



STEPHEN F. AUSTIN STATE UNIVERSITY

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To: Steve Westbrook, Interim President, SFA
Cc: Deans Council, Chairs Forum, Faculty Senate

From: Lorenzo M. Smith, Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs
Date: October 21, 2022

Subject: Strengths and Weaknesses of Prospective System Affiliates

Strengths and Weaknesses

The staff, faculty, and administrators in Academic Affairs (Academic Affairs) have reviewed the questionnaire responses from the four prospective system affiliates. Academic Affairs noted similar replies among all four systems in areas such as policy and procedural autonomy, cultural identity, state legislature representation, curriculum control, overall governance, and name/color/logo. Academic Affairs also noted several differences among the responses. These differences are highlighted in the tables below for your reference. Data were collected through an electronic survey facilitated by the Office of Institutional Research.

A. Staff Salaries: Commitment to introduce new revenue to increase staff salaries.

SYSTEM	Weak	Unclear	Strong
Texas A&M University	26%	45%	28%
Texas State University	63%	32%	5%
Texas Tech University	53%	38%	10%
University of Texas	3%	17%	79%

B. Faculty Salaries: Commitment to introduce new revenue to increase faculty salaries.

SYSTEM	Weak	Unclear	Strong
Texas A&M University	32%	43%	25%
Texas State University	62%	33%	5%
Texas Tech University	54%	36%	10%
University of Texas	3%	9%	88%

C. Financial Aid: Commitment to introduce new revenue to increase student financial aid.

SYSTEM	Weak	Unclear	Strong
Texas A&M University	22%	36%	42%
Texas State University	51%	43%	6%
Texas Tech University	42%	43%	16%
University of Texas	3%	15%	82%

D. Signature Programs: Potential to introduce new revenue to advance synergistic programming.

SYSTEM	Weak	Unclear	Strong
Texas A&M University	17%	33%	50%
Texas State University	43%	48%	9%
Texas Tech University	35%	45%	20%
University of Texas	6%	26%	68%

E. Financial Strength: Potential to provide financial strength to support future initiatives.

SYSTEM	Weak	Unclear	Strong
Texas A&M University	18%	35%	47%
Texas State University	55%	31%	13%
Texas Tech University	40%	41%	19%
University of Texas	4%	13%	83%

F. Mission-Centric Budgeting: Commitment to align budget allocations with the SFA mission.

SYSTEM	Weak	Unclear	Strong
Texas A&M University	21%	39%	40%
Texas State University*	36%	50%	14%
Texas Tech University	33%	47%	20%
University of Texas	7%	23%	70%

*Statistical significance: mean responses of Academic Affairs Leadership were significantly lower than Faculty or Staff means (P-value < .05). **Notes:** 1) Percentages may not total exactly to 100, due to rounding. 2) 220 total responses; 1,074 eligible participants invited; response rate = 21%, 3) 134 incomplete surveys (opened link, but did not record any responses or submit); incomplete = 13%

Principles to Consider

Throughout the process of prescribing the rubrics for our assessment, Academic Affairs considered the five guiding principles shown below. During its deliberations, it is requested of the Board of Regents to also consider these five principles.

Student Success is maximized when university leadership chooses to:

1. **Invest in people who interact directly with students:** SFA's frontline of engagement is academic instruction and other services through which students are directly engaged. Examples of people who most directly and meaningfully interact with students are frontline employees like the faculty, advisors, recruiters, reception staff, police, and counselors. Student success hinges upon frontline employee success.
2. **Invest in people who directly support frontline faculty and staff:** People who most closely support frontline employees are, for example, accountants in the Physical Plant Department, interior designers in the Procurement and Business Services Office, and certification coordinators in the Center for Teaching and Learning. Frontline employee success hinges upon supporting employee success.
3. **Promote not only financial transparency, but financial clarity as well:** University leaders effectively run businesses, and businesses need transparency and clarity in financial matters. While establishing transparency can be straight-forward, establishing clarity often requires detailed consultations, effective presentations, and time.
4. **Look most favorably upon mission-centric budget proposals:** Regardless of its financial status, SFA's budget should reflect its mission. If a misalignment between the budget and mission is observed, then an effort to establish greater alignment should be made.
5. **Be visionary about how much further SFA can serve its constituents and community:** SFA is succeeding in advancing success. Its employees perform with excellence, compassion, and pride. Employers flock to its campus seeking *Stephen F. Austin State University* talent. Through difficult, visionary choices, SFA has a rare opportunity to stand out more than ever as THE shining star from Deep East Texas.