversity> and <http://www.arl.org/libqual/> and at <http://www.arl.org/stats/factor.html>). The QEP committee determined, however, that focus on a few key and aligned themes for excellence in learning environments was likely to increase the probability that meaningful change would occur based on assessment findings.

Subsequent sections of this report will outline the Texas A&M University QEP in detail. Basically, however, the plan builds on existing processes while adding a

special focus on student learning outcomes. The student learning outcomes are couched as both quantitative benchmarks and qualitative goals.

Planning Principles

The planning principles in use are inclusive and combinational. In other words, no attempt is made to legislate a specific process that academic units must use to reach particular goals, and synergism is sought by multi-level strategies aimed at the same goals.

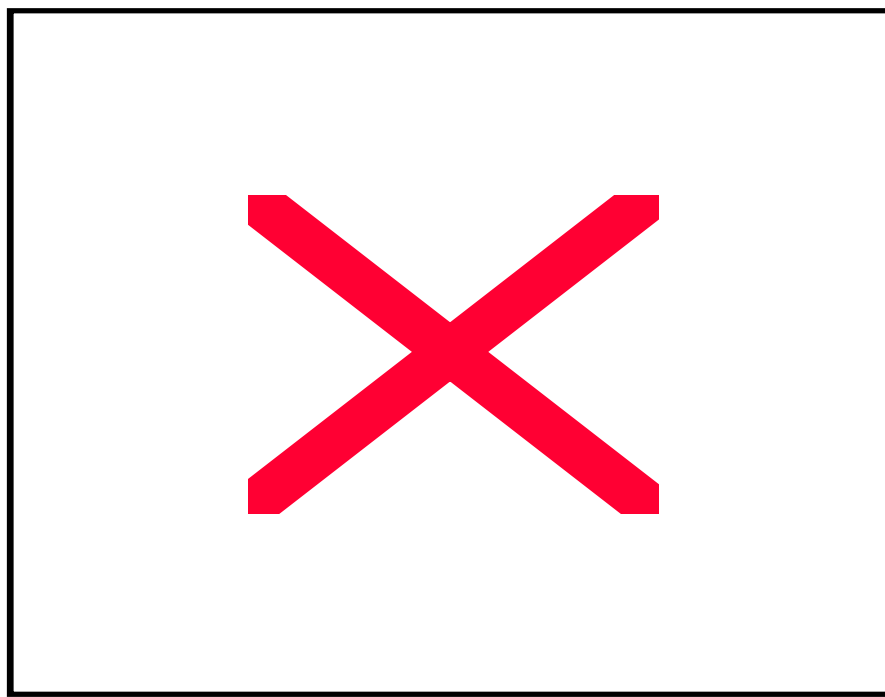
Our planning is evolutionary. We see that organizational enhancement passes through stages of:

- Education and awareness,
- Engagement and involvement of critical stakeholders,
- Integrated plans and resource allocation, and finally,
- Consolidation, refocusing, and celebration.

Each of our academic units is at a different stage in the development of plans to achieve excellent learning environments enhanced by research, diversity, internationalization, and technology. University success depends on educating faculty, winning their engagement, facilitating their planning and allocation of resources, and finally helping them evaluate and celebrate their successes and learn from their disappointments.

The basic data for the plan come from the academic program level. As the University community incorporates research, diversity, internationalization, and technology into planning for and assessing student learning, we anticipate broad impact on our teaching and learning. Aspects of our planning principles are illustrated in Figure 4.

Figure 4.



Section 2

Present Status: Research, Diversity, Internationalization, and Technology

The University community has just completed a 2002-2006 strategic planning process. Informed by the successes and challenges of the previous plan, *Vision 2020*, and other state and national influences, the University and College plans include emphases on the four crosscutting themes of research, diversity, internationalization, and technology.

Research

Knowledge creation (through pursuit of scholarly research) and knowledge dissemination (e.g., in classrooms, at conferences, via scholarly journals) are among the principal missions of research universities and all of their units. For a comprehensive review of research accomplishments and planning at Texas A&M University, consult the Office of the Vice President for Research at (<http://vpr.tamu.edu/>). Texas A&M University is well equipped to leverage scholarly research to enhance the quality of classroom instruction. Each unit will identify how research activity will be used to influence student learning outcomes at graduate and especially undergraduate levels.

When done well, research and quality teaching are highly complementary and, in fact, inseparable. Faculty members draw upon their research, and the research of their colleagues in the discipline, to enrich classroom instruction. By its very nature, quality teaching requires that the faculty member develop an objective evaluation of information through research and scholarship. Furthermore, faculty members involve students in collaborative research efforts that increase student knowledge, develop student practical and decision-making skills, and stimulate desires for continued intellectual development. Unique opportunities exist for student involvement in research education beginning in their freshman year, as identified in the Boyer Report of the Carnegie Foundation in 1999.

As identified in the Sigma Xi report on the status of undergraduate research at Texas A&M University (2000), students can benefit from hands-on experience in research facilitated through internships, co-ops, part-time jobs, and extracurricular activities. Curricula must be developed that place emphasis on research and research learning, and the importance of research in the development of our society. In these ways, students can increase their skills and knowledge of research techniques basic to their particular fields, and as future decision-makers in our society, understand the role and importance of research.

The QEP committee recommends special emphasis on improving undergraduate access to research education. This emphasis grows from our analysis that graduate education at Texas A&M University is well-organized around research, but much remains to be accomplished at the undergraduate level.

Creating an undergraduate research culture will be facilitated by academic units that will set student learning goals, and that will design assessments related to research education.

Key Indicator of Excellence in Research:

Students should graduate from Texas A&M University able to analyze problems, formulate (research) questions, and progress toward answers to those questions within their fields, modifying these answers as new knowledge dictates.

Other activities, currently in progress, also will facilitate a learning environment enhanced by research. These include the growth of our honors college, development of college-level learning communities, special housing arrangements for students based on academic interests, and increased faculty involvement with undergraduate as well as graduate research.

Of course, research learning outcomes will vary by field and level of training. In many of our academic disciplines, undergraduate students should graduate able to evaluate research within their fields. Master's students should be able to formulate good research questions, and make some progress toward answers. Doctoral students already are required to demonstrate substantial competence in formulating research questions and in carrying out, describing, and defending in a dissertation their pursuit of successful research.

The QEP committee anticipates that units throughout the University will address the key indicator for excellence in research in ways that are uniquely relevant to their individual programs. It is also anticipated that the units will explore new ways to accurately assess the influence of research education on student learning outcomes, and on the subsequent research competencies of their students.

Diversity

Students, faculty, staff, and administrators of Texas A&M University operate in a diverse, multi-ethnic, multi-racial, and multi-religious world. Our success as an educational institution and concomitant success of our students and faculty depend on our ability to work effectively in complex social environments. Texas A&M University must create and maintain an environment that promotes an understanding and celebration of diversity. Such a supportive environment for diversity will help us recruit and nurture the diverse student body, staff, faculty, and administrators we will need to help us be a competitive, successful institution of higher learning. If we fail to do this, we fail to fulfill the mission outlined for us by the citizens and leaders of the State of Texas to become a world-class institution of higher education. More information regarding University efforts to promote diversity can be found by consulting the strategic plans from the Office of Multicultural Services and the

Student Affairs Division. The plans can be accessed using the following address (<http://studentaffairs.tamu.edu/Goals/main.asp>).

The University seeks diversity that reflects the make-up of the 21st century society in which we live. Our particular position as a university serving the nation's second most ethnically diverse state, turns much of its attention toward ethnic diversity. This attention is not exclusive, however.

Since the 5th Circuit Federal Court Decision (commonly called Hopwood) created constraints on the University's ability to offer ethnicity-based recruitment and retention inducements, Texas A&M University has been working hard to regain a position of leadership in attracting an ethnically diverse student body to the University. Our concerns about diversity relate both to the pluralistic nature of Texas demographics, and to the intellectual climate that we wish to offer our students.

At this time, the State of Texas has a rather mediocre record of attracting and retaining its own citizens in higher education. For example, Texas, with a 4.9% of total population participation in higher education, is well behind states like California (6.1%), Illinois (6%), Michigan (5.7%), and New York (5.6%). We are also below the national average of 5.4% total population participation in higher education.

An analysis of Texas' 15- to 34-year-old population illustrates the gap among ethnic groups in participation. In 2000, 16.3% of Anglos, 11% of African-Americans, and 8.6% of Hispanic-Americans were involved in some segment of post-secondary education.

From an organizational perspective, it is clear that Texas A&M University must be an institution that reflects the population of Texas in order to guarantee a bright economic and civic future for the State. Furthermore, our students must be prepared to be successful in a global economy and multicultural world. The great diversity in our State is an opportunity to create intellectual vitality and innovation in higher education. In addition, therefore, to organizational goals for diversity (e.g., numbers of students, faculty, and staff from diverse groups), we have planned for student learning goals that will be accomplished by faculty, curricula, and a student body that reflect multicultural realities.

Demographics of Texas A&M University are as follows:

	African-American	Hispanic-American	Anglo
Undergraduates	889 (2.4%)	3283 (9%)	30040 (82%)
Graduate Students	184 (2.3%)	395 (4.9%)	4161 (52%)
Faculty	40 (1.9%)	92 (4.3%)	1869 (86.6%)

Table 1. Texas A&M University Fall 2001 Student Demographics, Fall 2000 Faculty Demographics

These statistics are in sharp contrast to our state demographics. Currently, 53% of Texans are Anglo, 32% are Hispanic-American, and 12% are African-American. By 2015, 45.3% of Texans will be Anglos, 39% will be Hispanic-American, and 10.6% will be African-American. Thus, the State of Texas soon will be a “majority of minorities.”

Because of this compelling social and organizational imperative to serve all Texans, and the need to have a learning environment that enhances the multicultural competencies of our students, the QEP committee has recommended a Key Indicator of Excellence in Diversity.

Key Indicator of Excellence in Diversity for Student Learning:

Students graduating from Texas A&M University should be able to function successfully in complex, diverse, social, economic, and political contexts.

The other themes are organized solely around student learning as the criterion measure. For diversity, however, it seems clear that the University’s success in attracting and maintaining a diverse student body and faculty is a necessary (though insufficient) condition for success in creating an excellent learning environment. Therefore, the QEP committee recommends an additional Key Indicator of Excellence for diversity:

Key Indicator of Excellence in Diversity for Organizational Change:

Texas A&M University must create and maintain an environment that promotes an understanding of the importance of diversity in all of its academic endeavors. Additionally, the institution must achieve student diversity that reflects current diversity among college-bound Texas high school graduates through appropriate recruitment and retention activities.

Currently, College deans set goals related to faculty gender and ethnic diversity. They must monitor the composition of all pools of potential faculty, and report to the Provost and Dean of Faculties about the heterogeneity of hiring pools. Further, the deans report annually the reasons why faculty members leave the University.

Deans receive yearly reports regarding the success of the University in attracting and retaining diverse faculty. They use information gleaned from exit interviews with faculty to enhance the climate for faculty of color and international faculty.

The QEP committee anticipates that units throughout the University will address these key indicators in ways that are uniquely relevant to their individual programs and organizational climates. It also is anticipated that the units will explore new ways

to accurately assess the influence of diversity experiences on student learning outcomes, and on the subsequent competencies of their students.

Internationalization

Increasingly, multi-national companies are employing Texas A&M University graduates. While this always has been true for the longer-established programs on campus such as engineering and agriculture, students graduating from most other disciplines now enter careers with strong international opportunities and expectations. The Office of International Programs is the source of comprehensive information about current international opportunities and the University's plans for expansion of international experiences for students. Their strategic plan is available for review at (<http://international.tamu.edu/ipo/mission.html>).

Many countries are represented by the nearly 45,000-strong student body and by the 2,500 faculty members of Texas A&M University, providing a rich global community on campus. In spite of this diverse context, concerns have been raised that some students attending the institution may not have the requisite skills and experiences to achieve their full potential in an international environment.

In recognition of the need to correct these perceived deficiencies, the University offers a variety of educational programs for its students, including study-abroad opportunities, overseas study centers, semesters away, and course offerings with an international emphasis. Financial support is provided to faculty members to encourage international travel in support of professional development and research opportunities, with an emphasis on the development of research collaborations in Latin America. Similarly, the institution has signed numerous memoranda of agreement with foreign institutions to promote productive relationships between their faculties.

To achieve its goal of becoming a top-10 public institution by 2020, Texas A&M University must strengthen the global awareness of its students and their abilities to work in multi-national settings. In recognition of this need, and because of the importance of globalization in other current planning activities on campus, the QEP committee has placed special emphasis on the influence of international experiences on student learning outcomes, and on the accurate assessment of desired competencies.

Promotion of a heightened understanding of the role of internationalization in undergraduate and graduate education will be facilitated by academic units setting student learning goals reflective of the recommended Key Indicator of Excellence for internationalization.

Key Indicator of Excellence for Internationalization:

Students graduating from Texas A&M University will be able to function effectively in their chosen career fields in an international setting.

The QEP committee anticipates that units throughout the University will address this key indicator in ways that are uniquely relevant to their individual programs. It is also anticipated that the units will explore new ways to accurately assess the influence of international experience on student learning outcomes, and on the subsequent competencies of their students.

Technology

As a large land-grant institution with a historical emphasis on the agricultural and mechanical sciences, Texas A&M University has placed a priority on the role of traditional technology in support of its core academic programs. As a result, employers have valued graduates of the institution for their hands-on competencies, in addition to their strong work ethic.

The need for competency in the use of technology no longer is confined, however, to students in scientific and certain professional disciplines. Every curriculum in the University now requires students to be computer-literate, and to be able to access and use informational resources electronically to support their studies. Technical competencies are critical, therefore, in the broadest range of disciplines; ranging, for example, from undergraduate students in history to postgraduate residents in veterinary radiology. Recognizing the need to provide state-of-the-art access to high quality information, the University has invested heavily over the past decade in improving the scope and quality of the electronic capabilities of its libraries. The institution maintains a strong commitment to computer access, with the recent addition of large computer laboratories for student use, and with ongoing funds to provide new-generation workstations for faculty offices. A complete evaluation of University strength in technology can be accomplished by consulting the strategic plan prepared by the Associate Provost for Information Technology.

Technology-intensive research programs continue to receive priority in the University's strategic plan, including telecommunications and informatics, and life sciences and biotechnology. The broad definition of these two disciplines touches almost every academic program in the institution, providing opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students, and for faculty to gain access to leading-edge technology.

Although Texas A&M University continues to emphasize a traditional campus-oriented educational experience for its students, distance education programs are growing and are expected to expand considerably over the next decade, as students in remote locations of the State, and beyond, seek convenient access to high quality learning experiences.

In recognition of the widespread use of technology in undergraduate and graduate programs on campus, the QEP committee has chosen to address this subject area for further exploration in the plan. The desired goal is to prompt academic units to

evaluate technologies essential for inclusion in their curricular offerings, and to identify which competencies are necessary to achieve defined student learning outcomes.

Promotion of a heightened understanding of the role of technology in undergraduate and graduate education will be facilitated by academic units setting student learning goals reflective of the following recommended Key Indicator of Excellence in technology.

Key Indicator of Excellence in Technology:

Students graduating from Texas A&M University will be highly competent in the use of modern technology relevant to their chosen career path.

The QEP committee anticipates that units throughout the University will address this key indicator in ways that are uniquely relevant to their individual programs. It is also anticipated that the units will explore new ways to accurately assess the influence of technology on student learning outcomes, and on the subsequent competencies of their students.

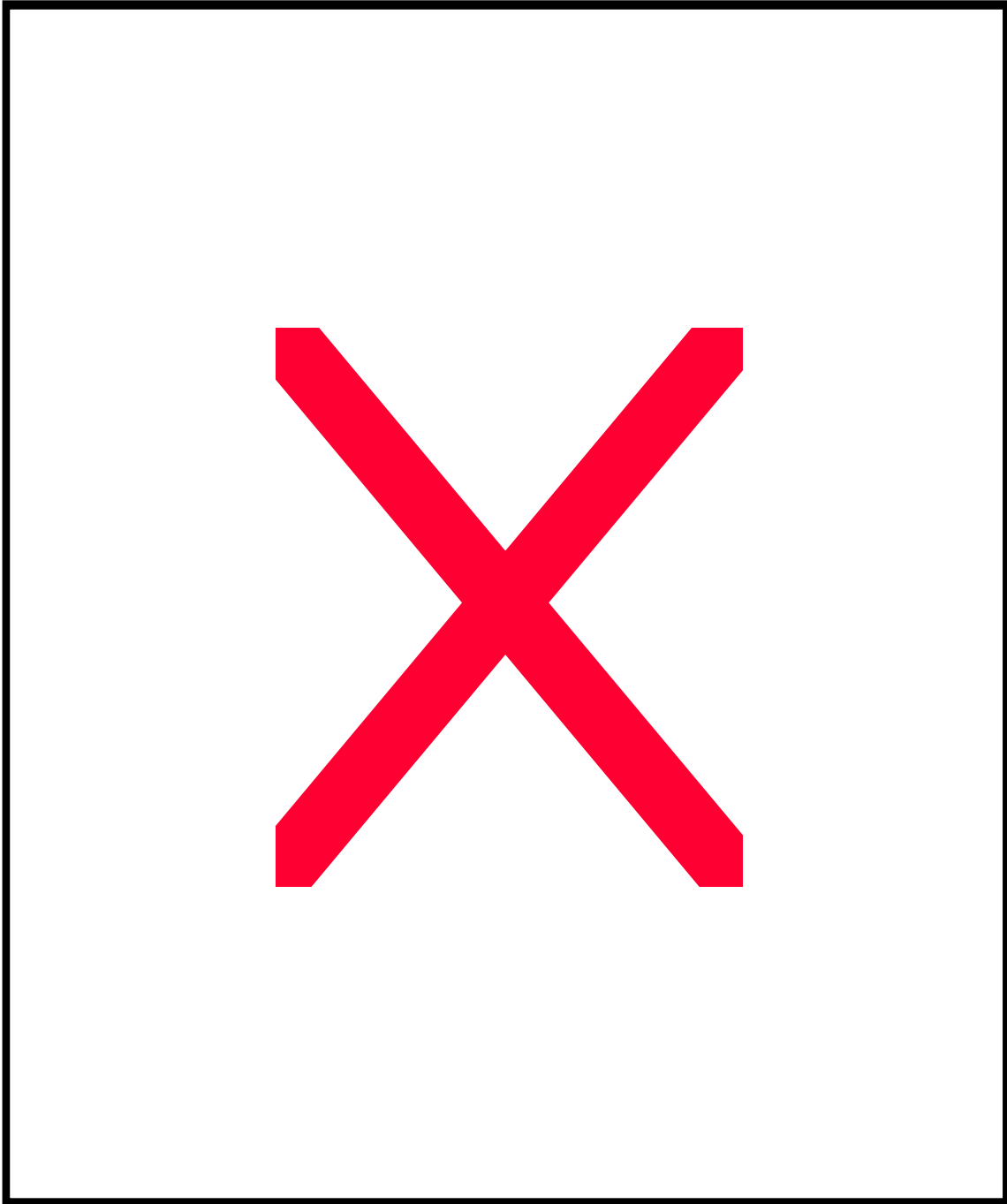
It should be clear that combinational strategies will be necessary to improve and maintain excellent learning environments. The QEP has a special focus on student learning. The strategic plans from the Offices of Research, Student Affairs, Multicultural Programs, International Programs, and Information Technology provide evidence of the significant infrastructural support devoted to improvement in each of our crosscutting themes.

Section 3

The Texas A&M University Quality Enhancement Plan

The QEP being recommended to the University community is embedded within its existing planning processes. A schematic of the QEP planning process is included as Figure 5. The University and its components develop strategic plans every four years. In addition, units within the University establish and assess *Institutional Effectiveness Goals* annually. The QEP uses both of these processes with a directed focus on alignment and on student learning.

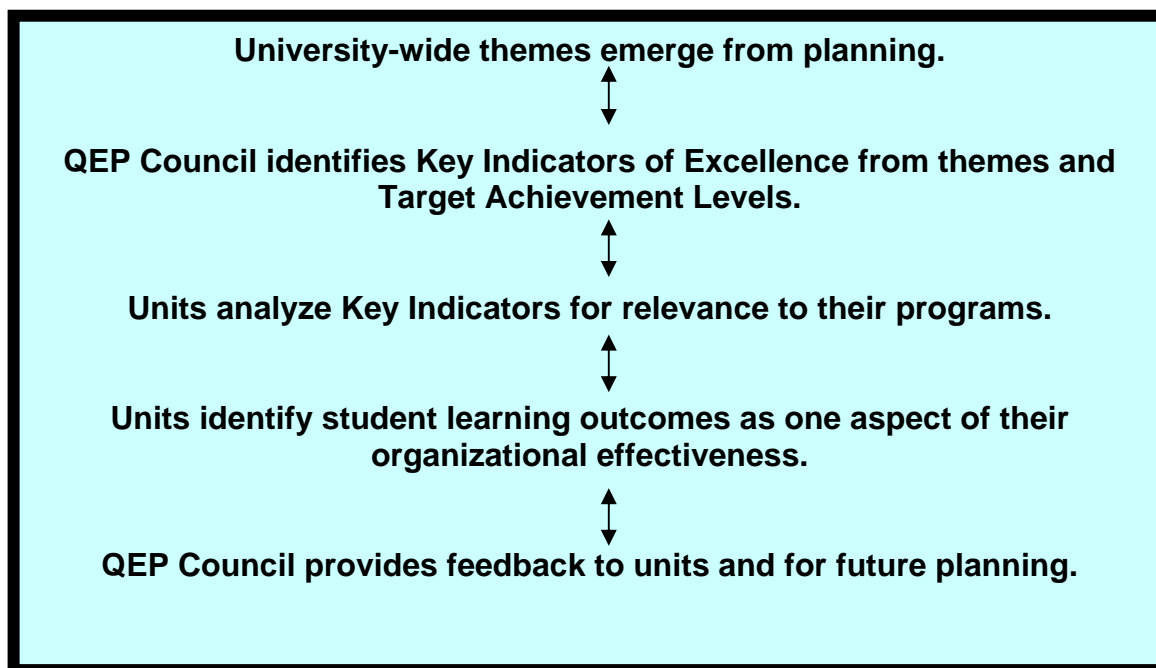
Figure 5. Schematic of the QEP



The basic elements of the QEP are as follows:

- The University community develops strategic planning documents that include overarching themes related to excellence in learning environments.
- The QEP Council (to be appointed this spring), with wide consultation and advice, transforms these overarching themes into statements of *Key Indicators of Excellence with Target Achievement Levels*.
- Each academic unit then develops one or more student learning outcomes related to one or more of the key indicators as *Institutional Effectiveness Goals*.
- These Institutional Effectiveness goals (student learning outcomes) and related assessment plans are monitored by the QEP Council.
- Results of the assessments are collected and used for feedback to units, and for further University planning efforts.

More simply presented, the recommended process is as follows:



Examples of the Process

The QEP may be best understood by considering each of the crosscutting themes and how each will be used to improve student learning environments. Members of the QEP committee constructed the following examples as illustrations of the

process. Faculty in each of our academic program areas will develop the actual student learning outcomes and assessment strategies. The student learning outcomes listed below as examples have, however, been set by some programs within the University already as evidenced by the record of *Institutional Effectiveness Goals*.

Research Examples

Graduate Research Example

A doctoral program in Education might set a student learning outcome such as the following: *Doctoral graduates will attain faculty positions at top-tier universities.*

Furthermore, the program might set a target achievement level that 100% of their doctoral students are familiar with current research literature and are skilled at conducting research studies.

The assessment plan associated with the doctoral learning outcome could consist of post-graduation surveys sent to all doctoral graduates every three years to ascertain place of employment. Survey results could be enhanced through regular contact between faculty and doctoral graduates.

Results of the survey could indicate whether curricula, collaborative research opportunities, or pre-graduation publication standards require adjustment within particular programs.

Undergraduate Research Example

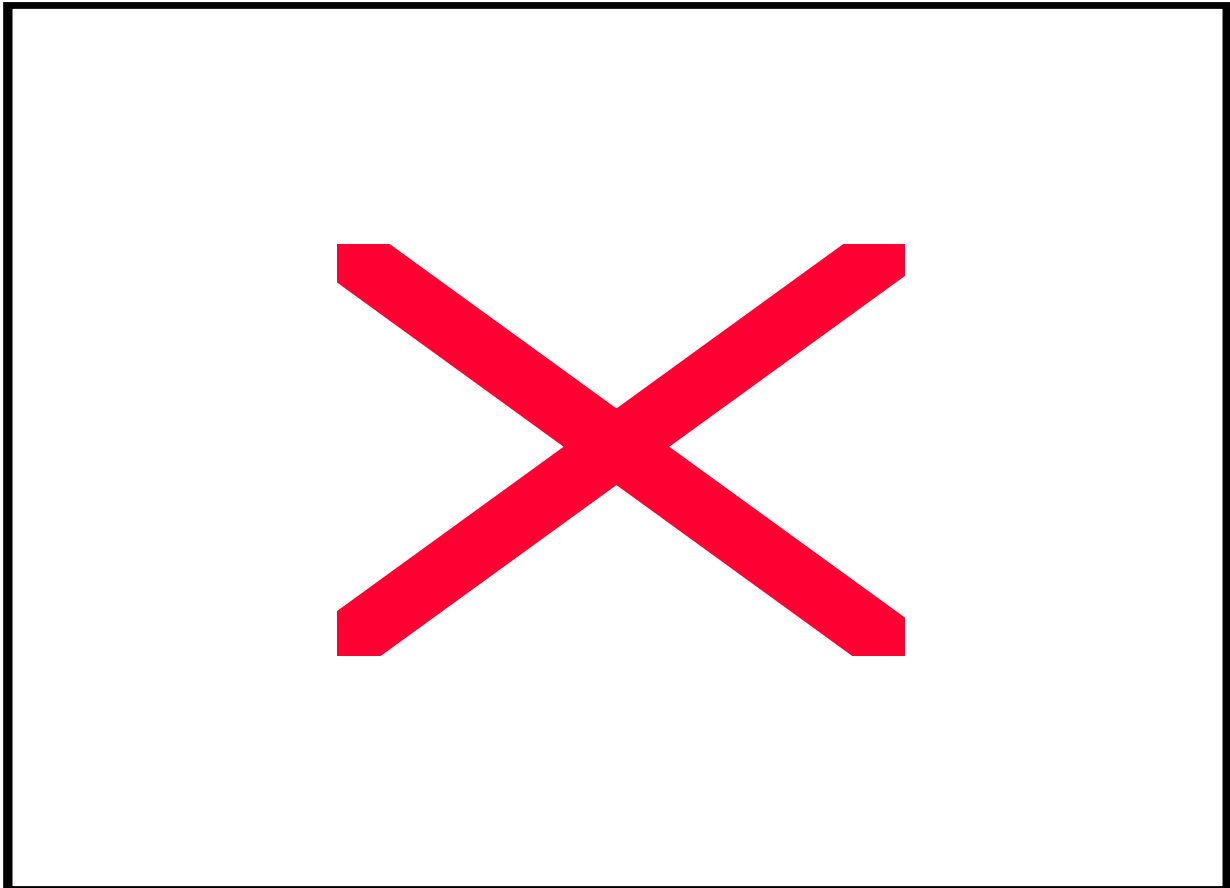
An undergraduate program in psychology might set a student research learning outcome of: *Majors will be able to evaluate the adequacy of research methods used in a published article.*

The program's target achievement level might be that 100% of their undergraduate students can describe research methods associated with the discipline, and that 25% have collaborated with faculty on research endeavors.

The undergraduate outcome could be assessed by an evaluation of a journal article critique submitted by students in capstone major classes. The assessment of the journal critique could be used to influence program requirements and assignments associated with critical reading of research.

Examine Figure 6 for a further example of planning for student research education with associated student learning outcomes. Note that this example illustrates teaching and curricula changes related to student engagement and learning outcomes. The example also shows the interaction of resource allocation to insure success.

Figure 6.



Diversity Examples

As noted previously (see page 21 of this report), unique to the diversity theme, the QEP committee has chosen to recommend key indicators both for student learning and for organizational change. The committee sees that progress on student learning related to diversity will not occur in a homogeneous social context.

Diversity Student Learning Example

The Speech Communication Department might identify a learning outcome associated with diversity such as the following: *Students will have the ability to assess the impact of cultural differences on communication and to communicate effectively across those differences.*

The program might plan to demonstrate that 100% of its students are functional, and that 25% are highly functional on the criterion measurements.

The assessment plan associated the above outcome might consist of an evaluation of communication skills of students within small groups of ethnically diverse classmates, or an evaluation of papers related to ethnic differences in communication styles.

At yearly planning events, faculty could analyze the results of the evaluation. Curricula might be changed or enhanced if student learning is not at a criterion level.

Diversity Organizational Example

The University has set an organizational goal that: *Student demographics should match state high school graduates' demographics by 2020.*

The target achievement level is likely to be approximately 45% Anglo, 39% Hispanic-American, and 10% African-American in 2020.

The Office of Admissions and Measurement and Research Services can provide the University community with continuous statistical updates on the ethnic, gender, and national composition of the student body. These data can be used to refine recruitment and retention efforts.

The University Foundation has established ethnicity-based scholarships, and the University has begun an aggressive recruitment effort toward high schools that have high minority and low socioeconomic populations. These strategies will require continual monitoring based on the results of the assessments. Other strategies likely will have to be developed.

Internationalization Example

The internationalization and diversity themes have several elements in common. Although the QEP committee chose to recommend only one key indicator of excellence in internationalization, the committee is mindful that a welcoming and diverse climate is as important for internationalization as it is toward diversity.

Internationalization Example

Our College of Veterinary Medicine might determine that: *One hundred percent of graduating students must be able to recognize the most common foreign animal diseases that threaten domestic animals in North America. Ten percent of students will be able to function at a higher level; for example, they will be prepared, upon graduation, through focused and practical experiences in the curriculum, to enter federal or overseas employment involving foreign animal disease control.*

Veterinary student learning outcomes associated with internationalization could be assessed using exams, auditing of patient-care activities in overseas facilities, and surveys of graduates' supervisors during off-campus work. Furthermore, post-graduation surveys could be used to document graduates' work sites, and to gather information on the graduates' self-reported competency with international disease management.

Technology Example

Students must be well prepared in technology for success at the University and in their future workplaces. The University's progress on improving student competencies in technology will, of course, be influenced by the technology resources available on campus and faculty skills in technology applications. Close coordination among the Colleges, the Associate Provost for Information Technology, the Office of Distance Education, and the Academy for Advanced Telecommunications and Learning Technologies is critical for progress.

Technology Example

One of our engineering programs might establish the following technology student learning outcomes: *The essential technologies with which graduates should have competency are: computer-based CAD systems, computer-based simulation tools, oscilloscopes, and logic analyzers. Competency is defined as skill with one example of each, and high competency is defined as skill with two or more of each technology type.*

The program would have to identify the essential technology competencies for students who choose career paths based on the major. Further, the program could determine what it would entail to be competent and highly competent with the technologies, based on an analysis of workplace demands on students. The program might strive for 100% of their students to display basic technology competencies, and for 25% to display high competency.

The assessment plan could be based on faculty evaluation of course exercises and student samples of work, and a co-op supervisor survey with comparisons to peer institutions. These data might lead a unit to determine that the curriculum seems to prepare the students well, except in the area of high competency with oscilloscopes. In the future, the faculty could decide that selected courses will include more experience with a broader variety of oscilloscopes.

Each unit will approach enhancing student learning influenced by disciplinary considerations, and by their own status in the planning process. Each unit will design unique activities, curricula, or student experiences that reflect the Key Indicators of Excellence and Target Achievement Levels. Some of the faculty's work and the student learning outcomes will reflect education or awareness, expanded engagement or involvement, integrated planning and resource allocation, or consolidation, assessment, and celebration. Because of the evolutionary nature of real organizational change, each unit must be supported to start their journey from the appropriate point of departure. Experience with the QEP will add refinements to the process.

The QEP Council will provide feedback and advice to each unit about the learning outcomes chosen and be a clearinghouse for assessment data. A charge to the QEP Council is to provide continuous feedback to keep planning aligned and moving toward significant organizational improvement.

Section 4 **Recommended Implementation of the Plan**

Quality Enhancement Planning Council (QEPC)

The QEPC is a university-level committee reporting to the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost. The QEPC will be constituted early in the spring semester 2002. Council members will be experienced faculty and administrators with substantial knowledge and understanding about the University. The responsibilities of the QEPC will include:

- Articulate QEP themes in crosscutting areas emerging from the University planning process.
- Transform the QEP themes into Key Indicators of Excellence for student learning with associated Target Achievement Levels.
- Provide feedback to units on proposed goals, strategies, and assessment of unit learning outcomes as they pertain to key indicators.
- Provide regular progress reports toward goals.

Target Achievement Levels

Establishing Target Achievement Levels is a fundamental component of the QEP. These targets require a careful assessment of current status in the four crosscutting themes. Enough data may exist to establish, at least, preliminary targets for some of the themes. In other areas, the QEPC may need to use the targets established by the academic programs as a method to create a baseline for future University benchmarking.

Colleges

Colleges will implement student learning outcomes assessment by degree program (e.g., Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering, Ph.D. in Mathematics). In the first year of implementation, Colleges should designate at least two degree programs. For each designated degree program, Colleges should assess learning outcomes for at least two of the four crosscutting issues, including at least one from research and/or technology, and at least one from internationalization and/or diversity.

Designated degree programs should be varied (e.g., one undergraduate program in one department and one graduate program in a different department). Learning outcomes assessment should apply to a broad base of students within the degree programs. Colleges also may choose to assess key indicators pertinent to degree programs in addition to assessing student learning outcomes in those programs. Additional academic programs will be designated for inclusion in the QEP process in succeeding years.

Other Units

The Faculty Senate will develop student learning outcomes for the University Core Curriculum. Administrative divisions and academic-support areas will develop goals, strategies, and appropriate assessment plans for pertinent QEP themes. The QEP will be implemented comparably at Texas A&M University at Galveston.

Unit Preparation

All units should plan to synchronize goals, strategies, and assessment in designated areas with the University's 2002-2003 Institutional Effectiveness cycle. Spring and summer 2002 should be used in necessary preparation. Colleges, for example, might identify designated degree programs and associated crosscutting themes; identify and prepare faculty for the project; and develop appropriate program-specific learning outcomes, strategies, and assessment mechanisms.

Timelines

As described above, the QEP implementation will incorporate the principles of institutional effectiveness. This ensures that the implementation will undergo continuing annual review. College implementation for a specific degree program should be completed within three years. College implementations for all degree programs should be under way within five years. Faculty Senate, Council of Principal Investigators, administrative divisions, and academic support areas will develop appropriate goals for the completion of their objectives.

Support

The University will provide facilitation funding, training, and technical support for the QEP implementation. For example, the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost initially will provide \$10,000 (\$5,000 per degree program) to each college for facilitation funds, usable, for example, to attend conferences, consult external experts, and purchase assessment tools. During spring 2002, Measurement and Research Services and the Center for Teaching Excellence will prepare to provide expert consultation to faculty and administrators regarding the process of development and assessment of student learning outcomes related to the Key Indicators of Excellence identified by the QEPC.

SACS Project Assessment

The QEP incorporates the Institutional Effectiveness model. Therefore, implementation of the QEP will incorporate the project findings into the enhancement of the institution on an ongoing basis. In particular, results of the QEP will be used for internal formative evaluation. Similarly, a "snapshot" of the QEP can be used for external summative evaluation. Therefore, at any time, the institution will have an

accurate estimate of the extent to which the QEP is leading to institutional and student learning enhancements.

Appropriate benchmarking is a concern. The exact central process has yet to be determined, because the most important benchmarking must occur at the academic program level. The QEPC might request that Measurement and Research Services gather pertinent assessment information, so that the QEPC can identify benchmarks. An additional strategy may be for the Faculty Senate to benchmark core curriculum assessments at other Vision 2020 peer institutions.

Deliverables

The University's Institutional Effectiveness program ensures that units provide status reports annually. The QEPC will provide in-depth progress reports at the university level after one, three, and five years. The University will communicate its progress to various constituencies and interest groups (e.g., students, Faculty Senate, The Texas A&M University System, former students, the press, and legislative bodies).

Section 5 Summary

The recommended Texas A&M University QEP focuses on four consensus crosscutting areas (research, diversity, internationalization, and technology) that have arisen from our Vision 2020 initiative and strategic planning efforts over the past four years. *Key Indicators of Excellence* and *Target Achievement Levels* have been recommended for each of the four areas.

The QEP committee recommends that assessment of student learning outcomes related to the QEP themes be implemented incrementally in academic degree programs in all colleges, with the goal that implementation will be underway in all degree programs within five years. The Faculty Senate likewise will implement appropriate outcomes assessment incrementally for the University core curriculum.

Administrative divisions (administration, finance, student affairs) and academic support areas (library, associate provosts) will develop goals, strategies, and appropriate assessment strategies for pertinent QEP themes. The QEP will be implemented comparably at Texas A&M University at Galveston.

Faculty should drive implementation of the QEP. The current QEP committee recommends that implementation be coordinated through a QEP Council, a University-level committee composed of faculty and administrators. The University will provide funding, training, and technical support for the QEP implementation.

The QEP implementation process will be modeled on, and synchronized with, the University's Institutional Effectiveness program. In particular, within the framework of the University's mission and QEP themes, units will set goals, devise strategies for their implementation, and map assessment of the results, all of which are then revisited (and revised, if necessary) annually. Likewise, progress towards University-level goals for the QEP will be assessed regularly, and adjustments made as needed.