

Mark J. Zoran, Dean

February 12, 2025

RE: Arts and Sciences Strategic Plan: A Foundational Future

Dear Simon,

Thank you for agreeing to chair our Strategic Planning **Research and Scholarship 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 rapidly changing educational and research landscapes and that will best position our college to positively impact the future of Texas, the nation, and the world. The central 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 has access to the **Strategic Planning 2-Pagers** that were produced by departments and the **Idea Papers** that emerged from the Fall 2024 research and scholarship retreat. I charge your Working Group to review these documents and 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 research.

I leave it to you, your co-chair and the group to define its conduct for initial aspects of your work, with the latitude to structure its process in a way that best fits the unique context 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.

- **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 Research and Scholarship Working Group, I ask that you consider the following issues and questions in your deliberation:

Research support: What college and institutional practices support, or could support, our faculty making significant disciplinary impacts on their fields and society? What can the college do to elevate the research profile of individuals, departments and the college?

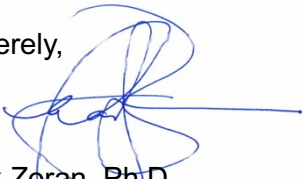
Research interconnectivity: How and where can we build strong research interconnectivity and enhance multidisciplinary scholarship? How can college research centers and institutes enhance our identity and be leveraged for greater opportunities across the college and university?

Faculty career development: What programs, initiatives, and activities might be developed to better advance our faculty members' career trajectory and scholarship? How do we help research-active faculty manage their teaching and service while advancing the excellence of their research?

Research Infrastructure: How do we evaluate current space usage and allocations while advancing our research missions? In light of enrollment and teaching pressures, how can the number of faculty in each department, and the appropriate balance between TT/T and APT faculty, be shaped to enhance our collective research impacts?

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,



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