The Commission of 125
A Disciplined Culture of Excellence

September 30, 2004

Final Report

The University of Texas at Austin
The Commission of 125 is a group of citizens convened to express a vision of how The University of Texas can best serve Texas and the larger society during the next 25 years. The Commission was proposed during the 2001–2002 academic year, 125 years after the Constitution of 1876 mandated that Texas establish “a university of the first class.” In the spirit of that mandate, the group was named the Commission of 125.
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Message from the President

Larry R. Faulkner

A distinctive, perhaps unique, aspect of our university’s history has been the recurring call for special commissions of citizens to express a vision for the future of The University and to recommend standards and principles for working toward the vision. Nearly all universities engage regularly in strategic planning, but rare indeed are those who place it so fully in the hands of citizens. The University of Texas has done so for three generations in succession. This report of the Commission of 125 expresses the findings and judgments of the third such process, and it is meant to provide guidance for development of The University for the next 25 years.

Most members of the Commission, but not all, are alumni of The University. Most, but not all, are citizens of Texas. All believe in the importance of The University, and all care about how it can best serve and best succeed. The members have committed two years to a close examination of this university and its opportunities and challenges. The Commission was assisted by a sizable number of our current faculty and staff, including all vice presidents and deans; however, pains have been taken throughout the process to avoid having any part of this report become the voice of insiders. What you read on these pages comes from the members themselves. Every line has been repeatedly debated, and has been ultimately settled, among them. This report therefore merits the utmost regard as a carefully developed expression of the hopes and expectations of a large body of leading, informed citizens.

I am grateful for the large gift of time and personal resources that each member has made in the course of his or her participation. This has been a great effort, requiring the physical presence and active engagement of the membership on many occasions. My every hope has been exceeded by the remarkable commitment of Commission members.

I am doubly grateful for the superb leadership of Kenneth M. Jastrow, II, chairman of the Commission of 125. He has given richly, and more than any other, to assure success in this work.

I also wish to thank Geoffrey Leavenworth, executive director of the Commission, who arranged the meetings, promoted communication, and facilitated the writing and printing of the report. He was ably assisted by Christine Marcin. Both have my personal appreciation for their excellent work.

History will reveal the quality of progress made by The University over the next two and one-half decades. Progress will be shaped by future leadership and changes in the world at large, but it will also be built upon principles drawn from a vision of The University’s proper role in society. I am confident that the Commission of 125 has given, in these pages, invaluable guidance for all who will lead The University into the 2020s. Thus, I commend this report to those leaders and to all who have an interest in the future of The University of Texas.

Larry R. Faulkner

President, The University of Texas
**Introduction**

*From the Chairman of the Commission of 125*

The creation of The University of Texas was mandated by the Texas Constitution of 1876, which called for the establishment of “a university of the first class.” This mandate has inspired The University’s proud pursuit of excellence since its inception.

Today, The University of Texas is an institution that has earned respect as a leading university. It also makes contributions of significant value to the state of Texas and its citizens. Still, it is not yet among the handful of finest universities in this country, and there is more that it could do for the public it serves.

The core purpose and core values of The University of Texas are:

**Core purpose**
To transform lives for the benefit of society.

**Core values**
Learning – a caring community, all of us students, helping one another grow.
Discovery – expanding knowledge and human understanding.
Freedom – to seek the truth and express it.
Leadership – the will to excel with integrity and the spirit that nothing is impossible.
Individual opportunity – many options, diverse people and ideas, one university.
Responsibility – to serve as a catalyst for positive change in Texas and beyond.

The constitutional mandate and the core purpose and values informed the work of the Commission of 125, a group of citizens appointed in 2002 by Larry R. Faulkner, president of The University of Texas. The Commission was convened for the purposes of reinvigorating UT’s aspirations for the next 25 years, determining what must occur to achieve them, and recommending a course of action. Eight committees studied and debated a broad range of issues, and their recommendations became the basis of this report.

Integral to each recommendation is the conviction that The University should pursue excellence passionately and rigorously. Its future operational decisions, at every level, must adhere to the goal of being “first-in-class.” Those in leadership positions throughout UT must be accountable for the performance of their area of responsibility. The University needs the best faculty, the best students, the best research capability, the most enthusiastic and supportive alumni, and the best administration and organizational structure to deliver excellence.

As part of its work, the Commission also adopted a vision statement for The University: *The University of Texas will be the best in the world at creating a disciplined culture of excellence that generates intellectual excitement, transforms lives, and develops leaders. The University of Texas will define for the 21st century what it means to be a university of the first class.*

The vision statement introduces the phrase “a disciplined culture of excellence.” This phrase evokes both the history and the future of the institution. The seal of The University states, “Disciplina Praesidium Civitatis,” a Latin rendering of the words of Mirabeau B. Lamar, president of the Republic of Texas: “a cultivated mind is the
guardian genius of democracy.” A disciplined culture of excellence means excellence in all University endeavors, characterized by strong leadership and an engaged intellectual community, combined with individual and institutional accountability.

In order to create this disciplined culture of excellence, the Commission establishes two strategic initiatives. These two initiatives, which require complex, difficult, and yet crucial structural changes to The University of Texas, are explained in detail in Part One of this report.

Part Two of the report covers sixteen recommendations necessary to support and maintain a disciplined culture of excellence, especially in regard to the daily operations of The University. It also proposes how The University of Texas can better serve both the state of Texas and the world.

The University of Texas has evolved into one of the major public universities in the United States. The University celebrates its status as a public institution and the resulting responsibility it bears. Today, many challenges face academic institutions of higher learning—funding, access, shifting demographics, and the need to adapt to a rapidly changing world. These challenges present both obstacles and opportunities, and they require creative solutions. The Commission of 125 firmly believes that The University of Texas can best serve society by fulfilling its aspiration to be the best public university.

Kenneth M. Jastrow, II  
*Chairman, The Commission of 125*  
*September 30, 2004*
I
A Disciplined Culture of Excellence
*a single imperative, two strategic initiatives*

The University of Texas must create a disciplined culture of excellence that will enable it to realize its constitutional mandate. To that end, the Commission of 125 recommends two strategic initiatives:

**Strategic Initiative One**
Develop a new undergraduate core curriculum to better prepare students for lives of accomplishment.

**Strategic Initiative Two**
Establish a more demanding standard for leadership of academic departments and research centers, and give those leaders the authority and resources to succeed.

**The Rationale**
The Commission envisions a higher level of performance by The University of Texas. A disciplined culture of excellence evokes not only the words of Mirabeau B. Lamar expressed in The University seal,

“Disciplina Praesidium Civitatis,” but also the other meanings that arise from the word *disciplina*: order, knowledge, and instruction. This disciplined culture of excellence requires superior performance in all University endeavors.

To achieve this vision, the Commission recommends a single overarching goal supported by two critical strategic initiatives. Certainly, The University has pursued excellence throughout its history, but the changes recommended here will raise the standard of excellence to which we aspire.

The Commission’s initiatives reemphasize and reinforce The University’s constitutional mandate of 1876:

*The Legislature shall as soon as practicable establish, organize and provide for the maintenance, support and direction of a University of the first class, to be located by a vote of the people of this State, and styled, “The University of Texas,” for the promotion of literature, and the arts and sciences . . . . *

Consistent with the constitutional directive, this report will refer to the Austin component of The University of Texas System simply as “The University of Texas,” “The University,” or “UT, each term honoring the constitutional language.

From its early days through the first half of the 20th century, The University rose in stature, earning recognition as a regional university that in many of its enterprises was the best in the state and region. But the Committee of 75, a group of citizens with a mission similar to that of the Commission of 125, acknowledged in its 1958 report that The University “while eminent in a region . . . does not [yet] occupy a position of eminence and distinction among the truly great universities of this country.”

That challenging report, coinciding with The University’s 75th anniversary, fueled a significant expansion of graduate and research programs, libraries, and collections. UT
gained stature, and by the early 1980s eight graduate programs ranked in the top ten nationally, and seventeen in the top twenty.

On the occasion of UT’s 100th anniversary, the Centennial Commission revisited these issues in its far-reaching report of 1983. One message was clear: “The faculty is at the heart of a university: Any institution aspiring to the highest levels of distinction must have a distinguished faculty . . . The quality of the faculty at [The University] is generally excellent but not uniformly great.” The work of the Centennial Commission resulted in the creation of 572 faculty endowments. During the decade following the Centennial Commission, no university in the nation achieved greater overall advancement in its rankings of graduate programs by the National Research Council. The Centennial Commission sought to elevate The University into the national arena. The University of Texas accomplished this objective.

In assessing where The University stands today and where it should be in another 25 years, the Commission of 125 studied a host of opportunities and obstacles confronting the institution in its quest to become even better. Commission members asked questions like these: If we aspire to be the best, does our campus culture support that aspiration? Do we have a curriculum that ensures that our graduates have learned to think, to write, and to discover? Do our students obtain a truly first-rate education? Do we have world-class leadership guiding our individual academic programs?

The Commission has determined that, too often, the answer to these questions is no. This must change if The University of Texas is to achieve and maintain a disciplined culture of excellence. Accordingly, the Commission recommends two sweeping changes.

**Strategic Initiative One: a new core curriculum**

*Develop a new undergraduate core curriculum to better prepare students for lives of accomplishment.*

The modern world presents challenges that our graduates must be prepared to meet. In particular, they must learn to achieve in a world made smaller by technology and even more complex by the importance of different cultures and peoples. A narrow education, no matter how deep in its field, will not be sufficient. Future citizens will need to think critically and have a confident grasp of the arts, the humanities, mathematics, science, and technology.

The success of UT graduates throughout the disciplines and professions indicates that they have received a generally sound education, and on its face, UT’s curriculum would seem to be doing a good job of keeping up with the times. Currently 14 colleges offer 333 degree plans, 123 of which are bachelor’s programs. But the Commission believes that while the current system offers students myriad courses of study, it fails to equip undergraduates with a core body of knowledge essential to a well-balanced education. For too many degree plans, the current curriculum resembles little more than a vast à la carte menu. While this makes for great flexibility and variety, course-selection decisions are frequently driven by class availability, convenience, and whim rather than by a well-conceived plan of instruction.

Students and alumni have cited other shortcomings such as inadequate development of writing skills, lack of exposure to the great books of civilization, overspecialization of study in professional education at the undergraduate level, and inadequate training in the
tools and methods of research.

UT’s last curriculum review occurred in 1981, and its recommendations are now outdated. The University should prepare its students for a changing and more challenging world. This goal is best achieved through the development of a new core curriculum, defined as an academic program required of all undergraduates, regardless of their majors. The Commission is not recommending a curriculum dictated by a literary canon. While the new core curriculum would require all undergraduates to take certain courses, the balance of their core requirements could be satisfied by selection from a broader list of approved course offerings. The Commission also envisions a curriculum that requires rigorous study and creates more intellectual interaction among students. The core curriculum should replace existing requirements, not be added to them.

To have a first-class undergraduate educational experience, the Commission believes every student should:

- Receive a broad education that includes exposure to culture, literature, foreign languages, the humanities, and the arts.
- Explore mathematics, science, and technology.
- Learn to think and read critically, write cogently, speak persuasively, and work both independently and as part of a team.
- Engage in open discussion, inquiry, discovery, research, problem-solving, and learning to learn.
- Examine questions of ethics and the attributes of effective leadership.
- Acquire a sense of history and the global community together with a respect for other cultures.

The creation of a core curriculum is the province of the faculty. The president should convene a committee to develop a new core curriculum. Once the core curriculum is determined, the Commission recommends prompt implementation. The president of The University should monitor the implementation to ensure that it achieves the intended breadth and quality. A key to success is adequate course availability. In addition, the new core curriculum should be monitored on an ongoing basis.

Core curriculum courses, like all others at The University, should be university-level curricula. Therefore, comparable courses may not be readily available at other educational institutions. Nor should course requirements be easily satisfied through advanced-placement examinations. To the extent that core course requirements are satisfied by transfer or advanced-placement credit, other more advanced courses in the respective subject must be taken both to satisfy core requirements and to give the student a university-quality learning experience.

The committee appointed by the president should confer with UT’s various colleges and schools to ensure that its recommendations meet licensing and accreditation requirements and appropriately enhance each degree program.

The core curriculum should be required of all undergraduates. The University is preparing the next generation of leaders. It is too important a job to be left to the vagaries of course availability, convenience, and whim. The University of Texas can do better.
Strategic Initiative Two: a higher standard for leadership of academic programs

Establish a more demanding standard for leadership of academic departments and research centers, and give those leaders the authority and resources to succeed.

Strong academic leadership at the department and research-center level is a hallmark of our nation’s finest universities. Commission members believe that a key to improving UT’s capacity for world-class teaching, scholarship, and research is to require that those who lead departments and research centers meet a higher standard of excellence, accomplishment, and leadership ability. This means (a) recruiting superior scholars and researchers who are proven leaders, (b) giving them the authority and resources with which to lead, and (c) holding them accountable for the outcome. An external advisory board should be established to help The University evaluate existing academic programs, identify new research opportunities, and recruit exceptional academic leaders.

This recommendation represents a major change in how academic programs are governed at UT. At present, decision-making authority regarding resources, hiring, and new research initiatives is shared three ways—by a dean, a department chair, and a budget council composed of the department’s tenured professors. In many cases, the chair is the least influential of the three. Furthermore, the chair typically rotates among faculty members for relatively short terms (usually every four years) and receives only a small increase in compensation and a small reduction in teaching load. In most departments the chair is an onerous burden to be borne rather than an opportunity to lead the unit to a higher level. The job currently requires tedious work without adequate staff support, which can distract from teaching and research. This is hardly an environment likely to attract strong, visionary leadership. While there are departments that have given the chair adequate authority to lead effectively, they are not the norm.

Much of the current leadership has been provided by The University’s deans. It is unrealistic for deans, who oversee large, complex organizations, to provide the vision and day-to-day guidance to lead multiple departments to excellence. One dean on campus, for instance, oversees 46 academic departments, research institutes, and research centers. Any leader would be hard-pressed to build excellence in 46 academic units.

A substandard department or center has little chance to achieve excellence without the appointment of an outstanding leader who is empowered and appointed for a sufficient duration to direct meaningful change. Typically, such a turnaround takes at least a decade. But empowered leadership can have a profound effect on teaching and research at The University. We can no longer allow leadership of our academic programs to be viewed as an assignment to be avoided. The academic enterprise is too important, too expensive, and too critical to the future to be left to default leadership.

Leaders will be needed to head programs in fields that hold exceptional promise or strategic value for UT. In these situations, it is essential that The University commit the resources to compete successfully for top talent. The Commission recommends that resources be dedicated to select, fund, and fully support at least one world-class chair or center leader per year for the next two decades.

Character and Scope

A commitment to a disciplined culture of excellence will force The University to reexamine its character and scope.
To be the best requires that UT not only attract superb students and faculty, but also achieve national recognition in all academic programs that it undertakes. Every program should rank at least among the nation’s top twenty. An institution that achieves a top-twenty ranking in every department will inevitably be regarded as among the nation’s very best.

Aspiring to genuine preeminence in all possible fields, however, is unrealistic. Given its finite resources, The University must be selective about which programs to emphasize. Underperforming programs should be either eliminated or improved to meet The University’s standard. This is a necessary change from the role The University played during the 20th century, when it aspired to be fully comprehensive. Creating a disciplined culture of excellence precludes The University from trying to be all things to all people.

Moreover, UT should aggressively pursue the highest level of international distinction in targeted academic areas, particularly those that are most critical to our overall mission, character, and location, and in those areas that have a disproportionately large impact on our reputation.

A disciplined culture of excellence requires accountability. The administration must implement systems by which performance of every program is evaluated consistently and rigorously and those individuals responsible for excellence are held accountable. In most cases it will be useful to enlist outside review of programs.
II
Supporting a Disciplined Culture of Excellence
Operational recommendations

The Commission’s operational recommendations to support its vision are organized into four groups:

Recommendations One – Four
Establishing an Environment That Promotes Excellence

Recommendations Five – Seven
Producing a Comprehensive Master Plan

Recommendations Eight – Thirteen
Creating Life-Enhancing Student Learning Experiences

Recommendations Fourteen – Sixteen
Serving Texas and the World and Strengthening The University’s Engagement with Society

Recommendation One
Reduce the undergraduate student-faculty ratio to 16:1 within a decade, with no college having a ratio greater than 17:1.

The quality of education the Commission seeks for UT students can be achieved only if there is a direct and meaningful engagement between students and professors. Such engagement is essential if we are to prepare students for an increasingly complex world. The student-faculty ratio is an important and traditional measure of a quality undergraduate education.

The University’s current student-faculty ratio is 21:1, whereas the nation’s top public universities have an average ratio of 17:1.

Student-Faculty Ratio: 2002–2003
- University of Michigan, Ann Arbor 13:1
- University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill 16:1
- University of Virginia 16:1
- University of Wisconsin, Madison 16:1
- University of California, Berkeley 17:1
- University of California, Los Angeles 21:1 (01–02)
- University of Illinois, Urbana/Champaign 21:1
- The University of Texas 21:1

Decreasing the student-faculty ratio will require reducing enrollment while also expanding the faculty. But the latter objective must not undermine The University’s commitment to recruit and hire new tenure-track professors of the highest quality.

Recommendation Two
The quality of the educational experience must be the primary factor in determining the size of the student body.
The administration should develop a model to determine the optimal size of the student body using factors such as student-faculty ratio, percentage of semester credit hours taught by tenured or tenure-track faculty, class size, and available facilities and financial resources.

Quality of education must be the first priority. To serve the largest number of students, consistent with this priority, The University must improve graduation rates and degree-completion times.

Bachelor’s degrees should be completed in four years unless otherwise required by the degree plan or by extenuating circumstances.

The present size of The University is an impediment to delivering an educational experience of the highest quality. Forty years ago, the undergraduate and graduate enrollment was 22,385 students. By fall 2003 it had expanded to 51,426, a gain of 130 percent. Meanwhile, the four-year graduation rate for undergraduates in 2003 was just 41.7 percent. Among a peer group of the top public universities, UT and the University of Wisconsin have the lowest four-year graduation rates.

Four-Year Graduation Rates: 2003
- University of Virginia 83.0%
- University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill 70.5%
- University of Michigan, Ann Arbor 69.5%
- University of Illinois, Urbana/Champaign 59.1%
- University of California, Berkeley 58.3%
- University of California, Los Angeles 54.6%
- The University of Texas 41.7%
- University of Wisconsin, Madison 41.7%

UT’s low four-year graduation rate is explained in part by the light course loads undertaken by many of our students. They take, on average, just 13.1 semester hours, which is unacceptable. The average should be at least 15 semester hours in order for students to make timely progress toward their degrees.

If the average undergraduate course load increases and more faculty are hired to reduce the student-faculty ratio, the Commission believes that the total enrollment should stabilize at approximately 48,000.

Recommendation Three
The University must aggressively recruit and enroll outstanding students representing the diverse regions and populations of Texas and beyond. In all its recruiting, admissions, and hiring, The University must base decisions on its vision to create a disciplined culture of excellence while building a community that reflects the face of Texas.

A separate office for recruiting students should be established. No single factor should be used for admission. Rather, a holistic approach should be used for the admission of all undergraduate applicants. Factors should include SAT or ACT scores, class rank, socioeconomic background, race, high school curriculum, extracurricular activities, leadership, community service, honors and awards, work experience, special talents, geography, and extenuating circumstances.
The University should exercise primary control over admissions and efforts to ensure diversity. The Legislature should not adopt or retain any legislation that impedes UT’s ability to use a holistic approach to admissions.

To recruit the best, The University must expand its financial aid program. No qualified student should be prevented from attending The University for financial reasons.

**Recommendation Four**

*Libraries, museums, and information technology resources at The University of Texas must rank with those of the best universities in the world.*

The University’s various collections contain significant components of the world’s cultural, intellectual, and artistic record. These treasures must be preserved, organized, and enhanced to support scholarship and education within and beyond the campus. We must continue this tradition by acquiring new materials to advance scholarly research and public access. Our treasures possess great potential to foster awareness of UT, especially via technology, which allows our collections to be shared in innovative educational experiences on campus and throughout Texas and the world at large.

Libraries are fundamental to teaching, learning, and research. As the result of decades of commitment and effort, our libraries are among the very best. Certain areas within our libraries, museums, and information technology systems are already of the first rank. The challenge is not merely to retain this status in the outstanding collections, but to elevate all significant UT collections to that standard.

The Commission recommends a consistent and aggressive program for the maintenance and improvement of UT’s libraries and museums. However, collections that are weak or no longer relevant may need to be phased out.

In a world increasingly dependent upon innovative information systems, it will be impossible to reach these goals unless The University maintains its leadership in information technology. A world-class information technology system is an indispensable goal in itself, but in terms of access to and management of UT’s libraries and museums, it is an absolute imperative. A recognized leader in digital libraries and administrative systems, UT is ideally positioned to develop the technology systems required of a great 21st-century university.

**Recommendation Five**

*Develop a University Master Plan to integrate academic planning and strategic goals with our facilities, infrastructure, and financial resources. The plan should be selective, and results should be measured systematically and objectively.*

The University Master Plan for facilities, infrastructure, and financial resources must serve academic initiatives and aspirations, thereby providing a road map to support a disciplined culture of excellence. The plan must be selective—it cannot apply resources equally to all academic programs. The plan should advance long-term academic goals and identify new initiatives and areas to receive special emphasis.

Both UT’s teaching mission and the student experience are best served by a single, well-planned campus.
The University Master Plan should:

- Prioritize resources to support academic and educational needs and goals.
- Encourage consolidation of duplicate academic or administrative functions.
- Provide a process for evaluating academic programs, and, if necessary, curtailing or eliminating those that are outdated or performing poorly.
- Facilitate cooperation and planning among the colleges, the central university administration, facilities planning groups, and the Office of Resource Development.
- Coordinate facilities planning to assist in recruiting and retaining talented faculty, resulting in improved teaching and research.
- Facilitate specially designed classrooms, offices, laboratories, and other structures when necessary.
- Adhere to the spirit of the Campus Master Plan created in collaboration with Cesar Pelli and Associates.
- Guide fundraising and the development of existing and new resources.
- Identify opportunities to collaborate with programs at other institutions, especially those within The University of Texas System.

The University Master Plan should be flexible, not a rigid and absolute formula for the deployment of resources over a long period of time. It should define the main forces impacting The University, the main challenges and opportunities, and the principles and priorities for development in the near and intermediate term. The plan should be a guide, not a recipe, for leaders who must respond and adapt to the changing landscape in academia and the world at large.

The University Master Plan must address technology, which is a key part of the infrastructure and will play a major role in all university enterprises. UT must embrace technology and commit resources to being on the leading edge of new developments, even at the risk of making mistakes.

**Recommendation Six**

*The University must consistently make the best use of its facilities, especially its classroom and laboratory space and off-campus properties, while maintaining a superior campus environment. New facilities should be designed and built more*
efficiently, with better coordination among academic, facilities planning, operations, and fundraising divisions.

The University has a backlog of critical maintenance and renovation projects, largely the result of the aging of the campus and inadequate resources. It has neglected open spaces that are vital campus assets. There is a shortage of classroom and laboratory space as well as limited land for construction of new buildings on the main campus. Furthermore, The University should use its facilities more efficiently.

The Commission therefore suggests that The University:

- Make better use of existing campus buildings through a faculty compensation system and tuition incentives that promote classes scheduled outside traditional classroom hours and during summer months.

- Design buildings to be multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary. Emphasize flexible use, unless building specialization is essential.

- Renovate or replace older structures, when possible, instead of expanding building inventory, which increases the amount of space to be maintained.

- Develop techniques to cut the cost of construction, operation, and maintenance without compromising quality. Adopt energy and environmental policies that conserve resources. Utilize the Pickle Research Campus for projects where less stringent design guidelines are appropriate, yielding more flexible and less expensive construction.

- Recognize that facilities and space provide capacity seven days a week.

- Coordinate design and construction efforts. Enlist the expertise of faculty and staff, particularly in the School of Architecture.

- Use landscape architects on all capital projects to create environments that are beautiful, efficiently maintained, and ecologically sustainable.

- Develop or lease non-campus properties to create investment income.

- Consider alternative models for development and construction, including joint ventures with private enterprise and non-traditional construction and acquisition methods.
Recommendation Seven

*Build financial strength and develop new public and private resources to support academic excellence.*

The University’s academic strength rests on a financial foundation that includes state appropriations, the Permanent University Fund, endowments, tuition, citizen and alumni support, research grants, commercialization of intellectual property, and other sources. That foundation must be strengthened to accommodate future growth. Of critical importance is increased state support. State funding for UT’s annual budget has dropped from 48.3 percent in 1973 to less than 20 percent in 2003. Despite increased student fees, submarket raises to employees, expanded research grants and contracts, and increased reliance on gifts and endowments, UT has had to finance its budgetary shortfall through deferred maintenance, repair, and renovation of its buildings and physical plant.

Tuition deregulation permitted by the Legislature in 2003 has addressed some of UT’s financial needs, but reliance on tuition increases is not feasible as a single long-term strategy. Increased state funding is essential.

Innovative forms of financing must be continually considered for all University enterprises.

- Non-traditional financing can produce benefits and reduce costs in building construction, joint ventures, and auxiliary services.
- The University should take advantage of underdeveloped and undeveloped assets, including valuable real estate located away from the main campus and commercialization of abundant intellectual property.

The strategic recommendations of the Commission clearly place emphasis on building intellectual capital. Therefore, just as it has been used for building physical infrastructure, bonding capacity should be utilized to fund the development of the academic initiatives called for in this report.

These recommendations require growth of and additional support for the Office of Resource Development.

Recommendation Eight

*Every student should receive effective academic advising and have access to a mentor.*

All students should be assigned an academic advisor. Academic advisors are critical to student success, especially in a university as large as UT, because they provide human contact and personalized advice in a setting that can otherwise seem daunting and impersonal. At UT, professional advisors help students set goals and monitor progress toward completion of degree requirements. In many cases, however, a student may interact with a different advisor at every advising session, which inhibits building a strong student-advisor relationship with continuity.

Effective academic advising is crucial to the goal of increasing the four-year graduation rate. Informed advising can help students avoid enrolling in courses that do not fulfill degree requirements and can also enrich learning by tailoring The University experience
to the needs and interests of individual students. 

Mentors, on the other hand, can offer students general advice on academic development and life decisions. They help students see the larger picture and take advantage of the richness of the campus environment and opportunities beyond graduation. Every student should have access to a mentor who may be selected from faculty, staff, administration, alumni, graduate students, and/or older students. Mentors can provide guidance to students in setting goals, solving problems, and making career decisions.

**Recommendation Nine**  
*Increase the campus residence-hall capacity to 9,000 beds.*

Students who live on campus tend to perform better academically and adjust more successfully to college life. And their very presence, day and night, improves the sense of community that encourages strong bonding with the institution. These observations led to a recommendation in the Campus Master Plan that residence-hall capacity be expanded. The first step was the construction of San Jacinto Hall, which opened in 2000 with 850 beds and increased total campus residence-hall capacity to 6,700 beds.

All freshmen should be able to live on campus. (In fall 2004, of the 5,630 freshmen who applied for campus housing, only 3,660 received housing assignments.) By expanding capacity to 9,000 beds, The University can provide housing to all freshmen who want to live on campus, while maintaining an appropriate mix of freshmen and non-freshmen in its dormitories. Residence-hall capacity will need to be reviewed periodically to consider changes in housing patterns and enrollment.

**Recommendation Ten**  
*Construct student activity space on the east side or on the perimeter of the campus.*

The Texas Union, built in the 1930s for a much smaller institution, cannot meet today’s needs of an active community of more than 50,000 students. Its location on the western edge of the campus leaves much of the student population ill-served, especially those in the sciences, engineering, fine arts, and law.

Space is needed for study groups, group projects, and meetings of student organizations, as well as for rest and recreation. With so many students now commuting from other parts of the city, The University needs more space for students when they are not in class. The creation of a new activity center to serve the east side of campus will be a major step toward building a stronger campus community and improving the student experience.

**Recommendation Eleven**  
*The Honor Code should be assimilated into the culture of the campus and made relevant to the lives of all members of The University of Texas community.*

No faculty, however distinguished, can alone ensure the reputation of a university. Nor can a reputation be ordained by administrators or mandated by committee. It must be earned over time—and largely through a commitment to shared values by all members of the UT community.

It is vital that students help set and maintain standards of excellence at their own
university. The Commission commends the student body for proposing an honor code in 2004. The administration and student body should promptly integrate the Honor Code into the life of The University. Every student, faculty member, and staff member should assume individual responsibility for upholding the reputation, values, and academic integrity of The University of Texas.

**Recommendation Twelve**

*The University should recruit the very best graduate students from Texas, the nation, and the world. It should seek to create for all its graduate students an academic environment that is second to none in intellectual richness and diversity. Stipends for UT graduate students should be at least as high as those at the nation’s other premier graduate schools.*

The graduate and professional programs of The University of Texas make crucial contributions to the economic, intellectual, and cultural strength of Texas, the nation, and the world. In addition, UT’s national and international reputation relies on the quality of its graduate and professional programs. The quality of graduate programs and graduate students can prove decisive in attracting high-quality faculty. Academic leaders and undergraduate students are keenly aware of the quality of graduate and professional programs at universities. In these interdependent ways, the quality of graduate and professional education has a profound effect on UT’s national and international reputation. Moreover, graduate students play an enormous role in a university’s teaching and research.

UT already is a distinguished institution. But if it is to realize its vision of excellence, it must have stellar graduate and professional programs.

Support for graduate students should be a high priority. If increased stipends cannot be provided for all programs, they should at least be offered for programs receiving special emphasis. It is important that UT’s graduate programs include students from racial and ethnic minorities.

While graduate students play an important role in undergraduate education, The University should reduce its dependence on graduate students to serve as teachers at the undergraduate level. Moreover, undergraduate teaching requirements should not drive graduate school admission policy or diminish the intellectual experience for graduate students.

Faculty members should integrate graduate students into the intellectual life of their departments so that the students’ intellectual and social experiences are more akin to those of academic peers. In addition, more must be done to foster a campus-wide social and intellectual community for graduate students.

**Recommendation Thirteen**

*Emphasize the study of leadership and ethics.*

The University has a long tradition of developing leaders at all levels. In a society frequently confronted by ethical problems, it is appropriate that The University help advance the study of leadership and ethics. The Commission recommends inclusion of ethics and leadership in the core curriculum. In addition, the Commission recommends that The University seek to provide all students with leadership opportunities.
Student participation in campus and community organizations and public service has always had a major influence on the development of leadership skills on the campus. The University should take steps to foster even greater student participation and supplement these experiences with opportunities to learn leadership skills.

**Recommendation Fourteen**

*The University should serve Texas by marshaling its expertise, programs, and people to address major issues confronting society at large. The culture of the institution should convey to students, as well as to faculty and staff members, that a commitment to service is intrinsic to a University of Texas education.*

Though it possesses national and international reach, The University has a special obligation to serve Texas. It accomplishes this primarily through teaching, which prepares future generations of leaders and citizens, and research, which expands knowledge and nurtures innovation.

A major research university also serves as a listening post, a connection to the larger world of ideas and new developments. Talented faculty and research staff alert the UT community—and the state—to important new discoveries that influence technology, public health, commerce, culture, government, and other aspects of daily life. UT’s wide-ranging and influential alumni, as well as the Texas Exes alumni association, are invaluable channels of communication for keeping the campus attuned to public concerns.

Logan Wilson, a former chancellor and president of The University of Texas, said in 1953, “We want this University to be truly of the first class, not for the sake of mere emulation or rivalry, but for more basic reasons. The potentialities of a great university as an instrument for the common good are almost limitless.”

The University of Texas has a responsibility to serve the state from border to border and to provide value to citizens even if they are not students or alumni. In addition, citizens can rightly expect this flagship university to:

- Provide expertise and information resources for the people, businesses, and institutions of Texas and beyond.
- Extend educational opportunities and access by new methods, including those afforded through new technology.
- Enhance the quality of life.
- Serve as a major engine for economic progress.
- Actively address pressing public problems of Texas, the nation, and the world.

The Commission believes that UT students, to whom so much is given, bear a responsibility to give back to The University, to Texas, and to society. The University can make them more aware of this responsibility through the curriculum and student life.

Faculty members also share a responsibility to serve the society that supports their research and scholarship. The faculty should embrace opportunities to enlist their expertise to help solve major issues facing society.
The University is in a strong position to lead collaborative efforts of the state’s intellectual, creative, and entrepreneurial resources in ways that will transform individual lives and improve the welfare and governance of Texas.

**Recommendation Fifteen**

*The University must provide the broadest and most effective access to its knowledge and collections in order to share its assets with Texas and the world at large.*

The emergence of the Internet and other technologies has brought dramatic changes in education, communication, and collaboration. Recent developments in digital libraries and access through electronic networks only hint at the myriad possibilities that lie ahead for publication, presentation, and storage of materials. While libraries and museums will remain important places to visit, UT’s collections and other resources will increasingly be experienced through electronic access, thereby removing many traditional barriers to their general use, such as time and location. Additionally, the development of sophisticated micro-technology can offer a richer and more interactive experience during the course of actual visits to university facilities.

These advances point directly to the need for skilled management of resources. To provide compelling experiences, digital libraries will have to be well designed, technically robust, and content-rich. The expertise needed to provide such services is only now being developed. In shaping the future of innovative access to collections and resources, UT should take the lead in developing the knowledge needed to design, implement, and maintain virtual access to our cultural treasures.

**Recommendation Sixteen**

*The University’s communications efforts must convey the value of higher education to society. In addition, UT must clarify its key strengths and distinctive qualities and devise ways to communicate them more coherently and consistently to its constituencies at all levels.*

Texas—and society in general—relies upon an educated citizenry for prosperity and well-being. The University must effectively convey that message. It must articulate, forcefully and persuasively, the crucial role that higher education plays in making Texas, and the nation, more learned and competitive. Communicating this message to the public will require a coordinated effort by all members of the UT community, not just top administrators.

In addition, we must be more aggressive in telling the story of The University—what we do and how it influences the state and beyond. To foster support for UT’s mission and to create a greater national and international presence, The University must build public awareness of its distinctive strengths and its contributions to society.

At present, the institution receives considerable national exposure resulting from the reputation of individual faculty members and programs. But a comprehensive national and international communications and public affairs effort will gain much additional exposure, attracting faculty, students, and staff of the highest quality. In addition to such public affairs initiatives, the faculty should be encouraged to actively present research at professional meetings, symposia, and other events that will raise the visibility of university programs among academic peers and the media.
The Texas Constitution mandated that the institution be designated “The University of Texas.” Accordingly, the Commission recommends that “at Austin” be dropped from the name of the institution.
Conclusion

In the 1950s, the Committee of 75 had enormous impact on increasing the scale and quality of graduate programs, libraries, and collections. The Centennial Commission, which completed its work 25 years later, is justly credited with the establishment of hundreds of endowments that created the legacy of a much stronger faculty. In the spirit of the Committee of 75 and the Centennial Commission, the Commission of 125 aspires to chart a path that will lead The University of Texas to a higher standard of excellence.

Universities are engines of progress, and UT can best serve all its constituencies by fulfilling its mandate to be “a university of the first class.” Indeed, the Commission of 125 offers this report in the interest of making The University of greater service to the state and to society by realizing the goal of elevating The University of Texas from a fine and respected university to the best.
The Next Step
Implementation, Accountability, and the Future of the Commission

This report will be submitted to the president of The University of Texas for the purpose of establishing goals and priorities for the years ahead.

All large organizations resist change, and the recommendations of this report will undoubtedly encounter resistance. Achieving the vision and aspirations described in these pages will require a strong and sustained commitment from The University’s senior administrators and the faculty, as well as from staff, students, and alumni. It will also require increased resources. The members of the Commission of 125 believe that implementing these recommendations and achieving this vision will pay great dividends to Texas and to society.

The work of the Commission of 125 represents an enormous investment of time and resources. Its recommendations need a mechanism that provides follow-up and accountability. The Commission requests that the president of The University issue an interim progress report six months after the publication of this report and each year for four years thereafter. In addition, the Commission will reconvene once a year for the next five years to be informed of progress on these recommen