

Desirable Characteristics: A Discussion

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In a number of important ways my experience aligns quite well with the characteristics you're looking for in the next TSC President. The way I'd like to demonstrate that alignment is by describing in some detail three signature projects I devised and successfully brought to completion during my years as Dean of San Diego State University's Imperial Valley Campus.

To begin, it's no exaggeration to say that it was my TSC experience back in Brownsville that helped inspire one of the most significant educational innovations ever to occur in our area here: the Imperial Valley University Partnership. The IVUP is our highly successful collaboration between SDSU-IV, the Imperial County Office of Education, and Imperial Valley College, our local community college. Involving a cohort structure and joint admission of students to the community college and university, the IVUP represents a unique form of downward expansion that brought four-year higher education to our region for the first time. At the time of its establishment the program was hailed by CSU Chancellor Charles Reed as a model for higher education in California. In 2014 the program received the Example of Excelencia Honorable Mention at the Baccalaureate Level for advancing educational achievement for Hispanic students. But it's the numbers that tell the story best. IVUP student retention rates are higher than those found on the highly-selective SDSU main campus, while students pay about 20% less. Because of the program our enrollment has increased by 15%, such that it is now the highest in the campus's 55-year history. The four-year graduation rate for the program's first cohort was 78%, more than double that found on the SDSU main campus, and higher than at many elite institutions such as UC Berkeley or UT Austin. Finally, the IVUP has proved to be a valuable tool for marketing, recruiting, and fundraising, in just a few years helping us raise over \$250,000 for student scholarships.

As I hope is apparent, my work developing and implementing the IVUP addresses a number of your hopes and expectations for the next TSC President. The program is a highly successful exercise in academic entrepreneurship and risk taking that has in many ways redefined our institution's culture and practices. It shows the ability to forge external partnerships in service of our campus's strategic vision as articulated in our strategic plan *Building on Excellence* (which as Dean I led the effort to develop). It has been a model of community outreach and engagement. It has brought visibility and significant resources to our institution. Finally and most importantly, the IVUP with its attendant increases in student enrollment, retention, and graduation rates, underscore my career-long commitment to student success.

The second project I'd like to discuss is the Center for Sustainable Energy. The ambitious goals of the CSE include advancing local educational and economic development, addressing the green energy goals of the State of California, and contributing to America's energy independence. To those ends I personally brought to campus a \$1.7 million federal cluster grant, for which I was co-PI, which jumpstarted our efforts. Through a creative partnership with Sol Orchard, a private renewable energy company, and the Imperial Irrigation District, our local utility, I raised another \$3.5 million in immediate and long term lease payments. The CSE has now blossomed into an SDSU-recognized research center of excellence with over \$20 million in deployed assets, including the largest university-based solar field in California, a Solar Learning Center, several proof-of-concept and R&D projects, and a power plant simulator for academic and industry training. This work has in turn helped create an academic and research partnership between SDSU and the Universidad Autónoma de Baja California in the area of renewable energy.

Again connecting these experiences to TSC's needs, the work developing the CSE represents a major success in strategic visioning, academic entrepreneurship, and risk-taking, steering our university in new and promising directions. It demonstrates the ability to establish collaborations with other educational institutions, including those in Mexico. It is a model for partnering with businesses and industry, and underscores my ability to bring in much-needed resources. Finally, the CSE holds great promise for generating new academic programs, some of them in collaboration with our local community college, others jointly administered with our colleague institutions in Mexico, providing our students with new educational and employment opportunities, while at the same time enhancing their cultural competency.

The third strategic initiative I'd like to mention here is Project AMCO. This partnership between SDSU-IV and the Mexico-based Advanced Methods Company has our campus serving as certifying agent for English language proficiency in Mexico, elsewhere in Latin America, and Spain. Employing a web-based platform for administering language evaluations across the globe, the project promises greater international recognition for our campus. It offers enhanced opportunities for faculty research and income. It provides opportunities for student recruitment, internships, and employment. Finally, it is yielding a vital revenue stream benefitting both the Imperial Valley and San Diego campuses. Project AMCO commenced operations in May 2014, and is now testing thousands of students in Mexico each year.

Like the IVUP and CSE, Project AMCO represents a major success in strategic visioning and academic entrepreneurship. It underscores my ability to establish collaborations with private businesses, including those in Mexico, and to bring to our institution much-needed resources. It represents another way I've endeavored to transform our university by taking advantage of its border location and bicultural expertise, enhancing its reputation and expanding its influence both in the United States and abroad.

I'll close with an obvious and important disclaimer. Throughout this discussion I've referred to these initiatives as "mine," but they are obviously a great deal more than that. Each project in fact represents an impressive and sustained effort by our university's partners, by our many friends in the community, and by a dedicated and talented team of faculty and staff. If you ask these people directly, they'll probably say something along the lines of I was the "architect" for the IVUP, CSE, and Project AMCO. However that may be, it's clear that architects accomplish little to nothing in isolation. With every initiative that was imagined or undertaken here in the Imperial Valley my colleagues and collaborators were actively involved. They provided constructive criticism and wise counsel to shape and improve things, helped generate the internal and external support the programs required to achieve liftoff, and did the bureaucratic heavy lifting necessary to bring the programs to fruition. In this sense, perhaps my greatest accomplishment as chief executive of our institution was bringing together the relevant players, inspiring and successfully implicating them in a vision for the future, supporting them where I could, and then standing aside as they wrought their magic in service of our institution, its students, and the community. I'm tremendously proud of what we've accomplished here in the Imperial Valley, and it was a privilege and a pleasure to work with a group of such talented and dedicated people. I'd love the opportunity to be similarly of service at TSC back in Brownsville, the place where I spent the bulk of my academic career, the place where to a significant degree my heart resides still.