

Assessment of the Vision in Action – Strategic Initiative Fund Program

The Strategic Initiative Fund (SIF) is a Trustee and Chancellor entrepreneurial initiative that arose from the Vision in Action planning process. SIF, which was funded for five years, provides development money for creative endeavors that cut across both the traditional budget process and the normal channels for external funding. Approximately \$8.4 million has been awarded cumulatively in support of 61 separate grants (out of a total of about 100 proposals submitted).

Funded proposals fell into two categories;

- A. Pathways to transformation grants – smaller tactical projects.
- B. Transformational grants, - larger strategic projects expected to significantly improve the University.

Each proposal goes through a rigorous competitive appraisal and is required to define the attributes of success. Assessment is thorough. A brief summary of the year-by-year results follows with a concluding summary of the outcomes of the process.

The first year of funding was 2005-06. Twenty-five different grants were funded (\$3,000 to \$218,000) that year totaling \$1.5 million dollars. Grants ranged from one year to five years of funding. Some of the original grants which continue to be funded for Fiscal 2010 are: Successful Graduation, Academic Advising AddRan Pre-major, Undergraduate Research Initiatives, Neeley Leadership Initiatives and the Center for Urban Education. Real World Advertising was funded this first year for a three-year period. It was delayed in beginning operations so funding ran from FY07 through May 2009.

The second year of funding was 2006-07. Again, 25 different grants were funded (\$4,000 to \$146,000). An incremental \$900K was funded this year. Commitments for year two of continuing grants brought the total to \$2.8 million. Grants awarded this year had a maximum four years of funding from VIA sources. Grants awarded in this year that are still continuing include the Writing Associates Program, the Undergraduate Research and Creative Activities Program and the Summer Research Program in Computer Science. A number of programs were funded for three-years and will complete their VIA funding this May. These include Center for Healthy Aging, Oxford Sustainable Futures, and Supply Chair Technology Lab. Portions of some of these programs may have been absorbed into the units through reallocation of resources, but no additional funds were allocated.

The third year was 2007-08. Five new grants (\$12,000 to \$135,000) were made this year totaling \$610 thousand. These grants included Graduate Aid Initiatives, the Satellite Art Gallery, the Purple Bike Program, the Center for Civic Literacy and the Collaborative Conservation project. The Purple Bike project was funded for only one year, but has managed to raise funds to continue and expand the purchase of bikes. The Art Gallery was funded for two years and continues to be funded by operations.

The fourth year of funding was 2008-09. Four new grants totaling \$461 thousand were funded (\$63,000 to \$136,500). The total being funded by VIA for this budget year will be \$2.8 million. These programs include a Student Machine Shop, the Summer Shakespeare Festival, the Transitions Academy and the Junior Faculty Summer Research Program. These grants will be for two budget years and end in May 2010 in terms of Vision in Action Funding. The Junior Faculty

Summer Research Program was permanently funded. The jury is still out on the Shakespeare Festival which has received rave reviews, but does not seem to generate sufficient dollars to be fund itself.

Funding for VIA Grants for Fiscal 2010 (budget beginning June 1, 2009 and ending May 31, 2010) was \$1.8 million and funded 6 grants from the first year; three grants from the second year; three grants from the third year; and 4 grants from the fourth year.

The following summary highlights some of the results of the program.

Successful Strategic grants with high visibility for the University (Examples)

- a. The ***TCU-Oxford Sustainable Futures Initiative*** (PI Mike Slattery), a grant of \$60,000 annually for three years that has now resulted in a five year \$2.9 million grant from Florida Power and Light to underwrite and expand the program.
- b. The ***Child Development Institute*** (PIs Karyn Purvis and David Cross), a transformational grant that received \$150,000 for two years and has resulted in \$4.0 million external funding for troubled adoptive children research, major coverage in *Newsweek*, and an invitation to the White House.
- c. The ***Neeley Next Generation Leadership Program***, (PI Chris Riordan), a transformational grant of \$200,000 for four years that has received a pledge for a \$2.5 million endowment from Burlington Northern Santa Fe railroad.

Successful grants with high internal impact (Examples)

- a. ***The Common Reading for Freshmen*** received \$16,000 for two years and is designed to introduce freshmen to university academics. 93% of 2007/8 participants voluntarily wrote an essay on Freedom of Speech. This program will likely be adsorbed into the general University budget.
- b. ***The Piano Texas Program***, which received \$40,000 for two years, has attracted international participants in the Music field and received invaluable publicity for the TCU School of Music. Permanent funding is being sought for this program.
- c. ***The Successful Graduation Initiative***, a \$200,000 grant over five years, that has already improved the freshman retention rate from 81% to 86%. As a result the six-year graduation rate has increased to 69%.
- d. ***The Fort Worth ISD Workplace Spanish Program***, funded by TCU at less than \$20,000, proved to the FWISD that the Spanish program designed especially for their educators is a worthwhile investment. During the second year, the District and the participating teachers paid the full cost and the program continues.

e. **The Urban Education Center**, which received funding of approximately \$90,000 a year for four years, has been successful in developing programs such as the English as a Second Language Summer Institute, the Bilingual Teaching Assistant Program and the Teaching Fellows Program. While the program has not been successful in attaining external funding and has had to eliminate its associate director, programs continue to be offered and supported.

f. **The Introducing TCU CD**, developed at a cost of \$30,000 and aimed at prospective students (and parents) has been a very successful initiative. The Dean of Admissions now administers the CD.

g. **Junior Faculty Summer Research Program**, funded 20 faculty members for \$6,000 so that they could devote their summers to a research agenda instead of full-time teaching. As a result six book projects, 15 journal articles, six conference presentations, two major grant applications and numerous field work has been accomplished. The program is now a part of the university budget.

h. **An AddRan Pre-major Advising grant** received approximately \$200,000 annually for five years. This project has been successful in retaining pre-majors and those in AddRan College. There is widespread applicability throughout the University and the University continues to study its options regarding advising. The pilot program was made a part of the permanent budget.

Big Difference Small Group grants (Examples):

a. **Theatre TCU at the Edinburgh Festival** received \$25,000 to take a group of 12 students to perform an original piece at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. The experience was amazingly transformative for participating students. The Dean of Fine Arts has challenged his Board of Visitors to help make a visit to the Festival part of the TCU Promise for students in the Performing Arts (Theatre, Music and Dance) on a rotational basis.

b. **The TCU Purple Bike Program**, initially recommended by a student group to a faculty mentor, received \$15,000 to purchase purple bikes to encourage students to live healthier life styles and practice sustainability. The program now has over 25 bikes in service and has received favorable publicity in the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*. While some potential donors have been found this program has probably reached full funding from the University.

c. **The TCU Real World Advertising Public Relations Agency** received approximately \$200,000 for four years. The program was slow getting off the ground and while it will provide real-world experience for TCU students, it was unable to sustain itself financially, but had considerable support in a limited arena. The Schieffer School plans to incorporate much of the program into its regular curriculum with full-time faculty administration rather than a stand-alone staff..

Grants that did Not Reach Full Potential (Examples)

a. ***TCU in Guanajuato, Mexico*** received \$14,000 in funding. This project did not fully establish an exchange program between faculty and students. Upon evaluation, the Office of International Education was unwilling to name Guanajuato as the primary TCU site for students studying in the Americas.

b. ***The Center for Business and Economic Forecasting*** received \$120,000 in funding. The Center was unable to garner support from the business community to generate sufficient funding to sustain itself.

c. ***The TCU School of Music Piano Pedagogy Enhancement*** received \$40,000 in funding in the hopes of developing a permanent link with the Julliard School of Music via Internet II. While several outstanding performances between international musicians and TCU students have been successful, the link with Julliard has not resulted due to problems at Julliard, not TCU.

Conclusions

The five-year (Fiscal 06 – Fiscal 10) Strategic Initiative Fund investment has had the following results:

- A. Some high profile programs have brought in very substantial external funding.
- B. Many operations of the University have been significantly improved.
- C. Some operations have not achieved their initial promise and will not continue.

A total of \$8.4 million was awarded over the period. A total of \$7.5 million came into the University to support the programs. Major Grants were to the Oxford project (\$2.9 million) and Major Foundation funding to the Child Development Institute (\$4.3 million) account for most of the funding. However, an additional \$350 thousand came in for ticket sales, miscellaneous income and smaller gifts.

In addition SIF has had positive intangible results. It has acted as a catalyst that has encouraged creativity, collaboration and communication across campus and has significantly improved faculty morale. The program distinguishes TCU academically and is a decided edge in recruiting able faculty. As results are presented to the broader world of higher education it will undoubtedly enhance our reputation.

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