Donna Savage: Hi. This is Donna Savage and I am here along with Javier Garza. We are co-chairs of the University Planning Council and we wanted to take some time to update the campus on the work conducted so far on a new University Strategic Plan for 2016-2020.

It has been a little bit over a year, I think, since Dr. Dottavio challenged us to commence with some “intelligent tinkering”. Over the last year much has been accomplished.

Some of these activities, like developing a time line, environmental scans...are documented on the UPC web site. Last fall about 500 folks involved in the process particularly in the activities organized to engage the campus and other stakeholder groups into the strategic planning conversation.

This stakeholder data was used as building blocks for last month’s President's Planning Retreat where over the course of a day and a half, members of the University Planning Council, Planning Task Force, campus leadership, and representatives from the faculty and staff met. With the benefit of a facilitator, the group worked to make sense out of pages and pages the stakeholder data. What emerged were four imperatives or what I would think of as BIG strategic goals: The first one,

Managed growth

2. Academic Excellence

3. Student Success, and finally something we’re calling

Community/Connection/Collaboration

In addition, there were 3 other areas that emerged as supportive of the goals I just listed:

Branding

Communication, and

Partnerships

These goals will serve as the foundation for moving into the next, and the most important phase for developing our new plan. This spring we will commence the NEXT 100 DAYS Campaign. The campaign will provide multiple opportunities to participate in activities that lead to the completion of our strategic plan.
The first of these activities is already underway and in fact about to wrap up. A campus-wide survey was distributed last month. That survey asked you to think about and illustrate, what does a “premier student-focused university” look like? How will we “inspire discovery, leadership, and service”? Your responses to these questions are already helping us determine what Tarleton should look like in 2020.

The Next 100 Days Campaign will also include a series of meetings and activities to discuss each of the BIG 4 goal areas. These open sessions will help us realize our vision with a look to the future and development of initiatives to get us to our 2020 goals.

**Javier Garza:** One of the most striking things that we’ve noticed and were not necessarily surprised by it, it’s very heartening, is the extent to which the campus community has been so demonstrative of their commitment to the institution, and, you know the love that our stakeholders have for this campus.

Our stakeholders have demonstrated a, a, a genuine willingness to be open and honest about their ideas.

I guess if there’s been anything that has been kind of gratifying about it is that they’ve been very willing to share their appreciation for being asked the questions that we’ve been asking them and for soliciting their feedback.

Another very important piece to our progress over the last year has been the cabinet’s commitment to the entire process, in particular their commitment to a very strong and genuine effort to engage the stakeholders.

Dr. Dottavio and his cabinet have been most supportive of a transparent and inclusive planning process.

There have been several aspects of the president’s cabinet that have just been, just been really important to the process. Among them is demonstration of trust in the campus community and, and the recognition that the, the stakeholders have something important to say to contribute.

They have been very clear about their interest in engaging -parents, students, alumni, just a sort of broad array of those who have a genuine interest in the future of this university.

In addition, what’s important I think to facilitate buy-in to this process is their support of a transparent and inclusive process.

And an indication of, of the commitment on the council’s part to that is the extent to which we have been posting every activity and the results, and trying to close the loop of every activity that’s been conducted by the council.
Certainly another sort, important party in the, the development of the plan has been the collective membership of the university planning council and the planning task force.

The council has been instrumental, key, in developing among other things, an internal and external scan and in surveying the landscape of higher education.

We could not have engaged all of the stakeholders for the feedback that we collected were it not for the work that many of the council and task force members have committed to the data collection process.

Another key piece in this process has been Dr. Pat Sanaghan who was an external consultant.

He's provided important direction to us and provided some instruction on how we can collect large amounts of data, feedback, and go through a process of prioritizing that information, making sense of it, and closing the loop and sharing that information with the campus communities.

Among those important key elements in the process has been the idea of organizational trust, and I think one of the things we’ve learned throughout this is that, you know, the willingness of the stakeholder to come to the table and to share their ideas depends a lot on, an issue of trust, you know the idea that, that, that whatever they share, the ideas they share will be considered, will be sort of woven into the, the feedback process that our collective voice is in the end is gonna be what brings us to a successful and, and - useful strategic plan over the next five years.

One of the things that we need to stay mindful of is that we need to be staying true to the vision that has been established, that Tarleton strives to be the premier student-focused university in Texas.

We need to make sure that the plan allows and includes some elements that are aspirational, bold and stretching.

And we’ve got to have a plan that is, is designed in such a way that it can be well implemented.

We will have some town halls, some open forums, to get feedback on preliminary versions of the plan.

An important part of the evaluation of any draft is going to be the extent to which it resonates positively with the campus community.
Realistically, it’s important to realize that you are gonna to see something in the strategic plan, draft, that you don’t think belongs in there, or you’re gonna recognize something you think that should be in there, but what’s important about how this process is played out to this point is that everything that’s in there comes from a collective sentiment from others on campus.

We want this to be representative of the stakeholders, the stakeholder body’s sentiments, and most importantly, above all else, we want it to be in the best interest of our students.

If you hear about a town hall or if you hear about a forum or whatever, and you’re not sure you wanna come because you have been to one before and it wasn’t, you know, what you thought it was gonna be or whatever, well this one might not be either.

But we can guarantee one thing, that your voice will be heard.

You know, it may not lead to an end that you’re seeking, but that’s because there are a lot of voices being heard.

I guess the point is that this shouldn’t, the fact that we’re sort of trying to build consensus, shouldn’t dissuade anybody from participating in the process.

**Donna Savage:** It has truly been a privilege for me to serve as co-chair him in this process. And while we do have a lot of work in front of us, I am heartened by the transparency, the engagement and the excitement of those that have been participating in the process to this point, and where we’ve gotten so far, and how much, and the look ahead.