



*An Invitation to*

**Stephen F. Austin  
State University**

*to join* **The University of  
Texas System**



***The University of Texas System is pleased to respond to the questions posed by the Deans Council. We appreciate your extraordinary support of SFA and we look forward to an opportunity to work with you.***

## **QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE DEANS COUNCIL**

Acknowledging that there are unique concerns relative to specific units and a diverse set of questions to consider, our intention is to create a framework of inquiry regarding value added through system affiliation.

### **LEGISLATIVE SUPPORT**

**1. How do you utilize your position within the system to advocate for the specific needs of each of your system campuses, especially during legislative session? Please provide examples.**

Each UT institution has its own Office of Governmental Relations with primary responsibility for institutional advocacy. The UT System Office of Governmental Relations works on system-wide budget and policy priorities that impact all institutions, or all eight academic or five health institutions, such as increases in formula and research funding as well as capital building projects through CCAPs. We also address broad issues like the Hazlewood legacy benefit and Higher Education Group Insurance (HEGI) that are important to all UT institutions. Each institution develops its own Legislative Appropriations Requests (LAR) exceptional items, and the UT System Office of Governmental Relations interacts with each of the institutions' Government Relations teams daily during session to support their priorities. On the policy side, we track all legislation here at the UT System to help institutions from having to take on that big task individually. Several recent issues that we have worked on at the System level are changes to statute related to Name, Image, Likeness (NIL) of student athletes, as well as issues surrounding teacher and nursing shortages, mental health, and other critical matters.

# QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE DEANS COUNCIL

## RESOURCE ALLOCATION

### **2. How does the system determine resource allocation to member institutions? To what extent does the system influence allocation of resources within each university?**

General revenue funding for each institution's operating budget is largely determined by the Legislature through formula funding. Capital funding, such as allocations of Permanent University Fund (PUF) bond proceeds, are recommended by the Chancellor to the Board of Regents after being requested by each university president. Other allocations, such as distributions from the Promise Plus endowment for tuition relief, PUF bond proceeds for the Library, Equipment, Repair and Rehabilitation program or the Science Technology Acquisition and Retention (STARs) program for faculty recruitment and retention, are formula based.

### **3. What percentage of each system university's total budget is allocated to its academic affairs division?**

For fiscal year 2023, the budgets of the eight UT academic institutions total \$7.4 billion or approximately 30% of the UT System's \$25.2 billion FY 2023 operating budget. Decisions on allocation of funding are largely determined at the institution level. In terms of operating expenses dedicated to academic affairs functions, Instruction, Academic Support, and Research as a percentage of Total Operating Expenses budgeted for FY 2023 almost all UT institutions have more than one-half of their budgets dedicated to academic affairs. The top three include UT Dallas at 58 percent, UT Austin at 54 percent and UT Arlington at 53 percent.

### **4. Provide examples of how you have invested in students, staff, and faculty.**

One recent example of student investment is the unprecedented UT System Board of Regents' \$467 million Promise Plus endowment to improve affordability and access for students at UT's eight academic institutions. Annual allocations from these endowments support institutions' existing financial aid programs that supplement federal, state, and institutional grants to cover the full cost of tuition and mandatory fees for eligible resident, full-time undergraduate students who have unmet financial need. These funds also help institutions attract more students. **If SFA joins the UT System, it will receive an annual distribution of at least \$1 million to directly support student financial aid.**

Another way we have invested in students is by allocating more than \$25 million over the last ten years to support System-wide mental health and student wellness programs, including alcohol and drug prevention education, a 24/7 mental health crisis line, and expanded counseling and psychiatric services through telehealth to all its campuses. We view the health and safety of students as an important part of our commitment to student success.

As for staff and faculty investments, the UT System provides generous financial support from the PUF for Library, Equipment, Repair and Rehabilitation (LERR) projects to purchase equipment and upgrade infrastructure, and support to help attract and retain top faculty through the Science and Technology Acquisition and Retention (STARs) program.

# QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE DEANS COUNCIL

Over the last 15 years, the UT System Board of Regents has presented annual Regents' Outstanding Teaching Awards (ROTA) to honor extraordinary classroom performance and innovation. Each recipient receives a certificate, a medallion and a \$25,000 cash award in recognition of their impact on students and their institutions. ROTA reinforces the Board of Regents' commitment to ensuring that University of Texas institutions are places of intellectual exploration and discovery, academic excellence, and unparalleled opportunity.

## CURRICULUM

### **5. Describe the curricular autonomy that exists between the system and its member institutions.**

Institutional faculty and academic processes drive the development of curriculum.

### **6. Provide specific examples of how the system invests in academic excellence including program accreditation and accountability.**

The UT System supports the highest level of quality academic standards. Program design, resources, and implementation plans should compare favorably with state, national and international standards. In general, they should always exceed minimum standards of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board or other appropriate accrediting bodies.

In 2008, the UT System Board of Regents established the annual Regents' Outstanding Teaching Awards (ROTA) program to honor extraordinary classroom performance and innovation. Each recipient receives a certificate, a medallion and a \$25,000 cash award in recognition of their impact on students and their institutions. ROTA reinforces the Board of Regents' commitment to ensuring that University of Texas institutions are places of intellectual exploration and discovery, academic excellence and unparalleled opportunity.

Additionally, UT System regularly convenes institutional liaisons to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools' Commission on Colleges to share information, best practices, and solutions.

## IDENTITY

### **7. Provide evidence of how the system ensures that its member institutions maintain their unique identities.**

Ranging from UT MD Anderson to UT Permian Basin, the 13 UT System institutions differ tremendously. Within our eight academic institutions, with UT Austin, four emerging research universities (UT Arlington, UT Dallas, UT El Paso and UT San Antonio) and three comprehensive universities (UT Permian Basin, UT Rio Grande Valley and UT Tyler), the UT System is diverse, and each institution has a unique mission and vision that serves the State of Texas. The UT System does not seek to create homogeneity among its institutions and, in fact, encourages each UT institution to pursue its own path of impact. The UT System will enthusiastically work to support and enhance SFA's rich identity.



## QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE DEANS COUNCIL

### **8. Describe the reasons you are interested in SFA. How do you see SFA adding value to the system?**

Texas is growing more than any state in the nation. With that growth comes extraordinary demands for education, health care, and research as key contributors to Texas' wellbeing and competitiveness. Responding to these challenges is central to our mission; we believe UT institutions have the responsibility to meet the educational, healthcare, and research needs to align with Texas' growth. This includes all our institutions, with a significant role for SFA in the important East Texas region. SFA will be key to impacting household incomes, health outcomes, college going rates in the region and the state, and ultimately improving the quality of life of Texans.

The UT System envisions SFA making significant strides in enrollment growth, expanded academic programs that meet the pressing needs of Texas' workforce, and new collaborations with other UT institutions to allow faculty and researchers to advance their work with more partners and resources. SFA would be a vital institution in the UT System and essential partner in expanding service to Texas.



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***The University of Texas System is pleased to respond to the questions posed by the Academic Department Chairs. We appreciate your extraordinary support of SFA and we look forward to an opportunity to work with you.***

## **QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE ACADEMIC DEPARTMENT CHAIRS FORUM**

### **COMPENSATION**

- 1. How will adjustments (merit, raises, compression) to faculty & staff salaries be evaluated? Provide examples of how adjustments to salaries were incorporated as a result of previous affiliation with your system. How do the salary and workload expectations differ among affiliated universities, and how is that incorporated into salary?**

As part of our own analysis of faculty compensation, we concur that SFA faculty compensation levels are below the averages of those at similar UT institutions, and we believe an additional \$5.5 million would be needed at SFA to bring faculty salaries and associated fringe benefits to that level. **If SFA joined the UT System, we would consider it a priority to assist SFA in closing this gap over a short period of two to three years.** (The UT System plans to do a similar analysis of SFA staff salaries)

As part of the annual budget process, each institution informs UT System of its intentions regarding merit and staffing adjustments. Decisions on merit are made at the institution level rather than by the UT System. Each academic institution develops its own salary and faculty workload policies. UT System policy requires that faculty and staff salaries be competitive. In the current budget cycle, the UT System provided funds to each academic institution to support operating needs—primarily salary increases.

- 2. What policies and procedures govern employee benefits that would be applied to our campus? Are benefits applied equally throughout the system? If there any examples of differences in benefits among your affiliated institutions, then please provide examples.**

# QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE ACADEMIC DEPARTMENT CHAIRS FORUM

UT System offers standardized employee benefits including health (UT Select), dental, life, accidental death, disability, etc. These are administered by the UT System Office of Employee Benefits (OEB). The UT System participates in the Teacher Retirement System of Texas (TRS). In addition to TRS, OEB oversees standardized Optional Retirement Program (ORP) investment options. ORP contribution levels have been standardized at 8.5% for all UT institutions. OEB also makes available a service for retiree benefits billing. One exception to the standardization is that employees in the Dallas/Fort Worth area have a secondary choice on health insurance (UT Connect) related to services provided by UT Southwestern.

## POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

### **3. Will the system guarantee faculty the academic freedom to discuss and opine on controversial topics relevant to the course, even if this offends some students and administrators? Please provide examples of how your system has supported academic freedom among your affiliates.**

Faculty have responsibility for the content, quality, and effectiveness of the curriculum, including the freedom to discuss and opine on controversial topics relevant to their courses. Faculty members' rights to academic freedom are well established in higher education, and the rights that we recognize within the UT System are consistent with those norms, including AAUP's Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom. Individual faculty members are guaranteed these rights under the UT System Board of Regents Rules. (Reference: University of Texas System Board of Regents' Rules and Regulations: Rule 31004: Rights and Responsibilities of Faculty Members).

### **4. When other universities have joined your system, which of these policies and procedures remained local or which ones were merged to the system: hiring process, general counsel, dual-credit, audit services, contracting/purchasing, information technology services, grant and support programs, curriculum & program management, assessment, tenure & promotion process, office of the registrar (academic probation & suspension, audits, graduation, plan of study, program fees and differential tuition).**

If SFA joined the UT System, it would maintain significant authority over the policies, procedures and functions listed above. In some instances, UT System Administration has staff/offices to support but not replace institutional operations, such as general counsel, audit and IT. The UT System Administration has a role in setting high-level policy related to tenure and promotion, academic degree programs, and tuition and fees.

### **5. What system integrations would be required for operational infrastructure? Please provide a list of internal and external software packages related to academic affairs that are used system-wide.**

Institutions are not standardized for academic affairs software. At their option, academic institutions can make use of a student information system administered by our Shared Information Services (SIS). SIS also administers a shared element of PeopleSoft (UT Share) that is available to all academic institutions. UT Share along with Hyperion Planning and Budgeting are currently fully funded by the UT System. The UT System also acquires shared licenses for Microsoft and Oracle along with several other shared software items, to relieve that burden from the campus.

# QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE ACADEMIC DEPARTMENT CHAIRS FORUM

## **6. Will we be able to choose our preferred learning management system? Or is this chosen system-wide? SFA currently uses Brightspace.**

The UT System does not mandate the use of a single learning management system. At present, some UT institutions use Blackboard while others use Canvas.

## **STRUCTURE AND HIERARCHY**

## **7. Please describe the relationship between marketing, advertising, and enrollment management across system universities and how do they mutually support each other?**

Effective marketing and advertising are important components of a sustainable and manageable rate of enrollment growth consistent with the institution's aspirations and goals, and each institution has the autonomy to engage in those efforts in a way that best fits their needs.

## **8. Please provide examples of system wide collaboration between undergraduate and/or graduate programs and mentorship of graduate students.**

Through Finish@UT, four UT academic institutions are presently collaborating on fully online bachelor's completion programs designed for adults who have already earned a significant number of credit hours, but no degree. At the graduate level, several UT institutions offer dual degree programs in collaboration with other UT institutions. Additionally, the UT System Career Exploration program allows students to participate in a series of career exploration and preparation events culminating in meetings with four different PhD-trained professionals from across the System, including faculty members and alumni.

## **9. What autonomy does SFA retain regarding staffing, faculty, and future programmatic decisions? Please provide examples of any restructuring or changes to programs that have occurred when institutions have joined your system.**

The UT System Administration is not involved in decisions on internal organizational structure or staffing. However, in accordance with accreditation standards and our commitment to academic excellence, we require institutions to employ a sufficient number of full-time faculty to ensure curriculum and program quality, integrity and review. University leadership would be expected to provide the appropriate mix of academic program offerings to help drive enrollment and respond to workforce needs.



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***The University of Texas System is pleased to respond to the questions posed by the Faculty Senate. We appreciate your extraordinary support of SFA and we look forward to an opportunity to work with you.***

## **QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE FACULTY SENATE**

### **GENERAL SYSTEM-INTEREST QUESTIONS (POSSIBLE CATEGORY)**

- 1. Why is your institution interested in the potential addition of SFA to your system? What do you see as the joint advantages of such a move? For instance, what are the three most significant ways you believe that SFA would benefit from joining your specific system—and you from SFA's participation in your system? [Feel free to discuss any specific programs, initiatives, general infrastructure, or human capital particularly informing this response.]**

Texas is growing more than any state in the nation. With that growth comes extraordinary demands for education, health care, and research as key contributors to Texas' wellbeing and competitiveness. Responding to these challenges is central to our mission; we believe UT institutions have the responsibility to meet the educational, health care, and research needs to align with Texas' growth. This includes all our institutions, with a significant role for SFA. SFA will be key to impacting household incomes, health outcomes, and college going rates in the region and the state.

Three significant ways SFA would benefit from joining the UT System include: (1) increased faculty salaries and access to financial resources that would support campus infrastructure (PUF, LERR and STARs), student access and affordability (Promise Plus endowment to address tuition relief), and student success (student mental health and wellbeing programs), and standards for appropriate and competitive faculty and staff salaries; (2) new collaborations with other UT institutions to allow faculty and researchers to advance their work with more partners and resources (e.g., Army Futures Command); and (3) participation in system-wide communities of practice that facilitate sharing of ideas, best practices and collective problem solving around a myriad of issues, ranging from enrollment to athletics to accreditation.

# QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE FACULTY SENATE

## 2. How do the programs at SFA fit into your strategy for serving the population of Texas?

SFA's full complement of academic degree programs will be critical for meeting the education demands of Texas' growing population. In addition, certificate and degree programs in computer science, nursing, education, and business will be especially important for meeting the state's workforce needs. And SFA's forestry and agriculture programs will be a vital addition to the UT System, making SFA the UT System's signature expert and serving as a special attraction for other UT institutions to collaborate with and build expertise.

## 3. In which programs or initiatives at SFA do you anticipate additional investment (either in terms of personnel and/or non-human infrastructure)?

If SFA were to join the UT System, we would begin by increasing faculty salaries to meet UT System requirements for competitiveness. **At this time, our analysis shows an unmet need of at least \$5.5 million, and we would prioritize closing the gap within two to three years maximum.** Also, we would encourage investment and enrollment growth in future critical fields that prepare graduates for the jobs of tomorrow and address the State's pressing workforce needs. The six colleges of SFA (business; education; fine arts; forestry and agriculture; liberal and applied arts; and science and mathematics), represent a diverse array of essential disciplines that enable students to explore many different critical fields. While we see opportunities in expanding and strengthening SFA's existing computer science, nursing, and education programs, SFA's leadership would ultimately be charged with providing their own assessment on the appropriate mix of academic program offerings to help drive enrollment and respond to workforce needs.

## 4. How would an affiliation between our universities likely impact SFA enrollment, in your view, if any? What is the reasoning for that conclusion (for instance, based on prior affiliation experience)?

The UT System will add SFA to its recipients of the Promise Plus endowment, a \$476 million endowment fund to augment SFA's current financial aid programs. **Once in the UT System, SFA would receive at least \$1 million a year in new tuition relief dollars.** The UT System also works with each institution to ensure a sustainable and manageable rate of enrollment growth consistent with the institution's aspirations and goals. As a university system, we are committed to meeting the educational needs of the state, which will require each institution to increase both enrollment numbers and degree attainment. Therefore, the UT System envisions SFA making significant strides - not just over the next 10 years, but in the next five - in enrollment growth. In addition to the Promise Plus Endowment for tuition relief, we provide additional support by bringing together leaders and staff from across the UT System to discuss their recruitment, enrollment, and retention strategies. Across the entire UT System, we have seen enrollment increases of more than 6% among undergraduate and graduate/professional students.

## 5. Which institution in your system seems closest in mission, scope, strengths, and weaknesses to SFA? Why do you say that?

As an institution focused primarily on serving the region through high-quality undergraduate education, impactful research and economic development activities, SFA is a unique institution, but in some ways may most closely resemble our newest institution, UT Rio Grande Valley, which has

# QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE FACULTY SENATE

quickly become the region's top institution and has grown significantly in enrollment and program offerings at the undergraduate and graduate levels. The UT System sees SFA as a destination institution based on its unique strengths, and we will do all we can to enhance that standing.

## **6. What programs at SFA do you view as differentiators relative to other regional state universities in your system? Why?**

***SFA has attractive, unique advantages that we would seek to build upon and provide resources to advance important work there:***

***SFA College of Forestry and Agriculture:*** SFA is home to one of the top forestry and agricultural colleges in the country. SFA's strong forestry and agriculture programs are preparing a workforce ready to take on global food supply and natural resource challenges. Its proximity to natural resources makes SFA a destination university for students seeking an immersive, hands-on program of study. As the only school of forestry in Texas located within the Timber belt, graduates have traditionally played a major role in the management of the state's natural resources, and we want it to remain the leader both from an academic and research standpoint by providing resources to it and exposing other UT institutions to SFA's leadership in this important discipline. SFA's strong STEM programs coupled with its leadership expertise in forestry and agriculture could become a signature center of innovation to address society's growing emphasis on enhancing and protection of the environment and sustainability. **The UT System sees a need and a unique opportunity to make this program the best in Texas and is committed to that goal.**

***Nursing and Other Health Care Providers:*** The East Texas region currently experiences some of the most challenging health outcomes in the state, highlighting the need to improve and expand public health efforts and rural health care delivery. SFA offers a wide range of nursing and pre-health pathways to help position students to enter health professions critical for the region. The DeWitt School of Nursing, for example, produces graduates who perform very well on the post-graduation national licensure examination and excel in rewarding careers. Demand for nursing remains high in the region, so expanding nursing education would be a priority.

***Business:*** With an eye on the growing East Texas economy, careers in accounting, finance and management will increase in demand, and the Rusche College of Business has a reputation of producing high-quality graduates. The best source of students trained in these disciplines who will likely remain in this region will be from top regional universities like SFA.

***Education:*** The Perkins College of Education has one of the state's most important roles — to train more teachers for a rapidly growing region and state. With colleges of education at all of UT's eight academic institutions, the UT System looks forward to a high level of faculty and student collaborations to meet workforce needs in our K-12 classrooms.

# QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE FACULTY SENATE

## INSTITUTIONAL IDENTITY QUESTIONS (POSSIBLE CATEGORY)

### **7. Would an affiliation between our institutions require an institutional name change? If so, why?**

No. The UT System will protect and preserve all things Lumberjack, including the name, Stephen F. Austin.

### **8. What changes might you envision concerning the manner in which SFA is marketed and recruits its students in the event that SFA were to become a member of your system?**

Each UT institution has autonomy to develop and implement its own marketing strategies, supported by UT System professionals, including those dedicated to enrollment and recruitment efforts.

### **9. If SFA were to become part of your system, would its mission change to become more focused on research (instead of teaching) than it currently is?**

UT institution leadership is responsible for developing and advancing the mission and vision for their university and presenting it to the Board of Regents.

## SYSTEM V. AFFILIATE OPERATIONS & GOVERNANCE QUESTIONS (POSSIBLE CATEGORY)

### **10. In your system, what is the management and governance structure put in place to oversee an individual affiliate?**

The Board of Regents, the governing body for The University of Texas System, is composed of nine members who are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate to govern, operate, support, and maintain the System. The Chancellor, the chief executive officer of The University of Texas System, reports to the Board of Regents. The Board of Regents selects the president of each institution, and the president has general authority and responsibility for the administration of that institution.

### **11. Will there be an external or internal post- affiliation review process of current programs with regards to performance and/or need after the affiliation? Who would conduct that review process, if one would be required?**

No post-affiliation review process of existing degree programs is anticipated. The leadership of the university will be responsible for assessing the health of existing degree programs, enhancing programs, and strategically developing new programs.

### **12. What would be the status of any open lines and/or personnel searches in progress if our universities were to merge?**

The president has general authority and responsibility for the administration of the institution. Therefore, decisions about open lines/personnel searches in progress would be made at the institution level.

# QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE FACULTY SENATE

## **13. How much autonomy do universities in the system have regarding establishing their own administrative hierarchies and setting university policies?**

UT System institutions have significant autonomy in establishing their administrative structures. In accordance with UT System Regents' Rule 20102: Appointment of Institutional Administrative Officers, presidents are responsible for the appointment and dismissal of all other administrative officers of each institution, including vice presidents and deans. UT institutions have significant authority to develop policies in accordance with applicable laws, policies and rules.

## **14. In general, what operational areas are impacted by system-wide policies, as opposed to affiliate-specific policies?**

UT System Regents' Rules and Regulations cover select high-level policies regarding administration, personnel, academic issues, student issues, development, investments, facilities and intellectual property. The following link provides a complete listing of the [UT System Regents' Rules and Regulations](#).

## **15. If SFA were to join your system, what process would be followed to search for and select the new president?**

The UT System uses an inclusive process to identify and recruit university presidents. The Chairman of the Board of Regents appoints a presidential search advisory committee composed of members of the campus community. Specifically, each committee includes at least one regent as well as members of the university's faculty, staff, student and alumni and civic communities. The committee engages in an intensive review process, recommends candidates, interviews them, and nominates a slate of top candidates to the regents to interview and select. This longstanding process is prescribed in Regents' Rules. In the case of a new presidential search at SFA, members of its Board of Regents would be included in the search process, along with the appointment of faculty, student, staff, alumni and local civic representatives.

## **16. What role would the Faculty Senate have in expressing the needs/concerns of faculty within the system?**

If SFA were to join the UT System, it would have representation on the UT System Faculty Advisory Council (FAC). The FAC is established in Regents' Rules. As an advisory group selected from faculty of UT System institutions, the FAC works with and on behalf of the UT System, with a primary mission of communicating ideas and information between faculty and UT System Executive Officers and Board of Regents and meets with Board every year.

## **17. What similar role would the Staff Council be able to occupy, if any?**

The University of Texas System Employee Advisory Council (EAC) is a selected representative advisory group that works with, and on behalf of, The University of Texas System. Each year the EAC meets with the Board of Regents to present information and make recommendations regarding issues of importance to the employees of UT System.

# QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE FACULTY SENATE

## EMPLOYMENT STABILITY, COMPENSATION, AND BENEFIT-RELATED QUESTIONS (POSSIBLE CATEGORY)

**18. Will you commit to keeping intact all current SFA academic programs (and their personnel) for at least three years? For five years? [Understanding that programs could be reduced or eliminated during that period by SFA's management team itself.] Why or why not would you agree to these timeframes?**

The UT System relies on institutional leadership to assess the viability and effectiveness of academic programs offered by the institution. We would rely on SFA leadership for such an evaluation and decisions about academic programs.

**19. Does the system perform a regular review (and potential right-sizing) of administrative and staff positions? If so, please describe that process.**

No.

**20. Can faculty (or staff) move between universities within the system, as and when employment needs change?**

Faculty and staff have the ability to go through the regular application and review process at the receiving institution.

**21. If SFA were to become a part of your system, would existing faculty and/or salaries be adjusted to become compatible with other campuses in your system?**

Yes. We have done a preliminary analysis of salaries and have determined that SFA average faculty salaries need to be raised to be consistent with salaries at similar UT institutions. An additional \$5.5 million would be needed at SFA to bring faculty salaries and associated fringe benefits to that level. **The UT System would make it a priority to implement SFA faculty salary increases in the next two to three years.**

**22. Would system-wide salary guidelines be put in place for new hires at SFA (post- affiliation)?**

Yes, while staffing decisions including compensation are made at the institution level, the UT System will provide support to increase faculty salaries to the averages of other similar UT institutions.

**23. If there are positions where an SFA employee's pay is currently higher than, say, a system-wide standard for that equivalent position, is there a possibility of affected employees facing a salary decrease?**

No, not that we are aware of, but an employee would not be adversely affected in any event.

# QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE FACULTY SENATE

## **24. Will employee benefit programs like LEAP remain in place in the event of an affiliation, or are benefit programs standardized across all affiliates?**

Tuition assistance programs like LEAP are an institution decision and are not standard across the UT System. UT System offers standardized employee benefits including health (UT Select), dental, life, accidental death, disability, etc. These are administered by the UT System Office of Employee Benefits (OEB). OEB oversees standardized ORP retirement program investment options. ORP contribution levels have been standardized at 8.5% for all UT institutions. OEB also makes available a service for retiree benefits billing. One exception to the standardization is that employees in the Dallas/Fort Worth area have a secondary choice on health insurance (UT Connect) related to services provided by UT Southwestern.

## **25. Are job titles and descriptions required to be standardized across members of the system?**

Job titles and descriptions are not standardized across all institutions of the UT System; however, faculty titles (professor, associate professor, etc.) are expected to be consistent across institutions pursuant to Regent Rule 31001.

## **26. Is there a standard telecommuting policy that would be enforced within the system, and if so, what is that policy?**

No. Telecommuting is permitted and specific policies are made by each institution based on that institution's unique needs.

## **27. What is your process for establishing salary consistency across faculty and staff serving within different system affiliates?**

Please see the response to Question 21.

## **28. What is your process for determining merit increases for faculty and staff serving within different affiliates?**

As part of the annual budget process, each institution informs the UT System of its intentions regarding merit and staffing adjustments. Decisions on merit are made at the institution level.

## **29. What is your process for determining annual salary increases for faculty and staff serving within different affiliates?**

As part of the annual budget process, each institution informs UT System of its intentions regarding merit and staffing adjustments. Decisions on salary increases are made at the institution level.

# QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE FACULTY SENATE

## ONGOING ACADEMICS OPERATIONS QUESTIONS (POSSIBLE CATEGORY)

### **30. What evaluation criteria are used (on an ongoing basis) to determine the viability/retainability of academic programs? How does this assessment process affect annual funding levels for those programs?**

The academic leadership of the institution has responsibility for the ongoing assessment of the viability and effectiveness of academic programs.

### **31. Does the system actively monitor duplicate programs and seek, if possible, to minimize system-wide duplications? If so, how does that process work?**

The UT System does not actively monitor existing duplicative programs.

### **32. What is the process for proposing/creating new programs?**

Using the application forms required by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, an institution submits a proposal to the UT System Office of Academic Affairs for review and approval. Then, the Office of Academic Affairs submits the necessary documents to the Coordinating Board for final approval. New bachelor's and master's programs are typically approved by the Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs within two months of receipt of a proposal. Doctoral programs must be approved by the UT System Board of Regents.

### **33. What system-level funding sources would be available for pilot programs, if any, in the event that a promising pilot could not cover its initial costs?**

Pilot program funding is typically provided by the institution. Support is provided on occasion for broad, statewide needs, such as seed funding for certificate and short-term credentialing programs and is explained further in the response to Question 44. The UT System also provided pilot funding for the ACUE initiative described in response 44, below.

### **34. What is the system's standard level of funding for research and graduate studies at its affiliates, or is this budget amount determined by each affiliate?**

Funding for research and graduate studies, e.g., stipends for graduate assistantships and research assistants, typically come from external grants garnered by the faculty or, in limited cases, from institutional resources. Support for research is provided by programs such as the UT System-funded STARs program.

### **35. Are librarians an integral part of the learning infrastructure in your system? To what extent, and in what roles?**

Each UT institution maintains its own library operation, although there is significant collaboration across the thirteen institutions. The University of Texas System Digital Library (UTSDL) consortium comprises the libraries of its eight academic and five health institutions of the UT System.

# QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE FACULTY SENATE

The UTSDL complements the collection strengths of our UT Institution libraries with online scholarly resources, expanding support for their institutions' services and programs. UTSDL provides access to resources ranging from humanities ebooks to medical research journals by:

- Leveraging group purchasing power
- Serving resource needs at the institution level
- Negotiating and licensing
- Managing licensed resources and business models

We work collaboratively to manage resources with the UT institution libraries and the UT System Advisory Committee on Library Affairs. Providing online scholarly resources, UTSDL advances the learning, teaching, and research capability of every UT student, faculty, and staff member.

Additionally, LERR funds are made available to institutions each year to purchase library resources.

**36. The number of librarians at SFA has been drastically reduced in the last 10 years as open positions were not filled, thereby resulting in fewer research/subject librarians to assist students, instruct classes, perform collection development, etc. Is this something that might change if we were to join your system, or would each affiliate determine those needs?**

Each UT institution determines its own library staffing levels.

**37. Do faculty who teach online receive a stipend? If so, at what rate?**

Stipends for teaching online courses are determined by the institution.

**38. At what stipend rate is development or redevelopment (total revision) of online courses compensated?**

This is determined at the institution level.

**39. What centralized technological support is provided for faculty who teach courses at night, or is this determined by each affiliate?**

This is determined at the institution level.

## CURRICULAR- AND ACCREDITATION ISSUE QUESTIONS (POSSIBLE CATEGORY)

**40. How does your system deal with the issue of standardized curriculum within duplicative programs across campuses? Must the programs, for instance, feature identical curriculums?**

There is no expectation or requirement of standardization across comparable programs at the UT System institutions. Each curriculum is determined by the faculty supporting the program at that institution.

# QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE FACULTY SENATE

**41. How about system-wide accreditation: For instance, is it necessary that external accreditation be performed on all similar programs at once across the system? If accreditation is performed individually, to what extent is the system involved in an affiliate's accreditation exercise regarding a common program?**

Each UT System institution is separately accredited by SACSCOC. Every degree program that has specialized/programmatic accreditation, e.g., NASM for music program, ABET for engineering programs, etc., is accredited independently of any other comparable degree program offered by another UT System institution.

**42. For programs facing discipline-specific accreditation, what type of support (administrative and/or financial) will be provided for them to retain accreditation?**

Financial support for discipline-specific/program-specific accreditation is the responsibility of the institution, but the UT System Office of Academic Affairs offers significant expertise and support during the accreditation process.

**43. What additional financial support (if any) is provided to program coordinators for accreditation or other needs?**

Such support is determined at the institution level.

**44. Are there system-wide meetings (either at the program, college, or university level) to share pedagogical best practices and/or subject knowledge?**

The UT System has a number of communities of practice and stakeholder groups who convene to share best practices across a range of areas important to the institutions. In addition, the UT System Academy of Distinguished Teachers is a member-selected group of outstanding teachers whose mission is to share best practices in effective teaching.

In support of the UT System's effort to increase student success at all levels, the Office of Academic Affairs and the Faculty Advisory Council partnered in 2018-19 to offer UT System faculty the opportunity to participate in the Association of College and University Educators (ACUE) Course in Effective Teaching Practices. The ACUE Course leads to the Certificate in Effective College Instruction, the only nationally recognized teaching credential endorsed by the American Council on Education (ACE).

**45. Are the system-affiliate's students offered preferential admissions at flagship or other system-affiliates' graduate programs?**

An individual who has graduated from one UT System institution and who applies for admission into a graduate program at another UT System institution typically follows the same application and admission process as any other applicant. We are interested in exploring medical school pathways, such as SFA to UT Tyler, for example.

# QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE FACULTY SENATE

## RESOURCE ALLOCATIONS & RESOURCE SHARING QUESTIONS (POSSIBLE CATEGORY)

### **46. How does the system determine how to allocate state funds (example: PUF or HEF funds) across affiliates in the system? Or are these applied for by each institution...and awarded individually?**

HEF allocations are determined by the Legislature. PUF debt allocations are determined by the UT System Board of Regents with allocations guided by the following justification criteria: (a) consistency with institution's mission; (b) project need; (c) unique opportunity; (d) matching funds/leverage; (e) cost effectiveness; (f) state of existing facility condition; and (g) other available funding sources.

### **47. What is the process for affiliates to lobby for funding in Austin? Is this permitted? Discouraged? Performed at the system level?**

Each institution maintains its own government relations operation and communicates actively with state policy makers. State agencies, of course, are prohibited from lobbying. However, our institutions provide information about the impacts that their budget and policy decisions will make on campus. This happens both at the UT System and the individual institutions and we believe that the government relations role is critical in forming successful relationships with legislative leadership and with other government stakeholders.

### **48. What would be the disposition of SFA's endowment funds and its fund reserve balance in the event of an affiliation with your system? Where would those funds be located and managed?**

This decision is made at the institutional level. The option exists for management of funds by The UT System Board of Regents with UTIMCO for the investment management of all funds under the control and management of the Board, including both endowment and non-endowment funds. We expect it would be advantageous for SFA's endowment and operating funds to be invested along with the endowment and operating funds of all UT institutions in investments managed by UTIMCO, unless funds held by affiliated foundations are held and managed elsewhere.

### **49. Do all affiliates in your system share the same bond rating, or are they measured individually?**

The UT System Board of Regents has assembled all of the System's revenue-supported debt capacity into a single financing program in order to provide a cost-effective debt program to all institutions of the UT System. All UT institutions benefit from the UT System's Aaa/AAA/AAA credit ratings, allowing each UT institution to benefit from very aggressive interest rates the System is able to achieve.

### **50. What mid- to back-office support services or infrastructural elements (ex: library and research resources; legal; human resources; accounting; IT; and so on) are shared across system members?**

UT System offers a shared digital library infrastructure maintained by UT Austin. For academic institutions other than UT Austin, the costs are currently paid by UT System. At their option, academic institutions can make use of a student information system administered by our Shared Information Service (SIS). SIS also administers a shared element of PeopleSoft that is available to all academic institutions. This system along with Hyperion Planning and Budgeting

# QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE FACULTY SENATE

are currently fully funded by UT System. The UT System also has a data center in Arlington available to the institutions. The UT System offers standardized employee benefits including health (UT Select), dental, life, accidental death, disability, etc. These are administered by the UT System Office of Employee Benefits (OEB). OEB oversees standardized Optional Retirement Program (ORP) investment options. ORP contribution levels have been standardized at 8.5% for all UT institutions. OEB also makes available a service for retiree benefits billing. The UT System has a broad spectrum of expertise including areas such as legal, real estate, information security, accounting, budgeting, human resources, debt finance, capital project management, police, governmental relations and development.

## **51. To what extent are research resources, particularly academic and research databases, made available to all system members (if at all)? Or do these remain the responsibility of each affiliate to arrange for?**

The University of Texas System Digital Library (UTSDL) consortia comprises the libraries of the eight academic and five health institutions of the UT System.

The UTSDL complements the collection strengths of our UT Institution libraries with online scholarly resources, expanding support for their institutions' services and programs. UTSDL provides access to resources ranging from humanities ebooks to medical research journals by:

- Leveraging group purchasing power
- Serving resource needs at the institution level
- Negotiating and licensing
- Managing licensed resources and business models

The UTSDL works collaboratively to manage resources with the UT Institution libraries, and the UT System Advisory Committee on Library Affairs. Providing online scholarly resources, UTSDL advances the learning, teaching, and research capability of every UT student, faculty, and staff member.

## **52. Is grant funding regularly sought at the system level (and then allocated to affiliates), or does grant funding remain an affiliate-driven initiative? Or do both types of initiatives occur in your system?**

Each institution is responsible for operating and advancing its own research enterprise, including grants. However, UT System regularly provides support for multi-institution research collaborations, such as that with the Army Futures Command and U. S. Space Force Partnership.

## **BUDGETING QUESTIONS (POSSIBLE CATEGORY)**

### **53. How are budgets balanced and managed in this system? More specifically, at what level of an organization's operations are budgets balanced (e.g., program, department, college, Cabinet or VP-level, holistic university, across multiple affiliates, at the macro system level, etc.)?**

Under the Budget Preparation Policies approved by the Regents, budgets are developed at the institution level. These policies address maintenance of operating margin at the institution level and the potential usage of prior year balances. Institutions are encouraged to maintain a favorable margin and minimize use of balances outside of critical items, unique opportunities, or projects funded from prior year income committed for that purpose.

# QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE FACULTY SENATE

## **54. What actions are taken, and at what organizational level, when spending is projected to exceed revenue?**

Institutions generally are expected to monitor their own budgets. UT System staff are available for consultation, but decisions are typically made at the campus level. With regard to monitoring of spending by the UT System, each institution prepares a “Monthly Financial Report” (MFR) that is submitted to System Administration. In months where the Board of Regents has a regularly scheduled meeting, the MFR is presented to the Board. There is also an annual process whereby the financial condition of each institution is assessed.

## **55. Are the percentages of budget allocations required to be similar across all affiliates (i.e., the % of budget that goes to divisions like academic affairs, student affairs, athletics, etc.?) Why or why not?**

No. These decisions are made at the institutional level.

## **56. What percentage of the budget is directed towards academic affairs/instruction across the system? Or is this figure determined within each affiliate?**

These decisions are made at the institution level and approved by the UT System Board of Regents as part of the annual budget process.

In terms of operating expenses dedicated to academic affairs functions, Instruction, Academic Support, and Research as a percentage of Total Operating Expenses budgeted for FY 2023 almost all UT institutions have more than one-half of their budgets dedicated to academic affairs. The top three include UT Dallas at 58 percent, UT Austin at 54 percent and UT Arlington at 53 percent.

## **57. How are your library, cultural heritage departments, and other primary resource areas funded? What is the level of that funding, aggregated at the system level?**

The UT System offers a shared digital library infrastructure maintained by UT Austin. **For academic institutions other than UT Austin, the costs are currently paid by UT System. This contribution exceeds \$13 million.** Each institution is able to direct the usage of a portion of those funds. Aside from this, library, cultural heritage departments and other resource areas are the responsibility of the institution.

## **58. What campus groups are typically involved in annual budget developments—or is this left up to each affiliate? What is the typical timeline and set of informational flows related to the budget development (both pre- and post- budget finalization) within your system?**

Subject to the Board-approved budget calendar, such decisions are made at the institutional level. Academic institutions utilizing the UT Share PeopleSoft instance can also take advantage of a shared Hyperion Planning and Budgeting platform. Beyond this, the process involves campuses meeting with the UT System Office of Budget and Planning to discuss budget development, which typically occurs in late spring to early summer. Drafts/final budgets are provided to the UT System for technical review during the summer for final approval by the Board of Regents at their August meeting.

# QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE FACULTY SENATE

## RESEARCH COLLABORATION QUESTIONS (POSSIBLE CATEGORY)

### **59. Can you provide examples of significant or noteworthy research-based program collaborations across affiliated members in your system?**

There are numerous such examples. UT MD Anderson and UT Austin, UT Dallas and UTSW, UTSA and UTHSC SA each have outstanding collaborative research programs, but there are many other examples. One unique set of programs relates to the cooperative research partnership with the Army Futures Command (AFC), headquartered in Austin at the UT System Building. The Board of Regents allocated \$50 million to support an agreement with AFC that enables a continuous flow of resources, and research and scientific expertise, focusing specifically on medical science and technological innovations extending from the battlefield to civilian care. We have multiple initiatives with the Army, and many UT institutions are involved. These opportunities would be available to SFA as a UT institution. The UT System would be particularly interested in hosting conversations between the prestigious Army ROTC Lumberjack Battalion and the Army Futures Command on military medical advancements.

### **60. What process would be followed to initiate, say, a shared research project or program initiative with other affiliates in the system?**

While no one process is followed for joint research projects or initiatives, the UT System offers support to its institutions on multi-institution collaborations by developing MOUs, contracts, IP agreements, and more. We frequently bring together communities of practice for the primary purpose of facilitating connections and collaboration across institutions.

### **61. How does system affiliation influence the development of research centers, clinics, and lab spaces?**

The UT System STARS program provides funding to institutions for start-up costs related to research laboratories, equipment, and related costs. LERR funding also supports the purchase of equipment, repairs, and related capital costs. The establishment of research centers is approved by the presidents of the institutions.

## TENURE AND PROMOTION QUESTIONS (POSSIBLE CATEGORY)

### **62. Do you use a single set of tenure and promotion criteria across the system? Perhaps within specific disciplines taught across multiple affiliates in the system? Or does each affiliate manage its T&P processes itself?**

Each UT System institution manages its own tenure and promotion process. The UT System Board of Regents has final authority to grant tenure and promotion. The UT System Office of Academic Affairs reviews the presidents' recommendations using each institution's tenure and promotion policy.

### **63. If a system-wide T&P process is in play, can you provide that policy/process description?**

Please see response under Question 62.



## QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE FACULTY SENATE

**64. Would existing tenured faculty be grandfathered in as tenured-and with credit given for their elapsed-time in current position-in the event of an affiliation? What about the time-in-role conditions relative to tenure-track (yet not-yet-tenured) faculty?**

Yes. Tenured faculty at SFA would remain tenured faculty if the university becomes a UT System institution. The time elapsed between the point of earning tenure and the present would remain the same. Faculty on the tenure track would maintain their existing tenure clock schedules.



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*The University of Texas System is pleased to respond to the questions posed by the Staff Council. We appreciate your extraordinary support of SFA and we look forward to an opportunity to work with you.*

## **QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE SFA STAFF COUNCIL**

### **GOVERNANCE/POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

**1. Which of the following policies and procedures will remain local and which will be adjusted to merge with system expectations following affiliation:**

- a. contracting/purchasing,**
- b. information technology applications,**
- c. software purchases,**
- d. emergency management,**
- e. construction management,**
- f. insurance and risk services,**
- g. hiring procedures,**
- h. holiday and academic calendars,**
- i. scholarship procedures/deadlines,**
- j. property inventory/management,**
- k. payroll,**
- l. accounts payable?**

**Please address each item.**

- a. Institution
- b. Institution with standardized Microsoft applications as well as having available certain systemwide contracts.
- c. Institution with standardized Microsoft applications as well as having available certain systemwide contracts.

# QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE SFA STAFF COUNCIL

- d. Institution, with the UT System Office of Risk Management and Office of the Director of Police offering oversight and emergency response.
- e. Varies depending upon the size of the institution.
- f. System, administered by UT System Office of Risk Management
- g. Institution
- h. Institution
- i. Institution
- j. Institution. If SFA participated in the UT Share PeopleSoft instance, the underlying systems are available as a part of it.
- k. Institution. If SFA participated in the UT Share PeopleSoft instance, the underlying systems are available as a part of it.
- l. Institution. If SFA participated in the UT Share PeopleSoft instance, the underlying systems are available as a part of it. Also, a shared license for PaymentWorks is available.

**2. SFA is currently without a permanent president. The selection of our next leader will be critical to our success, and our institutional commitment to shared governance means that many stakeholders will want to be part of the selection process. How will the system approach the presidential selection process?**

The SFA community will play a vital role in the recommendation of a new president. The UT System uses an inclusive process to identify and recruit university presidents. The Chairman of the Board of Regents appoints a presidential search advisory committee composed of current and former regents along with representatives of the university's faculty, staff, student and alumni and civic communities. The committee engages in an intensive review process, recommends candidates, interviews them, and nominates a slate of top candidates to the regents to interview and select. This longstanding process is prescribed in Regents' Rules. In the case of a new presidential search at SFA, members of its Board of Regents would be included in the search process, along with the appointment of faculty, student, staff, alumni and local civic representatives.

**3. What level of autonomy will SFA retain regarding its institutional shared governance practices? Will there be any changes to representative bodies such as Staff Council? How will the system actively facilitate staff representation in system-level and university-level conversations?**

Each UT institution maintains its own shared governance practices. At the UT System level, each institution has equal representation on system-level stakeholder groups such as the Faculty Advisory Council, the Employee Advisory Council, and the Student Advisory Council.

## SYSTEM RESOURCE INVESTMENT & AFFILIATE ACCOUNTABILITY

**4. Please provide specific examples of how system affiliation will benefit SFA with respect to:**

# QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE SFA STAFF COUNCIL

## **a. legislative representation,**

Each UT institution has its own Office of Governmental Relations with primary responsibility for institutional advocacy. The UT System Office of Governmental Relations works on system-wide budget and policy priorities that impact all institutions, or all eight academic or five health institutions, such as increases in formula and research funding as well as capital building projects through CCAPs. We also address broad issues like the Hazlewood legacy benefit and Higher Education Group Insurance (HEGI) that are important to all UT institutions. Each institution develops its own Legislative Appropriations Requests (LAR) exceptional items, and the UT System Office of Governmental Relations interacts with each of the institutions' Government Relations teams daily during session to support their priorities. On the policy side, we track all legislation here at the UT System to help institutions from having to take on that big task individually. Several recent issues that we have worked on at the System level are changes to statute related to Name, Image, Likeness (NIL) of student athletes, as well as issues surrounding teacher and nursing shortages, mental health, and other critical matters.

## **b. resource allocation,**

In terms of operations, the UT System is able to fund certain costs centrally through its Direct Campus Support program instead of allocating these costs to the institutions thereby preserving institutional operating resources. Moreover, the UT System is privileged to have access to the Permanent University Fund (PUF), an asset that no other state in the nation has. PUF assets are created by oil and gas and other revenue produced on 2.1 million acres of land in West Texas called University Lands. The PUF allows the Board of Regents to invest heavily in capital construction needs for all 13 UT institutions. If SFA becomes part of the UT System, it will be eligible for and receive PUF allocations as directed by the Regents for all UT institutions. SFA will also receive allocations for Library, Equipment, Repair and Rehabilitation (LERR) projects, and support to help attract and retain the best qualified faculty through the Science and Technology Acquisition and Retention (STARs) program. **SFA would also benefit from distributions from the Regents Promise Plus endowment created to improve affordability and access across all UT academic institutions, adding at least \$1 million annual to student debt relief programs.**

## **c. employee benefits,**

UT System offers standardized employee benefits including health (UT Select), dental, life, accidental death, disability, etc. These are administered by the UT System Office of Employee Benefits (OEB). OEB oversees standardized ORP retirement program investment options. ORP contribution levels have been standardized at 8.5% for all UT institutions. OEB also makes available a service for retiree benefits billing.

## **d. vendor relations.**

A shared license for PaymentWorks would be available to SFA. PaymentWorks is a digital supplier onboarding for secure, compliant, and optimized business payments.

# QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE SFA STAFF COUNCIL

## 5. What will the system gain by affiliating with SFA?

Texas is growing more than any state in the nation. With that growth comes extraordinary demands for education, health care, and research as key contributors to Texas' wellbeing and competitiveness. Responding to these challenges is central to our mission; we believe UT institutions have the responsibility to meet the educational, health care, and research needs to align with Texas' growth. This includes all our institutions, with a significant role for SFA. SFA will be key to impacting household incomes, health outcomes, and college-going rates in the region and the state.

The UT System envisions SFA making significant strides - not just over the next 10 years, but in the next five -- with enrollment growth, expanded academic programs that meet the pressing needs of Texas' workforce, and new collaborations with other UT institutions to allow faculty and researchers to advance their work with more partners and resources. SFA would be a vital institution in the UT System in expanding service to Texas.

In summary, the UT System envisions SFA continuing all the traditions, programs and qualities that have made the institution what it is today and using those strengths to grow and serve more Texans to successfully meet the demands of our time, with the full support of the System.

## 6. In what ways will the system assist with increasing SFA's enrollment? Describe how the system addresses potential enrollment competition across member institutions.

If SFA were to join the UT System, we would encourage enrollment growth in future critical fields that prepare graduates for the jobs of tomorrow and address the state's pressing workforce needs. The UT System works with its institutions to ensure a sustainable and manageable rate of enrollment growth consistent with the institution's aspirations and goals. As a university system, we are committed to meeting the educational needs of the state, which will require each institution to increase both enrollment numbers and degree attainment.

**SFA would participate in Promise Plus, a \$467 million endowment to provide financial aid in addition to all federal, state, and institutional support. Through Promise Plus, SFA would receive at least \$1 million annually to help relieve the financial burden of eligible students.**

We also provide additional support by bringing together leaders and staff from across the UT System to discuss their recruitment, enrollment, and retention strategies. Across the entire UT System, we have seen enrollment increases of more than 6% among undergraduate and graduate/professional students.

Two of our institutions, UT Arlington and UT Dallas, are less than 30 miles apart, and the UT System Board of Regents has provided significant financial resources to each for new facilities, faculty recruitment and retention, student success and more. Today, they are both among the Texas' fastest growing institutions in enrollment and research rankings.

# QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE SFA STAFF COUNCIL

## **7. Describe system expectations of institutional performance and accountability. How will performance objectives be set and measured? What happens when expectations are not met?**

The Chancellor conducts an annual evaluation of each academic president and reports it each August to the UT System Board of Regents. Each fall, presidents provide the UT System an updated description of strategic goals and priorities for the year and identify the steps they will take to achieve them. Each spring, presidents provide a self-assessment which includes a description of progress made on these goals. This assessment, as well as key performance metrics (including undergraduate and graduate student profiles; persistence, retention, and graduation rates; degree and certificate production; faculty hiring; research expenditures; and financial status and operational efficiency data) are reviewed and discussed, with a strong focus on student access and success.

## **HUMAN RESOURCES**

### **8. Will system affiliation require adjustments to current employment benefits, such as:**

- a. retirement,**
- b. insurance,**
- c. worker's compensation,**
- d. employee assistance programs,**
- e. leave accruals,**
- f. compensatory time accruals, and**
- g. employee and dependent tuition assistance?**

**Please provide a comparison of each of these current (SFA) vs. future (system) benefits, specifically noting potential reductions.**

In general, most UT System benefits are at least comparable to those offered at other state agencies or institutions of higher education. The UT System provides a variety of Insurance, Retirement and Wellness programs for University of Texas employees, retirees, and families, which can be found at the following link: [Employee Benefits](#).

- a.** The UT System participates in the Teacher Retirement System (TRS) and the Optional Retirement Program (ORP). UT System also offers optional 403(b) and 457 deferred compensation plans. The allowed ORP vendors are standard across the System. All UT institutions contribute to ORP at the 8.5% level.
- b.** The UT System offers standardized employee benefits including health (UT Select), dental, life, accidental death, disability, etc. These are administered by the UT System Office of Employee Benefits (OEB). One exception to the standardization is that employees in the Dallas/Fort Worth area have a secondary choice on health insurance (UT Connect) related to services provided by UT Southwestern. UT System benefits are not the exact same as those offered through the Employee Retirement System but are comparable.

# QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE SFA STAFF COUNCIL

- c. The UT System administers its own worker's compensation program separate from the State Office of Risk Management.
- d. Each campus develops its own EAP.
- e. Leave accruals are consistent with state law.
- f. Each institution determines its own policy for compensatory time.
- g. Each institution determines its own policy for employee and dependent tuition assistance

## **9. Will the system allow ERS years served at SFA to count toward the 10-year minimum rule for insurance at retirement?**

This would be subject to the provisions of the Insurance Code, and the UT System would make sure this receives our full support and is addressed in legislation during the integration of SFA into the UT System.

## **10. There is significant concern about the impact of system affiliation on job security. Please describe how you will address positions at SFA that overlap with positions at the system level (e.g., general counsel, Title IX, audit services, human resources) as well as positions that may be currently outsourced at other institutions affiliated with your system (e.g., financial aid verification, groundskeeping, custodial services, and skilled trades work).**

These are institutional decisions based on optimal use of resources at the institution. SFA would review its own needs after a potential affiliation and make these determinations. Outsourcing of any services is an institutional decision.

## **11. In recent years, Hanover conducted salary studies for staff and faculty positions at SFA. (Detailed findings are available [here](#) and [here](#); in short, most salaries at SFA are below average compared to peer institutions and market.) What specific actions will the system take to (a.) close the gaps between SFA employee salaries and salaries at peer institutions and (b.) address salary equity, compression, and disparity concerns?**

As part of our own preliminary analysis of faculty compensation, we concur that SFA faculty compensation levels are below the averages of those at similar UT institutions, and we believe an additional \$5.5 million would be needed at SFA to bring faculty salaries and associated fringe benefits to that level. If SFA joined the UT System, we would consider it a priority to assist SFA in closing this gap over a short period of two to three years. We plan to undertake a similar analysis of SFA staff salaries.

## **ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE/INSTITUTIONAL ALIGNMENT AND IDENTITY**

### **12. How will SFA's organizational structure change as a result of system affiliation?**

Structure, organization and staffing decisions are made at the institution level.

# QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE SFA STAFF COUNCIL

**13. Describe the criteria that will be used to evaluate potential department realignments and position reallocations.**

Any such criteria would be developed at the institution.

**14. In what ways does the system's mission align with the values of our local and regional communities? Please provide evidence of how the system will support the growth, health, and continued success of both our local and regional communities.**

UT institutions have the responsibility to meet the educational, health care, and research needs to align with Texas' growth. This includes all our institutions, with a significant role for SFA. SFA will be key to impacting the community by enhancing social mobility, improving health outcomes, improving college-going rates in the region and the state, and ultimately enhancing the quality of life of its graduates, their families, and the greater community.

**15. Describe how the system aligns with and will further support SFA's current commitment to non-discrimination and diversity in addition to equity, and inclusion practices.**

Across the UT System, we aim to develop a culture, practices, and policies that are equitable and inclusive. UT System institutions aspire to be welcoming and supportive places that embrace differences—not only because they make us a more creative, thoughtful and stronger organization, but because it is the right thing to do. Underpinning this philosophy is a belief that talent is universal—distributed evenly regardless of gender, race, national origin, ethnicity, age or anything else—but, unfortunately, opportunity is not. We believe the UT System has both an opportunity and a responsibility to lead in matching talent and opportunity, and we are determined to have a student body, leadership team and workforce that are as diverse as the people we serve.

**16. To what degree are member institutions allowed to maintain their traditions and unique identity? Will SFA keep its name, mascot, traditions, colors, logo, and ring? Would local traditions and/or institutional identifiers be expected to change over time?**

SFA's name, mascot, traditions, colors, logos, rings and all identifiers and traditions are time-honored and would be retained by the UT System. Decisions on university marks are made by the institution.

**17. SFA is a current NCAA Division I member of the Western Athletic Conference. Will system affiliation result in divisional membership changes? Will the system require changes to SFA Athletics' visual intellectual property?**

No.

# QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE SFA STAFF COUNCIL

## FINANCE

### 18. What level of financial autonomy will SFA retain with respect to:

- a. local holdings,
- b. investments,
- c. construction, and
- d. the procurement of goods and services.

**Please address each item. Please discuss how financial autonomy has been addressed during previous affiliations.**

- a. local holdings** – While institutions can maintain their own banking arrangements, the UT System has four systemwide master banking agreements available.
- b. Investments** – The UT Board of Regents has contracted with UTIMCO for the investment management of all funds under the control and management of the Board, including both endowment and non-endowment funds. It is expected that SFA's endowment and operating funds would be invested along with the endowment and operating funds of all UT institutions in investments managed by UTIMCO, except those that SFA's affiliated foundations elect to invest elsewhere.
- c. Construction** – The UT System Office of Capital Projects (OCP) oversees capital construction. In some cases, the oversight of specific projects is delegated to the campus. For smaller institutions, OCP is more involved and may contract with outside managers for specific projects.
- d. Procurement of goods and services** – Each institution procures its own goods and services. The UT System procures larger software contracts such as Microsoft and Oracle. There is also the Supply Chain Alliance that promotes in-house group purchasing providing savings to participating institutions.

### 19. Please detail any costs that member institutions are required to pay to the system for support services. What benefit does SFA yield from these payments?

There are no charges for services.

### 20. How does the system allocate assets between member institutions?

The UT System does not allocate assets between member institutions.

### 21. Will funds raised by SFA's capital campaign or SFA Alumni donations be retained as local resources, or will they be absorbed as system revenue? Please provide specific examples from a previous affiliation with your system.

Any funds raised by SFA would be retained by SFA, which is consistent with how philanthropy works at all UT System institutions.



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***The University of Texas System is pleased to respond to the questions posed by the Student Government Association. We appreciate your extraordinary support of SFA and we look forward to an opportunity to work with you.***

## **QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE SFA STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION**

### **STUDENT LIFE AND CULTURE**

#### **1. Will we have to change our university's name?**

No. The UT System will protect and preserve all things Lumberjack, including the name Stephen F. Austin.

#### **2. What can your university system offer to our students?**

SFA students would benefit from the UT System's new Promise Plus program, a \$467 million endowment created by the UT System Board of Regents to improve affordability and access across all eight UT academic institutions. **This means that a minimum of \$1 million per year will be added to financial aid packages of eligible students at SFA.**

Additionally, the UT System Board of Regents has allocated more than \$25 million over the last ten years to support System-wide mental health and student wellness programs, ranging from alcohol and drug prevention education, a 24/7 mental health crisis line, and expanded counseling and psychiatric services through telehealth to all its campuses. We view the health and safety of students as an important part of our commitment to student success.

#### **3. Will we have to change our university's colors?**

No.

#### **4. Would e-sports and other student clubs merge with joining a larger system?**

No. Each UT System institution maintains its own e-sports and student clubs and student organizations.

# QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE SFA STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

## 5. Will this change the 100-year anniversary of Stephen F. Austin State University?

No. We support the celebration of this historic event.

## 6. What is the process and/or timeline for joining your university system?

We are committed to making the process for joining the UT System as quick as possible, consistent with action and approvals by the Texas Legislature and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

## 7. Will this affect student employee salaries?

We are undertaking a review of SFA salaries, but do not have an answer to this question now.

## 8. What will students have to give up in exchange for joining your university system?

Nothing. We believe students stand to benefit from joining a system with the academic and financial strength of the UT System, which includes funding from the Permanent University Fund for new and renovated learning facilities, and the Promise Plus program, **which will provide at least \$1 million per year in financial aid support**. All of UT's academic institutions receive these funds. No other state in the nation has access to PUF funds.

## 9. Will we have to change our university's mascot?

No. UT institutions select their mascots, athletics logos, academic marks and other identifiers.

## 10. Will Stephen F. Austin's traditions still be supported if we were to join your university system?

Yes. SFA's time-honored traditions will have the full support of the UT System.

## ACADEMICS, FACULTY/STAFF

## 11. Will there be any changes in current employee wages such as health insurance?

The UT System has conducted a preliminary analysis and has determined that faculty salaries would have to be raised at SFA to be competitive and consistent with UT System standards. The UT System would provide funding as part of a transition plan over the next two to three years. The UT System will also undertake a staff salary analysis.

We anticipate that employees would participate in UT System benefits programs including the UT Select health insurance program administered by Blue Cross Blue Shield. It is likely health insurance provisions would be addressed as part of any legislation.

## 12. Will joining your university system affect academic programs and/or guidelines?

No. Existing academic programs will not be affected by SFA joining the UT System.

# QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE SFA STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

## **13. Will faculty/staff be cut or downsized if we join your university system?**

No. Faculty and staff decisions are made by the institution.

## **14. How will affiliation with your university system support academics and student success in the classroom?**

The Board of Regents invests heavily in library resources that support academics and student success in the classroom. Additionally, the UT System supports student success and academic innovation in many other ways. For example, the Board of Regents just allocated nearly \$1 million to help academic institutions offer in-demand industry credentials at no additional costs to undergraduate students. As a result, students at UT institutions will be able to obtain an industry credential concurrently with their degree, making their skills more attractive in the labor market.

## **15. Will affiliation with your system help us with reducing Stephen F. Austin's financial challenges?**

Yes. The UT System provides a significant level of support to its institutions that helps reduce the financial challenges faced by all institutions of higher education. Through the UT System's direct campus support program, many costs that are typically funded by each institution, such as cybersecurity, systemwide software costs, certain insurance premiums, digital library, etc. are instead being funded by the UT System thereby reducing the financial challenges at each institution. Through the UT System's library, equipment, repair and rehabilitation (LERR) program, the UT System assists its institutions to acquire library materials, capital equipment and fund repair and renovation projects through the use of Permanent University Fund (PUF) debt, which debt is repaid from distributions from the PUF endowment and is not repaid from the institutions benefitting from the PUF debt. The UT System also capitalizes on its size and strength to achieve economies of scale through UTShare (shared ERP and related staffing), supply chain alliance (group purchasing), investment management (UTIMCO), etc.

## **16. How will joining your university system affect the average tuition costs for students?**

**The Promise Plus program, for example, will be a significant benefit to students, providing an additional \$1 million support in financial aid relief.** For example, at UTRGV, no resident full-time student with a family income of less than \$125,000 pays tuition or mandatory fees.

## **17. If we join your university system, will our projected graduation date(s) and/or requirements change?**

No. Graduation dates and requirements will not change as a result of joining the UT System.

## **18. How will joining your university system affect faculty and staff at Stephen F. Austin?**

The UT System will prioritize helping SFA improve faculty salaries to be similar to other UT institutions, based on its recent analysis. It will also undertake a staff salary analysis. Faculty and staff will benefit from participating in relevant collaborations and communities of practice from across the UT System.

# QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE SFA STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

## **19. How will affiliation with your university system affect the library at Stephen F. Austin?**

The UT System provides generous financial support annually for Library, Equipment, Repair and Rehabilitation (LERR) projects. Additionally, The University of Texas System Digital Library (UTSDL) consortia comprises the libraries of the eight academic and six health institutions of the UT System. The UTSDL complements the collection strengths of the UT institution libraries with online scholarly resources, expanding support for their institutions' services and programs. UTSDL provides access to resources ranging from humanities ebooks to medical research journals by:

- Leveraging group purchasing power
- Serving resource needs at the institution level
- Negotiating and licensing
- Managing licensed resources and business models

The UTSDL works collaboratively to manage resources with the UT institution libraries, and the UT System Advisory Committee on Library Affairs. Providing online scholarly resources, UTSDL advances the learning, teaching, and research capability of every UT student, faculty, and staff.



*An Invitation to*

**Stephen F. Austin  
State University**

*to join* **The University of  
Texas System**



***The University of Texas System is pleased to respond to the questions posed by the SFA Alumni Association. We appreciate your extraordinary support of SFA and we look forward to an opportunity to work with you.***

## **QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE SFA ALUMNI ASSOCIATION**

### **IDENTITY**

**1. To what level will the university retain its identity - name, mascot, branding/logo, spirit, colors, traditions, culture, etc.?**

The UT System respects SFA's identity and culture and will protect all things Lumberjack, including the university's name, mascot, logos, colors, traditions, and all marks that SFA uses to retain and enhance its identity.

**2. How will affiliation with the system preserve the integrity of the degree?**

The UT System upholds the highest academic quality standards, consistent with an SFA degree.

### **RESOURCES**

**3. What would be the impact of affiliation on resource allocation? Do we gain more funding?  
Will joining a system stabilize the university's financial situation?**

**Yes, SFA would receive more funding.** It will be eligible for and receive significant funding from the Permanent University Fund for capital construction and specific programs to support faculty recruitment and laboratory costs, deferred maintenance, libraries and more.

Also, through the UT System's direct campus support program, many costs that are typically funded by each institution, such as cybersecurity, systemwide software costs, certain insurance premiums, digital library, etc., are instead being funded by the UT System thereby reducing the financial challenges at each institution.

# QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE SFA ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

Through the UT System's library, equipment, repair and rehabilitation (LERR) program, the UT System assists its institutions to acquire library materials, capital equipment and fund repair and renovation projects through the use of Permanent University Fund (PUF) debt, which debt is repaid from distributions from the PUF endowment and is not repaid from the institutions benefitting from the PUF debt. The UT System also capitalizes on its size and strength to achieve economies of scale through UTShare (shared ERP and related staffing), supply chain alliance (group purchasing), investment management (UTIMCO), etc.

## **4. What resources will SFA gain?**

In addition to PUF funding and other financial benefits, UT System has significant expertise available that can assist SFA in understanding and addressing financial issues. Through the UT System's Direct Campus Support program, many costs that are typically funded by each academic institution, such as systemwide software costs, risk insurance premiums, digital library, and the UT Share ERP are instead being funded by the UT System thereby reducing the financial challenges at each institution. Leveraging the power of the collective, participation in UT System investment programs, risk programs, and debt issuance programs can provide significant revenue enhancement and cost savings.

## **5. What services would likely be outsourced if we were to join the system?**

Outsourcing is an institution decision.

## **6. How will joining a system effect ongoing, and planned, capital improvement projects?**

Most UT System institutions manage their own capital improvement projects, with the active assistance of the UT System Office of Capital Projects. That system office oversees preparation of the Capital Improvement Program based on information provided by the institutions. The Capital Expenditure Policy (UTS 168) provides guidance to institutions along with related Regents Rules referenced on the policy's web page. SFA and UT System would work together on ongoing projects and future projects.

## **PERSONNEL**

## **7. What would be the impact of affiliation on personnel management?**

SFA would continue to manage its own personnel.

## **8. Are current staff and faculty reassured their jobs (job security)?**

Any adjustments to staffing would be an institutional decision.

## **9. Do they plan to right-size our budget by cutting people and/or programs?**

No. Any adjustments to staffing or programs would be an institutional decision.

# QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE SFA ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

## **10. How would SFA staff members' employee pay and benefits be impacted?**

We conducted a recent analysis of faculty compensation that indicated SFA faculty compensation levels are below the averages of similar UT System institutions. Our preliminary work shows that an additional \$5.5 million would be needed at SFA to bring faculty salaries and associated fringe benefits to that level. **The UT System would consider it a priority to assist SFA in closing this gap over the next two to three years maximum.** (The UT System will also undertake a staff compensation analysis.)

Staffing decisions including compensation are made at the institution level. Depending upon the related legislation, it is anticipated that employees would participate in UT System benefits programs including the UT Select health insurance program administered by Blue Cross Blue Shield. It is likely this would need to be addressed as part of legislation.

## **11. What is the likelihood of staff reductions/layoffs/consolidation with system departments?**

Any adjustments to staffing would be an institutional decision.

## **12. Will SFA faculty and staff be brought up to the salaries of the current system?**

As indicated in the response to Question #10, the UT System will prioritize bringing SFA faculty salaries up to those of similar UT institutions by closing a gap of at least \$5.5 million within two to three years.

## **13. Are the preferred systems aware of the compressed salaries? Will they be able to address the disparity?**

Yes, we have done our own preliminary analysis and as indicated in the response to Question #10, we would prioritize bringing faculty salaries in better alignment with similar UT institutions within two to three years.

## **14. How would current pay inequities among faculty and staff be addressed?**

The UT System will prioritize helping SFA improve faculty salaries based on the responses above.

## **15. Will there be any changes in current employment benefits/wages such as health insurance, LEAP employee scholarship, raises in pay for faculty and staff, retention of staff as opposed to layoffs, things of that nature?**

Depending upon the related legislation, it is anticipated that employees would participate in UT System benefits programs including the UT Select health insurance program administered by Blue Cross Blue Shield. Tuition assistance programs such as LEAP are an institution decision.

## **16. What will happen to insurance benefits when an employee retires, if we are part of a system?**

Depending upon the related legislation, it is anticipated that employees and retirees would participate in the UT System benefits programs including the UT Select health insurance program administered by Blue Cross Blue Shield.

# QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE SFA ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

## 17. Will any current standings be overturned (tenure...)?

No.

## ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

## 18. What would be the likelihood of elimination of academic programs if SFA should join the system?

The UT System will not eliminate academic degree programs as a result of SFA's affiliation.

## 19. Will any changes be required to current programs?

Programmatic changes are the responsibility of the institution.

## 20. What programs, schools and departments would the interested parties be able to grow, improve and elevate?

SFA as a whole will benefit greatly from joining the UT System, and we would assist in growth and development of SFA's institutional priorities.

## TUITION

## 21. How will joining a system impact tuition? Would tuition/fees go up or down for students?

SFA students would benefit from the UT System's new Promise Plus program, a \$467 million endowment created by the UT System Board of Regents to improve affordability and access across all eight UT academic institutions. Under this program, eligible students get 100% of their tuition and fees covered, subject to income requirements and other criteria that vary slightly by institution. The program has been successful in serving current students and attracting incoming students. For example at UT Rio Grande Valley, the Promise Plus program is now able to provide full tuition and fees for students whose families' incomes are less than \$125,000. Before the program, UTRGV was able to offer full aid to families earning \$100,000 or less. **SFA would receive a minimum of \$1 million in Promise Plus financial aid to help more students have their tuition and fees covered.**

Any changes to tuition or mandatory fees would be subject to approval by the UT System Board of Regents. UT System's tuition setting process is grounded in a commitment that rates are predictable and that increases are limited to what is necessary to achieve institutional goals within the context of a comprehensive financial plan. In support of this effort, UT System institutions develop long-range financial plans that leverage multiple sources of revenue and expense reduction measures to meet budgetary needs. The Board of Regents did not approve any tuition or mandatory fee increases for Academic Year 2022-2023.

## ATHLETICS

## 22. Will the athletics program still be under the NCAA restrictions from the win with Duke?

This would not be affected by affiliation with the UT System.

# QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE SFA ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

## SYSTEMS

### **23. How will this change the size of the campus for the future?**

Any future growth plans for the university are developed and recommended by the president to the chancellor and ultimately the regents.

### **24. Will student press freedoms continue to be supported on our campus? If yes, how?**

Yes, the System supports freedom of the press for all student newspapers.

### **25. Will the system come in and tear down all of the residence halls?**

Decisions regarding campus capital facilities are made at the institutional level, with the support and assistance of the UT System.

### **26. What benefits will this provide to SFA, the most impactful benefit?**

The most impactful benefit will be financial through PUF support to build or renovate facilities, and the Promise Plus program. Being part of the largest public university system in the state and one of the largest in the country offers SFA more financial resources, expertise, direct campus services, collaborations between faculty and researchers, and many more assets to help SFA grow.

### **27. What will SFA lose in this acquisition?**

Nothing. The UT System intends to make sure that SFA is provided with new resources, support, creativity and strategy.

### **28. Will some services be consolidated, resulting in a less duplication of similar functions?**

No. The UT System does not request or direct consolidations on campuses.

### **29. What are the dollar ramifications for affiliating or not?**

There are many significant and positive implications, beginning with eligibility for PUF support. There are many other financial benefits to SFA including shared services, direct campus financial support, and the Promise Plus Program.

### **30. What is in it for the other University systems to acquire SFA?**

The UT System has as its mission providing the higher education, health care, and research necessary for a growing state of Texas. We work to achieve this through our current 13 institutions, and we are the largest university system in the state. Texas will continue to grow rapidly and need much more of what higher education, and specifically the UT System can provide. We believe that affiliation with SFA can be an important part of fulfilling our mission and will well serve SFA.

# QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE SFA ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

## **31. What are the top 5 reasons [xxx system] believes their organization is the right fit for SFASU?**

1. Our institutions are rich in history and diversity, and each contributes greatly to the state. SFA has a similar history of contribution and fits well with the UT System.
2. All UT System institutions benefit from PUF funding to support capital priorities, faculty recruitment, deferred maintenance, libraries and much more.
3. The UT System can provide additional financial support for salaries and competitiveness for SFA.
4. The UT System's unparalleled financial and debt management expertise can provide significant benefit to SFA.
5. Our institutions are unique and each is allowed to develop and maintain its own traditions, programs, and opportunities.

## **32. Why is each system interested in acquiring SFA? What does each system consider as major benefits of SFA joining their organization?**

The UT System has as its mission providing the higher education, health care, and research necessary for a growing state of Texas. We work to achieve this through our current 13 institutions, and we are the largest university system in the state. Texas will continue to grow rapidly and need much more of what higher education, and specifically the UT System can provide. We believe that affiliation with SFA can be an important part of fulfilling our mission and will well serve SFA.

## **33. Will existing honorific building naming's be dismissed and sold by the system?**

No names will be changed as a result of the affiliation, and any request to name a building for a donor originates at the campus level before being considered by the Board of Regents.

## **34. What parts of our current processes will we lose?**

The UT System will not mandate process changes.

## **35. Would SFA become essentially a feeder school for students who aren't initially accepted to the flagship institution, resulting in many students enrolling for just one year before moving on?**

No. Each institution is expected and encouraged to reach its potential. While we are aware some systems have feeder school arrangements, this does not exist at the UT System.

## **36. Does assimilation with [xxx system] provide a wider range of faculty and student teaching and learning resources? If yes, how?**

Institutions are charged with providing the appropriate teaching and learning resources needed to advance their mission. There are system-level programs (e.g., the Archer Center Fellowship Program in Washington, D.C. for students and the UT System Summer Internship Program) for which SFA undergraduate, graduate, and professional students would be invited to participate. And, the UT System has partnered with the Association of College and University Educators (ACUE) Course in Effective Teaching Practices, inviting faculty from UT institutions to participate in professional development opportunities.

# QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE SFA ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

**37. Will SFA benefit from expertise, experience, and “buying power” of the system in terms of software that the university uses to conduct business, enrollment/recruitment practices, advertising/marketing? If yes, how?**

The UT System provides a number of shared services of which SFA would benefit. These include Oracle Master Agreement(s), Microsoft agreements, including Microsoft A5 licensing for IT security, immutable backup services, and intrusion detection support for cybersecurity paid for by UT System. Institutions also have access to other services (e.g., Internet 2- Eduroam) at reduced costs due to the buying power of the UT System. Institutions are not required to participate in system level agreements but generally choose to opt-in to benefit from the competitive pricing and/or financial support.

**38. What will SFA give up -- although I'm sure a system cannot thoroughly answer the question of what functions, student programs, and academic programs and jobs may cease to exist until a thorough analysis of the university is completed, are there some initial thoughts?**

UT System institutional presidents are ultimately responsible for determining what functions, student programs, and academic programs are needed to advance the institution's mission.

**39. How will the system help make SFA more academically competitive compared to other universities?**

SFA's access to the PUF for construction of new academic buildings, more financial aid, and increased salaries, will all contribute significantly to making SFA more academically competitive compared to other universities.

Other benefits of joining the UT System includes access to a wide variety of community of practice and stakeholder groups whose missions are to learn from each other and share best practices. Among the many current groups are the Guiding Coalition on Student Success, Transfer Advisory Group, SACSCOC Accreditation Liaisons Community of Practice, Library Directors Community of Practice, Student Health Centers Directors group, Graduate Deans Community of Practice, among many others.

**40. What changes do they believe need to be made?**

The UT System plans to support SFA with additional funding.

**41. What do they feel are SFA's strengths and weaknesses? Why?**

SFA has a reputation for adapting and responding to the needs of the region: It has worked hard to address challenges in East Texas, and while the region still lags in other areas of the state and nation in terms of household incomes, health outcome and education rates, SFA has propelled economic and social mobility by enrolling and graduating a high proportion of first-generation college students. However, as part of the UT System, we would help SFA make significant strides in enrollment to maximize its impact and potential.

# QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE SFA ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

## ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

### **42. What happens to the Alumni Association? Will it remain independent?**

The university, not the UT System, is responsible for defining its relationship with and working with the alumni association .

### **43. How does the system view alumni relations for system institutions?**

Alumni relations is essential for the success and wellbeing of any institution, and alumni engagement and support is directly tied to the aspirations, goals, and ranking of a university.

### **44. What type of changes, if any, would be made to the Office of Alumni Relations?**

None by the UT System.

### **45. Do you allow for an interdependent alumni association?**

Yes. The UT System does not make that decision; it is up to the institution.

### **46. Would the system recognize standing MOU's between the University and Alumni Association?**

Yes, UT institutions and their affiliated foundations all have MOUs that clearly define the relationship and expectations of each organization to ensure best practice and effectiveness.

### **47. Would the system make changes to the current administration (cabinet level positions)?**

Other than hiring presidents, all campus employees, including cabinet level positions, are determined by the institution.

### **48. Will the system allow the university to partially fund salary and benefits for alumni relations staff members?**

Those arrangements are determined through an MOU process between the alumni association and the institution to ensure the best workable model and clear understanding of services/duties between university affiliated foundations and the institution it supports.

### **49. How can the system bring value to the 115,000 living alumni (more than 60,000 email addresses) and how to engage with alumni?**

The UT System's Advancement Academy offers professional education, training, and assessments to each of the 13 UT institutions' development and alumni relations offices to help them achieve the highest degree of philanthropic and alumni engagement. The Academy brings in national best practices at no cost to campuses. It also engages in master service agreements to allow campuses to contract with outside consultants without having to engage in lengthy RFP processes.

# QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE SFA ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

## SFASU FOUNDATION, INC.

**50. Can the foundation remain fully independent? If yes, are we required to use the system's investment managers or select our own? Or will the system absorb the university foundation assets?**

That decision is up to the SFASU Foundation. Not all UT institutions have affiliated foundations, but those that do are allowed to make their own decisions with respect to investment management. That said, UTIMCO is regarded as one of the nation's top university investment management companies in the nation, yielding better returns than almost any other company. Today, UTIMCO manages more than \$10 billion in endowed gift funds on behalf of 13 UT institutions, and its market growth has been exceptional.

**51. Describe the structure in which the foundation will operate within the system. Based on the response, do you allow for the distribution of funds from a foundation to support operations of an alumni association?**

Those decisions are determined through an MOU between the university and the affiliated foundation.

**52. Will funds raised in the "Elevate SFA" capital campaign remain with our campus? Would scholarships established for SFA students continue to benefit only SFA students?**

Yes. All gift funds raised by the campus or its affiliated foundation remain with the institution. The intent and gift agreement of a donor is always honored. Every dollar raised by the university remains with the university as directed by the donor.

**53. Does the system dictate endowment spending policies? If yes, how?**

Each university or its affiliated foundation decides its endowment spending policies and shares that information annually with the UT System to include in its annual endowment administration and compliance report.

**54. What will happen to scholarships started by alumni and friends?**

Scholarships will continue to be used as directed by alumni and friends for the exclusive benefit of SFA students.

**55. Would the system recognize standing MOU's between the University and the foundation?**

Yes, a number of UT institutions have MOUs with affiliated foundations.

## CITY

**56. What, if any, consideration has been discussed concerning changes to Nacogdoches who has been generous both financially and graciously?**

The UT System fully expects SFA to continue to engage the generous people of Nacogdoches in the success of SFA and would offer to help whenever requested.