

**Texas Southern University  
BJ-ML School of Public Affairs  
Strategic Plan**

***I. Introduction and Rationale***

The mission of the Barbara Jordan-Mickey Leland School of Public Affairs is to serve as an urban focused community of learning dedicated to educating professionals who will plan and administer environmentally healthy and sustainable communities at the local, state, national and international levels of society.

In addition to the quality education, the Barbara Jordan-Mickey Leland School of Public Affairs has a reputation as a comprehensive center for sound academic research. Scholars focus on a broad range of topics, including voting behavior, American foreign policy and international relations, political communication, criminal justice attitudes and behavior, police violence, environmental justice, race and crime, race and governance, policy studies, leadership, E-government, homeland security, urban transportation, housing and community development, Diaspora studies, environmental planning, economic development and the fiscal responsibility of urban governments.

The Barbara Jordan-Mickey Leland School of Public Affairs has established strategic partnerships with numerous public and private sector entities. These partnerships offer our students unique opportunities to gain hands-on skills and establish contracts and references for the future.

The School's current success is notable, but future success is not assured by the School's present position. Success creates new opportunities but also creates many new opportunity costs and risks. Moreover, the School's academic fields are changing rapidly, as are the educational and economic environments that shape academic institutions. To build and improve upon past successes, the School must be highly responsive to emerging trends and opportunities, and the School's overarching institutional mission of teaching, research, and public service.

***II. Need for Strategic Plan***

The strategic plan focuses attention on the vision of what the School should be and how it should function. It helps focus attention on where future needs lie. The plan is developed in the context of the University's 2010 Plan of Excellence. A key to successful strategic planning is context. The plan must consider the interests of the School in its larger context, including its place within the University, the State of Texas, the region, the nation, and even the global environment. A strategic plan will help the School anticipate and create its future, maximize its strengths, capitalize on its opportunities to play a leading

role in the emerging issues shaping public affairs, as well as build support for activities it deems important to its future.

### ***III. Institutional Context and Climate***

The development and growth of the School of Public Affairs at Texas Southern University has been remarkably successful in the eyes of both internal and external constituents. With success comes complexity, which can severely challenge efforts to maintain and build upon past achievements. Institutional growth and development must be managed actively to ensure that the overall mission of the School and its constituents remains in focus. The School comprises an intricate web of strengths and weaknesses that requires careful attention to assure the School's future success in a changing environment. A major challenge when things are going well is to think creatively. There is little incentive to change direction or even to make minor adjustments. However, as faculty, staff, and students are engaged, it becomes evident that there are issues of concern that can be addressed through a logical planning process. Business as usual will not solve these issues and continuation will lead to further frustration.

It is recognized that the School's success comes from the success of individual faculty. The past development and present realities of institutional support means that future success depends on the individual faculty initiative and productivity. In charting its leadership course, the School must protect, solicit, and sustain the energy and commitment of its faculty, then seize every opportunity to translate faculty accomplishment into added value for our mission in public affairs education and higher education.

### ***IV. Assessing the Current Institutional Context: Internal Strengths and Challenges***

During its early history and since reestablishment in 2002, the School has developed many notable strengths and competencies. Despite their advantages, some of these internal characteristics also entail institutional costs that ultimately pose challenges for the future success of the School. The School's strategic planning should ensure that strengths endure while challenges become opportunities for improvement. Some of our most compelling strengths and challenges are noted below.

Geographic Locale – As the only school of public affairs in the metropolitan Houston region, the School faces a compelling opportunity to become the primary focus of expertise on issues of planning, environmental policy, administration of justice, public administration and other public policy questions. Such a natural monopoly entails obligations as well as advantages. In this regard, the School will face the challenge of meeting the expectations of large, changing, and diverse stakeholders.

Emphasis on Identity – The School needs to create a niche in public affairs education. The School must become the “premier” school in some area.

Substantial efforts must be directed towards achieving an identity or a brand that will bring distinction to the School.

Interdisciplinary Nature of Public Affairs – The School of Public Affairs is comprised of many disciplines, it is by nature one of the most multidisciplinary schools on campus. The solution of real public policy problems requires the application of many disciplines and teamwork among professionals across many fields of expertise and arenas. Collaboration across fields and department is natural in a School of Public Affairs.

Partnerships – It is vital for the School to establish firm links within the community. As the only school of public affairs in the Houston metropolitan area, the School has a responsibility to lead the development of partnerships with community organizations, state and county agencies, and business and industries. In building alliances and partnerships, the School needs to develop more efficient and effective mechanisms to translate research findings into public policy and community action.

Educational Infrastructure – The School is located in a state-of-the-arts facility. The facility is a four story building with “smart” classrooms and the latest multimedia technology, Survey Research Center, Administration of Justice Laboratory, Policy Simulation Room, and a cutting edge Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Laboratory. The School also houses the Barbara Jordan Institute, a public policy institute dedicated to finding policy solutions to the many challenges facing urban communities at the local, regional, national and global level, and to advancing civic engagement.

The academic environment creates incentives for its members to pursue projects that are fundable and produce high quality academic output. The current challenge is for the faculty to do community-based research, community outreach, policy-relevant activities and program development that respond to community needs.

## ***V. Anticipating the Future: External Opportunities and Threats***

The landscape is complex and turbulent given the economic marketplace, rapidly changing technology, and political developments for schools of public affairs. In thinking about our future, the School must consider what will set it apart from the other schools of public affairs and consider its possible future scenarios.

Demographics – The United States is becoming a minority/majority country. The State of Texas and its region are more diverse in racial and ethnic make-up than most locations. Age is another key demographic consideration for the future of the School. The average age of a student at Texas Southern University is 27. The number of Americans aged 65 and above is projected to increase from 35 million in 2000 to 78 million in 2050. The implication of these demographics is the recognition that diversity will be needed in the ways of thinking about

problem-solving. There will be a need to have and maintain a diverse constituency of students, faculty, and staff.

Economic Trends – We face the challenge of economic disparities that will exist among those recruited as students for our academic programs. Many of our students will require financial support. The magnitude of the financial aid for our students will require us to focus attention on charting a more equitable path when making economic decisions that impact our students.

Public and Private Enterprising – The School need to expand its public and private funding initiatives. Expanding opportunities for funding research has to become imperative for the School. However, this should be done carefully and strategically so that it is related to research goals and mission, rather than simply pursuing each viable opportunity that arises. The development of a research agenda will help to ensure that resources are effectively used for advancing the School's mission.

#### ***VI. Recommendations: A Strategic Agenda for the Future***

To build upon current and past successes, the School is pursuing an agenda that focuses on its future as presented in the attached action plan.