

# **Strategic Plan Draft**

## Introduction

The process of developing this strategic plan began in the spring of 2015 and has deliberately been a broad, transparent effort, reaching out to all parts and levels of Arkansas Tech University for dialogue. The primary generation and elaboration of ideas has occurred in the varied operations of the Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) and its working groups. The effort was ambitious. The 24 members of the SPC met weekly, or more often, through the fall of 2015, and the 49 members of five working groups met still more often as they produced white papers on key topics. The SPC and its working groups were led by faculty with full participation by administrators and staff, as well as students and community members. Public discussion was invited through multiple open forums and the ability to comment on the website. The SPC developed the first full draft of the plan--all drafts of the plan and the completed white papers were available to the campus community on the website ([www.atu.edu/strategicplanning](http://www.atu.edu/strategicplanning)).

The SPC will recommend its draft of the plan to the Executive Planning Council (EPC). The EPC, comprised of faculty, senior administrators and a member of the board of trustees will refine the plan. It will then be recommended to the president, communicated broadly, and further comment taken into account. Finally, it will be presented by the president to the board of trustees for adoption in the spring of 2016.

Part of the reason for beginning with this description of the process is to show that the process has been exhaustive and the participation broad. Another reason is to suggest that the intensiveness of the effort has been very important. The goals are sweeping and the action items to achieve them are quite specific, even hardnosed in some cases. This serious effort, particularly by the working groups and SPC, led to rational ideas, but also to expressed passion for and about Arkansas Tech University. The phrase One University was used by several of these groups and seems to capture the passion that developed at the core of the effort. For that reason, the plan itself is framed in terms of this image of One University.

## The Plan for Arkansas Tech University

The paths to Arkansas Tech University taken by our students, faculty, staff, and alumni, the central essence of our university, have been many, and there will no doubt be additional paths to the idea and actuality of our university in the future. While the paths have been diverse, the arrival is to a kind of oneness where the relations, actions, and connections of the university's human core develop, cohere, and flourish. For us, this is Arkansas Tech University at its best, as One University.

This is not a simple or limiting oneness but a rich, dynamic, participatory and integrating oneness: it is the oneness of teaching, learning, and scholarship, engaged in by faculty and students, supported and made possible by staff; it is the oneness of 3 campuses as One University—Russellville, Ozark, and the Career Center; it is the oneness of introductory studies, technology-based studies, and a broad variety of university studies; it is the oneness of a rich variety of ethnic origins, genders, sexual orientations, nationalities, religions, social and economic classes, intellectual stances, and political persuasions. It is also the oneness of multiple levels of certificates and degrees from associate to doctorate. Further, it is the oneness of our university positioned within a city, a region, a state and a global community. Finally, it is the oneness of Arkansas Tech University as a family.



The power of this oneness comes from our human core, which must be attended to and supported if the conceptual framework of One University is to be fully realized. This will require attention to a variety of issues in order to progress from where we are now to a more fully developed embodiment of what we can be. To bring out the best in our human core, for students, we must ensure their success by helping them enter the university in a manner that sets up achievement, reducing unnecessary barriers, and ensuring that they complete their degrees and move into their futures and careers prepared to succeed, just as they have at Arkansas Tech University. For faculty, we must work toward fair compensation and course loads. For staff, we must offer fair compensation and sufficient resources to accomplish their required tasks. For alumni, we must maintain or elevate the prestige of the degrees they have earned. This attention to and support of the human core leads to goal #1.

**Goal 1: Provide the support needed for students to flourish and graduate from ATU with good prospects for a meaningful and satisfying future. At the same time, provide the support needed for faculty and staff to do the best work possible in their roles as teachers, scholars, mentors and as supporters and facilitators of learning, respectively.**

#### Action Items

- 1) Work towards matching the national graduation rate average by 2025 while maintaining rigorous academic standards. Achieve a minimum annual increase in the graduation rate of 1% per year towards this goal once retention programs are implemented.
- 2) Establish employee compensation levels at the median of reasonable comparison groups: the CUPA regional comparison group for faculty and administrative staff and local/regional markets for similar jobs for staff. Regularly reevaluate wage and benefit targets in the context of years of service to maintain or improve employee compensation levels in order to remain competitive with peer institutions.
- 3) Develop staffing-level policies and plans for both faculty and staff. Implement any non-additive adjustments as soon as reasonably possible and make any additive adjustments required as resources become available.
- 4) Enhance the University's administrative research and planning capabilities, including the ability to generate, analyze, and communicate the import of data in support of student recruitment, enrollment, retention, and completion.
- 5) Develop scholarships and financial aid policies that reach out to traditionally underserved populations, offer targeted need-based aid and incentivize students to regain lost scholarships by achieving academic goals.
- 6) Establish a robust, sophisticated, and proactive human resources function to ensure compliance with all HR-related legal requirements,

- to help hire strong and diverse employees, and to analyze employee issues (e.g., stepped-down or phased retirement) and propose responses in support of enhanced job performance and high morale.
- 7) Develop and implement a diversity and inclusion plan to include all stakeholders for our campuses.
  - 8) Determine and implement a plan that facilitates reciprocal access to university services across all campuses (e.g., Health and Wellness, Tutoring and Career Services).
  - 9) Establish an Office of Research that supports faculty efforts to increase funding for scholarly activities and professional development. The Office should support faculty, non-tenure track instructors and staff. The Office should also operate required research oversight offices (i.e., Institutional Review Board and Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee) and provide grant-writing expertise to increase the number and quality of faculty grant proposals.

The next circle out from the human core is the academic structure and organization of our university. Arkansas Tech University should seek to be fully recognized in the Arkansas higher education landscape by prospective students, the public, and employers as the premier regional comprehensive university with recognition of its distinctive mission in the technology disciplines. This will require increased clarity and coherence of academic structures, so that they encourage synergy and efficiency as well as recognizing roots in disciplines and campuses and at the same time making connections across disciplines and campuses. At least two clear opportunities exist at present to strengthen areas of study that are already strong at ATU. One is to connect health-related courses/programs in an allied health program, while the other is to expand and connect engineering and agricultural courses/programs in a way that keeps current strengths, expands the recognition of environmental or green focus, connects more directly to area farmers, and even brings in the sociology and cultural richness of the River Valley.

Greater clarity about deciding when courses should be delivered in person and when they should be delivered online will be important, particularly given the increasing market demand that comes from online courses. Further, students need degrees that connect with each other such that, for example, an associate's degree from Ozark can lead smoothly to a bachelor's degree that is completed in Russellville. Still further, providing recognition of multiple stages of increasing academic accomplishment by students can lead to greater rates of retention and completion.

To accomplish an evolution of academic structure, faculty members and administration will need to fully embrace their participation in shared governance and accept the responsibilities that it brings. All of this results in goal #2.

**Goal 2: Seek and implement new and stronger connections between courses or programs that will increase coherence as well as attractiveness to current and future students; develop an online program strategy; ensure that there are clear and available degree paths through the university such that more students achieve higher-level degrees.**

Action Items

- 1) Faculty Senate and Executive Council should collaborate to define the parameters and implementation of shared governance to accomplish the academic goals of the university.
- 2) Academic Affairs, in collaboration with appropriate university stakeholders, will directly oversee all university retention efforts by establishing a Student Support Center. The Student Support Center will investigate, develop and coordinate retention programs and services, administer all developmental and non-major first year experience courses, provide academic coaching to undeclared students, and provide college readiness programs that partner with secondary schools in the region.
- 3) The University, through the Graduate College and in collaboration with other Colleges, will develop a comprehensive strategy for a renewed graduate education initiative that will propose new programs, develop services to promote success for graduate students, and create a marketing plan as appropriate.
- 4) The University, through the College of eTech and in collaboration with other Colleges, will develop a comprehensive strategy for a renewed online education initiative that will propose new programs, develop services to promote success for online students, and create a marketing plan as appropriate.
- 5) To provide stackable degree opportunities between campuses, existing curricula will be restructured and new programs will be developed, including a Bachelor of Applied Sciences program. Where possible, curricula in bachelor degree programs will be structured to provide certificates and/or associate degrees during the natural progression of the educational pathway.
- 6) In cooperation with the Vice President of Academic Affairs, develop a method of administrative reorganization, academic program development and resource reallocation that encourages Colleges to develop programs that operate between Colleges and between campuses, encourage synergy between existing programs, and create programs that prepare students for 21<sup>st</sup> century labor trends. Potential reorganizations include:
  - a. Reorganizing the College of Natural Sciences and Health Sciences to include all health science-related programs across all campuses.
  - b. Reorganizing the College of Engineering and Applied Sciences to develop new degree programs and/or emphasis areas to be

- offered on all campuses in renewable energy, conservation, agriculture, and agricultural and biological engineering.
- c. Through cross-disciplinary collaborations, develop innovative programs that highlight the unique eco-region in which the university resides, for example, eco-psychology, wilderness/adventure therapy or outdoor education.
- 7) In collaboration between Academic Affairs and Student Services, develop a university ethics statement, develop and implement a method of tracking academic misconduct between courses, and investigate the need for a university-wide honor code for all stakeholders that addresses academic and professional behavior.
  - 8) In collaboration between Academic Affairs and Student Services, develop and implement a plan to coordinate Student Services programming with the academic mission of the university.

The third concentric circle symbolic of One University is the support structure of robust and well-managed finances along with well-designed physical and technological infrastructure that is renewed in a timely fashion. Significant to the successful elaboration and functioning of this support structure is the ability to produce, analyze, communicate, and use multiple data sources. Along with data, there needs to be broad communication and transparency regarding operating budgets and capital expenditures, in clear language and in settings that allow for questions, discussion, and comment. Seeking clarity and understanding via an established communication process is important to the continual re-invigoration and full partnership of the human core at the heart of the university. Additionally, it is important to offer an infrastructure that is safe, accessible and well prepared. This circle of financial and physical support leads to goal #3.

**Goal 3: Ensure that ATU's finances and infrastructure are well thought out and well managed. This means investing the operational and capital budgets as fully and as prudently possible and investing in buildings and technology with careful attention to priorities and future needs.**

#### Action Items

- 1) Optimize university tuition revenue by understanding and recruiting existing categories of students, as well as reviewing and changing pricing strategies commensurate with the University's brand strength within the state.
- 2) Redesign the university's development function to enhance giving and increase grant awards. Ensure that its members communicate well and frequently with both donors and stakeholders.
- 3) Develop a new budgeting process, supported by a flexible financial information system. The new process should be designed to optimize university resources, accommodate new funding initiatives when feasible, and be well understood by all stakeholders.

- 4) Develop a campus facility master plan as the basis of a coherent, multi-year approach to facility and infrastructure needs. This master plan should be updated and reviewed annually.
- 5) Develop a facilities and technology capital financial plan, including sources and uses of funding, that looks out up to ten years while focusing on the next five years, and is updated annually. The plan should include new buildings, technology, and infrastructure, as well as renovation and renewal of existing assets in these categories.
- 6) Develop and adopt a university debt policy and approach to financial reserves that help shape capital funding and university fiscal policy.
- 7) Determine and implement effective strategies of disseminating information across all levels of the university (e.g., chairs of the Faculty and Staff Senates and SGA Presidents give regular reports to the Board of Trustees).
- 8) Facilities management should develop environmental sustainability initiatives to decrease the carbon footprint of all campuses, including developing a comprehensive recycling policy, and collaborating in the planning of new energy efficient infrastructure and retrofitting current infrastructure to reduce energy consumption.

The outermost concentric circle of One University is the participation of Arkansas Tech University as a public university in its cities, region, state and the global community. With the strength of its human core, its academic coherence and excellence, and its attention to strong operation by prudent financial management and a robust physical infrastructure, Arkansas Tech University makes and provides connections to its various communities. And this goal does not wait for the accomplishment of the other three goals, but must take place simultaneously—all the goals are interconnected. As an institution of Russellville and Ozark, Arkansas Tech University must work with official and non-official structures to support the off-campus life of its students, for their good and the good of the cities.

Engagement through student volunteer efforts and academic connection to the city and region through experiential learning are both critical to a high-quality education that is engaged, not isolated. Further, the health of Arkansas Tech University and the economic strength of the region are inevitably aligned. Pathways should be found to use new and existing knowledge to contribute to and support economic development. This means increasing faculty and administrative connections with industry and business, particularly in contexts where listening can occur to better understand how Arkansas Tech University's academic enterprise can be leveraged for regional economic and social benefit. The experiences of the Ozark campus may be particularly important because they have previously developed and valued connections with industry and business leaders. Enhancing Arkansas Tech University's visibility and recognition are important to successful engagement. The natural coherence and clarity that develop around One University is important, but professional help with



communicating the university's identity will also be needed to accomplish the public good components of the university mission and facilitate a clear public understanding of who and what defines Arkansas Tech University. The invigoration of Arkansas Tech University's presence and participation outside its own campuses is the fourth and final goal.

**Goal 4: Increase ATU's presence and effective participation in our cities, region, state, and world.**

Action Items

- 1) Increase the visibility of the University by developing a 21<sup>st</sup> century brand identity, strengthening the mission and vision statements, and conducting a detailed marketing analysis.
- 2) Develop an Experiential Learning and Community Engagement Center that partners with academic programs to aid in developing and maintaining opportunities for internships, service learning, interdisciplinary project-based courses, study abroad, undergraduate and graduate research, learning communities, and other high-impact practices.
- 3) Improve the career readiness of students and alumni by establishing stronger and broader career services efforts and creating a network of departmental liaisons to collaborate with business to aid in determining career services and curricular recommendations.
- 4) Develop and implement a comprehensive plan for internationalization and global education.
- 5) Participate in economic development efforts with community, industry and regional and state governments to help recruit new business to the River Valley and Ozark regions, including the utilization of the El Paso-Glenwood Avenue extension corridor to unify Arkansas Tech University with the city of Russellville.
- 6) Increase partnerships with regional and state governments through marketing our established strengths and utilizing government liaisons, administration, faculty, staff, students and alumni.
- 7) Develop and implement a plan to create additional recognized sports teams in order to engage diverse communities and maintain appropriate competitive levels within the Great American Conference.

**Strategic Planning Committee**

- Dr. Jason Warnick, Chair – *Associate Professor of Psychology*
- Dr. Daniel Bullock, Faculty Representative/Working Group Chair – *Associate Professor of Electrical Engineering*
- Dr. Stephen Jones, Faculty Representative/Working Group Chair – *Associate Dean of Business & Associate Professor of Management*
- Dr. Julie Mikles-Schluterman, Faculty Representative/Working Group Chair – *Associate Professor of Sociology*
- Dr. Johnette Moody, Faculty Representative/Working Group Chair – *Associate Professor of Computer & Information Science*
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- Dr. Eric Lovely, Faculty Representative – *Associate Professor of Biology*
- Dr. Lucas Maxwell, Faculty Representative – *Assistant Professor of Agricultural Education*
- Ms. Lesley Krohn Snider, Ozark Faculty Representative – *Workforce Education Faculty of Associate Degree Nursing*
- Ms. Aubrey Holt, Staff Representative – *Director of Campus Life*
- Mr. Yasu Onodera, Staff Representative – *Director of International & Multicultural Student Services*
- Mr. Ken Wester, Staff Representative – *Director of Information Systems*
- Ms. Sandy D. Cheffer – Ozark Staff Representative – *Chief Fiscal Officer*
- Ms. Tammy Rye, Classified Staff Representative – *Fiscal Support Analyst*
- Mr. Kelly Davis, Development/Alumni Representative – *Director of Alumni Relations*
- Ms. Jocelyn Flores, Russellville Student Representative
- Mr. Tanner Howell, Ozark Student Representative
- Mr. Eliel Mendez, Russellville Student Representative
- Mr. Saul Pennington, Russellville Student Representative
- Ms. Julia Smith, Russellville Student Representative
- Ms. Angela Bonds, Community Representative
- Mayor Randy Horton, Community Representative