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Memo

Date: April 7, 2021

To: All Members of the Leadership Council of The Association of Former Students

Through: Porter S. Garner III '79
President and CEO
The Association of Former Students

From: **Jorge A. Vanegas**, Dean
College of Architecture
and
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Subject: Introduction to the Task Force on Campus Historical Displays and a
Request to Disseminate a Survey

Howdy!

As you are aware, in January of this year, the *Commission on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (CDEI)* at *Texas A&M University (TAMU)* presented the *Final Report* and the *Set of Recommendations* they developed over many months of hard work in 2020, and a joint statement by the CDEI Co-Chairs. The full report and the statement can be downloaded from:

https://president.tamu.edu/committees-task-forces/commission-on-diversity-equity-and-inclusion/documents/CDEI_Final_Report_2021.pdf

http://www.tamus.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Joint_Statement_Co-Chairs_for_Commission_on_Diversity_Equity_and_Inclusion.pdf

In response, the *Board of Regents (BOR)* of *The Texas A&M University System (TAMUS)* made the following statement:

https://www.tamus.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/01-25-2021_BOR_Statement_on_Diversity.pdf

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This statement was followed by a message from *Dr. John Junkins*, **Interim President** of TAMU, and a joint statement by *The Association of Former Students* and the *Texas A&M Foundation*:

<https://president.tamu.edu/messages/stronger-together.html>

http://www.tamus.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/AFS-AM_Foundation_Joint_Statement_DEI_Efforts_2021.pdf

Subsequently, as the *University Architect* (since 2012) and as the *Dean of the College of Architecture – COA* (since 2008), we were honored to be selected and invited by Interim President Junkins to serve as Co-Chairs for the BOR's *Immediate Proposed Action 7* in response to the recommendations proposed in the CDEI Report, to: “*Establish an action-oriented task force to accurately and fully tell the story of Texas A&M’s history through displays and iconography*,” with a target investment of \$ 1 Million. The resulting *Task Force on Campus Historical Displays (TFCHD)* was configured to be representative of the broad TAMU community, and each member was specifically invited to contribute the voice of who they represent, and also, their individual knowledge, experience, and perspectives.

The specific charge to the TFCHD is:

*Per the directive of the Office of the President, the **Task Force on Campus Historical Displays (TFCHD)** is charged with accurately and fully telling the story of TAMU through its **Heritage Assets** (i.e., buildings; open spaces and view corridors; monuments, statues, and busts; public art; and other types of displays and iconography indoors and outdoors).*

The task force will consider the following guiding parameters:

- *Using the **complete campus** as the canvas to tell the story of TAMU.*
- *Designing **specific spaces** designated to recognize historical figures, for example, reimagining Academic Plaza and/or identifying other additional spaces for recognition.*
- *Focusing on the **development of concepts** in response to the first two bullets.*

In accepting to serve as Co-Chairs of the TFCHD, we are committed to fulfill this charge by (1) recognizing and respecting the past of TAMU, with an eye to the future; (2) using our combined architectural expertise and experience, our ability to complement each other, and our commitment to looking at the project in a fully integrated way; and (3) seeking input formally from the Task Force Members, and from administrators, faculty, students, staff, former students, supporters of TAMU, and members of the broader community. In addition, we have been, and will continue to be, focused on exploring various possible answers to the question: ***How might TAMU use its main physical campus in College Station to tell the full story of what a great university it is?*** In doing so, we have centered our efforts in the following seven questions:

1. *What is working well at TAMU within the context and scope of the charge to the Task Force?*
2. *What is not working well at TAMU within the context and scope of the charge to the Task Force?*
3. *What might/could/should/must TAMU start doing that it currently is not doing within the context and scope of the charge to the Task Force?*
4. *What is the story of TAMU that is not being told by TAMU’s current Heritage Assets (HAs) that might/could/should/must be told?*
5. *What might/could/should/must this story tell?*
6. *How might/could/should/must this story be told, e.g., what type of media would you use to tell the story?*
7. *Where on campus might/could/should/must this story be told?*

The Task Force made a formal decision that data gathering is imperative in gaining an understanding of how to successfully achieve the bullet points noted above, and as a result, it developed a Qualtrics Survey through based on these questions, with three survey data collection captures:

- **First Data Capture:** To test and calibrate the survey to maximize an effective capture of the voices and input of every constituency at TAMU who chooses to participate and contribute, all the members of the Task Force completed a preliminary survey, based on the initial discussions on its charge and expected outcomes.
- **Second Data Capture:** The preliminary survey was modified based on the responses received, and then, the Task Force Co-Chairs proceeded to send the survey to (1) all administrators, faculty, students, and staff of every one of the 18 Colleges and Schools at TAMU, through their respective Deans; and (2) all personnel in the primary Administrative and Business Units at TAMU, through the leadership of the members of the Presidential Executive Staff. This survey opened on Monday, March 22, 2021 and closed at noon on Tuesday, March 29, 2021.
- **Third Data Capture:** Since the survey responses from the second data capture have been processed, the Task Force Co-Chairs are now reaching out to former students and supporters of TAMU to capture the voices and input, of those who choose to participate. ***This Survey will open at noon on Monday, April 5, 2021 and will close at noon on Thursday, April 15, 2021.***

In addition, the Task Force will pursue two other data collection captures:

- **Fourth Data Capture:** The final formal data collection phase will be done through two open information forums to be held in April (a decision will be made later on dates, times, and virtual or in-person venue) for which the Task Force Co-Chairs will reach out and invite the TAMU community at large, as well as select partners in Bryan/College Station, to present and discuss proposed strategies and conceptual designs in response to the charge and collect any additional feedback and /or input.
- **On-Going Data Capture:** Finally, and as it has been the case to date, the Task Force Co-Chairs and the members of the Task Force will continue to receive unsolicited data and information from specific individuals and groups, on a diverse range of topics related directly or indirectly to the charge to the TFCHD. Information being gathered will be compiled and, when appropriate, communicated to other individuals / groups, as appropriate.

As a result, we are asking your assistance, as members of the Leadership Council of The Association of Former Students, in disseminating to all the constituencies that you represent the following link to a short survey:

[Click here to take the survey.](#)

Note: This survey will open at noon on Monday, April 5, 2021 and will close at noon on Thursday, April 15, 2021

Your assistance will be greatly appreciated.