

From: [Provost Office](#)
To: [Baylor Faculty All](#); [Baylor Staff](#)
Subject: Illuminate Steering Committee Update
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Attachments: [image001.png](#)

Dear Colleagues,

The progress made on *Illuminate*, the University's strategic plan, is incredibly energizing. As we proceed through the fall semester with our campus community unified around the goals of *Illuminate*, I am extremely grateful for and appreciative to you, our faculty and staff, as you work side by side to make it a reality.

Today I would like to share some information on the topic of the research recommendations made by our *Illuminate* Steering Committee (ISC) and the actions we are taking in the Provost's Office. This will be the first in a line of regular communications about implementation of *Illuminate* along with other topics that will significantly animate our academic community.

Supporting Illuminate research priorities

Last year, under the leadership of Drs. Gary Carini and Gary Mortenson in the Provost's Office, the ISC was created to engage faculty across campus in developing research proposals aligned with *Illuminate*'s five Signature Academic Initiatives: Health; Data Sciences; Materials Science; Human Flourishing, Leadership and Ethics; and Baylor in Latin America. In all, 55 proposals involving more than 135 faculty members were reviewed by subcommittees composed of faculty with expertise in these respective areas as well as by chairs, associate deans, and deans. After careful review, these subcommittees recommended particular actions to the ISC, and the ISC subsequently made recommendations to me. These proposals have played a significant role in informing Baylor's current strengths and future research opportunities.

The expertise of our faculty serving on the ISC and its subcommittees, which ranged across academic disciplines, has been an invaluable resource to the University. I commend them for their ongoing service to Baylor. I also recognize and appreciate the work of Dr. Kevin Chambliss, our newly appointed vice provost for research, as he works to implement major changes in pre- and post-award operations that will provide a higher and more consistent level of grant support. Additionally, we are streamlining and standardizing the university's complex processes through IGNITE which also will play a significant role in providing more resources and better services to support faculty and students. Watch for implementation of IGNITE across campus by summer 2020.

Funding and supporting research

We are working vigorously and collaboratively to support research across all units of the University. In doing so, we must examine our policies and incentives to assure both support and accountability for those who carry research responsibilities. For instance, the Honors College and the departments within the College of Arts and Sciences are revising their guidelines to assure stronger alignment with the goals of *Illuminate*. The Office of the Vice Provost for Research recently announced a new post doc program that will increase our capacity to generate research. The Graduate School is directing its stipend support to doctoral

students.

The plan to generate the needed resources is already in progress and includes the launch of new professional and graduate programs that are providing significant resources for research activities. In fact, from Fiscal Year 2013-14 to the end of our most recent fiscal year, in May 2019, our annual net revenue from our online degree programs has gone from zero (\$0) to almost \$10 million.

In addition, this year we are seeking to secure eight new endowed chairs as part of the Baylor Academic Challenge (BAC), a program through which philanthropic support is matched dollar for dollar by the existing resources of the gift that created the BAC. Our goal is to establish as many as 17 endowed faculty positions, providing a wealth of support that will enable us to hire at the very highest levels of excellence in teaching and research.

Making progress

The ISC recommended strategic hiring in several key areas, including: chemical and biological engineering, data sciences, ethics, global environment and health, materials science, and cancer (and neglected diseases).

In recent months, I have met with the ISC and each of the subcommittees to better understand what we have learned about the University's current state in each of *Illuminate's* five Signature Academic Initiatives as well as to discern what actions we need to undertake next. In some areas we already benefit from a cluster of faculty members working in interdisciplinary and complementary ways. For example, in Health we have strength in aquatics research and in cancer and neglected diseases. The recently endowed Jackson Family Chair for Baylor in Latin America will leverage our strength in water research to create a more significant presence in Latin America and provide opportunities for researchers in a broad array of disciplines to come alongside our aquatics research in ways that increase our impact and serve our mission.

In the case of Materials Science, we need a comprehensive strategy and funding plan to build a cluster of faculty, especially at the senior level, in order to assemble the tools necessary for success. In Human Flourishing, we possess a particular strength in ethics and work is underway to engage faculty across campus to develop significant ethics components in each of the five initiatives. Faculty hiring over the next several years in several departments will be linked to this initiative.

Data Sciences is critical to all of our research efforts, undergirding all five of our initiatives, and we must continue to bolster this area with support. For example, our research in aquatics can be significantly strengthened through strong partnerships with data scientists. Dr. Amanda Hering, associate professor of statistical science in the College of Arts and Sciences, in collaboration with researchers at 18 other institutions (most of which are R1 universities), has acquired \$100 million from the Department of Energy over five years to support research at the intersection of water quality and data science. This year, we have five searches underway for data scientists.

Looking ahead

We have additional proposals out for endowed chairs and anticipate that more announcements

will be made in the next few months. Alumni and other supporters of Baylor are stepping forward in a remarkable manner to support our ambitions under *Illuminate*.

The ISC's recommendations influenced some of this year's hiring decisions and they will have an even greater impact on our long-term hiring plan as supported by the Baylor Academic Challenge program. Over the next year some of these subcommittees will convene faculty around shared research interests and they will serve in an advisory capacity to me.

In building upon Baylor's historic strengths, the goals of *Illuminate* enjoy a strong foundation upon which to create our future as an institution of higher learning. That creation is up to each of us working collaboratively and with joyfulness in our mission as a Christian research university. As we invest in new areas of teaching, research, and service, moving toward our ambition of becoming an R1 university, we are fulfilling our potential and making a powerful difference in the surrounding world.

Sincerely,

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