Terms of Reference for the Action Team on Arts and Humanities

Purpose of Aspire 2020

Aspire 2020 is a bold planning initiative for scholarship on the Norman Campus including Norman Campus Programs at OU-Tulsa. It centers on the goal of Becoming the Nation’s Foremost Public Comprehensive Research University of Our Size, and involves three objectives: Transforming our Research Culture, Transforming our Research Engagement, and Transforming our Research Competitiveness. Aspire 2020 will not create a written plan, but instead will serve as both a practical framework as well as a philosophy for continuously advancing our research and creative activities. New practices and paradigms created as part of Aspire 2020 will help the University of Oklahoma achieve its full potential as one of the Nation’s research powerhouses. For more information, visit http://aspire2020.ou.edu.

Action Teams

Foundational to the success of Aspire 2020 is active engagement by faculty and administrators from every college, department and research unit. Action Teams, facilitated by faculty, are the mechanism for this engagement. For a period of approximately 2 months, starting April 15, the first three Action Teams will meet to address a specific topic and develop a set of prioritized actions leading to measurable outcomes in support of the three goals listed above. Participation in Action Teams is open to everyone and no registration or application is needed; simply attend the meetings. Summaries of each Action Team meeting will be placed in a web-based discussion forum on the Aspire 2020 site so faculty can post comments and suggestions and view the same from their colleagues.

Charge to the Action Team on Arts and Humanities

The Arts and Humanities Action Team will engage the important topic of ensuring that the arts and humanities are a vibrant and integral part of the Norman Campus research enterprise. This charge includes recommending ways for advancing the engagement by arts and humanities in extramural funding as a means for pursuing research and creative activity both with respect to these disciplines themselves, as well as for engaging challenges that reside at the boundary of other disciplines such as physical science and engineering. The charge also encompasses identifying mechanisms by which the arts and humanities can play a leadership role in effectuating truly creative environments for the pursuit of scholarship across the Norman Campus, not only in the context of physical facilities but also in approaches taken to address key intellectual and cultural challenges. Finally, in light of historically intensive teaching and studio activity loads, this team will identify creative mechanisms by which faculty in arts and humanities can have sufficient time and resources to pursue scholarly endeavors with their students and professional colleagues.

Action Team Leadership

The Arts and Humanities Action Team will be co-led by the following committee consisting of faculty from the arts and humanities: Professor Mary Margaret Holt (Director, School of Dance and Nichols Chair/Regents’ Professor of Dance), Professor Pamela Genova (Director and David Ross Boyd Professor, Department of Modern Languages, Literatures and Linguistics), Professor Samuel Husky (Chair and Joseph Paxton Presidential Professor, Department of Classics and Letters), and another faculty member to be named soon.

Questions to be Addressed

The work of Action Teams is guided by a number of questions, and shown below are questions to be addressed by the Action Team on Arts and Humanities. Answers to some will influence whether others remain valid or new ones should be added at the discretion of the Team.
1. Building upon an existing strong foundation of arts and humanities at OU, what actions can be taken to assist arts and humanities faculty in obtaining additional external funding to support their scholarship? What mechanisms are used elsewhere and could they be adopted at OU?
2. What actions can be taken to assist other disciplines at OU (e.g., physical science, life science, engineering) in understanding the value of engaging arts and humanities in their research and to incentivize that engagement? And Vice versa? What mechanisms are used elsewhere and could they be adopted at OU?
3. How can arts and humanities help drive the establishment of truly creative, inspiring environments (physical as well as programmatic) for scholarly pursuits across all disciplines on the Norman Campus?
4. What scholarly opportunities exist, or might be created, for the arts and humanities based upon existing or emerging assets at OU?
5. What metrics should be used for competitive analyses between arts and humanities programs at OU and those at other institutions? Most of the quantitative analyses performed to date by the VPR Office have focused on physical science and engineering.
6. What special funding mechanisms (e.g., endowments) might be effective in providing support for research in the arts and humanities, as an augmentation of or inducement for external funding, including support for graduate students?
7. What disincentives to research now exist within the arts and humanities and what actions can be taken to remove or mitigate their impacts?

Process and Timeline

The Action Team should meet weekly, starting the week of 19 April 2010, to ensure an ability to complete its work by 15 June 2010. Concise summaries of each meeting will be posted to the Action Team forum on the Aspire 2020 web site to ensure broad faculty participation. Support for the Action Team will be provided by the Office of the VP for Research.

Other Materials

Action Team leaders and VPR Office staff will provide on the Aspire 2020 web site additional resources relevant to the topic being studied.

Expected Outcome

The Action Team is expected to provide to the VP for Research a set of actionable recommendations including priorities, resources needed, and metrics for assessing progress.