

Mark J. Zoran, Dean

February 12, 2025

RE: Arts and Sciences Strategic Plan: A Foundational Future

Dear Christian,

Thank you for agreeing to chair our Strategic Planning **Undergraduate Education Working Group** as we craft the first strategic plan for the College of Arts and Sciences. Your group is one of four created that will focus on critical activities we pursue to achieve **national and international preeminence** across the college. This is an exciting moment as this plan will help chart our path for the next 10 years.

The objective of the strategic plan is to develop a framework for goals and actions that cement our newly formed College firmly as the **foundational future** of the Arts and Sciences at Texas A&M University. Dramatic changes in learning and teaching, training and skill development, acquired knowledge and creative competencies are rapidly transforming education, particularly the missions and future of higher education. New challenges in technology, communication, globalization, financial stability and the future relationship between a university and the citizenry add obstacles to academic transformation in research and instruction.

My **charge** is that your Working Group develop a set of recommendations that account for the emergent challenges posed by our rapidly changing educational landscape and that will best position our college to positively impact the future of Texas, the nation, and the world. The question that drives our strategic planning conversations is simple, ***“What is the shared vision in Arts and Sciences for creating national and international prominence in our research, teaching, and outreach?”***

Your Working Group will have access to the **Idea Papers** produced in association with your Spring 2025 Undergraduate Education retreat. I charge the Working Group to review any applicable data, conduct meetings with focus groups and generate a report that includes potential goals, objectives, strategies and actions, as well as assessment metrics, that support our vision for the future of Arts and Sciences undergraduate education.

I leave it to you, your co-chair and the working group to define its conduct for initial aspects of your work, with the latitude to structure its process in a way that fits the unique aspects of your assigned area. However, to ensure a shared approach and inclusivity in the formulation of our ultimate strategic plan, please follow the steps outlined below and illustrated in the accompanying graphic.

- **Create a Working Group and identify Focus Groups that reflect the diversity of key stakeholders germane to your area**, such as faculty, staff, students, and administrators. Develop strategies for engaging these key stakeholders regarding their perception of your area and future possibilities.
- **Continue to reality test your evolving set of goals, strategies and actions**, understanding approaches will change over time as you deliberate. Reassessment of the utility and viability plans is important as university constraints or emerging societal trends may disrupt and challenge our thinking.

Academic Building, Suite 400
3357 TAMU
College Station, TX 77843

Tel. 979.458-8000
mjzoran@tamu.edu
artsci.tamu.edu

- **Track cross-cutting issues and overlaps that may be relevant to other Working Groups.** Each Working Group has a particular focus, be mindful of ideas that arise that might impact other groups' planning and pass them along to the appropriate chair.
- **Produce a preliminary report by April 11, 2025.** Please include a brief executive summary in your **Working Group Reports**. These brief overviews will be posted on a college website, so as to inform planning progress. Following the completion of preliminary reports, coordination meetings among the Working Group Co-Chairs will be scheduled to explore cross-cutting issues and how the college may address them as well as provide updates on the progress of the Working Groups.
- **Submit your final report on strategic planning by May 30, 2025.** Note that the preliminary and final report have no required format or template at this time, but more guidance will likely be forthcoming. Again, final executive summaries of the reports will be posted to the website.

For the Undergraduate Education Working Group, I ask that you consider the following issues and questions in your deliberation:

Curricular innovation and excellence: What opportunities exist to create new degree programs or initiatives that address changes in the intellectual requirements and changing work environment that our future students will face? How can we optimize our commitments to teaching all undergraduates (through core curriculum or required foundational courses), meeting demands of our majors within constraints of staffing and space, and maintaining an appropriate balance between TT/T and APT faculty? What resources do we need for improved teaching in the classroom and CANVAS? What opportunities do emerging digital technologies offer to enhance undergraduate instruction?

High-impact and experiential learning opportunities: How can we better deliver and measure high-impact and experiential learning for our students? How can we support and encourage faculty to continue and refine existing high-impact and experiential learning as well as develop and implement new opportunities? How can we communicate the value of high-impact and experiential learning opportunities to our students, former students, citizens of Texas, and employers?

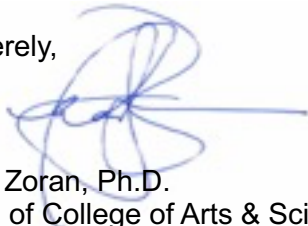
Student advising and career support: What training, resources, and support do our academic advisors need to meet the needs of undergraduate students and enable student success? How can we improve career readiness among our students? How can we engage our former students and other stakeholders to create career-focused programming and increase access to professional development opportunities? What kinds of extracurricular activities are needed to support our students?

Interdisciplinary and interdepartmental undergraduate curriculum and courses: How can we encourage the development of interdisciplinary courses? What are the obstacles we could try to reduce? How can we (or should we) make our programs more interdisciplinary? What are obstacles to interdisciplinary degree programs, for example, a BA in Arts and Sciences? How can we better integrate humanities, social sciences, and sciences to meet student and societal needs?

First-year programming: Within the current structure of New Student Conferences (NSCs), how can we improve the way Departments and the College introduce students to our degree programs? How can we improve our orientation and welcome for Change of Curriculum and Transfer students into our College and degree programs? Within the current structure of Hullabaloo requirements, how can we improve the first-year experience of new students? How can we better understand the needs of our incoming students and adjust our programming accordingly?

Thank you for leading this working group. I greatly appreciate your willingness to undertake this important task for the college. I strongly believe that the talent and resources we have in the college give us the opportunity to become one of the leading colleges of arts and sciences in the nation and I look forward to working with you to make this a reality.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Mark Zoran', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Mark Zoran, Ph.D.
Dean of College of Arts & Sciences