# Strategic Input Report

BAYLOR UNIVERSITY
2011 STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

**BAYLOR** UNIVERSITY
1845

Strategic Input Report

Baylor University 2011 Strategic Planning Process

Presented by:

Mitchell J. Neubert, Ph.D.
Chavanne Chair of Christian Ethics in Business
Associate Professor of Management

Chairperson, Strategic Themes Committee

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# The Strategic Themes Committee

Members of the Strategic Themes Committee were selected based on an ability to listen to and comprehend the ideas of others and report back on those ideas in a manner that retains the original intent of the participant. Moreover, when presented with multiple perspectives on an issue, each member was challenged to identify and report on common themes and priorities without substituting his or her own preferences into the report.

Members of the Strategic Themes Committee Include:

- Mitchell Neubert, Chairperson, Hankamer School of Business
- Andy Arterbury, George W. Truett Seminary
- Susan Bratton, College of Arts and Sciences
- Burt Burleson, Student Life
- Phil Donnelly, Honors College
- Ron English, Enrollment Management
- Cristina Galvan, Student Body External Vice President  - 2010-11
- Richard Gerik, University Libraries
- Leah Jackson, School of Law
- Karen Kemp, Marketing and Communications
- Rosalind Kennerson-Baty, College of Arts and Sciences
- Carson Mencken, College of Arts and Sciences
- Byron Newberry, Engineering and Computer Science
- Patricia Pack, Mayborn Museum Complex
- Diana Ramey, Enrollment Management
- Rob Rogers, School of Social Work
- Sara Rae Schlesinger, Graduate Student Association
- Martha Lou Scott, Student Life
- Kathy Steely, School of Music
- Tony Talbert, School of Education
- Ashley Thornton, Institutional Effectiveness
- Patricia Tolbert, Institutional Effectiveness
- Jeff Wallace, Finance and Administration

# The Strategic Themes Analysis and Synthesis Process

The Strategic Themes Committee was charged with the process of synthesizing and analyzing all of the input received during the Community Input period (December 2010-April 2011) of the 2011 Strategic Planning process. This report, submitted to President Ken Starr and the Executive Council on June 24, 2011, represents the work of this team in coding, analyzing, and synthesizing all input submitted from individuals through the online Strategic Planning Web form, community members through groups held around the country, and faculty, staff, and students through group documents submitted via the Strategic Planning website.

The Strategic Themes Committee began meeting in January 2011 to discuss the committee members' role in the broader Strategic Planning process. Subsequent meetings involved discussing and working out approaches to analyzing and synthesizing the data to ensure high levels of *reliability*, *accuracy*, and *objectivity*. Early in the process, the committee was divided into three working sub-groups. One group to read and examine the group documents, a second to analyze the community input documents, and a third to analyze individual input.

After an initial amount of data was collected, the committee used an inductive process of avoiding preconceived ideas about particular themes and allowed themes to emerge from the data. Each sub-group reviewed data and suggested a set of themes. The committee as a whole discussed the suggestions and adopted a framework of 12 themes in which to code/categorize all the data. Initial themes:

- ✓ Christian Identity and Distinctiveness
- ✓ Curriculum: Pedagogy and Programs
- ✓ Learning Environment
- ✓ Scholarship and Creative Endeavors
- ✓ Finances
- ✓ Community Engagement and Service

- ✓ Baylor Family Engagement
- ✓ Facilities, Aesthetics and Infrastructure
- ✓ University Leadership
- ✓ Stakeholder Diversity
- ✓ Athletics and Extracurricular Activities
- ✓ Other

At end of April, the Committee began the process of categorizing the data. Each document, response, or suggestion was read by at least two members of the committee and agreement was reached as to how comments/recommendations would be assigned to one of the twelve themes. Attention was given to not having members code inputs directly related to their discipline or area of service on campus.

In late May and early June, the synthesis of each major theme began. Each committee member was assigned a theme to analyze and further categorize into sub-themes that were used to describe the data related to that theme into an executive summary. For each theme and sub-theme, exemplary quotes were then collected and documented in the executive summaries. Each theme's executive summary was reviewed and edited by a second member of the Strategic Themes Committee.

**Characteristics of submitted data**

On-campus discussion took place within existing organizational structures (departments, schools, administrative units, and student organizations) as well as in multidisciplinary groups (e.g., study abroad directors or pre-health faculty and advisors). Faculty, staff, and current students were encouraged to share their input during these meetings. The leaders of these groups summarized their group's input and uploaded their documents through the Strategic Planning website. In total, 165 groups submitted one or more documents to the Strategic Planning site. The <u>number of documents submitted by each area</u> on campus is illustrated below.

**Figure 1: Group Documents Submitted**
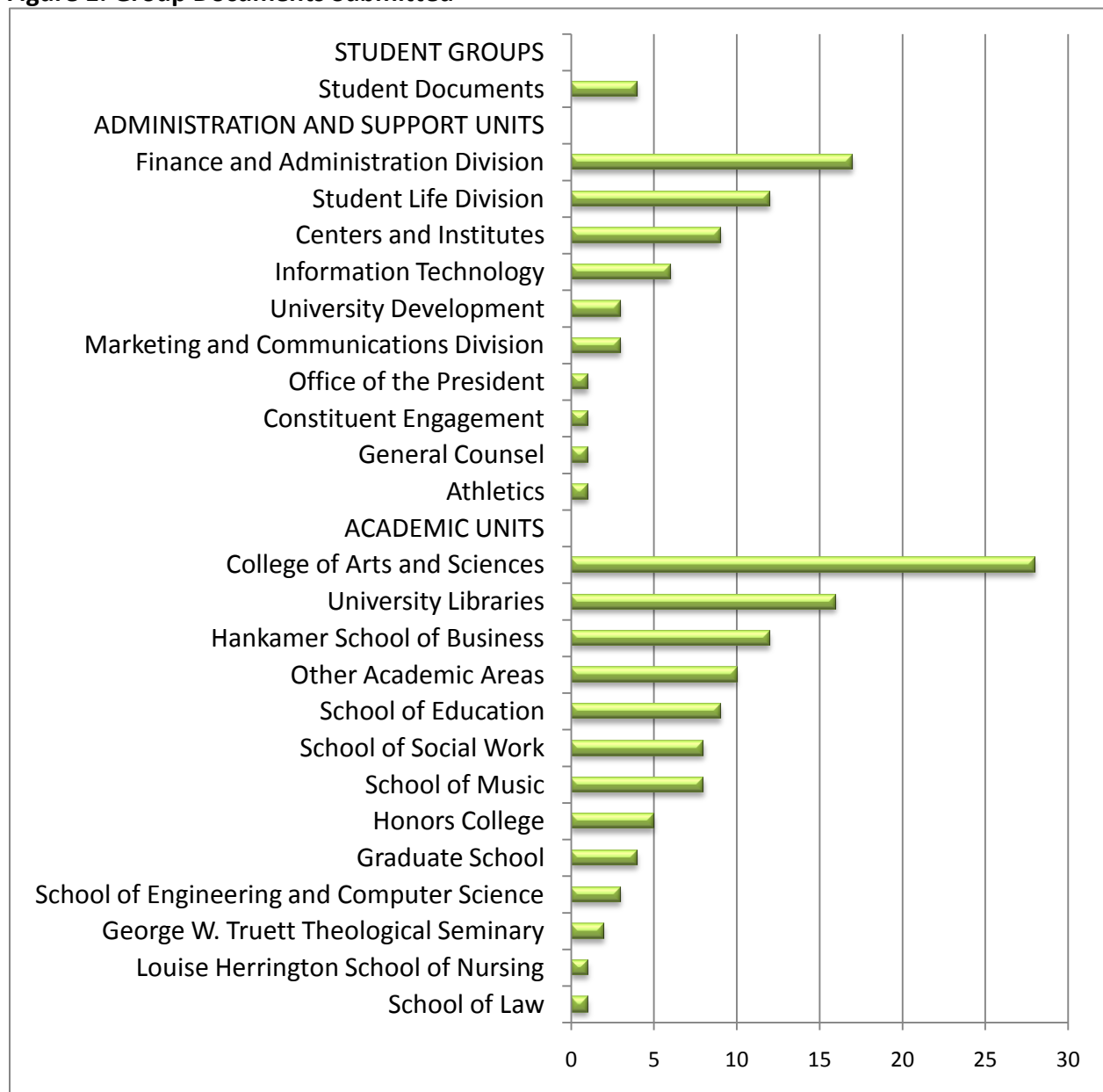
Off-campus constituents also had the opportunity to share insight and ideas through the Strategic Planning website and through community input sessions in select cities. A total of 725 alumni and other friends of Baylor attended community input sessions in the following communities:

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|---|---|
| Jan. 25: Marietta, GA | April 7: Longview, TX |
| Jan. 27: Waco, TX | April 11: Austin, TX |
| Jan. 27: San Antonio, TX | April 13: Chicago, IL |
| Feb. 1: Houston, TX | April 14: Los Angeles, CA |
| Feb. 7: Amarillo, TX | April 14: Washington, D.C. |
| Feb. 8: Lubbock, TX | April 18: Fort Worth, TX |
| Feb. 21: Dallas, TX | April 25: New York, NY |
| Feb. 28: Tyler, TX | May 26: Dallas, TX |
| March 3: Nashville, TN | |

Individuals within and outside of Baylor also were invited through email, presentations, and Baylor publications to forward written submissions to the Strategic Planning process via an online Web form. A total of 299 individuals responded to the invitation to submit their recommendations to the Strategic Planning process.

**Comments on interpreting the theme executive summaries**

The theme executive summaries serve to organize the extensive quantity of data associated with each theme. The committee chose to include a significant amount of exemplar comments to represent the spirit and nature of the vast amount of data that could not appear in the synthesis. These quotes, or in some cases paraphrased statements, provide a powerful and vivid glimpse into the many insightful and passionate comments offered as input.[1] Although choosing these exemplar comments did involve subjective judgment, the choices were reviewed by at least two committee members.

The committee recognized early in the process that given the volume and diversity of the data it would be difficult and perhaps misleading to precisely quantify the data. As such, the committee provided only a limited amount of information related to the relative frequency of the comments associated with themes and sub-themes. It is important to recognize that these comments reflect the approximate frequency of the data as it was submitted and coded. The input process was designed to be open-ended and not a strictly stratified sample. Further, although the committee attempted to categorize all input into one theme, some comments contained ideas that spanned several themes but were not meaningful if separated. Therefore, a handful of comments were counted twice in making relative judgments of frequency.

In the end, it is the committee's recommendation that the reader consider all quantitative statements as approximations in describing the data. Moreover, it is important to recognize that the frequency of statements associated with a particular idea or theme does not always reflect its importance. Therefore, we also have attempted to highlight unique comments or ideas in the choice of exemplar comments and the sampling of specific suggestions offered at the end of some of the executive summaries.

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[1] *In a few cases, through the multiple- stage process of compiling and editing the document a comment may have been slightly revised or paraphrased, but it is unintentionally represented as a direct quote.*

# Strategic Themes Executive Summary

The vast amount of voices represented by the input is intended to inform the Strategic Planning process by contributing to envisioning what Baylor could be in the future. In so doing, either directly or indirectly, participants also provided a glimpse of our internal strengths and weaknesses as well as the opportunities and threats we are facing in our educational and societal environment.

Everyone invited to participate in the process was encouraged to read Provost Elizabeth Davis's *Envisioning Our Future* document and offer strategic insights and aspirations that would serve and stimulate the formation of a formal and detailed strategic plan. Participants approached this task in a variety of ways that resulted in quite different levels of detail and focus. Overall, the group documents (particularly from academic units) were more detailed and, at times, more narrowly linked to needs or aspirations of a particular program. On the whole, the community input and individual responses represented more general comments about Baylor as an institution and its overall distinctiveness and potential embodiment in the future.

These disparate approaches are explained in part by the nature and characteristics of the communication channels associated with each source (group documents, community input, and individual responses). For the most part, the group documents emerged from discussions occurring within formal units within the university and, thus, were potentially subject to the history, inertia, unique knowledge, and possibly even politics that are resident in these established groups. The community input session input emerged from interactive sessions that were shaped by notions of the individual participants as well as the synergistic dialogue with other participants and other group dynamics. The individual responses were the least likely to be influenced by social influences but may have been constrained somewhat by the question prompts in the Web-based interface.

For these reasons, the input from each source is considered and reported separately after this initial synthesis. The rich input from each source will be presented in a source synopsis and then separate theme-based executive summaries. The themes are briefly described below, followed by a set of unique strategic opportunities and challenges that reach across all sources and integrate thoughts from multiple themes.

## Themes

**Christian Identity and Distinctiveness —** This theme comprised comments related to the importance, potential, and implementation of our core Christian commitments. There was enthusiastic support across all the sources (group documents, community input, and individual responses) for how faith was and is foundational to who we are as an institution and how we can uniquely contribute to educating, developing knowledge, and influencing the community and the world. Our Christian identity is what makes us distinctive and provide us the greatest potential to impact students, our communities, and the world. As such, our Christian identity and distinctiveness should be safeguarded and strengthened as we move into the future. There was strong and widespread support for the necessity of hiring Christian faculty and staff to maintain our distinctiveness. There was less consensus regarding the relative emphasis on Christian and/or Baptist principles in governing the university and its endeavors in the future.

**Curriculum: Pedagogy and Programs —** This theme comprised comments related to programs and pedagogy that determine which content areas are taught and the instructional methods and approaches informing how knowledge and skills are developed. Prominent among ideas discussed here are the need for an intentional, integrated, and excellent core curriculum, more experiential learning opportunities linked to curriculum (particularly in research and service), multidisciplinary approaches, and expanded graduate programs. There was frequent mention across sources regarding how our Christian identity should inform curriculum decisions and how pedagogy and programs should equip students to be leaders who bring to bear both their Christian character and professional competency in addressing challenging societal problems and emerging global opportunities.

**Learning Environment —** This theme comprised comments related to the context or location of instruction, the student and faculty support systems for delivering instruction, and opportunities and resources outside of the classroom that supplement learning. There was unequivocal support for expanding learning in global contexts and through more extensive internship experiences. Relationships within Baylor and outside of Baylor were suggested as resources to enhance learning, with particular attention given to the benefits of increased interactions with faculty, alumni, and external organizations. There also was noteworthy discussion of technology as an enabler of learning and compelling cases offered that supported and opposed distance learning as means to engage more learners.

**Scholarship and Creative Endeavors —** This theme comprised comments related to the many expressions of research and creativity across campus, the plans for enhancing and expanding such endeavors, the resources necessary to support diverse expressions of scholarship, and the benefits that accrue from investing in these areas. Multiple voices recognized that increasingly becoming a research institution enhances our stature nationally and internationally, offers opportunities to participate in the national dialogue on critical issues, and offers more opportunities for students, but there was considerable resistance to an increased emphasis on research detracting from excellence in teaching and diminishing our Christian identity. Many agreed that aspirations related to research, teaching, and faith need not be mutually exclusive and, in fact, can be mutually supporting.

**Finances —** This theme comprised comments related to the sources and uses of finances, and an extensive discussion of issues related to affordability for students from all backgrounds. This was a significant issue for all sources of input, with a majority of passionate voices supporting a funding model that moves away from relying on tuition increases to support operations. Two dominant streams of practical suggestions related to building the endowment through enhancing relationships with alumni and friends of our mission, and to expanding and encouraging efforts to secure external grants.

**Community Engagement and Service —** This theme comprised comments related to community engagement and service in Waco and beyond. There was broad agreement that our Christian faith provides a moral imperative to serve the people in Waco and even to the ends of the earth, and that our faith compels us to contribute to addressing and alleviating the needs and problems of others. Practically, there were many ideas for expanding partnerships within Waco as well as nationally and internationally. In orienting our programs and people toward service, Baylor also benefits by gaining practical experience and a broadened perspective for students, faculty, and staff.

**Baylor Family Engagement** — This theme comprised comments related to engaging the immediate Baylor family of current faculty, staff, and students as well as past faculty, staff, and our alumni. Alumni were deemed to be a critical source of knowledge, career connections, and financial resources that can support research, teaching, and the perpetuation of our Christian mission. In turn, alumni can and should benefit from access to excellent students, cutting-edge research, and the enjoyment that comes from participating in campus life and athletic events. For these reasons and more, a vast majority of these comments argued for the need to build mutually beneficial relationships with our alumni and heal lingering divisions that hinder mutual success. Other comments called for developing a more integrated campus community of faculty and staff, undergraduate and graduate students, and alumni and community members, that is an example of Christian concern and caring.

**Facilities, Aesthetics, and Infrastructure** — This theme comprised comments related to the current and potential benefits and drawbacks to various facilities, aesthetics, and infrastructure decisions and investments. There was a great appreciation for improving or adding instructional, residential, and athletic facilities (with frequent mention of an on-campus football stadium), but there also were admonitions to act prudently in the allocation and use of resources in order to preserve an ordering of symbolic and actionable priorities that are consistent with our mission and core commitments.

**University Leadership** — This theme comprised comments related to concerns and challenges associated with the leadership roles and responsibilities of administrative staff and the Board of Regents. Across sources, this was often the least directly referred-to theme. When mentioned, common suggestions related to improving transparency, enhancing communication, and expanding diversity in the Board of Regents. Indirectly, all the other themes contain specific issues that constituents believe university leadership should intentionally and faithfully address.

**Stakeholder Diversity** — This theme comprised comments related to the diversity of our internal stakeholders: students, families, faculty, staff, and board. A majority of the comments in this area focused on recruiting, retaining, and engaging of a diverse student body to reflect changing demographics and to contribute to a multicultural learning experience for all students. Additional consideration was given to mirroring student diversity with faculty, staff, administrator, and Board of Regents appointments. Aspects of diversity that are discussed further in the executive summaries include race, religion, gender, and economic status.

**Athletics and Extracurricular Activities** — This theme comprised comments related to athletics and other extracurricular activities students participate in as part of their Baylor experience. In many cases, athletics and extracurricular activities were noted as windows into Baylor and important for student recruiting and national recognition. Athletic achievement was asserted to be a worthwhile goal, but not one that should supplant a focus on developing successful scholar-athletes and demonstrating Christian character in athletic endeavors.

**Other** — This theme comprised comments that either did not fit clearly within one theme or by nature of their interdependence were deemed to capture either a higher level idea or a concept that was relevant across several themes. This is most evident in the community input section where a significant amount of detail is given to describing participants comments regarding the reputation or brand of Baylor, the desired attributes of Baylor graduates, and practical ideas about the careers and callings of

students and alumni. Comments related to the Baylor brand from alumni and community members deserve particular attention in strategic discussions given they represent external perceptions of the university and its position in the marketplace.
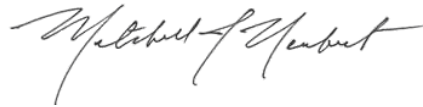
**Strategic Opportunities and Challenges**

1) The distinctive Christian mission and core convictions of Baylor are the foundation of its unique identity. A challenging question is how can (or should) the moral imperatives of Christian faithfulness, considered deeply and broadly, be understood in relation to the imperatives required for Baylor to become a "very high research activity" university, according to the Carnegie Foundation classification system? The matter for discernment, however, is not only one to be decided in principle but also one that will involve countless practical judgments ranging from the political aspects of AAU membership requirements to the judicious selection of Baylor's specific niche research specialization clusters in the sciences and humanities. Additional challenges reside in balancing the demands of an increased research emphasis with Baylor's historically excellent and personal approach to educating the whole person in a caring Christian community. In short, Baylor's leadership needs to discern how best to promote and leverage, rather than compromise, these historic strengths in striving to strengthen research programs across a range of disciplines.

2) The rich history of contributions from Baylor students, faculty, staff, alumni, regents, and friends has uniquely positioned Baylor to be able to consider a range of compelling opportunities and new directions. Comparisons to "best practices" and peer institutions should be cautiously considered to avoid aspiring to be something that we are ill-equipped to achieve or that is inconsistent with our mission and commitments. Strategic thinking and planning related to identifying and implementing areas of focus for an organization is consistent with a variety of voices urging Baylor to invest in and leverage its past, current, and emerging strengths to realize success in mission centric or high profile niche areas (e.g., entrepreneurship, philosophy/ethics, religion, etc.).[2] A further challenge relates to how Baylor's leadership should cultivate in students, staff, and faculty, a biblically wise assessment of opportunities in each educational environment. For example, Baylor will be confronted with opportunities and perhaps pressures from inside and outside the university to grow, integrate technology, and become more global in its perspective, but how might potential opportunities align with our core identity and strengths?

3) Baylor can only achieve its highest aspirations in collaboration with others. It will take the formation of a broad, inclusive, and committed community of friends and partners to bring to bear the intellectual, financial, and spiritual resources necessary to meet the challenges of the next decades. A particular relationship in need of immediate and ongoing attention is with our alumni. Engaging alumni in meaningful and mutually beneficial endeavors is critical to achieving all our aspirations. University leadership must remain committed to listening to alumni concerns and bringing about healing while remaining diligent in pursuing our mission and promoting the interests of all current and future stakeholders.

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[2] Examples of Baylor's highly ranked programs - http://www.baylor.edu/about/index.php?id=78512

4) Baylor's grand aspirations and collaborative relationships will intersect in the context of an increasingly diverse, rapidly changing, and global environment. A chorus of voices in the input calls for the Baylor family to be inclusive of diverse people and perspectives and to engage society in a culturally relevant manner. Further, the university, in its essence, is a place to entertain and critically evaluate diverse ideas. Baylor must balance inclusive and open practices with intentionality in affirming, retaining, and communicating its unique mission, core convictions, and brand. Baylor must retain its uniqueness and leverage it as the basis, for example, of a unique type of service learning, scholarship, and local outreach that enables community development and racial reconciliation in Central Texas and beyond. The challenge for Baylor's leadership is to discern the unique ways that we can be equipped, motivated, and empowered to address such challenges and others, without giving way to compromise.

A short synthesis is woefully insufficient to fully represent the deep and meaningful interdependencies that undergird the workings of a dynamic university, nor can a short list of opportunities and challenges adequately capture all the points of tension or potential synergies evident across all the data sources. The following synopses and theme executive summaries provide substantially more detail from which to draw insights and formulate strategic priorities and plans.