


MEMORANDUM

To: TAMUK Campus Community

From: James M. Palmer 
Provost & Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

Date: December 1, 2023

Re: Student Success and Administrative Structure / Position Changes

As noted in our strategic plan, it should be the mission of everyone at TAMUK that every student who walks into our front door leaves with a diploma or certificate, ensuring that every student is successful.

To this end, Deans, Department Chairs, and members of the Council for General Education have examined with me recent course success rates, previous ETS Profile results demonstrating core curriculum outcomes attainment, and freshmen and senior NSSE data. Discussions also took place about aspects of student success with the Center for Academic Technology and in meetings with the Interim Associate Vice President for Student Success, where we further examined the Academic Advising Model Redesign plan.

An examination of the data and results helped establish a list of strategies to address student success, especially with regard to core curriculum achievement, student retention and eventual graduation. The following items stem from these discussions and other efforts to enhance our mission.

Faculty Development

Faculty members are the heart of TAMUK's institutional mission-driven activities. Increasing support for faculty benefits students and their success. For this reason, starting fall 2024, we will enhance our long-standing efforts through the Center for Teaching Effectiveness (CTE) by transforming the CTE into a Center for Faculty Development with a physical location on the first floor of the James C. Jernigan Library.

The Center will focus on teaching as an art form while enhancing interdisciplinary research and innovation. Aside from additional support for the current director position, course release support will be in place for two faculty roles—rather than just one. This will continue the New Faculty Investment Program efforts while allowing additional support for innovation in teaching with technology and Artificial Intelligence, among other areas of importance to faculty and student success.

Student Academic Success Unit

The Student Academic Success unit under Academic Affairs currently houses Advising, Student Success and Mentoring, the Writing Center, the HEART Project, among others. We will enhance this area for greater support and synergies, and will rename it the Academic Engagement and Student Success unit.

Completing the academic advisor model re-design, increasing mentorship efforts, strengthening technologies, establishing math and degree pathways, addressing DegreeWorks functionality, continuing the efforts to enhance summer bridge programs and working on earlier move-in days for incoming freshmen are just a few of the important efforts we will undertake.

Greater synergies will take place by moving Honors under Academic Engagement and Student Success. While this will mean that we no longer refer to a Dean of Honors or to an Honors College, we will continue to support all honors students as we do currently while identifying new ways to enhance and expand the honors experience. The Global Engagement area currently under Honors will merge with the Office of International Student and Scholar Services. These changes will begin in the spring and finalize during the summer.

One of the more important student success efforts will be establishing an assistant/associate dean position for each incoming freshman class starting with the fall 2024 class. This individual will ‘stay’ with that assigned cohort from their freshman year through graduation. Each assistant/associate dean will work on our first- and second-year experiences, including UNIV. These new roles will be open to faculty as well as to staff, and position details along with application information for the first cohort position will be released in late January.

To support these changes, the currently vacant Executive Director of Undergraduate Advising position will be posted for a national search later this month.

Associate Vice President and Dean of Undergraduate Studies

Further necessitated by these changes—and mirroring the current Associate Vice President and Dean of Graduate Studies Position—the current Associate Vice President for Student Success position will be retitled to Associate Vice President for Academic Success and Dean of Undergraduate Studies.

This position will help advance undergraduate recruitment and retention initiatives in collaboration with enrollment management, admissions, academic deans and department chairs; advance community college partnerships (such as pathways and 2+2 agreements), among others. In addition, the position will work closely with the registrar to ensure the currency of catalog and degree requirements, support continued improvements to undergraduate program assessment and responses to data, and support the process for undergraduate program reviews. This critical position will be posted this month for a national search.

Lab and Classroom Enhancements

Stemming from both our strategic plan and one of the strategies identified in meetings over the last two months on student success is the need to continue enhancing learning spaces. Ever supportive of student success, the President and the Vice President for Finance have identified

and allocated funding to renovate or enhance 15 classrooms, laboratories, computer labs or innovation spaces across our colleges. Some lab areas identified will require complex and sustained renovations through the coming spring and summer. More details about lab and classroom enhancements are forthcoming, but some of the areas identified include: NIER 157, MANN 127, ARTS 123, MUSC 157, RHOD 244 and 246, HOWE 201, BUSI 111, ENGR 104 and 106, and new specialized equipment in HREC 203, among others.

Library Computers

The Library will continue its own student support efforts by working to replace computers, a high-use scanner, and several printers on the first floor. Given recent use-data reviews, the Library will also secure more laptops for rotating checkout. These enhancements will complement the third floor transformation taking place to establish new student spaces for study and collaboration.

General Overview

Through these and other sustained efforts, we will continue working together to focus on our strategic plan outcomes, especially those that align with our North star: student success. I am so very proud to be part of Javelina Nation and the first institution of higher learning in South Texas, and I look forward to collaborating with you to continue advancing our mission.

cc: Robert H. Vela Jr.