## A VISION FOR UTSA

**Strategic Plan Refresh Steering Committee Report** 



August 14, 2023

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### A VISION FOR UTSA

#### A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT EIGHMY



Before my arrival, UTSA was already on a solid course for institutional transformation due to significant investments in student success and research excellence. UTSA's ten-year strategic plan—A Vision for UTSA (2018-2028)—lays the groundwork to build an even stronger university from this foundation.

In the five years since the plan's creation, much has changed. Most notably, UTSA has completed dozens of <u>strategic</u> <u>initiatives</u> to significantly advance progress toward our three strategic destinations, earned the R1 Carnegie Classification, and adapted to the paradigm-shifting impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Today, UTSA awards more degrees than at any point in its history—and those graduates have likely earned their degrees in less time and have accumulated much less debt. In

just five years, we have substantially grown our endowment, expanded our facilities, witnessed great successes in our athletics program, and continue to align our academic portfolio with workforce needs to ensure we provide our students and our region with targeted opportunities.

These many accomplishments are a testament to the creativity, dedication and hard work of the UTSA community. I am so proud of the work we have accomplished together, yet I know we have more to do.

A year ago, to fulfill a mandate from the University of Texas System Regents, I assembled the Strategic Plan Refresh Steering Committee. I charged the committee to undertake a yearlong mild "refresh" process to affirm our strategic destinations, apply insights and lessons learned and position ourselves to continue becoming one of the nation's leading Hispanic-Serving public research universities. Committee members responded by providing both leadership and facilitation for an important process to decide together our big, bold bets for the future of UTSA.

The work of the Strategic Plan Refresh Steering Committee will figure prominently in my upcoming presentation to the UT System Regents later this fall.

I look forward to working with all Roadrunners to finish what we started,

President Taylor Eighmy

#### A NOTE FROM THE STEERING COMMITTEE CHAIR

President Eighmy and Members of the UTSA Community,

I am writing on behalf of the members of the Strategic Planning Refresh Subcommittee to share our findings and recommendations regarding UTSA's strategic plan.

During the past year, it has been my honor to join the UTSA community in celebrating our shared accomplishments and imagining together how UTSA will continue to build on our strengths to fulfill our potential. The refresh effort was successful because the UTSA community participated actively at every stage. Faculty, staff and students shared their voices and proposed ways to make UTSA an even better place to study, learn, discover and work. I am confident that, moving forward, our community will continue to demonstrate this high level of engagement and commitment as we implement new initiatives to reach our strategic destinations.



On behalf of the Steering Committee, I also want to express our deepest gratitude to Kimberly Andrews Espy for her exceptional leadership throughout this process. This powerful year of reflection, dialogue, listening, and shared visioning for the Roadrunner community would not have been possible without her contributions.

This year has served as a reminder that UTSA's future depends on all of us to lend our time and talents to reach our bold aspirations. Time and time again, this community has signaled that it is ready to meet whatever challenges we face.

I thank the UTSA community for participating in this important work,

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Heather Shipley, Interim Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs Chair, Strategic Plan Refresh Steering Committee STRATEGIC PLAN REFRESH STEERING COMMITTEE

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#### ABOUT UTSA'S STRATEGIC PLAN

In 2017, UTSA launched a strategic planning process to build on past success and chart the course for the coming decade. Arriving at the halfway point, UTSA has made strides to reach its three strategic destinations:

- 1. UTSA will be a model for student success
- 2. UTSA will be a great public research university
- 3. UTSA will be an exemplar for strategic growth and innovative excellence

Since the launch of the plan, UTSA has celebrated many notable successes, including being named the first Carnegie R1 institution in San Antonio, dramatically reducing the time it takes for students to earn a degree, achieving new milestones in both enrollment and fundraising, completing capital projects to improve where we learn, work, and discover, forging new partnerships, and exemplifying what it means to be a Hispanic-thriving public research university by achieving the prestigious Seal of Excelencia.

#### REFRESH PROCESS GOALS

#### Why a refresh?

Under the current strategic plan, the UTSA community has come together to serve students and deliver our mission in a changing world. As required by the University of Texas System Regents, during the 2022-23 academic year, UTSA will undertake a refresh process to celebrate its successes, hone its approach and align its resources to ensure continued forward momentum.

#### A refreshed plan will allow us to:

- Acknowledge what we have achieved since the launch of the plan in 2018
- **Map** our progress and chart our future directions
- Adapt to changes in the higher education landscape
- **Capitalize** on lessons learned during the pandemic
- Align our goals and pro forma (long-range financial plan) as required by UT Regents



#### **ABOUT THE REFRESH PROCESS**

During the 2022-23 academic year, the UTSA community has worked diligently to undertake a comprehensive, transparent and engaging refresh process under the leadership of the Steering Committee. Stakeholder feedback was actively sought and collected throughout the highly iterative process.

For transparency and accountability, findings from each stage were posted on the strategic plan website (<u>utsa.edu/strategic-plan-refresh/</u>).

#### **UTSA's Strategic Plan Refresh Process Featured Four Steps:**



**REFLECT** In the fall semester, steering committee members met with their respective units and shared governance groups to update them on what UTSA has accomplished during the first five years of the strategic plan.



**SURVEY** In February, all faculty, staff, and students were invited to participate in an anonymous online survey about the current plan: we received more than 1,100 responses identifying elements of the plan that meet our current and anticipated needs as well as suggestions for how to modify the plan.



**LISTEN** I Between March and April, Steering Committee members hosted fifty college and unit listening sessions to more deeply explore feedback and solicit additional suggestions. More than 2,000 Roadrunners played an active role in this process at the division, college, and unit level.



**SUMMARIZE** Between May and July, the Steering Committee reviewed everything learned over the past year and developed the findings and recommendations contained in this report.

## FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS



#### SUPPORT AND PRIDE IN UTSA'S TRAJECTORY

Throughout the refresh process, the UTSA community had consistent and overwhelmingly positive feedback on the current strategic plan. Stakeholders appreciate its clear and memorable vision, ambitious goals, and the transformative growth and improvement it has already enabled.

The UTSA community echoed consensus and pride in the plan. Said one respondent, "The destinations represent the heart of what a modern, urban research university should focus on."

Said another, "That seems to be UTSA's goal, to become something great, so that should be the destination: anything that gets us there."

94%

of survey respondents recommended no or modest changes to the plan

100%

A majority of participants in all 50 listening sessions affirmed the current destinations or proposed minor revisions only More than 3,000 Members of the UTSA Community Participated in the Strategic Plan Refresh through the survey and listening sessions.

#### **KEY STRENGTHS**

The Strategic Plan Refresh Process identified several strengths that ideally position UTSA for continued excellence and achievement in the remaining five years of the strategic plan. The Steering Committee recommends that UTSA's leadership keep these themes in mind in selecting future strategic initiatives and priorities.

#### **UTSA Has Built Momentum**

UTSA has been steadily building momentum to achieve its three strategic destinations. These efforts have already had a transformative impact, resulting in historic enrollment levels, reducing the time it takes for students to earn degrees, accelerating our research to the highest levels, a thriving athletics program, and robust fundraising success. UTSA has identified and refined approaches and strategies that move the needle on our key performance indicators. While we learn from our past experiences, UTSA embraces innovative approaches.

#### **UTSA Defies Expectations**

UTSA represents the future of higher education. As a founding member of the Alliance of Hispanic Serving Research Institutions, UTSA is proving to the world that universities can excel while pursuing a dual mission of providing students with access to higher education while also elevating our research productivity on an international stage. UTSA's commitment to ensuring that an excellent education remains affordable and accessible to students from all backgrounds is essential to our mission and founding as an institution.

#### UTSA is Ideally Positioned in a Great and Growing City

UTSA is fortunate to be located in the growing, vibrant and diverse city of San Antonio. UTSA exists to serve the community as a partner in advancing educational opportunity, knowledge sharing, economic prosperity and social mobility. Our enviable location provides UTSA with innumerable benefits: a growing population of future students, generous corporate partners and visionary civic leaders who share our belief in San Antonio's bright future.

#### **UTSA Pursues Excellence Boldly**

The UTSA community does its best work when we set our sights high. During the pandemic, Roadrunners demonstrated creativity, dedication, ingenuity, and resilience. UTSA demonstrates the same, unwavering determination to achieve its ambitious goals in student success, research excellence and operational innovation. Challenging ourselves to perform at a high standard is part of our Roadrunner DNA.

#### **KEY OPPORTUNITIES**

As UTSA continues to pursue its strategic goals, the refresh process surfaced new opportunities that will only strengthen our university in the long term. The Steering Committee hopes these opportunities will feature prominently in future strategic initiatives.

#### Facilitate Growth and Evolution at Scale

In a concentrated period of time, UTSA has experienced growth in research expenditures, facilities and operations. While this growth has enabled UTSA to expand its impact, it has stretched our ability to keep up with demand. As UTSA continues to implement its strategic plan, it should continue to refine resource allocation, pursue new sources of revenue, and sunset efforts that no longer serve current needs to use our resources most efficiently.

#### Invest in Exceptional Faculty and Staff

Prior to the pandemic, UTSA had exemplified itself as an employer by embracing remote work policies. Coming out of the pandemic, employers in all sectors of the U.S. economy are feeling a new urgency to provide their employees with flexible policies and greater support. UTSA has already made strides in this area, proactively implementing a campus climate survey in 2020 in a robust strategic compensation plan in 2021. UTSA should continue these efforts toward being a model employer in the continued implementation of the strategic plan.

#### Adopt Efficient and Innovative Practices

UTSA strives to adopt the mantra: "Work smarter, not harder." To accommodate our recent and anticipated growth, UTSA should adopt efficient, streamlined and innovative best practices throughout the institution. Streamlining processes and enhancing collaborative solutions will enable UTSA to achieve its strategic destinations more quickly.

#### Further Enhance Communication and Collaboration

Guided by the findings of UTSA's first Climate Survey in 2020, in recent semesters, campus leaders have placed renewed emphasis on improving and aligning communication. The Strategic Plan Refresh Process affirmed that we are progressing on this front and should continue to champion our many achievements through effective internal and external communications. Members of the UTSA community stand ready to share suggestions and provide feedback to ensure that we continue to build on our momentum.

## **RECOMMENDATION 1:** AFFIRM UTSA'S VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

UTSA's vision, mission and values provide the underlying foundation for the Strategic Plan. Historically, these statements have played a long-standing role in reflecting who we are as a university community, our defining ideals and shared aspirations for the future. Given the affirmation from our stakeholders, the Steering Committee sees no reason to change our vision, mission statement, or values at this time.

**Vision:** To be a premier public research university, providing access to educational excellence and preparing citizen leaders for the global environment.

Mission: The University of Texas at San Antonio is dedicated to the advancement of knowledge through research and discovery, teaching and learning, community engagement and public service. As an institution of access and excellence, UTSA embraces multicultural traditions, and serves as a center for intellectual and creative resources as well as a catalyst for socioeconomic development and the commercialization of intellectual property – for Texas, the nation and the world.

**Values:** Integrity | Excellence | Inclusiveness | Respect | Collaboration | Innovation

#### **RECOMMENDATION 2: AFFIRM DESTINATION 1**

Students are at the heart of all we do at UTSA. In recent years, organizational changes, critical investments and completed strategic initiatives have allowed UTSA to make significant progress toward Destination 1. Our success is evident in our <u>Key Performance Indicators</u>, including increasing total enrollment, improving graduation and retention rates and reducing the time it takes a student to earn a degree.

Knowing we can continue to grow with respect to student success, Destination 1 continues to resonate with the members of the UTSA community. The Steering Committee affirms that UTSA should keep Destination 1 as a pillar of the strategic plan.

#### **DESTINATION 1:**

## UTSA WILL BE A MODEL FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

UTSA puts students first by cultivating an environment focused on their success. As a next generation Hispanic-thriving, multicultural institution where students from all backgrounds can excel, UTSA serves as a prosperity engine graduating world-engaged civic leaders of tomorrow. UTSA will continue the dramatic momentum of the last decade to retain and graduate more students, and will emphasize experiential learning and classroom-to-career educational opportunities.



#### RECOMMENDATION 3: MODESTLY REFINE DESTINATION 2

Throughout the refresh process, stakeholders expressed justified pride in UTSA's ascent as a public research institution. In 2021, UTSA achieved R1 status from the Carnegie Classifcation, a distinction that places UTSA in the top 4% of research universities nationwide. In 2023, UTSA fulfilled another longtime goal by qualifying for National Research University Fund (NRUF) eligibility. Pending the outcome of a November 2023 public referendum, UTSA expects to migrate to eligibility for National Research Support Fund resources appropriated by the State Legislature.

By recruiting and retaining top researchers, UTSA has moved the needle among our Key Performance Indicators, including growth in total research expenditures and significant increases in the number of faculty who receive prestigious prizes or have been recognized as members in a national academy.

Destination 2 provides a clear, shared focus for continuous growth, improvement and maturation as a research university. The Steering Committee proposes modest refinements to the accompanying rationale statement to reflect our recent accomplishments, anticipated changes in state funding and UTSA's future aspirations.

#### **DESTINATION 2:**

#### **UTSA WILL BE A GREAT PUBLIC RESEARCH UNIVERSITY**

#### **Current Rationale Proposed Rationale** UTSA is on the fast track to becoming a UTSA is on the fast track to becoming a nationally nationally-recognized research university, well recognized research university, having attained an on its way to attaining National Research R1 university status from the Carnegie University Fund (NRUF) eligibility and aiming Commission and achieved National Research for an R1 designation by the Carnegie University Fund (NRUF) eligibility. These Commission. These designations will position designations position UTSA to qualify for the UTSA to align with members of the prestigious National Research Support Fund (NRSF) Association of American Universities. UTSA is resources and continue to align efforts with the members of the prestigious Association of an urban-serving university focused on driving San Antonio's knowledge economy, living out American Universities. UTSA is an urban-serving the notion that great universities need great university focused on driving San Antonio's cities and great cities need great universities. knowledge economy, living out the notion that great universities need great cities and great cities need great universities.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 4:**

#### **FURTHER REFINE AND ADD EMPHASIS TO DESTINATION 3**

In the last five years, UTSA has accelerated the growth and scale of our operations. These efforts have had a transformative impact on our <u>Key Performance Indicators</u>, to include a major expansion of our annual budget, significant endowment growth and a reduction in our administrative cost ratio (a marker of increased efficiency).

To ensure continued forward momentum, Steering Committee Members voted unanimously to further refine Destination 3 to underscore the importance of supporting, recruiting and retaining a talented workforce. This emphasis best positions us to continue to foster innovation as we grow as a university.

<b>Current Destination</b>	Proposed Destination				
DESTINATION 3:  UTSA WILL BE AN EXEMPLAR FOR STRATEGIC GROWTH AND INNOVATIVE EXCELLENCE.  Current Rationale	DESTINATION 3:  UTSA WILL BE AN INNOVATIVE PLACE TO WORK, LEARN AND DISCOVER.  Proposed Rationale				
	•				
UTSA will realize its full potential as a university by growing enrollment and infrastructure while focusing on innovation and continuous improvement. UTSA actively cultivates the excellence of its people, and places an emphasis on increasing the diversity of its leadership and faculty in order to reflect the community it serves.	UTSA will realize its fullest potential by recognizing that people are its greatest asset to enable growth, innovation, and continuous improvement. UTSA will become a model for other institutions by actively cultivating the excellence of its employees while growing enrollment and infrastructure, remaining nimble in the face of change, improving operations and efficiency, delivering exceptional support to students, and serving our community.				

## **RECOMMENDATION 5: UPDATE PEER MODELS OF EXCELLENCE**

In 2018, UTSA identified ten institutions to serve as <u>peer models of excellence</u> with the expectation that we would emulate and adapt proven strategies and best practices. These examples provided know-how and inspiration for UTSA's transformative growth and becoming a Tier One, R1 Institution.

As institutions change, it is natural that their peers and aspirants will change as well. In his charge to the Strategic Plan Refresh Steering Committee, President Eighmy tasked the Steering Committee Chair to work closely with UTSA's Office of Institutional Research and Analysis to identify a new group of comparison institutions to inspire us as we look to complete our strategic plan in 2028. That analysis resulted in the recommendation to update that list accordingly. Moving forward, these ten institutions will set new, aspirational benchmarks toward which we will continue to strive.

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The University of Texas San Antonio	1		1		· /	1	1	<b>✓</b>	Mis		
Arizona State University	1		1		1	1	1	1	V		
Florida International University	1		1		1	1	1	1	1		
George Mason University	1										
Georgia State University	<b>✓</b>			<b>V</b>							
University of California, Irvine	1	1	1	1	V				1		
University of California, Riverside	1	1	1	1	✓	1			V		
University of California, Santa Cruz	1		1	/	1	1					
University of Central Florida	<b>/</b>		1	<b>V</b>	1	1	<b>✓</b>	1	V		
University of Illinois Chicago	1	1 ma	1	1	1	1	A003		1		
University of South Florida	1	1					1	1	1		

<sup>\*</sup>Current affiliations and institutional attributes as of August 2023

#### **RECOMMENDATION 6: PROCESS MOVING FORWARD**

Throughout the strategic plan refresh process, stakeholders repeatedly stated that enhanced communication makes UTSA a stronger and more engaged institution. Many praised the inclusiveness of the refresh process (e.g., regular progress updates, inviting stakeholder feedback in many forms, listening sessions, etc.). Based on these successes, the Steering Committee believes these strategies should be replicated in the future, not just for strategic planning. The UTSA community is a rich source for new ideas, inspiration and innovation.

The members of the Steering Committee, in their capacities as campus leaders, will share the recommendations contained in the report with their stakeholders. In the coming years, campus leaders stand ready to take responsibility for aligning college, division and unit-level work plans and strategic priorities with the resulting refreshed university-wide vision.



## **NEXT STEPS**

To mark the conclusion of the work of the Strategic Plan Refresh Steering Committee, this report will be shared with President Taylor Eighmy and the members of the UTSA community in August 2023. The Steering Committee is confident that President Eighmy will continue to consult with the Cabinet and campus leaders in developing UTSA's pro forma and any additional materials used in his forthcoming presentation to the UT System Regents in November 2023. UTSA will continue to maintain a website tracking the ongoing efforts and accomplishments of the strategic plan and provide regular communication to the campus.

A <u>Vision For UTSA (2018-2028)</u> is as much a plan as a promise. To fulfill this promise—to our students, our partners, our stakeholders and our community—UTSA will continue to reach for new levels of excellence. Inspired by a bold vision, driven by innovation and united in purpose, the UTSA community is ready to finish what we started five years ago and complete the strategic plan.



### **APPENDICES**

- 1. ABOUT UTSA'S STRATEGIC PLAN
- 2. STRATEGIC PLAN MID-POINT PROGRESS REPORT
- 3. FINDINGS FROM THE ALL CAMPUS SURVEY (FEBRUARY 2023)
- 4. FINDINGS FROM CAMPUS LISTENING SESSIONS (May 2023)
- 5. <u>CAMPUS LISTENING SESSIONS COMPLETE SUMMARIES (MAY</u> 2023)