

“Breakthrough Solutions”

This document describes the status of the University of Houston with respect to 5 of 7 “breakthrough solutions”, prior to any additional actions being taken as a result of the recent initiative presented to university regents at the Governor’s Higher Education Summit held on May 21, 2008. As described below, there are many recurring processes and initiatives underway at UH consistent with these solutions. We are in the process of considering appropriate modifications.

In a conference call held on June 16, 2008, Texas regents collectively decided not to address solutions #6 and #7 given that these are expected to be addressed by the Legislature and/or the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

STATUS of UH

Solutions #1, #2 & #4 – Teaching Efficiency, Effectiveness, & Rewards

Scholars and Teaching

- University of Houston faculty members are more than teachers; they are scholars, innovators, and explorers. They teach their students how to be teachers, researchers, explorers, innovators and entrepreneurs. They teach them how to think beyond what has already been discovered.

Teaching Excellence

- The University of Houston expects and values high quality teaching by all instructional faculty members, be they tenured, tenure-track, or non-tenure track.

Student Satisfaction

- Each student is encouraged to express his or her level of satisfaction upon completion of each course. End of course evaluations are administered to give students the opportunity to reveal and document their level of satisfaction with the course materials and the quality of instruction.
- Teaching effectiveness, as evidenced by student evaluations, contributes data for the annual merit review process for all faculty members. The merit review process is tied to a faculty member’s annual salary.

- Student satisfaction findings contribute to faculty evaluations and the identification of opportunities for improving instruction.

Public Disclosure of Student Satisfaction Ratings

- Student satisfaction ratings of teaching performance are compiled for each instructor by course and posted for public review in the university library. Students have access to these ratings.

Monetary Awards for Excellent Teaching

- The University of Houston Teaching Excellence Awards for outstanding faculty and teaching assistants/fellows carry cash prizes of \$5,000 for faculty and \$1,000 for teaching assistants/fellows. Eight Teaching Excellence awards are granted to faculty: four awards are reserved for exceptional tenure or tenure-track professors, two awards are reserved for tenured or tenure-track faculty who teach University Undergraduate Core Curriculum courses, one award is reserved for faculty who have demonstrated excellence in innovative teaching using instructional technology, possibly including but not limited to hybrid courses, online courses, and instructional television, and one award is reserved for outstanding faculty who do not have tenured or tenure-track positions, including Instructors, Clinical Faculty, Research Faculty, Artist Affiliates, and Lecturers. There are two awards reserved for teaching assistants/fellows.

Teaching Excellence & Tenure

- Tenure is awarded to a faculty member either upon appointment or following a probationary period. Tenure is awarded only after a rigorous review at the department, the college, and the university level based on criteria including evidence of teaching excellence.
- The post tenure performance review process “intended to ensure that each tenured faculty member consistently performs at an acceptable professional level” is utilized. This process provides recurring reviews of teaching performance.

Student Learning Outcomes

- Learning outcomes are defined for each program. The extent to which students learn specified outcomes is regularly assessed. Assessment findings contribute information for improving teaching and learning.

Solution #3 – Split Research & Teaching Budgets to Encourage Excellence in Research & Teaching

Teaching and Research mission

- As a metropolitan research university, UH is engaged in innovation, teaching, knowledge generation, instruction, service, and commercialization. Teaching excellence at UH involves linking inquiry to instruction, which is the unique mission of a research university.
- Separating research from teaching would deprive our students of learning from scholars.

Faculty Expectations

- Faculty members are expected to conduct research and scholarly activities; effectively teach new knowledge; and provide service to their communities. These integrated activities are tracked through faculty assignments and reviewed annually.
- Research faculty are encouraged to use external research funding to support their salaries during the summer, with the result of incrementing their annual salaries.

Budgets

- Departmental budgets are primarily derived from student enrollment and supplemented by research budgets.
- Separate budgets are assigned to grants, contracts, and sponsored research initiatives.
- The Office of Research is putting in place a formula for allocation and reallocation of indirect cost funding based on whether or not the college or department met specific sponsored research targets.

Recognition

- Annually UH publicly celebrates the research accomplishments of faculty with monetary awards.
- Tenure is awarded to faculty, either upon appointment or following a probationary period, only after review at department and/or college as well as university level based on criteria that include evidence of research excellence. Annual merit reviews and resulting salary adjustments place significant emphasis on evidence of scholarly activity. In disciplines where external funding opportunities exist, the amount of external funding weighs heavily on faculty evaluations.

Solution #5 – Results based contracts with students

Excellence

- The UH degree signifies that a person has not only acquired basic knowledge, but has learned how to innovate and explore in their field. It is the interaction with a faculty of scholars that makes this possible.

Student success information

- Student success is dependent on a student's ability to access information, complete degree and course requirements. UH provides information to each student in university catalogs, on web sites, and through advisement services.
- Students are provided with information on specific degree requirements by their advisors, in admissions materials, catalogs, and the university web site.

Student “contracts”

- Once enrolled students are provided academic advising to assist them in identifying a planned program of studies to guide their completion of required and elective courses. Program plans are signed by individual students. Program requirements are posted on college and department web sites for easy access by students.
- Each UH instructor provides a syllabus for each course. Syllabi specify learning outcomes, course activities, and expectations for success.

Learning outcomes

- Consistent with the accreditation requirements of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, learning outcomes are specified for each program, each course, and subject to recurring assessment.
- UH participates in the Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA) and provides information to students and families on institutional performance related to student success and satisfaction.