Working Group—Enrollment and Marketing

Members: Dr. Jeff Aulgur, *Department Head and Assistant Professor of Professional Studies*, Dr. Daniel Bullock (Working Group Chair), *Assistant Professor of Electrical Engineering*, Megan Morris, *Public Information Specialist – Ozark Campus*, Yasushi Onodera, *Director of the Office of International and Multicultural Student Services*, Sam Strasner, *Directory of University Relations*, Megan Toland, *Assistant Professor of Journalism*, Dr. Susan Underwood, *Professor of College Student Personnel*, Dr. Jessica Young, *Assistant Professor of Physics*

Executive Summary

The "Enrollment and Marketing" working group was tasked with developing strategic initiatives pertaining to student enrollment, university identity, and marketing. For the enrollment piece our group looked at enrollment trends, including retention and graduation rates, over the last six years for each program across the university. We also reviewed enrollment data among different student demographic groups (underrepresented groups, traditional vs. nontraditional, remediation vs. no-remediation, etc.). For the university identity and marketing portion the group held a series of informal focus groups with student organizations as well as open forums with the public. The working group also met with the agency that handles the university's advertising to discuss strategies that have been effective in the past.

As a result of our efforts we have developed the six strategic initiatives listed below:

Strategic Initiative 1: **Increase the graduation rate by 10% over the next 6 years.**

Strategic Initiative 2: **Increase campus diversity and inclusion for both students and faculty.**

Strategic Initiative 3: **Develop additional in-demand online programs and enhance support for current online programs and students in an effort to increase enrollment and success.**

Strategic Initiative 4: **Increase regional access to Arkansas Tech-Ozark and Arkansas Tech Career Center.**

Strategic Initiative 5: **Develop a marketing plan for the Graduate College.**

Strategic Initiative 6: **Continue to identify and promote points of distinction.**

In the following document we present a justification for each strategic initiative where we provide a rationale based on data and include relevant references. In addition to the justification we also describe strategic roadmaps where we highlight specific actions that the university should take to achieve the related strategic initiatives. Supporting data, full justifications, more detailed descriptions, and figures are included as Appendices.

<u>Strategic Initiative 1</u>: **Increase the graduation rate by 10% over the next 6 years.**

JUSTIFICATION SUMMARY
(Full justification is attached as Appendix A)

Arkansas Tech University's current six year graduation rate is 45.2% which ranks second when compared to all four year public institutions in the state, however this graduation rate is well below the national average of 58% for public institutions (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2015). Research conducted by College Board demonstrates the value of a college education and the difference increasing higher education attainment among Arkansans could make in the Natural State. College Board published "Education Pays 2013: The Benefits of Higher Education for Individuals and Society" (Baum, Ma, & Payea, 2013) to illustrate "differences in the earnings and employment patterns of U.S. adults with different levels of education." Leadership inside Arkansas has taken note of the proven benefits of higher education and established goals for the state to make strides in that area. On Oct. 30, 2015, the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board adopted a document entitled "Closing the Gap 2020: A Master Plan for Arkansas Higher Education" (Arkansas Department of Higher Education, 2015). The plan, which was drafted with input from higher education professionals around the state, seeks to address "enrollment and attainment rates of targeted populations, completion and graduation rates of students, college affordability and the alignment of state resources with these goals." (More details are available at http://www.adhe.edu/institutions/higher-education-master-plan/). Given the broader impacts for the region and state on increasing higher-education attainment and the renewed focus on student success from the state, increasing the graduation rate should be the top priority for our institution.

ROADMAP

1. *Establish an Undergraduate College (UC) under the direction of Academic Affairs that would serve as a hub for all retention efforts on campus, house the academic advising center, and administer all developmental and freshmen orientation courses.*

    Under the current matriculation model students are asked to decide on a major field of study on their first day on campus. In the case where there is a highly motivated and focused student this isn't an issue. This type of student typically comes to the university academically prepared for the rigors of college study. Unfortunately, the well-prepared, focused student is the exception and not the norm for our university. In fact, review of enrollment data over the last ten years revealed that the percentage of undeclared students has ranged from 27% in the fall of 2005 to 12.5% in the fall of 2015. Furthermore, we can expect that over 40% of all students that declare a major as an incoming freshmen will eventually change their major at least one time (see attached data from institutional research in Appendix B). Given these statistics and the fact that 40-48% of our incoming students require some form of remediation it is the recommendation of this committee that the institution, under the direction of Academic Affairs transform the traditional academic matriculation path for our freshmen students by forming an *Undergraduate College (UC)*. The *UC* would be an academic unit that houses the Academic Coaching Center (a retooled and repurposed version of our current Academic Advising Center described in further detail later), all retention efforts and data (for both traditional and online programs), orientation courses, and remediation/developmental courses. Appendix C illustrates the different components that would be a part of the *UC*.

The first component that would be housed in the *UC* is a university retention center. This center would develop new retention efforts on campus, coordinate current retention efforts, and house the relevant data associated with retention. There are currently several retention efforts underway on campus namely, *Bridge to Excellence, Tutoring* and *Supplemental Instruction,* housed in the offices of Student Success, the *Living-Learning Community* coordinated by the Department of Agriculture, *First Year Experience* coordinated by the department of College Student Personnel, the *Student Support Services TRIO* programs, *Complete College America,* and the *Gateways to Completion* program managed by the office of Academic Affairs. As you can see from this list although there are many efforts underway they are housed in varied departments across campus, and although they all share a common goal of increasing the academic success of our students there is essentially little to no coordination between programs resulting in duplication of efforts, inefficiencies, and inconsistencies. The *UC* could serve to be a central repository of all of these efforts on campus. The value added of housing these programs under one central structure would be better coordination of retention efforts, a central retention data clearing house that would be able to identify trends and make adjustments to programs, and serve as experts for retention and student success on the campus. In addition to helping our more traditional face-to-face (F2F) students the *UC Retention Center* could also house an online student success center that would develop programs optimized for our online students to help them succeed. By coordinating with the *College of eTech* this online student success center could make available resources to assist online students with tutoring, library assistance and any general resources that are also available to F2F students. Finally, as part of the *UC,* this online student success center can serve as advocates for our online students to ensure that they receive equal benefits to those provided to F2F students.

In addition to the retention center the *UC* would design and implement all first-year experiences for freshmen students. The *UC* will house the freshman orientation classes, CSP 1013 and Tech 1001. The current policy (attached as Appendix D) would be revised to require all incoming students to take either CSP 1013 or Tech 1001. This change would facilitate a coordinated alignment of ATU's new student orientation with the freshman orientation classes affording students more timely information and instruction. The disciplines can then focus their orientation classes on introducing their discipline specific information. Providing First-Year Experience (FYE) Seminars to help students make a successful transition to the college environment is supported by research (Barton & Donahue, 2009; Jamelske, 2008; Vaughan, Lalonde, & Jenkins-Guarnieri, 2013) and by Arkansas Tech University's assessment evidence. The 2012-2013 National Survey of First-Year Seminars (National Resource Center, 2013) found that 89.7% of respondents offer a FYE seminar and that the most commonly reported objectives are to help students make a connection to the institution, orient students to campus resources, and help students develop academic skills. Furthermore, when regression analysis is used to compare the actual success of first semester ATU freshmen to the predicted success significant results are found. The full assessment evidence is attached as Appendix E.

Another component housed under the *UC* umbrella would be a retooled and repurposed Academic Advising Center that would be renamed the Academic Coaching Center to distinguish it's new role. An important aspect of having the Academic Coaching Center under the authority of the *UC* is to transition it from its current role of primarily acting as "schedulers" to actually provide students with high quality, highly intrusive academic and

career advising. Intrusive advising has shown to significantly benefit retention rates (Chiteng Kot, 2014); unfortunately the current role of the advising center is more for coordinating students' schedules instead of helping them address their academic concerns/needs. The bulk of student scheduling could be handled with software and we should train and staff the advising center to better add value to the students' educational success. The advisors should all teach one or two sections of TECH 1001 since they are the people that understand their students' needs and can intervene when a student starts missing classes regularly. This would also facilitate a deeper connection between the student and advisor.

Once the infrastructure of the *UC* is in place, the *UC* will be able to transform the freshmen matriculation path. All incoming freshmen would initially be admitted to the *UC*. For those students that are sure of their majors they will be assigned to "pre-major" programs, for those students that are still "deciding" they will receive specialized academic coaching to help them pick an appropriate major field of study. While part of the *UC* all students will take general education requirements. For the students ready to pick a major they will take foundational courses as part of a pre-major program. After the student has completed the pre-major program he/she will apply to be admitted into the department. The department will set well-defined, reasonable entrance standards (i.e. GPA, minimum grades in foundational courses, etc.). This model already exists on campus with the Nursing program and it is very successful. If a student is unable to meet the minimum requirements they can either retake some of the foundational courses and reapply or through intrusive academic advising they may be able to decide on a different program more aligned with their talents. The students should be capped at a maximum number of hours when they are a part of the *UC*. An intuitive cap would occur at 30 or 60 credit hours corresponding to the end of a student's freshmen and sophomore years respectively. Upon completion of a pre-program students could be awarded associate degrees to celebrate their first higher education milestone. Appendix F illustrates a possible flowchart for how students would matriculate to their respective programs.

2. *Arkansas Tech University must make it a priority to be an economically attractive choice for students.*

Tuition is a major factor for students and parents when making the decision of where to go to college and considering "the published prices for postsecondary schools have been rising more rapidly than the prices of most other goods and services for many years," (Baum, Kurose, & McPherson, 2013, p. 26) Arkansas Tech must make it a priority to maintain cost-effective tuition. The fact that the university already waives out-of-state tuition charges for students from Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Oklahoma, Tennessee and Texas shows that we are aware of these costs and that we help prospective students in certain areas of this issue. However, "the downward trend in state funding has led to a real decline in per-student funding in higher education" (Baum, Kurose, & McPherson, 2013, p. 29) and we need to do something to counter that trend to keep Arkansas Tech as a top choice for students.

Furthermore, it is well-known that the cost of higher education is a major risk factor for student success. "If colleges rethink the way they teach and do business, they can save students and taxpayers billions without compromising their educational missions" (Cota, Dua & Laboissiere, 2012). Additionally, as time goes on, if rising costs aren't mitigated,

we'll continue to have to fight the battle of people debating if "college is worth it". "Americans tend to believe that colleges are wasteful and that cost-saving innovations are easily available" (Baum, Kurose & McPherson, 2013). In order to correct this misperception it is critical that Arkansas Tech operates in a fiscally responsible way and the resulting savings are passed onto the students. Some innovative approaches include (detailed descriptions are available in Appendix G):

- *Tuition freeze/Fixed-rate tuition* (Associated Press, 2013; Mason, 2014)
- *Sliding tuition scale based on programs* (University of Arkansas, 2015)
- *Tuition Deferment* (Cohen, 2015)
- *Retention grants* (Mason, 2015)
- *Reduce time to graduation* (Cota, Dua & Laboissiere, 2012)
- *Reduce course materials costs*
- *Evaluation of scholarship policies and communication strategies*
- *Re-evaluate all fee policies related to housing*

3. *University should support and facilitate High Impact Practices (HIPs) that have shown to increase retention by forming a deep level of engagement with the student (Kuh, 2008).*

HIPs are activities and techniques that go beyond the traditional classroom and have been proven to have positive benefits for student engagement and successful learning. Through intentional program design and innovative pedagogical approaches, these types of practices can enhance student learning and work to narrow gaps in achievement across student populations and improve overall student success. Some possible approaches include (detailed descriptions and some recommendations for implementing these practices on our campus are available in Appendix H):

- *First-Year Seminars and Experiences* (Barton & Donahue, 2009; Jamelske, 2008; Kinzie, 2008; National Resource Center, 2013; Vaughan, Lalonde, & Jenkins-Guarnieri, 2014)
- *Undergraduate Research* (Hensel, 2012; Hunter, Laursen, & Seymour, 2006; Kuh, Kinzie, Whitt, & Associates, 2010; Laursen, Seymour, Hunter, Thiry, & Melton, 2010; Padgett, Keup, Pascarella, 2013
- *Diversity/Global Learning* (American Council on Education, n.d.; American Council on Education, n.d.; Green, 2013)
- *Learning Communities*
- *Service Learning, Community-Based Learning*
- *Collaborative Assignments and Projects*
- *Internships*
- *Capstone Courses and Projects* (Dunlap, 2005; Henscheid, 2008)

4. *The University should make a concerted effort to offer specific and strategic support for its non-traditional students.*

According to the data provided by ATU's institutional research, non-traditional students (ages 25-34) graduate at a rate of 50.9% compared to traditional students aged students (ages 20-24) that graduate at a rate of 19.8%. The nontraditional student group tend to be learners that are highly motivated to succeed in college in order to advance in their careers. Therefore, the return on investment the university would see by better

supporting these students would be significant. From open forums and informal focus groups, this committee suggests the following (detailed descriptions and recommendations are available in Appendix I):

- *Developing more programs that are accessible to non-traditional students*
- *Offer scholarships specifically for non-traditional students*
- *Offer low-cost, high quality child care services on-campus* (Boressoff, 2013)
- *Offer economically attractive housing for nontraditional students*

Strategic Initiative 2: **Increase campus diversity and inclusion for both students and faculty.**

JUSTIFICATION SUMMARY
(Full justification is attached as Appendix J)

Arkansas Tech University is currently the least diverse four year public institution in the state with just 22.4% of its student body being from a minority group. Furthermore, among the set of 22 peer institutions A TU ranks fifth from last in percent of minority students. The Arkansas Department of Higher Education has recognized this issue of the disproportionate educational attainment among underrepresented groups and a stated goal is to "Raise the attainment rates of underserved student groups in the state by 10%" (Arkansas Department of Higher Education, 2015).

In addition to the social and ethical responsibility the institution has to ensure equal access to higher education among all groups the institution must prepare its students to function in the 21st century workforce which is increasingly diverse. "In order for the United States to have a truly world-class higher education system, colleges and universities must be globally engaged and prepare students to be citizens of a multicultural community both at home and in a globalized world. Institutions accomplish this by having a multi-dimensional, comprehensive strategy that includes internationalization at home and engagement with global issues and partners" (American Council on Education, n.d.).

ROADMAP

1. *Strategically market to the different ethnic groups.*

   In order to attract more, high quality students that are from underrepresented groups the university must develop a focused marketing plan for each group. Based on informal focus groups with students, specific recommendations include (detailed descriptions and recommendations are available in Appendix K):
   - *Publish all advertising materials (including course catalogs) in multiple languages*
   - *University's full website should be available in multiple languages*
   - *Increase extracurricular programming that would engage diverse groups*

2. *Hire more diverse faculty, staff, and administrators*

   The university should facilitate the hiring of a more diverse group of faculty, staff and administrators. During a focus group held with the African American Student Association several students commented that there is a lack of African American faculty. The university should explore creative practices that have been successful at recruiting underrepresented faculty, staff, and administrators. One approach could be to have a separate pool of funds dedicated to hiring diverse faculty. If a department requests funds for a new faculty line

they could receive expedited approval if they agree to hire a qualified candidate from an underrepresented group. Another approach that has been successful is sometimes referred to as the "Grow Your Own" program. In this program promising undergraduate students from underrepresented groups that are currently attending the institution would be identified. Upon graduation, they would receive some financial support from the university if they continue their education through graduate school (even if the students chose to do their graduate work at another institution). In return for the financial support the student agrees to come back to the institution to work for some period of time.

3. *Offer more scholarships specifically for underrepresented groups*
    In the fall of 2015 94.2% of all incoming minority freshmen on the main campus received some financial aid (see Appendix L for data set). If the institution is interested in attracting more high quality students from underrepresented groups it must provide an economic incentive. There are currently no foundation scholarships specifically for underrepresented groups on campus. The only institutional scholarship (i.e. not from the foundation but is instead privately supported) is the Cora McHenry Scholarship for Teaching Excellence. This program offers three partial tuition scholarships (roughly $2,500 per student, per semester) to African-American students planning on teaching in a public school in Arkansas at either the early childhood/middle or secondary level.

4. *Develop and implement a strategic plan for internationalization and global education*
    In order for Tech to increase diversity and inclusion of international students, staff and faculty, implementation of comprehensive internationalization needs to be considered. The Center for Internationalization and Global Engagement's (CIGE) model for comprehensive internationalization targets the following six interconnected initiatives:
    - *Articulated institutional commitment:* ATU needs to specifically include international education, global learning, and diversity in the mission statement and general education learning objectives. Also, the assessment and general education committees should work with the International & Multicultural Student Services Office (IMSSO) to develop formal assessment mechanisms.
    - *Administrative structure and staffing:* IMSSO should report to top-level administrators to ensure various elements of internationalization have coordination and oversight. The institutional leaders will send a message about the high priority the institution places on its internationalization agenda.
    - *Curriculum, co-curriculum, and learning outcomes:* An internationalized curriculum and co-curriculum needs to be introduced to ensure that all students are exposed to international perspectives and can build global competency. The institution should articulate global learning in its general education outcomes and consider a foreign language course as part of its general education requirements. Tech should recognize the importance for faculty to have international competence when setting policies related to faculty hiring, tenure, promotion and awards presentation.
    - *Support and Increase Study Abroad Programs:* Tech needs dedicated staff and an office to enhance its study abroad program. Coping with ever-increasing international student recruiting competition, the IMSSO is in need of more staff and customer relationship management solutions.

- *Collaboration and partnerships:* Centralized, campus-wide policies or guidelines for developing and approving international partnerships is also required.

5. *University should strive for easy access for all groups including those with disabilities*

    In order to ensure that the university experience is accessible to all students it is critical that we address serious accessibility issues on campus. Specifically:

- *Ensure easy access for people with disabilities:* There are several areas on campus that are not easily accessible to people with a disability. Some of the wheelchair ramps on campus do not meet federal guidelines in regards to width and slope. Many of the sidewalks are in disrepair and there is a lack of curb cuts and protected crosswalks on campus. Additionally, there is no signage on the buildings or on the campus grounds directing individuals towards accessible entrances. This can result in an individual travelling to a destination across campus only to find, once they arrive, they won't be able to access the building/structure due to the presence stairs, a steep slope, or possibly a sidewalk that leads to nowhere.

- *Address serious accessibility issues related to housing:* The aging residence halls on campus present a serious challenge for students with disabilities. Many of our older residences halls don't have accessible entrances, accessible laundry facilities, elevators or restrooms and the dorms that are accessible are typically the most expensive.

    Students requiring accessible rooms can't always share a room or a suite with their friends who have the option of choosing to live anywhere on campus. As a result students with disabilities have a more difficult time socializing with their friends who reside in inaccessible dorms. One example is Caraway Hall, which is reserved for sororities and is not a particularly accessible hall. A student with a disability may join a sorority but not be able to room with her sisters due to the lack of accessibility. Students who have parents and friends with disabilities may not be able to invite these individuals to visit them in their on-campus residences. Move-in day often presents significant challenges because family members accompany students to campus not recognizing they won't be able to get to their rooms.

    One of the most requested accommodations is for a private room with a private bath. There are more and more students for which this is appropriate: students with anxiety and OCD, students on the autism spectrum who need time to decompress with little stimulation at the end of their day, students with unusual sleep patterns due to conditions like bi-polar disorder or ADHD, students with significant environmental allergies who must refrain from being exposed to chemicals commonly found in cleaning products, toiletries, laundry products. etc. We have very few options for these individuals and unfortunately the best fit cost the most money which many students can't afford.

- *Disability Services should have input over architectural designs:* There has been a significant disconnect between the university and architects regarding accessibility and, as a result, many ADA standards are overlooked. To fix this issue Disability Services needs direct input at the planning stages of all new buildings and all remodeling projects of current buildings.

- *Develop an on campus transit solution for students and visitors with disabilities:* The University does not have an on-campus transit solution for students and visitors

with disabilities. This makes it very difficult for a person with mobility issues or other health impairments to move about the campus.

- *Ensure adequate and accessible parking for those with disabilities:* There is a serious shortage of ADA parking spaces on campus. In fact, according to ADA standards, the University is over 100 spaces below the recommended number. In addition to the lack of ADA parking on campus, the current spaces are not ADA compliant with regard to width and the availability of a curb cut leading onto the sidewalk. Vehicles block access to the sidewalk in many areas due to the lack of parking stops which are designed to keep the sidewalks clear of obstacles. Often individuals parking in an "accessible" parking spot must travel across or into the line of traffic in order to get to their destination.

- *Develop an accessibility map:* Currently Tech does not have an accessibility map. If someone needs to know where to find accessible parking there is no way for them to look and plan ahead. If a person gets to Doc Bryan Student Services and would like to next visit the library they have nothing they can refer to in the way of a printed map or an online app that directs them to the shortest accessible route of travel.

- *Campus events should be accessible for those with disabilities:* The premiere outreach activity that Tech hosts each February (Time Out For Tech) runs videos for the duration of the event which are not captioned and there is no interpreter on hand. Every year students who are hearing impaired attend this event and have no idea what's being played on the overhead monitors or being said during the break-out sessions. The university should anticipate that any event of this size will have individuals (students, their parents, chaperones from their school district) in attendance who have difficulty hearing or identify as deaf. To address this issue Disability Services should have direct input to the planning stages of these types of events.

Strategic Initiative 3: **Develop additional in-demand online programs and enhance support for current online programs and students in an effort to increase enrollment and success.**

JUSTIFICATION

Online programs have experienced significant growth since the College of eTech was established. According to data provided by institutional research roughly half of the institution's increases in external revenue over the past three years have come from online students. Additionally, the cost to operate these online courses are significantly less than the traditional face-to-face (F2F) model. Finally, online programs allow the university to reach students that may, for whatever reason, not have physical access to campus.

ROADMAP

1. *The university should facilitate the expansion of online graduate programs.*
   The institution has several opportunities by addressing some gaps in the current online market for graduate programs. Specifically, the development and execution of an online Master's of Business Administration (MBA) and Master's degree in Engineering Management (there is currently one program offered at Arkansas State University – Jonesboro and it is not online). The institution should invest resources in performing a

comprehensive study of the current online marketplace and add programs that have a high potential for growth.

2. *Strategically reach out to online program alumni.*

One challenge with online degree programs is ensuring students are engaged not only while enrolled at the institution, but also maintaining that engagement after graduation. Often, the only time the online student steps onto campus is at commencement. Although the online alum's experience is significantly different than our traditional F2F student they still represent an opportunity for the university. The attainment of an undergraduate degree while working full-time or managing a family has the potential to be a "life changing" event. Students who have attained success while managing multiple commitments will likely be receptive to join and participate in alumni networks. To better engage our online alumni this committee recommends the following:

- Invite and encourage online graduates to participate in all traditional alumni networking events in order to meet their traditional counterparts.
- Avoid campus- or online exclusive associations, networks or chapter that are inclusiveness increases engagement.
- Create an online community that offers career-planning services and other benefits to alumni.
- Recognizing the strength of student affinity in an online degree program is more likely in the career-field than it is the institution. Many of these students came to the university to start, advance or switch careers.

3. *Provide proper and continuous training of faculty for online course development and delivery.*

With limited financial resources and increased competition, many institutions have utilized the delivery of online education as a means to recruit and retain students in higher education (Allen & Seaman, 2010). In a 2012 study, Herman noted that "at the 80% of institutions that provide professional development for training faculty for online course delivery . . . the majority of faculty members felt that they were offered inadequate incentives" to develop and deliver online courses (p. 407). Institutional support (i.e., release time, fair compensation, adequate tools, training, technical support, and institutional policies) are frequently cited in the faculty satisfaction literature (Bolliger, Inan, & Wasilik, 2014).

Faculty training for online programs is in place with the availability of the eTech Certification course, an eight week hybrid program to educate full-time faculty about how to develop interactive, engaging classes that meet the C-RAC (Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions) guidelines required for SARA (State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement) participation. It is recommended that (if possible) course developers complete the certification course the semester before eTech course development/review is to take place. It is not a requirement for faculty to complete the certification course before development, but it assists with a smoother and faster development process as faculty learn new technologies and techniques as well as engagement possibilities. In addition to the certification course, the College of eTech is currently piloting a Transitioning to Teaching Online course that will be required of all instructors (faculty and adjuncts) who teach online. The completely online course will only need to be completed once within a three

year period. It is self-paced with assessments at the end of each of seven modules. It is expected faculty will return to the course as a reference for teaching online. The College of eTech plans to launch the Transitioning to Teaching Online course in spring 2016. The College of eTech is also working to offer workshops throughout the year on topics of interest to online instructors. These will be delivered in a format that can be accessed at a distance and multiple times.

4. *Develop institutional polices that are compatible with online courses.*

The university needs to consider how we reach out to online students. Larger universities with online programs have the manpower for recruitment, marketing, and managing their inquiries from a centralized calling center that can follow-up with students as they consider programs and apply for admission. There are several companies that offer products to assist with these efforts. Education Dynamics (Educational Dynamics: Student Acquisitions Solutions, n.d.) is one that considers multiple areas such as digital marketing and contact centers. The university needs to address friendly online policies as a customer service practice. Research with current and former students will pay dividends on particular areas that are most troubling for incoming students. A clear understanding of what all offices are currently doing to assist online students and how they imagine scaffolding their work to plan for effective growth is necessary. Using a revised version of the eTech Task Force with the offices working with online students would provide for discussions of processes and growth.

5. *Develop corporate relationships in order to create relevant online programs.*

The College of eTech is facilitating corporate partnerships by preparing the website and advertising materials to offer the most accurate information in a user friendly and appealing format. Lisa Clark, Director of Online Partnerships and Military Outreach, is working to expand her knowledge of the military as we finalize the website and marketing materials. Once these materials are prepared, The College of eTech will be working with local and state organizations, moving toward regional and national opportunities. Relationships are needed with these corporations for sponsorship and donation possibilities to the university. To get there, however, the university needs to prove worthy of the investment. Demonstrating the flexibility and quality of the university's coursework to meet the identified needs through certificates, undergraduate and graduate programs is part of that relationship building. To find these companies, we need the benefit of market research, such as that provided by the Education Advisory Board's (n.d.) Continuing and Online Education Forum.

Strategic Initiative 4: **Increase regional access to Arkansas Tech-Ozark and Arkansas Tech Career Center**

JUSTIFICATION SUMMARY
(Full justification is attached as Appendix M)

Arkansas Tech University-Ozark Campus was established in 2003 with the merger of Arkansas Valley Technical Institute (AVTI) with Arkansas Tech University. With a little more than 2,000 students, enrollment at Arkansas Tech-Ozark is up more than 600 percent since joining the Tech

family in 2003. While most classes are offered in Ozark, the campus holds courses in Fort Smith, Van Buren, Booneville and Russellville. Additionally, the campus oversees Adult Education programs in Franklin, Logan and Johnson counties as well as the Arkansas Tech Career Center (ATCC) in Russellville.

ROADMAP

1. *All general education course should be offered through the Ozark and satellite campuses.*

    Offering more general education courses and more sections of currently offered courses would increase degree path access to students who can earn an Associate of General Studies from the Ozark Campus, where they can then transfer to the main campus to seek a bachelor's degree, benefiting both campuses and the students in terms of enrollment, retention and degrees awarded.

    So far, the campus has off-site locations (including Adult Education and Career Center facilities) in Fort Smith, Van Buren, Booneville, Paris, Charleston, Clarksville and Russellville. While the Ozark Campus primarily serves students seeking workforce education, there is a large student population seeking general education courses toward a degree, both two-year and four-year. The campus has more than 800 Associate of General Studies degree-seeking students.

    Expanding course access can also benefit the local economy. According to the 2012 Arkansas Tech Economic Impact Study, students who live with their parents provide long-term benefits because they are more likely to remain in the area after graduation (Brown and Trivitt, 2012). While the study only analyzes Arkansas Tech-Ozark's impact in Franklin County -- based on the study's conclusion of students staying in the area, taking courses and completing a degree at an off-site location could result in a more educated and employable workforce in the area.

2. *Offer full Ozark programs in Russellville at Morton Hall and ATCC.*

    Students in the Russellville area and east of Russellville seeking Ozark programs are limited to offerings at Morton Hall – Occupational Therapy Assistant, Paramedic/Emergency Medical Services and Medical Assisting.

    ATCC offers concurrent credit courses to high school students in welding, automotive service, allied health, computer information systems, law enforcement and more. Because ATCC is part of the Russellville High School campus, classes are finished by 3 p.m. during the week. ATCC houses a full welding and automotive shop as well as classroom space.

    Between ATCC and Morton Hall, it is possible to offer full programs in the Russellville area. This would again expand educational access across the region. Students living in Russellville and surrounding areas seeking programs such as practical nursing or automotive service have the option of driving 20 miles to Morrilton or 47 miles to Ozark. Bringing Ozark Campus programs to Russellville would provide easier access to relevant, industry-driven programs while keeping the students within the Tech system.

    With ATCC offering concurrent credit in these programs already, high school students graduating would continue to earn their full technical certificates and associate degrees without traveling to Ozark. ATCC's enrollment is more than 600 students. This would help with retention as these students would be taking courses in a familiar setting from an institution of which they are already members.

Courses in Ozark are traditionally taught during the day. Utilizing Morton Hall and ATCC provides program access to those who are in the workforce and need night or weekend classes to earn a degree; for example: an evening/weekend welding program or practical nursing program.

A barrier to offering full programs in Russellville is personnel and facility maintenance. This would require more full-time faculty and staff. Additionally, needed renovations to Morton Hall would provide space for more personnel as well as more classroom space for course offerings.

Strategic Initiative 5: **Develop a marketing plan for the Graduate College.**

JUSTIFICATION

Arkansas Tech University began developing its first modern marketing plan for undergraduate students in 1998. In the years since that decision and subsequent dedication of resources, overall enrollment at Arkansas Tech has increased by 184 percent to its current total of 12,054 students.

Data from the Arkansas Tech Office of Institutional Research shows that enrollment in the Graduate College increased 70 percent in the years following the economic downturn of 2008. The number of students in the Graduate College went from 532 in fall 2008 to 903 in fall 2014. There are 863 students in the Graduate College for fall 2015.

The Graduate College has achieved these gains without the benefit of the same strategic and marketing resources that has been applied to recruiting undergraduate students. With the track record of success that the institution has enjoyed in marketing its undergraduate programs, now could be an appropriate time for the university to dedicate the resources necessary to reach a larger audience of prospective students for its graduate programs.

ROADMAP

1. *Develop a national advertising campaign for our graduate programs.*

    By reaching out to current undergraduate students, recent graduates and professionals based upon their digital profile --- to include geography, demographics and demonstrated interests --- Arkansas Tech can efficiently reach more prospective students who could be interested in its current graduate programs, both in person and online. One of the outcomes the university must be prepared to address in the event that this targeted online marketing is successful is ensuring the availability of enough qualified faculty members to accommodate the increased market demand.

2. *Capitalize upon the forthcoming Master of Business Administration degree.*

    The current graduate programs at Arkansas Tech are primarily targeted to niche audiences, a fact that has and would make mass marketing (television, etc.) of them inefficient. Due to the greater variety of potential career paths and/or advancements available to its graduates, the proposed Master of Business Administration degree would give Arkansas Tech its greatest opportunity to reach a wide audience for graduate studies. The most important factor in marketing the MBA program will be identifying how it is distinct from similar programs at other universities and effectively communicating that message to prospective students.

3. *Actively recruit our large pool of young alumni.*

More than 60 percent of ATU's graduates have earned their degrees in the past two decades. The university now confers more than 2,000 degrees per year. As a result, there are a large number of young alumni of Arkansas Tech who already have familiarity with the university's brand and could benefit from an advanced degree. Through e-mail communications created by the Office of University Relations and routed through the Office of Alumni Relations, Arkansas Tech can reach out to its alumni en masse or on a targeted basis by college/department.

Strategic Initiative 6: **Continue to identify and promote points of distinction.**

JUSTIFICATION

In a state that has 11 four-year public universities, 22 public two-year institutions and 13 private colleges and universities, it is critical for Arkansas Tech University to cultivate, identify and communicate factors that distinguish it from other options for prospective students.

ROADMAP

1. *Capitalize on the "Tech" in Arkansas Tech University.*

Data released by the Arkansas Department of Higher Education in 2015 (Arkansas Tech University: News and Information, n.d.) shows that over the past five years, more Arkansans have chosen to study in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields at Arkansas Tech University than at any other institution in the state. Planning for continuous improvement of the laboratory and research space needed to carry out these programs and providing more undergraduate research opportunities in these disciplines would allow Arkansas Tech to capitalize upon the momentum of these past five years and develop a long-term reputation as the STEM institution of choice for the Natural State.

2. *Develop an identity around environmental awareness by capitalizing on the "Green".*

Recent events have positioned Arkansas Tech University to serve as a statewide leader in environmental consciousness. The donation of more than 800 trees to the Russellville campus by the Norman Family since 2009 has created a more beautiful learning environment and a teachable opportunity about the environmental benefits of healthy, sustainable trees. At the Arkansas Tech-Ozark campus, students have the opportunity to earn a "green" designation on their transcript by completing "no less than 12 hours of coursework directly supporting their ability to apply environmental awareness and responsibility to their personal and professional daily life." The Ozark Campus catalog goes on to state that "such coursework may include waste and energy management, environmental health, alternative technology, environmental law and regulation, general environmental awareness, and advocacy topics" (Arkansas Tech University – Ozark, 2015). What other policies and programs can Arkansas Tech pursue that would allow it to distinguish itself as a "green university?" What are the potential budgetary benefits of creating more environmentally-friendly initiatives? Research at Allegheny College (n.d.) found that such planning should be rooted in faculty-student research, education and

reinforcement for institutional leadership and both top-down and bottom-up ideas. Adherence to this formula over a period of 20 years allowed Allegheny College to establish a new staff position focused on sustainability, purchase 100 percent wind power, create academic space for the study of environmental science and include a climate-neutral goal as part of its strategic plan.

3. *Utilize planned new student recreation facility to promote healthier lifestyles.*

According to Better Policies for a Healthier America, Arkansas ranks No. 1 in the United States in the percentage of its adult population that is obese (America's Health and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2015). In 1995, 17 percent of adult Arkansans were obese. Two decades later, that figure stands at 35.9 percent. Arkansas Tech is currently in the planning stage for a new student recreation facility. It seems critical that as plans for the building are taking shape, it is necessary for an equal amount of planning go into the development of information and programming that will educate the student body, faculty and staff on the importance of exercise and nutrition so that we can maximize the impact of this new facility. Successful implementation of such a plan could yield economic benefit for the institution by controlling health care costs for employees.

4. *Embrace our quirks.*

To paraphrase the words of Dr. Jeff Woods, dean of the College of Arts and Humanities, during one of the strategic planning open forums, it is important that Arkansas Tech embrace its quirks in order to celebrate its history and traditions. It is time to build a statue memorializing "The Original Wonder Boy," John Tucker, outside Thone Stadium at Buerkle Field. Such a statue was part of the early plans for Centennial Plaza, but it did not make it to fruition. It is time to build a statue celebrating our campus ambassador, Jerry the Bulldog, and position it outside the W.O. Young Building as a celebration of not only Jerry, but the man (William Omer Young) who sparked the legend in the 1930s. It is time to invest in permanent signage strategically placed in athletic facilities, residence halls and dining facilities so that we may more effectively and consistently educate students on the Story of the Wonder Boys, the Story of the Golden Suns and the Legend of Jerry. Arkansas Tech currently lacks these kinds of identifiable landmarks. At other universities, these are the places where prospective students stop to take a selfie. They are the places where current students gather to show, and in many cases develop, their affection for the institution. They are the places where alumni return decades later to remember when. If we continue to fall short in establishing an emotional connection between Arkansas Tech and its students, we can never expect to enjoy the kind of alumni support --- be that in words, dollars or otherwise --- that we need to reach our potential.

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