

Galveston Organizational Review

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Thank you for your time and thoughtfulness responding to the organizational review of Texas A&M University at Galveston. Your engagement and individual input shared through various channels – from surveys and emails to in-person events – have helped inform and shape the next steps. I particularly want to thank Col. Michael E. Fossum who has provided me with honest feedback throughout the organizational review process and during our discussions regarding the recommendations. Like many of you, I found the report to include good ideas, some that support efforts already underway and others that need modification for them to bring positive momentum in advancing our academic, research and outreach mission at Texas A&M University at Galveston.

The Galveston Campus provides real-world experiences focused on the Blue Economy – the economic, social, political and ecological vitality of our coasts, oceans and surrounding ecosystems. Educational opportunities for our students and faculty to engage with business and industry, non-profit and community organizations in these areas are growing. In addition, established academic programs, research capabilities, and outreach initiatives in the Blue Economy are underway. Therefore, we are perfectly positioned to more intentionally and strategically invest in the Galveston campus to prepare students with relevant, current and innovative educational opportunities that prepare them for the workforce after graduation.

I remain steadfast in my goal to build upon the tremendous strengths, investments and culture of Texas A&M at all campuses to maintain our upward trajectory. Many of the recommendations offered and supported through feedback align the Galveston campus with the organizational structure and processes of the College Station campus. Still, many recommendations in the report will help the Galveston campus grow even stronger while also respecting and embracing its unique mission, traditions and history. The College Station leadership team and I are committed to helping Galveston, an integral campus of Texas A&M University, advance without losing who and what is at its core.

The following is a summary of my decisions on key recommendations; however, The Texas A&M University System Board of Regents has final approval authority on many of these actions. Further approvals may also be necessary and we will share the status with you. While only some of the recommendations are discussed in detail, there is a comprehensive overview of the next steps following my summary.

Organizational Structure

Creating a sense of consistency supports our faculty, students, staff and all stakeholders that engage with us from academics and research to philanthropy. I support and accept referring to all branch and satellite location leaders as Vice President and Chief Operating Officer. This is already in place for Texas A&M Health and the McAllen Higher Education Center, and will be established in Fort Worth once that campus is developed. But I also recognize that our leaders on the branch campuses have unique responsibilities. In Galveston, the title for the role Col. Fossum currently serves will signify primary leadership for both the campus and the Maritime Academy. Maintaining the title of Maritime Academy Superintendent will keep a strong connection to the federal Maritime Administration and other five state maritime academies in the United States.

To support the Vice President, Chief Operating Officer and Superintendent, a Chief of Staff position will be created. While an Associate Vice President of Operations was also recommended in the report, I am not moving forward with this executive role at this time. However, if we discover the need to fill this position in the future, we will do so.

Already underway, and mostly completed, is the centralization of key operational areas on the Galveston campus to align with the organizational structure on the College Station campus. These include Undergraduate Recruitment and Outreach, Technology Services, Marketing and Communications, and Human Resources and Organizational Effectiveness, all with solid lines reporting to the respective VPs in College Station. Other operational units, Finance and Business Compliance, Administration and Auxiliary Service, and Student Affairs, will remain as direct reports in Galveston and are encouraged to continue their close collaboration with their counterparts in College Station.

The concern for career development, pathways and competitive salaries is being reviewed through the university's classification and compensation analysis. Our Division of Human Resources and Organizational Effectiveness is beginning to

conduct a market-based analysis of compensation that reviews job titles, position descriptions and compensation in relation to the geographic location and market of the position. I understand this critical need in Galveston, and across all our regional campuses, and I have asked that we develop funding solutions to bring better market-based compensation for employees across the university. This is not something we can achieve quickly, but I am committed to identifying funding. This analysis is happening at this time, and more information will follow as it becomes available.

Aggie Student Experience, Communications and Student Affairs

Many claim their program, school or university are unique, but this is undeniably true in Galveston. Our ability to work with industry partners and lead efforts addressing the holistic and unique dimensions of the Blue Economy is evident in the lab experiences, relatable degree programs offered and research endeavors underway, and as a sea-grant institution, this is an integral and vital component of Texas A&M. As part of the organizational review, I challenged Galveston leadership to reimagine how things could be done and define ways to elevate current opportunities while leveraging new degree programs, philanthropic and donor relations to support initiatives, and more. This led to an idea that, while not a specific recommendation outlined in the organizational review, fosters a new way of thinking and brings forward innovation in program delivery, enhances existing efforts and provides a pathway for future growth.

Your feedback revealed a vision to solidify a new identity and clearly define what Galveston offers. As a result, we will establish a new marine and maritime school at Texas A&M University that uniquely positions the marine and maritime disciplines at the forefront of “blue” scholarship, education, research and professional development. The formal name of the new school is an immense opportunity for branding and marketing, and will be determined through the implementation process described below. The new school will be complemented by the Department of Oceanography, which will remain in College Station as part of the College of Arts and Sciences, but also will be expanded to include a presence in Galveston. I will work with The Texas A&M University System Board of Regents and Higher Education Coordinating Board to bring this idea to fruition.

This pivotal change will help grow awareness of the Galveston campus, bringing new resources including additional lab spaces, an increase in faculty positions and a mechanism to expand the academic and research initiatives already underway. I

am mindful of this campus's recruitment and retention needs, and view this new school as a way to support those needs. Therefore, I have charged the Marketing and Communications team in both Galveston and College Station to evaluate the existing branding and work with leadership to develop the new brand mark, including the new school's name. A comprehensive plan for releasing this new branding will be completed by Aug. 1. In addition, our government relations team will be part of ongoing conversations to successfully establish and roll-out this new initiative with mindfulness related to the Texas State Legislature and the funding allocations awarded to this unique campus.

Bringing a school forward that directly aligns with the academic interests and research areas of emphasis at the location segues into countless opportunities. The physical campus will continue using the formal name of Texas A&M University at Galveston, which will be home to the newly established school and the Texas A&M Maritime Academy. Degree programs, both existing and forthcoming, will directly correlate with the economic, social, political and ecological vitality of our coasts, oceans and surrounding ecosystems. Students seeking a degree in these areas will know that Galveston is a premier destination for specialization in these disciplines.

We will need academic support and organizational structure to establish this new school successfully. We will transition the current role of Chief Academic Officer to a new Dean and Associate Vice President position, and commit 12 new Galveston-based faculty positions over the next three to four years, with five of those being committed to oceanography, as a starting point. With representation from Galveston and College Station, a search committee will be convened as a first step in beginning the Dean search process. This undoubtedly raises questions about existing degrees and programs, especially with the expansion of the Department of Oceanography and its degree programs to the Galveston Campus. Additional details about this structure are noted in the next section. The College of Engineering programs, which are currently on the Galveston campus, will remain structured the same as they are currently, with a solid reporting line to the Dean of the College of Engineering in College Station. The goal is to holistically support the Blue Economy by appropriately interlacing joint programming, supporting internal communications across disciplines and strategically showcasing success stories of students, faculty and staff to recruit and retain qualified applicants and team members.

Academic Programs and the Sea Grant Mission

Strengthening our position as a leader in marine science and maritime studies for the state of Texas, the nation and our world requires aligning academic programs and research initiatives with real-world applications. The Galveston campus offers countless opportunities for students to gain employable experience. Now, the stage is set for these to multiply.

The Texas Sea Grant College Program is a collaboration of the [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration \(NOAA\)](#), the state of Texas and universities across the state. The Sea Grant mission is core to Texas A&M and it is important for Texas Sea Grant, as a unit, to continue reporting directly to the VP for Research and remain headquartered in College Station. As a university, we honor our sea-grant mission more holistically when components of marine extension, research and education are housed at multiple locations. I support the recommendation of clearly linking our sea-grant academic programs and will establish a Sea Grant office in Galveston to actively seek research, collaboration and outreach opportunities.

The Maritime Business Administration academic department in Galveston will form part of the new Galveston campus school, and not join the Mays Business School as the report recommended. However, the opportunity for joint faculty appointments and increased collaboration are encouraged and supported both within this degree and all others when feasible.

The Department of Liberal Studies will also form an integral part of the new school and will be renamed as the Department of Maritime Studies to represent the unique academic focus and degree programs critical to the Blue Economy mission. Another academic area in Galveston changing is the University Studies degree program. Currently enrolled students will finish their degree plan and new applicants will select a full degree program when applying.

I accept the recommendation to combine the Marine Biology and Marine and Coastal Environmental Science departments. This aligns with establishing the new Texas A&M University marine and maritime-focused school on the Galveston campus and expanding the Department of Oceanography to include faculty in Galveston. The Department of Oceanography itself will remain within the College of Arts and Sciences in College Station. However, courses and degrees will now also be available to students in Galveston. The oceanography faculty located in Galveston will be administratively pinned to College Station and live and operate in Galveston

to facilitate collaboration, similar to the ocean engineering personnel in Galveston. In addition to personnel, new space will be established to provide the additional office and research spaces required.

The Geochemical and Environmental Research Group (GERG) is a center of excellence in applied interdisciplinary research in the ocean and environmental sciences, ocean science and resource geosciences. Two critical components are the laboratory facilities for analytical analysis and the ocean observing assets, including HF radars, the TABS Buoys array and ocean observing instrumentation. These assets will be redistributed within the analytical laboratory facilities, relocated to the basement of the Oceanography and Meteorology building on the College Station campus, and the ocean observing component relocated to the Galveston campus. The adloc for GERG will remain with the Department of Oceanography.

Next Steps

From the accepted recommendations, I have asked Col. Fossum to establish two working groups. One working group will include Marketing and Communications members from the Galveston and College Station campuses to review, evaluate and define the overarching brand for the new school, including the name and development of supportive elements for the newly combined department and those that will be renamed. Their recommendations will be completed and submitted to me by Aug. 1.

The second working group will develop an implementation plan for merging the departments of Marine Biology and Marine and Coastal Environmental Sciences, with representation from the Department of Oceanography. Steps will be identified to successfully merge the two departments and establish synergies with the Department of Oceanography. These recommendations and next steps will be submitted to me by Aug. 1. They will address key implementation elements including a name for the new department, the alignment and consistency of degree plans and the curricula between the new department and the Department of Oceanography; the identification of possible mechanisms to provide students greater efficiency towards time to degree or change of curriculum; interdisciplinary programs between departments, the relocation and enhancement of GERG on the Galveston Campus, and more. I intend to preserve existing degree programs and curricula within departments so there is no redundancy and greater benefit to our students, faculty and stakeholders.

All areas will have appropriate benchmarks developed to help ensure we are moving forward, bringing positive change to the Galveston campus to support our faculty, students, staff and stakeholders. In identifying key performance indicators, and establishing and reviewing peer institutions for comparison, efforts to organizationally and functionally align our academic and operational units in Galveston will clearly align with their relationships in College Station.