

# **Troy University Transformational Strategic Planning: The Journey to One Great University 1995-2005**

## **Introduction**

The challenge of affecting meaningful change in higher education is addressed in a remarkable work by Peter Eckel, Madeline Green, Barbara Hill, and William Mallon.<sup>1</sup> Their findings suggest colleges and universities must look not just at linear improvements of programs but also at the changes required to meet new and different external challenges. They were quick to point out this may require a significant detailed review of the missions and goals of an institution. They referred to this process as transformational planning.

In 1995 The Troy State University System existed as a loose-knit consortium of three separately accredited universities reporting through a Chancellor to one board of trustees. Each university, Troy State University in Troy, Troy State University in Dothan and Troy State University in Montgomery had a president<sup>2</sup>. There was commonality in some financial management and financial aid processing. Faculty and staff had also begun looking at a centralized management information system. Each institution had separate mission statements, curricula, strategic planning, and institutional effectiveness processes. It became obvious that more attention had to be placed on reviewing cost efficiency, duplication of effort (imagine the cost of three separate self-studies happening within four years of each other), student transferability, and public misunderstandings and misperceptions about “Troy State.”

---

<sup>1</sup> *On Change III: Taking Charge of Change a Primer for Colleges and Universities, American Council on Education, 1999.*

<sup>2</sup> The Chancellor also served as the president of Troy State University.

## **The Journey Begins**

In 1997 universities in Alabama were required to change from a quarter to semester system. All three universities in the Troy State University System independently approached the changes associated with the quarter-to-semester conversions. Additionally, SACS self-studies were on the horizon for each of the institutions as well as the completion and beginning of new long-term strategic planning processes. Each process had different schedules and each had unintended consequences for other institutions in the System. It was in this time period that the full implications of lack of commonality within the system became-painfully obvious.

A couple of examples make this point. Because each institution was moving through self-study for reaffirmation at different times, the conversion from quarters to semesters occurred at different times. This meant that some students in the system were on quarters and some on semesters. This further complicated the existing problem of students transferring credit among institutions within the TSU System.<sup>3</sup>

In fall 1999 Troy State converted to semesters, as did Troy State University Dothan. Troy State University Montgomery converted in the fall of 2000. The schedule for self-study and reaffirmation was 1997 to 1999 for Troy State University Montgomery, and 1997 to 1999 for Troy State University Dothan. Troy State University began its self-study in 1999 and completed it in 2001. Finally the Troy State University strategic plan (five-year plan) ended in 2000, Troy State University strategic plan (five-year plan) was to end in 1999 and Troy State University Montgomery (three-year plan) was ending in 1999. These examples speak to a system needing more synchronization.

In 2000 Troy State University developed a draft of its strategic plan for 2000-2005:

---

<sup>3</sup> In 1999 Chancellor Jack Hawkins, Jr., identified barriers to student transfer within the system as the major issue affecting a core value of student-centered service.

*Over the Horizon.* This draft was presented for discussion at a Board of Trustees' retreat in February of that year. As the discussion unfolded, the chair of the board asked why are there not common System Plans wherein all institutions address common needs? Chancellor Hawkins felt this should and could be done and immediately asked staff to begin assembling a "System-Wide" planning process.

### **The Troy State University System and Campuses Strategic Plans**

The institutional research and planning offices at each of the three institutions worked through a strategic planning group chaired by then Executive Vice Chancellor Doug Patterson with Dan Joslyn acting as facilitator for the process.<sup>4</sup>

In June 2000, Chancellor Hawkins sent a memorandum of understanding to each institution stating that a bridge-year of institutional planning, 2000-2001, would take place:

- Each institution would complete a one-year plan by September 1, 2000, using the same strategic goals or initiatives used in 99/00.
- There would be a System strategic plan that will include objectives that strengthen cooperation among institutions and campuses, remove administrative barriers to student movement across the System, identify new markets and increase community impact on Southeastern Alabama.
- The individual campus plans would be developed using System-wide goals and objectives as a guide.
- The System plan would be developed by February 2001 for the years 2001-2005.
- The Institutional plans would be developed (using the System plan) by June 2001 for the years 2001-2005.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Dr. Doug Patterson is Senior Vice Chancellor for Administration of the new Troy University and Dan Joslyn of Joslyn Consulting has worked with the strategic planning process since 1993.

This one-year plan allowed all three institutions to then enter a common planning cycle during 2000-2001 to create a new system plan and for the first time in the system's history to produce a system plan tied to campus plans. Chancellor Hawkins' challenged the group to bring the system institutions closer together to eliminate barriers to student service and to achieve operational efficiencies. In addition, he challenged the group to assess the effectiveness of the System against the changing conditions in higher education.

The Annual Leadership Conference of senior faculty and staff from all institutions in the system was the venue for the kickoff of the system-wide planning effort:

TSU System Conference

July 24-25, 2000

The 24th

9:35- Dr. John Dew facilitates Timeline Exercise

10:30-11:10- Panel Discussion on trends impacting TSU System- Dr Doug Patterson, Dr.

Mike Malone, Dr. Cam Martindale, Dr. Rodney Cox, and Dr. Curtis Pitts

11:10-11:15 –Dr. Dew details the work of groups responsible for (SWOT) analysis of issues

The 25<sup>th</sup>

8:30-10:30 workgroups take what is learned from the activities of the 24<sup>th</sup> and begin to identify and capture ideas and opportunities for improvement in areas of academic programs, student and administrative services and community development

11:45-12:15 Wrap up Dr. John Dew and Mr. Dan Joslyn

---

<sup>5</sup> TSU System Strategic Planning Steering Committee, Notes of the Meeting of June 19, 2000 (written and distributed on June 26, 2000).

At this meeting the organization of the twelve-month planning process was discussed and adopted and some 500 ideas from participants in several workgroups were collected, assessed, and codified.<sup>6</sup>

The organization of the planning process featured a set of strategic planning teams that included faculty and staff from across the TSU System. These “System Management Teams” (SMTs) were led by the Vice Chancellor, Dr. Douglas C. Patterson; the president of Troy State University Dothan, Dr. Mike Malone; and the president of Troy State University Montgomery, Dr. Cam Martindale. The groups were presented with findings from an environmental scan conducted by the main campus at Troy and the issues, ideas and concerns, derived from the Leadership Conference “500 Idea-Set.”

Meeting at least monthly, some 51 faculty and staff addressed these issues and began building a mission, goals, and strategic objectives for the Troy State University System.<sup>7</sup> Each team maintained minutes and began to extensively use the Internet in order to coordinate the significant meetings, drafts, and final decisions about their areas. Chancellor Jack Hawkins chaired the System Strategic Plan Steering Committee comprised of the system management team leaders and Mr. Joslyn. It met monthly to assess progress and make decisions as required. The new system plan was developed in February 1, 2001, and used by each institution to create campus plans based on the eleven strategic initiatives of the system plan:

1. Develop and implement a coordinated marketing program to build system identity and strengthen brand awareness.
2. Develop and implement a coordinated system of transferability of course credit and articulation across campuses for undergraduate and graduate academic programs.

---

<sup>6</sup> Dr. John Dew, a continuous improvement specialist and Mr. Joslyn led the conference through a systematic *Future Search* exercise to generate SWOT-based ideas and issues. Mr. Joslyn codified all ideas from the conference and developed a planning process to turn ideas and concerns into initiatives and objectives.

<sup>7</sup> While 50 faculty and staff served on teams all faculty and staff had access to meetings, emails, and briefings on what was taking place.

3. Create a comprehensive student-centered environment across the TSU System.
4. Create new program options and concentrations.
5. Develop and expand strong continuing education programs.
6. Create an environment in which students and faculty share a commitment to strive for excellence.
7. Establish a process for program and service evaluation to provide continuous system improvement.
8. Develop and implement academic and administrative procedures to ensure effective/efficient student access to educational resources among campuses.
9. Develop and implement standards in the classroom and total campus environment (co-curricular) that foster personal and professional growth and development by enhancing the values of integrity, accountability, responsibility, and mutual respect.
10. Build strategic partnerships that cultivate cultural, social, and economic development to leverage the unique and adaptive nature of the Troy State University System to address the changing needs of the marketplace.
11. Establish a dynamic System-wide internal and external communication system that integrates and generates timely information about actions and the impact of the Troy State University System.

The Troy State University System Strategic Plan and institutional plans for Troy, Dothan and Montgomery were developed, copies sent to faculty and staff for review, and reviewed again at the System's Annual Leadership Conference held in August 2001. After some adjustments the plans were presented to the long-range planning committee of the Board of Trustees. That committee forwarded the plan to the Board of Trustees and the plans were approved on August 23, 2001.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> While one may question the need for development of four interrelated plans around common initiatives, recall that Troy State University was just beginning its self-study while TSUD and TSUM had just completed theirs. A common system plan would have

Fall 2001 began with a strong movement to increase the levels of cooperation across the System. From the start the intent was to use the consolidated plans as an interim step focused on creating one strategic five-year plan for the Troy State University System by late 2005.

### **Responding to Changing Conditions: A Bold Move**

From September 2001 until October 2002 a good deal of discussion took place within the long-range planning and executive committees of the Board of Trustees and the senior staff of the System. The dialog revolved around drops in state funding for higher education, the duplication of costs across the TSU System and the best ways to position these institutions, not just within Alabama but also in its various sites in the United States and around the world to strengthen programs and grow enrollment.

In addition to the issues cited above, Troy State University Montgomery was under court order to continue its very sharply focused mission of adult education.<sup>9</sup> The concern was that the changes needed to make the system more viable could be jeopardized if the courts would not allow such changes to go forward at the Montgomery Campus.

The Strategic Plans continued to be implemented even while state support for higher education called for cutting existing operating budgets. The Troy State University System institutions had to reduce their operating budgets (proration) by 6.2% for FY 2002. The climate to reduce costs was so strong that the decision was made to forego the annual leadership conference scheduled for August of 2002.

---

meant waiting until after reaffirmation by SACS in December 2003 thereby by not being able to respond to the Board mandate to act quickly.

<sup>9</sup> Details of this can be found in *John Knight, et al. v. State of Alabama, et al.*, CV-83-M-1676-S.

In 2002 general opinion was that increases in legislative appropriations for senior colleges and universities would not occur and that stagnant (+1 to -3%) change in allocations would continue at least through 2005.

In October 2002 Chancellor Hawkins asked that a concept paper be developed outlining what could be done to further reduce costs and bring the System even closer together in terms of best academic and student practices while continuing to look to better ways of making the Troy State brand more recognizable. This request began a series of concept papers that evolved into a final paper, *A Case for Alabama's 21st Century University*.

In early 2003 Dr. Hawkins approached the then new Governor of Alabama, the Honorable Bob Riley, to discuss *A Case for Alabama's 21st Century University*. Both the Chancellor and the case were well received and the decision was made to explore the central feature of the case -- that the institutions within the system combine into a new university with a mission and goals focused to meet new demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Two immediate concerns had to be addressed. The first was how the federal courts would perceive this idea and the second was how the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools would react to a three-university merger. Here are the steps that were taken:

1. Presented case to the Governor
2. Presented case to the Federal Court
3. Presented case to Dr. Jim Rogers, Executive Director of Commission on Colleges of SACS
4. Revised case based on steps 1-3
5. Presented case to the Board of Trustees
6. Developed an outline of what needed to happen in the next two years to ensure "One Great University" would be operational (provided steps 1-5 were approved) by fall 2005

As the University moved into 2003, the planning team and the Chancellor continued to talk and assure faculty, staff, and students that this was the right move at the right time with the right people ...“who can make this happen.” On February 20, 2003 Chancellor Hawkins sent a memo to faculty and staff throughout the system. This memo provided clear information on the progress toward creating what was referred to internally as “One Great University” and included the following assurances.<sup>10</sup>

*...I want to assure you that our move to one university will not have any negative effect on any student's progress toward his or her educational goals; rather the aim is for this to be as seamless as transition as possible. All of us will be one Troy State University whether we are in Hong Kong, Montgomery, Troy, Dothan or Phenix City. Additionally I want to assure faculty and staff that through this process we will become better and stronger and that we will see new and dynamic opportunities for faculty and staff on our campuses.*

Institutional plans now focused on creating one institution by August 1, 2005; other objectives in the original strategic plans that were not directly tied to OGU were moved to secondary priority with the understanding that while viable, many objectives may need to be reassessed after August 1, 2005, as faculty and staff would then be planning for one institution, not three.

In the March 1, 2003, meeting of the Board, pending approval by the U.S. District Court, the plan was adjusted to create “One Great University” by the fall of 2005. This was the same time frame as the original system strategic plan (*Coming Together as a System*). This meant that in a little more than 24 months all of the issues related to a three-way merger and transformation into a new university had to be accomplished. This required an intense review of current plans and a refocusing of the priorities of all three campuses.

On April 9, 2003, U.S. District Court Judge Harold Murphy granted approval of the Administrative Restructuring Plan as submitted by the Troy State University System.

## **Adjusting the Plans**

The Board changed the focus from bringing campuses of the Troy State University System closer together, to becoming one university. Faculty and staff had to be informed and an intense 24-month plan put in place in order for OGU to be operational in the fall of 2005. Chancellor Hawkins asked that the strategic planning teams be used to explore how this would be done and that a concise plan for the next two years be created.

In the summer of 2003 SMT leaders were asked to identify those objectives from the Troy State University System Strategic Plan that must be completed by August 1, 2005, in order for the OGU to open! In addition, the leaders were asked to identify objectives from plans that could be shifted beyond 2005 and finally to identify other issues that needed to be addressed but had not been considered in the original plan.

In the 2003 Leadership Conference there were a series of discussions about OGU and what was taking place as planning gears were shifted to address the mandate of the Board of Trustees. During and following the conference, a new set of forty-eight “OGU Objectives” was developed. From September 2003 through August 2004 implementation activities were pursued aggressively while progress on the plan was monitored closely by the SMTs and the Executive Committee.<sup>10</sup>

In August through December 2004, the organization implemented steps to enable the new university to emerge. New functions were grafted onto old structures and new structures evolved. Again Chancellor Hawkins captured this strategy when he pointed out that...“ it is not so much that we can flip a switch and see a brand new “One Great University;” rather it is more like a slow turning up of a rheostat. Different parts of the OGU will

---

<sup>10</sup> See “OGU Objectives 2003-2005.”

slowly come into focus, and by August 1, 2005, what we have become will be bright and clear.”

The most significant action in 2003-2004 was the building of a new organizational structure while continuing to administer the old structure of three universities. The key in the new organization was the creation of the Chancellor’s Cabinet and the naming of senior vice chancellors who would head the major divisions of the new institution- Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost, Senior Vice Chancellor for Student Services, Senior Vice Chancellor for Administration and Senior Vice Chancellor for Advancement and External Relations.

This meant, at the organizational level, senior vice chancellors had taken over the tasks of strategic management. The senior vice chancellors were Dr. Ed Roach, Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost; Dr. John Schmidt, Senior Vice Chancellor for Student Services; Dr. Doug Patterson, Senior Vice Chancellor for Administration; and Dr. Cam Martindale, Senior Vice Chancellor for Advancement and External Relations.

The Chancellor’s Cabinet included the above plus the Executive Assistant to the Chancellor, the Vice Chancellor for Financial Affairs, the Campus Vice Chancellors at Dothan, Montgomery and Phenix City, and the Vice Chancellor for University College (later the university Athletic Director was added to the Cabinet). Senior vice chancellors met as a group and in twos and threes to work interrelated issues and challenges they could solve among themselves – a vital teamwork approach that has proven to be most helpful in implementing one university policy and procedure.

Chancellor Jack Hawkins, Jr., also began meeting with senior vice chancellors forty-five minutes before each Cabinet meeting in early 2005. This allowed the SVCs to address common issues and receive feedback and for the Chancellor to introduce ideas and issues.

The first year of the OGU Plan was intense. The magnitude of change, while conceptually understandable, was extremely difficult on a working level. Priorities, responsibilities, and workloads shifted.

### **OGU Becomes Troy University**

In late 2004 and early 2005 a major communication objective relative to OGU was begun. This was a marketing and communications study that eventually included assistance from Stamats, a national firm recognized as a leader in university branding and marketing. Given that a new entity/university was being created, it was essential that the story of why and how decisions were made and captured in *A Case for Alabama's 21st Century University* be communicated to constituencies.

This effort was extraordinary in scope. This action had to happen first because the time needed to launch a brand awareness campaign of the OGU would take months to prepare. The idea was to begin marketing the new institution in 2004 with a run up to its approval by the Board and later by SACS so that the actual marketing of the OGU to students could take place for the entering class of 2005.

As a result of these efforts, Stamats puts forth the recommendation that The Troy State University System, as it becomes one great university, be called **Troy University**.<sup>11</sup> The reasons for this recommendation were twofold. One, that public universities with cities followed by the word state in their names are perceived as regional and limited in focus. Two, that given the significant national and international presence of the university, the word "State" was viewed as an understatement of the scope of the programs and services being offered. Several institutions had dropped state from their names and the majority reported positive feedback and an increase in funds raised.

---

<sup>11</sup> See STAMATS report of June 2004.

In order to fully explore this recommendation, faculty, staff, students, alumni, and local, national, and international leaders were interviewed and/or participated in discussion groups as to whether they felt Troy University was the appropriate name for “OGU.” The response was overwhelming in favor of the name Troy University.<sup>12</sup>

By March of 2004 Chancellor Hawkins had prepared a resolution for Board consideration wherein the Troy State University would become Troy University. This action was reviewed by the Board of Trustees and approved by them with the Honorable Bob Riley, Governor of Alabama, sitting as chair of the Board.

In August 2004 the Annual Leadership Conference featured the naming of the new academic leadership -- the deans of the colleges and schools of the new Troy University. The new graphics standard manual for the institution was introduced as was the marketing and advertising plans for 2004-2005.

The Chancellor’s Cabinet continued to monitor the strategic plan and in December 2004 the Cabinet approved the process that would result in the first strategic plan for the new institution- *Troy University: 2005-2010*. This was again explored in detail in the January 18, 2005, Chancellor’s Cabinet meeting.<sup>13</sup>

This planning process is unique in that it folds in several facets.

1. It will carry over any “OGU Objectives” into 2005 and beyond as needed to complete the transformation to one university;
2. It will factor in any Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE) goals that pertain to the new university;
3. It will capture the Chancellor’s vision and bold initiatives for 2008 and 2010;
4. It will encapsulate the design and implementation of a capital campaign for the University;

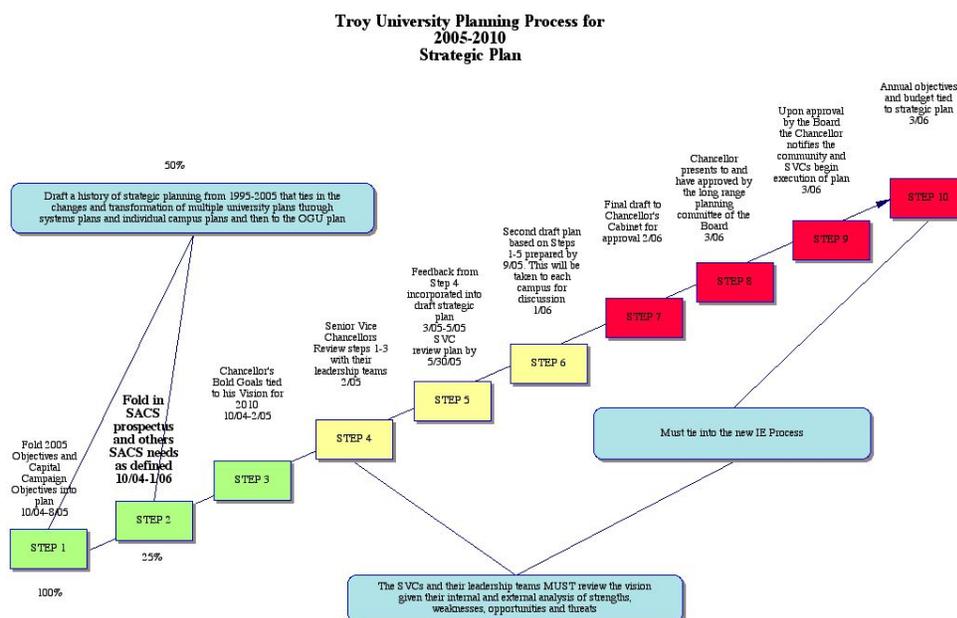
---

<sup>12</sup> See reports from Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost, Dr. Ed Roach, and Senior Vice Chancellor for Student Services, Dr. John Schmidt.

<sup>13</sup> See Troy University Planning Process for the 2005-2010 Strategic Plan.

5. It allows for summation of the individual campus plans that were begun in 2001 and needed to be complete before transition to one university.<sup>14</sup>
6. It focuses on the new university getting its bearings or “sea-legs” as it sets sails under a new flag, with a new mission and vision.

The specific steps and their relationship are displayed in a flowchart developed for the Chancellor’s Cabinet:



It is clear in retrospect that strategic planning has been transformative for this university. The process has been alive -- it has neither rested on a shelf nor gathered dust. It has been molded in the hands of dozens, even hundreds of faculty and staff and overseen by a Board that has been thorough and demanding in the attention to detail and quality that has evolved. Actions have been monitored, assessed, and changes made where necessary. This has been a dynamic, not static, process!

It has not all been easy. It has and continues to tax everyone involved. The challenge has always been how to make a better university as measured by student outcomes.

<sup>14</sup> This is an important step in that it allows closure of the separately accredited institutional plans prior to the substantive change visit by SACS in fall 2005.

Chancellor Hawkins always likens what is being done to that of building a great cathedral -- each stone, and each wall, forming a great university. Without those stonemasons, who may never see the finished product, the future cannot happen.