

**Project South Texas  
Academic Program Working Groups  
Final Report  
January 31, 2014**

<b>Working Group Name</b>	Social Sciences
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## **Executive Summary**

The Social Sciences Working Group is pleased to present this final report of our work in planning what we hope will be not only a university for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but a university for the Rio Grande Valley, Texas, the Americas and the Gulf of Mexico that brings together the highest quality teaching and research, along with strong community-based programs that serve to expand and deepen the impact of the university on the local community and beyond. We offer a set of modest and achievable proposals that are significant in impact and broad in scope.

### **The College of Engaged Social Sciences**

The College (or School) of Engaged Social Sciences will constitute an essential part of the core academic programs of the new university. The social sciences have a long tradition in academe, and our proposals honor and preserve that tradition within recognized, well-established disciplinary boundaries, while laying the groundwork for innovative inter- and transdisciplinary programs that build on synergies from within and without the College to foster learning and research that engages students, scholars and the community.

### **Highlights of our work:**

1. We fully embrace the desire to develop innovative and creative inter- and transdisciplinary programs. However, it is our sense that existing programs at UTB and UTPA should be preserved in the new university. Existing programs build on faculty strengths; maintain the integrity of the tenure process with faculty appropriately trained to assess the contributions of probationary faculty; and, above all, ensure that graduating students who wish to pursue advanced studies elsewhere are not hindered in their access to traditional programs. Nonetheless, we have also suggested some degree programs that reflect inter- and transdisciplinary approaches.
2. The group also recognizes the value of community engagement. In our discussions, we have referred to these programs as being housed in a College (or School) of Engaged Social Sciences. In addition to rigorous academic training in the classroom, we propose that all students in the College be required to participate in community engagement through internships and/or community-based research projects. This also incorporates the bilingual, bicultural and biliterate mission of the new university. In addition, we feel that community-based research and

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engagement projects should be reflected in workload assessments and balanced against teaching loads and other elements of faculty workload evaluation.

3. Interdisciplinary programs offered through the College of Engaged Social Sciences will be distinctive in that their focus will offer rigorous training in social science methodologies—including quantitative, qualitative, historical and interpretive—that provides students with the tools to succeed in standard nationally recognized departments, innovative interdisciplinary academic departments, and in professions that require policy and social analysis.
4. As is detailed in the Report and the attached Program Descriptions, we are proposing three entirely new transdisciplinary academic programs: Transborder Studies, Sustainable Communities and Wellness and Well-being Studies. In addition, we are proposing program expansions with new degrees in a number of the existing programs. See the Report Addendum for detailed descriptions of these programs.
5. We recommend that the departments of Economics and Criminal Justice be recognized as academic programs in the social sciences and housed in the College of Engaged Social Sciences. Historically, economics has been understood as a social science (indeed, it is one of the founding disciplines of the social sciences), and its location in an academically-oriented college is more appropriate than in a professional school primarily oriented toward preparing students for the business world. This is not to deny the importance of economics to the business community, but it enables a more expansive understanding of economics as not just a *business* concern, but a matter of great *social* importance. Although a newer discipline, the same arguments hold for Criminal Justice. Criminal Justice is much more than a training program for law-enforcement personnel, but an academic discipline that examines the social conditions that contribute to crime, as well as the conditions for justice and its application. Further, students in both of these programs would benefit substantially from the community engagement that will be integrated into the College of Engaged Social Sciences.
6. Although not included in our working group, we believe that the department of History should be considered as a social science, so we have included History programs in our listing of programs offered.
7. We recommend the following to address what are principally nominal differences between UTPA's and UTB's structure:
  - a. The Department of Political Science (UTPA) and Department of Government (UTB) are not of one mind regarding a preferred name, with some preferring Department of Politics and others preferring Department of Political Science.
  - b. The Department of Psychology (UTPA) would be retained, and what is now the UTPA Department of Anthropology and Sociology would be split into separate departments in each discipline. The UTB Department of Behavioral Sciences would then be divided up into its constituent units.

#### Conclusion

The Social Science Working Group was delighted to have had the opportunity to join our colleagues in dreaming about new and exciting innovations in teaching and research. We should close by stressing that the implications of such innovations for the traditional values of faculty governance, professional autonomy, and authority over pedagogic strategies and curriculum is an ongoing, vital concern to faculty. We look forward to deliberating over such matters as we construct a new university of the highest quality that will transform Texas and the nation by becoming a leader in student success, teaching, research and healthcare.

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## Working Group Meetings

Date	Location/Format
10/4/13	UTPA
10/18/13	Weslaco; in-person
11/8/13	Weslaco; in-person
11/21/13	Harlingen; in-person
1/24/14	Weslaco; in-person

## Current Academic Programs

UTB	UTPA
BA Government	BA Political Science
BA, MA Psychology	BA, BS Psychology; MA, MS Clinical Psychology; MA Experimental Psychology
BA Sociology	BA, MS Sociology
BS Criminal Justice (incl. on-line through UT Consortium)	BS, MS Criminal Justice
BA Law & Justice Studies	BGS General Studies
MA Public Policy and Management	MA in Public Administration
MA Interdisciplinary Studies: Borderlands Studies, Sociology, Sustainable Development, Individualized Option	MA Interdisciplinary Studies: Global Security Studies, Mexican American Studies, History, Anthropology
BA History	BA, MA History
BA Economics and Finance	BA, MA Economics
BA Public Service	BA Anthropology

## Current Academic Programs to be Offered Fall 2015

Bachelor's Degrees	Master's Degrees	Doctoral Degrees
All current programs to be continued	All current programs to be continued	n/a

## New Academic Programs for Fall 2015 (Please indicate with an asterisk (\*) your top 3 priorities.)

Bachelor's Degrees	Master's Degrees	Doctoral Degrees
BA Transborder Studies*	MA Transborder Studies*	

## New Academic Programs for Fall 2017 (Please indicate with an asterisk (\*) your top 3 priorities.)

Bachelor's Degrees	Master's Degrees	Doctoral Degrees
		PhD Clinical Psychology*
		PhD Transborder Studies*

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## New Academic Programs for Fall 2020 (Please indicate with an asterisk (\*) your top 3 priorities.)

Bachelor's Degrees	Master's Degrees	Doctoral Degrees
BA Urban Studies	MA Urban Planning*	PhD Criminal Justice*
	MA Sustainable Communities*	

## New Academic Programs for Fall 2025 (Please indicate with an asterisk (\*) your top 3 priorities.)

Bachelor's Degrees	Master's Degrees	Doctoral Degrees
	MA, MS Wellness and Well-being Studies*	

## Examples of innovative programs

*Identify institutions and/or programs that are organized in an innovative way. In what ways are the programs innovative? How does this organization promote student success and/or scholarly activity?*

**History of Consciousness (UC Santa Cruz):** interdisciplinary; provocative course offerings; support for faculty via reduced teaching load and research funding and pro-faculty environment

**Sustainable Communities (Northern Arizona University):** An interdisciplinary Master's degree program with several areas of concentration from sustainable design and environmental education to community organizing and food security. Students are required to volunteer in the community for 3 hours/week in their first year.

**UC Berkeley:** Berkeley's model includes Centers, Institutes, Groups and Programs to foster trans- and interdisciplinary research and study.

**Committee on Social Thought (University of Chicago)**

**Center for Global Citizenship (various universities)**

**Social Science PhD (UC Irvine)**

**Environmental Studies (various universities)**

## Possible consultations

*Identify campuses that faculty and administrators who are engaged in further planning may wish to study or visit and/or leaders/scholars that planners may wish to consult.*

Northern Arizona University (Luis Fernandez, Director, Sustainable Communities program)

University of Chicago

Arizona State University-Transborder Studies (Dean of Transborder Studies, Carlos Velez-Ibanez)

UC Santa Cruz

Brandman University (Irvine, CA)

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#### Trans-disciplinary Opportunities

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*Describe the trans-disciplinary opportunities that extend beyond your group of disciplines.*

**Transborder Studies:** (BA, MA, PhD). An interdisciplinary program in Transborder Studies would enable scholars and students to effectively engage a wide-range of contemporary issues, including regional economic integration, security versus openness of borders, and the need to institutionalize management of transboundary problems ranging from immigration to shared environmental problems to public health and economic development concerns. Border Studies is particularly suited for students who want to become service professionals working within border regions in careers such as public policy, the health professions, border patrol, education, and public administration.

**Sustainable Communities:** Incorporates a variety of disciplines including, for example, environmental sciences, education, sociology, anthropology, political science, communication, urban studies and planning, architecture, and art history. The program would be designed to include community engagement, including required internship/volunteer work for a portion of the program. The program would also stress a bilingual and bicultural orientation.

**Wellness and Well-being Studies:** A center for research and teaching on questions regarding the mental, physical and social factors that contribute to wellness and well-being. Incorporates disciplines including psychology, sociology, comparative literature, political science, philosophy, history, anthropology, architecture, urban studies and planning, social work, neuroscience, health professions.

#### Bicultural/ Biliterate/Bilingual

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*Describe how the proposed academic programs reflect the bicultural/bilingual/biliterate mission of the new university and culture of our region.*

See "Community Engagement," below.

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#### Community Engagement

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*Describe how the proposed academic programs reflect the community engagement mission of the new university.*

We recognize the great value of community engagement. Its importance is reflected in our proposed name for the college that would house these programs, the College of Engaged Social Sciences. In addition to rigorous academic training in the classroom, we propose that all students in the College be required to participate in community engagement through internships and/or community-based research projects. This also incorporates the bilingual, bicultural and biliterate mission of the new university. In addition, we feel that faculty community-based research and engagement projects should be reflected in workload assessments and balanced against teaching loads and other elements of workload evaluation.

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#### Academic Structure

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*Describe the academic structure you are recommending for your group of disciplines.*

There was no strong feeling in our group with respect to the institutional level for the social sciences. We are comfortable with either being a stand-alone College or a School within a larger college.

The core of the College/School would be the traditional disciplines. Our expectation is that the new transdisciplinary programs will each have a small core faculty (3-5), and would draw from courses taught in the traditional disciplines.

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In recognition of the high level of community engagement that is an integral part of the College/School of Engaged Social Sciences, each department should be allotted one FTE for community engagement, for curriculum development and to help ensure continuity in community-based projects. This may be allocated as each department sees fit: To have one person specifically assigned to community engagement, or providing course release time for faculty involved in community engagement projects. It is anticipated that this will be in addition to, and complementary to, a campus-wide administrative body dedicated to community engagement.

Research centers would be developed which may or may not be associated with specific degree programs, to support faculty for research and in the development of innovative programs. Faculty engaged in active research programs may receive release time or, in some cases, sabbaticals, and receive support for research travel and to present their work at conferences. We recommend that 10% of FTEs be set aside to support faculty research. As an example, a Center for Law, Justice, and Society would be the organizational home for research and service activities related to law, legal institutions, and justice as a general class of social and political problems that need to be understood and solved. The center would bring together faculty from many disciplines interested in applying their expertise to research and service related to law, justice, and society, both inside and outside the United States. A research center such as this would help fulfill the interdisciplinary and multicultural goals of the new university, although it would not offer degrees itself. Courses related to this work would be offered by the departments of criminal justice, sociology, politics, anthropology, and others.