

Written Testimony

The University of Texas System

for
State Higher Education Executive Officers
National Commission on Accountability in Higher Education

April 8, 2004

Background. On March 11, 2004, The University of Texas System submitted to its Board of Regents its first annual accountability and performance report, the result of a year's work by System administration and all 15 institutions that comprise the U. T. System.

This report was inaugurated more than year before Texas governor Rick Perry January 2004 executive order calling for the development of accountability systems by each public university.

While The University of Texas System and its nine academic and six health-related institutions have always tracked their performance in many areas, this is the first time that a centralized, consistent, and detailed accountability reporting framework has been implemented. It provides information and analysis on how U. T. institutions add value, contribute to state goals, and compare with institutions outside the System.

Purpose. The U. T. System's Accountability and Performance framework and report are intended to serve two fundamental purposes. First, the report will be a tool for System and campus administrators for sound management and strategic planning, the goal of which is continuous improvement in all operations. Secondly, it will enhance operational transparency, as a guide to the people of Texas, elected officials, and policy makers regarding how well the System and its institutions are carrying out their responsibilities.

Scope and Content. The report is organized around four broad themes: 1) student access and success; 2) teaching, research, and health care excellence; 3) service to and collaborations with communities; 4) organizational efficiency and productivity. A fifth section includes data on institutional profiles and peer comparisons. And, each section includes analysis and discussion of implications for future planning. Within this framework, we have adopted a 360-degree view of activities that support the learning, research, and health care missions and priorities of our institutions.

The report includes 70 performance measures for our nine academic institutions, 50 for our health-related institutions, and 15 that focus on system-wide performance, arrayed within the four themes listed above. Although there is considerable overlap among measures for the academic and health institutions, separate measures are included because of their very different missions. For each measure, five-year longitudinal data re displayed where available. These trends will make it possible to track institution

performance over time; comparisons will be to institution goals, rather than institution to institution. The peer comparisons utilize a shorter set of the measures displayed under the main themes of the report. While some accountability systems adopt a shorter list of measures, the U. T. System believes that this robust set of measures will provide the detail needed to support planning, management, and communication needs.

Examples of the kinds of measures in the report include:

- Number of 1st-time, full-time, degree-seeking students (and by gender and ethnicity)
- Average ACT or SAT scores of entering freshmen and GRE scores of entering graduate students
- Proportion of part-time students
- First-year persistence rates
- Four-year graduation rates of transfer students
- Undergraduate evaluation of overall educational experience
- Numbers of degrees awarded (and by gender and ethnicity)
- Total externally funded research expenditures
- Ratio of research expenditures to FTE faculty
- Number of faculty holding grants
- Number of new invention disclosures and new patent awards
- Contributions to K-12 education
- Alumni giving
- Value of endowments
- Economic impact data
- Citizen awareness and satisfaction
- Patient satisfaction ratings
- Total patient care revenue

Use of the report. Our report will be used as a ready reference for our Board; it will highlight key issues; reflect state priorities; highlight successes and areas that require improvement. We believe that accountability is a continuous process of analysis, feedback, and improvement. It requires patience and persistence, to use and refine performance data, take into account the multiple influences on success, and to improve our methodologies over time. Setting performance targets for the future will be based on the analysis of trend lines and comparisons established in the first edition of the report. These data and the analysis will be strengthened by use over time.

Response. There has been positive and strong public response to the report.

- Governor Rick Perry called the report “an important step toward ensuring all Texas public colleges and universities are held strictly accountable to the people of our state.”
- Senator Florence Shapiro (R-Plano), chair of the joint legislative committee on higher education, said “the UT model provides statistics and figures and tells us exactly where our money is going.”
- Senator Judith Zaffirini (D-Laredo) described the report as “impressive,” and said “it should be a model for other Texas higher education institutions.”

- Rep. Fred Brown (R-Bryan) said “other colleges should mimic the University’s model to help better track how money is being spent.”
- A businesswoman from Dallas wrote in an editorial that “...until now we had no idea how well those [higher education] dollars were being managed. The University of Texas System has changed that by making public its first annual ‘accountability and performance report.’ The report lays the groundwork for a new era in Texas higher education. We get to see what we are paying for, how wisely our tax dollars are being spent...”

For further information. The full report is accessible on the U. T. System’s accountability Web page, at:

<http://www.utsystem.edu/cha/AcctRpt/2003/homepage.htm>.