

Constituent Building to Form a New University and Promote Regional Economic Development

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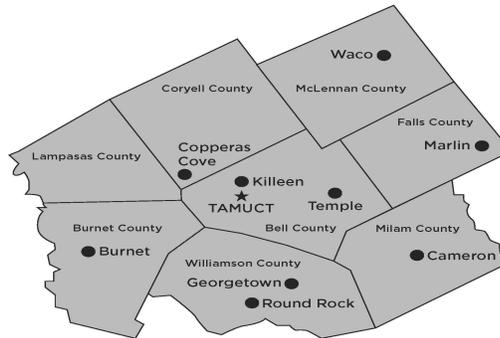
Decision Dilemma

Lieutenant General (LTG) Bob Johnson was perplexed. The critical effort to gain approval for an independent public university in the Central Texas area was at a crossroads. The Central Texas University Task Force, the coalition formed to spearhead the effort, was strong with all stakeholders represented, yet some were fully engaged and others were only on the margins. The year 2007 had been a tough year for the Task Force. They had two sound defeats from the Governor, and while the University was growing, it was very slow growth. LTG Johnson sat with his Executive Committee to brainstorm what constituents to involve in a new round of initiatives to keep momentum going. Their key challenges, after decades of work, were how to better leverage their stakeholder network to help the University enrollment grow at a faster pace and be better prepared for the next legislative session. They knew they couldn't fail. Their mission to provide for regional economic development and better academic and career futures for both the military and local populations was too important.

Introduction

The people of the greater Central Texas Ft. Hood area knew that their region was underserved in the area of higher education. The nearest state universities were the University of Texas at Austin and Texas A&M University in College Station. Both were at least 60 miles away but, more importantly, had capped enrollment, only taking the top high school students. Figure 1 shows the seven-county area this new University was intended to serve (Central Texas University Task Force archives, 1999). There were two accessible junior colleges in the area, both providing associate degrees and technical and vocational training, but no capability within the region for affordable state supported bachelor or masters degrees.

Figure 1: Seven County Service Area



The Central Texas area is made up of a number of small and medium sized towns. Figure 2 shows the primary county involved, Bell County, and its population centers (Google, 2015).

Figure 2: Bell County Map



The largest employer and a key landmark to the area is Fort Hood, one of the largest Army military installations in the United States. Table 1 gives a comparative population of the major cities, Killeen and Temple, during the time of this case (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.).

Table 1: Population of Killeen -Temple MSA

1900	2000	% Change
255,301	312, 952	22.6%

History of Higher Education in Central Texas

Efforts to bring higher education to the underserved Central Texas area began with the establishment of Central Texas College, a two-year institution granting associate degrees. In

1963, a steering committee was formed with businessmen and civic leaders from Killeen, Nolanville and Copperas Cove. The steering committee explored the possibility of a joint effort with the already established Temple Junior College, with a campus in Killeen and one in

Temple. However, Temple Junior College rejected the idea. The steering committee set up a Junior College District encompassing Nolanville, Killeen, and Copperas Cove. In 1965, voters in Copperas Cove and Killeen voted to approve a Junior College District and a \$2million bond package to get it started. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) issued a report that predicted there would be 155 students when the school opened. The College opened its doors September 19, 1967 and surprised all with 2081 students enrolled (Skidmore, 2010).

The early years of the Junior College were very successful and very entrepreneurial. Central Texas College (CTC) established the American Education Complex (AEC), which included the American Technological University (ATU) and several other educational agencies. CTC had academic and vocational/technical course offerings leading to certificates and Associate degrees. ATU was formed in 1973 as a private upper level university to respond to the need for bachelor and masters level work in the Central Texas community. It was backed by a number of local businessmen who put up the capital.

In 1976, both TEA and the Attorney General's office began investigating the management and finances of the AEC. The concern being that state funds had been misspent, given the private status of ATU. Although the audit checks found no state money was misspent, it called for ATU being completely separated from the AEC. Subsequently, ATU separated and formed its own board of trustees made up of local business leaders. The shadow of financial improprieties at AEC continued in articles in the *Houston Chronicle*, but nothing was ever proven (Skidmore, 2010).

In 1989, the first efforts were taken to form an upper division public university in Killeen. Local Killeen State Representative Stan Schlueter introduced legislation to create a public university in Killeen and State Senator Temple Dickson took a similar version of the House Bill to the Texas Senate. Both the House and the Senate approved their respective bills. However, the Governor of Texas refused to sign the bill until an amendment was added requiring the approval of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB).

In September of 1989, ATU formally changed its name to the University of Central Texas, but it still maintained its private status. The THECB was adamantly opposed to the creation of any more state supported colleges or universities (Skidmore, 2010). It seemed to be especially opposed to establishment of one in the Killeen area; speculation was because there were still ill feelings due to the previous allegations of mismanagement by the AEC (Altman & Vitucci, 2013).

The THECB created 15 different criteria that had to be met before a new university could be considered for Killeen. One of the stipulations for the four-year University to be created was that both the CTC and UCT Boards of Trustees would have to agree to dissolve and turn their assets over to the new Central Texas University. Additionally, all debts of both CTC and UCT would remain the responsibility of the respective institutions. THECB also stipulated that CTC would give up its technical and vocational courses and would no longer be able to award Associate degrees. THECB also stated that CTC would have to give up all of its educational contracting. CTC had major contracts to provide lower level courses within the Department of

Defense and in overseas military communities; these contracts had proved very successful in CTC's rapid growth rate. These stipulations were very high barriers to formation of a new university. The idea of a new four-year University was put on hold for a short while, but was definitely still in the minds of local leaders (Skidmore, 2010).

The Central Texas University Task Force

Formation

Despite the THECB barriers, local Central Texas leaders believed a new institution of higher education was necessary to maintain positive economic growth in the region. Employers needed skilled workers and if local children moved away for college, they tended to stay away. At the same time, Ft. Hood wanted a way for soldiers and their dependents to be able to secure bachelors and masters degrees, either to secure upward mobility in the military or to make themselves competitive for private sector jobs when they left the army. The local business community and chambers of commerce were committed to keeping the idea alive.

Retired Brigadier General (BG) Chuck Dickens, who was the head of the Greater Killeen Chamber of Commerce and Area Development Committee, became the convener of the effort to form a public university. General Dickens held a town hall meeting in June of 1991, and found the citizens of Central Texas were in favor of the four-year university, but firmly opposed to removing technical and vocational programs and associate degrees at CTC. The Board of Trustees at CTC voted to keep the vocational and technical courses and to actually expand their offerings in these areas. The Boards from both CTC and UCT rejected the THECB's stipulation of turning all assets over and retaining the debts incurred by the respective schools.

The interest in pursuing an upper level public university galvanized several of the notable community leaders to take the necessary formal steps to formalize the planning. In 1991 the Central Texas University Task Force (CTUTF) was incorporated by the State of Texas as a 501 (C) nonprofit organization. The chambers of commerce of the cities of Killeen, Copperas Cove, and Harker Heights backed the newly formed nonprofit organization (CTUTF archives, n.d.).

The initial CTUTF Board consisted of: 1) BG Chuck Dickens - retired military, president, Killeen Chamber; 2) Doc Oran - government contractor and vice president, Copperas Cove Chamber; 3) David C. Thomas - local businessman, secretary, Killeen Chamber; 4) Wilson M. James - local businessman, treasurer, Killeen; 5) Charles T. Tubbs - local businessman, member, Killeen Chamber; and 6) Robert Franks - local businessman, member, Killeen Chamber. These early leaders understood that this group was significantly smaller representation than the area they hoped the new University would eventually serve, however it was a start. Notably missing were individuals from East Bell County, including the cities and chambers of commerce of Belton and Temple (Altman & Vitucci, 2013).

Soon after its formation, the Superintendent of the Killeen Independent School District (KISD) agreed to join the task force and an invitation was extended to Lieutenant General (LTG) Bob Johnson, Commanding General of Ft. Hood and III Corps. LTG Johnson's role was that of an advisor to the Task Force, but soon after he joined he subsequently retired and moved away from the Central Texas area.

In the fall of 1991, the Task Force contracted with an economic development consultant to offer options for structuring the new University. The option that was chosen was to retain CTC as the community college with expanded academic, vocational, and technical programs and create the University of Central Texas as an upper division University, granting Bachelor's and a limited number of Master's degrees. The intention was the University would become a satellite within the one of the flagship state University systems, either the Texas A&M System or the University of Texas System (CTUTF archives, n.d.).

In July of 1993, additional representatives from the Killeen Chamber of Commerce and the III Corps staff at Fort Hood were added as members of the CTUTF. Mr. Jack "Cotton" Gordon, a member of the Killeen Chamber of Commerce, and an educator within the KISD and Edward Shavers, the Deputy Operations Office from the III Corps staff, became members of the committee.

The CTUTF was still heavily represented with West Bell County constituents. There was little spirit of cooperation between West and East Bell County. The rivalry can be traced back to competition for resources and attracting businesses to the respective parts of the county. There were particular rivalries over a new Texas Instruments plant and location of a new airport; competition was strong for both. At the time, these cities all seemed to see the attraction of businesses and resources as a zero sum game, only benefiting their own community, not the region as a whole (Altman & Vitucci, 2013).

Expanding the Coalition

When LTG Bob Johnson retired from the US Army and returned to the Killeen Area in 1994, there were many who called for him to chair the CTUTF. LTG Johnson was not willing to do so unless BG Chuck Dickens remained on the committee and would agree to serve along with him. BG Dickens agreed and LTG Johnson became the CTUTF Chair. Soon after LTG Johnson took over as Chair, they reevaluated their constitution and decided it needed a broader stakeholder base. The Task Force sought out and appointed representatives from Temple and Harker Heights to become more inclusive of the Central Texas area. These representatives were business people, school district, city government and key community leaders.

With these additions, most all of the Central Texas communities were now represented on the CTUTF, except for the City of Belton. Belton was not represented because they were opposed to forming the new university. The University of Mary Hardin Baylor, a private church affiliated University, was located in Belton and they feared the competition a new public University in the area would pose. Task force members attempted to allay their concerns, pointing out that UMHB's population drew from a wider pool and significantly high school seniors, while the new University would be taking community college transfers and returning adults. These attempts to persuade them to cooperate were not successful (Altman & Vitucci, 2013).

In February of 1994, another pivotal meeting was held between civic, military and education leaders who were on the CTUTF and their invited guests. The purpose of the meeting was to determine next steps necessary for creating a public university in the Killeen area. The effort

needed an anchor and an Action Plan. There was no doubt, the new University needed to be a part of one of the University systems, either the University of Texas or Texas A&M. The CTUTF did some preliminary exploration with the Texas A&M University System (TAMUS) so the meeting was chaired by Dr. Miguel Santiago, TAMUS Vice Chancellor. At this meeting were executive officers of higher education institutions in Central Texas including Tarleton State University, University of Mary Hardin Baylor, University of Central Texas, and the University of Texas and representatives from the KISD, Ft. Hood, and the THECB. At the conclusion of this meeting the CTUTF formed a working group which met three times and made several important recommendations. The working group concluded that:

- 1) There was an urgent need for selected bachelors and masters programs in the Killeen/Ft. Hood area and these should be offered by a single, state supported public four year or upper division year university that was both affordable and accessible;
- 2) CTC should be maintained to meet the region's two year vocational and technical needs;
- 3) Ft. Hood was prepared to expand educational and administrative space on the base;
- 4) Tarleton State University, a university within the Texas A&M University System, should immediately initiate negotiations leading to the establishment of an upper level/graduate center in the Killeen/Ft. Hood area and cooperate with other universities in the region to meet program needs not in their inventory;
- 5) The University of Central Texas should transfer all assets to the State of Texas to be administered by Tarleton State University. Tarleton State University was picked for two very important reasons: they were the closest public university with uncapped enrollment; and they were a part of the Texas A&M University System.
- 6) Operations should begin as soon as the Legislature determined that state funding was sufficient to accommodate expansion of state funded services (Altman & Vitucci, 2013).

In June 1994 these recommendations of the working group were approved, including the element that the new University be only upper division and graduate students. This component was well received by representatives of the local community colleges, especially CTC. With the agreement by all that the University would only be upper division and graduate, the CTC representation became more amenable to the idea of the new University and therefore more engaged in the Task Force's efforts (Altman & Vitucci, 2013).

In November 1994, the University of Mary Hardin Baylor in Belton encouraged letters of dissent be sent to political leaders and hired a prominent state lobbyist to try to derail the public university effort in Austin, the State Capitol (CTUTF archives, n.d.). The CTUTF members felt that this dissent needed to be resolved and more East Bell County representatives needed to come on board if they were to eventually succeed (Altman & Vitucci, 2013).

HB 2247 was introduced by local Killeen representatives to the Texas legislature in 1995 to provide for the transfer of assets from UCT to TAMUS for the purpose of establishing an upper level university in Killeen. The bill passed both the Texas House and Senate, but failed when it had to go back to through the Houses to pass an amendment attached to it (Skidmore, 2010).

The CTUTF would not give up and despite this setback began planning for the new legislative session in 1997, given the Texas Legislature only meets every two years. The CTUTF decided, once again, more engaged constituents were needed to broaden its base, and changed its structure to form four working committees:

1. Outreach: to develop marketing materials and support from city/county elected officials and the general public for university support;
2. Finance: to develop financial support from throughout the university area;
3. Legislative: to plan and direct the legislative effort; and
4. Education: to support development of higher education programs (Altman & Vitucci, 2013).

Several new Task Force members were appointed, including executives from local business, hospitals and chambers to supplement the skill sets of those already involved. Ms. Linda Diamond, a marketing executive, and Mr. Neil Goodwin, a newspaperman, were added to the task force to shore up the marketing and public relations areas. Additionally, retired General Bob Gepetto and Jack Whalen were added to the Legislative Committee. General Gepetto and Jack Walen, both from West Bell County, were County Commissioners and carried some important and needed political clout. The Education Committee was joined by the Superintendent of Schools from Copperas Cove, the President of UCT and the Chancellor of Central Texas College. The President of Temple College, Dr. Marc Santorini, and Mayor of Temple, Mr. Keith Marshall, joined the Task Force, significantly increasing the East Bell County presence. Dr. Santorini became an active voice for East Bell County. The Task Force continued to hold regular meetings and also meet with legislators and THECB officials.

Legislative Efforts: 1997-1998

The CTUTF continued to work with their politicians in the State Senate and House and in 1997, Killeen State Senator Troy Frazier agreed to propose Senate Bill 572, while a broader group of State Representatives from the area sponsored the companion House Bill 1207. These bills authorized the transfer of the organization, management, and property from the University of Central Texas to TAMUS. This recommendation had originally come from the CTUTF working group back in 1994 and had previously been required by the THECB, so hopefully this effort would remove one of the THECB stumbling blocks. Senate Bill 572 was passed by the Legislature and signed by the Governor, however, it stipulated that any execution would have to be approved by THECB (Altman & Vitucci, 2013; Skidmore, 2010).

The CTUTF then turned its attention to overcoming the THECB objections, led by the Generals. General Bob Gepetto became the person who countered all resistance raised by THECB. Every issue raised was researched and refuted by General Gepetto by gathering data and convincing the THECB that there was a genuine need to access affordable public education in the Killeen/Ft. Hood area. One member of the CTUTF also reflected on the role LTG Johnson played at this point: “At no point did General Johnson give up or even indicate that he was about to give up. So, he inspired the rest on the task force to keep working” (Altman & Vitucci, 2013). After several important meetings with the THECB it agreed that there was indeed a legitimate need for upper level education in the Central Texas area. In 1998 the THECB established a “Pathway Model” which would provide a way for the areas

educational needs to be met (Skidmore, 2010).

The “Pathway Model” established a “University Center” under a parent university. When the designated number of full-time equivalent students (FTES) was achieved (number set was 1,500), the Center could petition to become a stand-alone university. The THECB approved this concept and designated Tarleton State University as the parent University. As the parent University, Tarleton would oversee the operations of the System, but allow it to function with its own local administrators and faculty. The University Center would operate under the accreditations of Tarleton. The UCT Board of Regents approved the transfer of approximately \$8.5Million in assets to Tarleton State University. In September, 1998 the TAMUS Board of Regents approved the concept and in October of 1998, the THECB approved it. These two actions represented major hurdles overcome and were celebrated by the CTUTF (Altman & Vitucci, 2013).

The University Center: 1999-2007

On September 1, 1999, UCT officially closed and Tarleton State University-Central Texas was established and opened as a University System Center as a part of THECB “Pathway Model”. Enrollment was open to Junior and Senior level transfers and graduate students. The Center opened with 1270 student enrollment and 617 Full Time Student Equivalents (FTSE) (Skidmore, 2010). The FTSE count was so much lower as most students were adult students, enrolled part-time. Transfer students were primarily from Central Texas College, with a smaller number from Temple College.

The growth in population in the Central Texas area became an important environmental factor that also drove the need for upper level higher education in this area. One prominent member of the Task Force and local newspaperman recalls this time period:

“I think the thing that was really the most significant at that time was just the rapid population growth and that meant the schools and community colleges were having many more students enrolled and so that created more need for the University.” (Altman & Vitucci, 2013)

When opened, the new University operated out of rented and donated space at Central Texas College, and a local KISD Middle School. To establish its own identify, the CTUTF leaders knew a separate campus would be necessary. In September of 2002, the TAMUS Chancellor requested the Commanding General III Corps and Ft. Hood give favorable consideration to the transfer of at least 500 acres of land to establish a permanent “stand-alone” University campus. The Commanding General supported the request, and the Army pursued and federal legislative action (Skidmore, 2010).

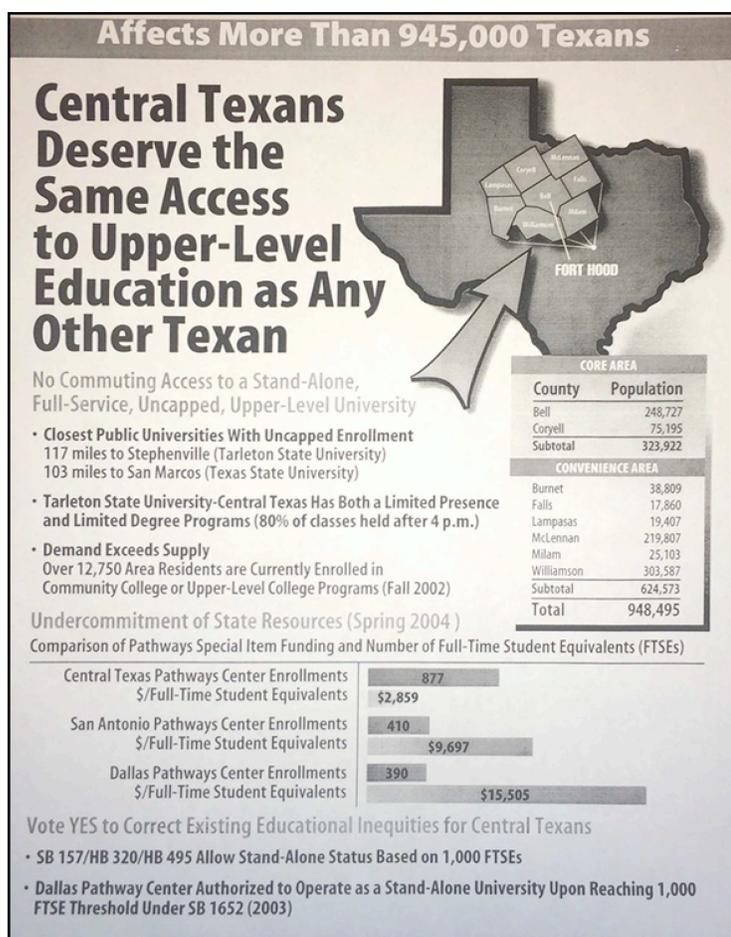
In April of 2004, a new Interim TAMUS Chancellor provided the CTUTF with a vision statement for a new Texas A&M University – Central Texas:

“The University should be an upper level/graduate university and research institution and partner with the US Army and Ft. Hood to provide research and development associated with the transformation of the 21st century Army.” (CTUTF Archives, 2004)

On October 28, 2004, President George W. Bush signed the National Defense Authorization Act directing the Secretary of the Army to convey 662 acres of Ft. Hood land for the purpose of establishing TAMUCT (CTUTF archives, 2004). The law provided for either the land to be sold or in-kind services provided by the University in the amount of the purchase price. The University and the Army entered into negotiations for determination of appropriate in-kind services.

In June of 2005, Texas State Representatives Suzanna Hupp, Lampasas, and Sid Miller, Stephenville, sent HB 495 to the Governor authorizing Texas A&M University – Central Texas to operate as a teaching institution once the THECB certified the 1,500 FTES enrollment of the Tarleton State University-Central Texas. Killeen’s State Senator Frazier authored the companion bill Senate Bill 157. The CTUTF galvanized local support for these bills with publicity and sponsored trips to the Capitol in Austin; Figure 3 shows an example of a brochure used (CTUTF archives, 2005).

Figure 3: Brochure Promoting TAMUCT Formation to Texas Legislature



On June 18, 2005 the Governor signed the bill to authorize Texas A&M University – Central Texas to operate as a general academic teaching institution once the THECB certified Tarleton State University System Center Central Texas in Killeen had reached 1,500 FTES for one semester.

In 2006 a new leader, Mike McKinney, took over as TAMUS Chancellor. His background was instrumental to his support of the new university. LTG Johnson reflects on what the Chancellor said to him at the time and its impact:

“As long as you put the students in the seats we will educate them. I’ll help you fight through the legislature. McKinney had been a legislator, he had been Chief of Staff to the Governor, and he understood that process. I was confident after talking with him that it was just around the corner. It took us a while longer but it was going to happen.” (Altman & Vitucci, 2013)

Despite early successes with formation of the University, student enrollment was growing, but at a much slower pace than hoped for. While the student enrollment number had grown in the past couple of years, the FTES number was relatively flat. Spring enrollment numbers were higher because the fall semester offered both traditional 16 week courses, along with shortened 1st and 2nd 8 week courses. Enrollment for the fall 2nd 8 week courses counted in the spring. Table 2 shows student enrollment and FTES data for the period 2002 – 2007 (Tarleton State University, n.d.).

Table 2: Student Enrollment Data – Tarleton Central Texas 2002-2007

Academic Year	Fall Semester		Spring Semester	
	Headcount	FTES*	Headcount	FTES*
2002 - 2003	1498	755	1543	814
2003 - 2004	1650	781	1714	896
2004 - 2005	1685	830	1622	762
2005 - 2006	1555	750	1674	875
2006 - 2007	1688	793	1719	875

*Full time equivalent students

CTUTF members and University administrators offered several reasons why enrollment was slow growing, despite local population increases. First, students were reluctant to take a chance on a new University. Second, getting the “word out” about the new higher education option was challenging. Small improvements could be seen related to funding of additional student scholarships and the few marketing efforts the University could afford. Working with the local Community College counselors to make students aware of the transfer opportunities did not seem to be making the impact they had hoped for (Altman & Vitucci, 2013).

With the enrollment numbers still below 1,000, the CTUTF leaders knew the 1,500 FTES threshold was going to be very difficult to achieve in a reasonable timeframe. Therefore, discussion began to get state support for lowering the stand-alone threshold to 1,000 or allowing summer enrollment to count. In the 2007 legislative session, Senator Frazier filed SB 211 and Representative Aycock, Killeen, filled companion HB 589. These bills directed the THECB to include semester credit hours generated during summer semesters as part of the annual FTES count. Governor Perry vetoed HB 589 on June 15, 2007 because he did not agree with the reduced enrollment requirements (Altman & Vitucci, 2013).

Also in the 2007 legislation session, HB 153 was proposed, authorizing Tuition Revenue Bonds (TRB) for educational and related facilities for Texas A&M University – Central Texas if the University Center achieved 1,500 FTES enrollment prior to January 1, 2010. This would allow the University to begin building its first dedicated building on the land being conveyed by the Army. Also in this session, Representative Sid Miller filed HB 317 which reduced the TRB threshold to 1,000 FTE for one semester. Governor Rick Perry vetoed any TRB legislation citing “Pathway Centers should reach stand-alone status prior to the issuance of TRBs” (CTUTF archives, 2007).

2007 and Beyond

At the conclusion of the 2007 Texas Legislative session the CTUTF was disappointed and somewhat frustrated, given two major defeats. The CTUTF leaders, along with the local political officials, were not willing to give up, they wanted to learn from the Governor’s vetoes and plan a new strategy. Equally important, they couldn’t depend on the lowering of the enrollment threshold at the legislative level to reach their FTES goal, the University was growing, but it was very slow growth, too slow.

Despite the strong coalition, maintaining the momentum the CTUTF had generated over such a long period was growing difficult. Many of the individuals who joined the initiative early on were still involved, but keeping all constituents motivated and committed was now a challenge. The Executive Committee knew this effort was too important for the region, its children, the military population, and for future economic development. They needed to reenergize the effort, but how?

LTG Johnson sat with his Executive Committee to brainstorm what constituents to involve in a new round of initiatives. They understood they had to look hard at what stakeholders were engaged, which could be better engaged and what could possibly get them beyond the enrollment hurdles and political challenges. With so many successes and setbacks over the years, how could they generate the resources to move forward?

Resources were the key, both manpower, legislative muscle, and incentives for increased enrollment. The University administration had put together a strong list of degree program options, but students either still didn’t know about them or couldn’t afford to enroll. Recruiting was still “word of mouth”, or through the community college counselors. Few scholarships were available and their target student population needed them to enroll.

The new University had the support of the A&M System but where this initiative stood in terms of competing priorities within the System was unclear. Tarleton State University was a good parent, but had its own priorities and growth challenges. Local legislators weren't giving up, the land was being conveyed by the Army, but efforts needed to be mounted at a greatly energized level for success in the next legislative session.

The group began to brainstorm how they could use their stakeholder coalition in different ways to generate the momentum and resources they needed to move forward.

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¹ All interview data in this case is governed by an approved TAMUCT Institutional Review protocol which includes consent forms signed by all interviewees and kept on file by the case authors.