**Updating Clemson University's 2020 Road Map**
Ellen Granberg and Brett Dalton
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**Background**
On April 15, 2011, Clemson University completed and approved a strategic plan titled the “Clemson 2020 Road Map”. The plan sets a single, central **Vision** to become one of the nation’s top-20 public universities. Major **Goals** are to develop talent for the new economy, drive innovation, and serve the public good. **Investment priorities** are aimed at enhancing student quality and performance; providing engagement and leadership opportunities for all students; attracting, retaining, and rewarding top people; and building infrastructure to compete. This plan remains in place through 2020; however, the time is right to reflect on progress and priorities.

The Road Map’s ultimate Vision was achieved in October 2014, when US News and World Report announced that Clemson was a top 20 public university for undergraduate learning. This is an impressive achievement in light of recent, precipitous declines in state funding. Clemson succeeded by having good leadership, excellent faculty and staff, a strong central focus on undergraduate learning, and an internal “divest to invest” strategy that prioritized undergraduate learning and made small but highly strategic investments in attracting, retaining and rewarding talent. However, the limited availability of resources forced the institution to make only modest investments in research, graduate studies, and outreach. Progress in these areas has remained slow. A strategic plan for research and economic development, completed in 2009, was not incorporated into the 2020 Road Map. University-level planning for innovation, entrepreneurship, and commercialization has just gotten underway. **Ironically, the most limiting factor to furthering the quality of undergraduate learning – i.e., the place where investments will make the greatest impact on our student’s learning and our institution’s rankings - is academic reputation, which is rooted in research and graduate studies.** Clearly, the path forward for Clemson must include renewed focus on these two areas.

President Clements has charged the institution to refocus priorities within the 2020 Road Map. We will do this by:

**Phase 1:** Updating the roadmap by adding new visionary, aspirational goals to our ongoing efforts in undergraduate learning, graduate education, and research; this exercise will be completed by February 1, 2015; we will use three teams to flesh out three potential visionary goals

**Phase 2:** creating an implementation plan, including restructuring of the institution and setting investment priorities; this will be completed April 1, 2015; we will use a different team to develop this plan
Which visionary goals should we set?
Clemson’s success in reaching top 20 public university status was the result of a “laser beam” focus of effort and investments on a singular goal, with one major metric to measure success. If Clemson is to add new visionary goals and expect to succeed, the goals must be similar; i.e., they have to be aspirational, all of the university must be aware of them and focused on them, investment strategies should be aligned to support them, and progress should be assessed using focused and reliable metrics. Furthermore, because resources are limited, the visionary goals can only be a few (1 to 3), and they need to be crafted in a way such that investment in one automatically helps to advance the others.

With these goals and constraints in mind, Provost Jones led discussions about the future of Clemson with faculty, administrators, the Board of Trustees, and external constituents during fall semester 2014. The results of these discussions point to three visionary goals as starting points for our planning:

• Pre-eminence in undergraduate learning, to build on our already strong national reputation
• National and international reputation in select and more diverse areas of graduate studies, which is needed to recruit the best and brightest talent to Clemson
• National and international leadership across an array of scholarly endeavors ranging from creative work to basic and applied research to entrepreneurial activity, which will help to attract and retain the best faculty and students, and enhance the well-being of SC and the SE region

As we construct these goals, how can we enhance chances for success?
First and foremost, it is clear that Clemson University prides itself in Quality above all else. The entire community is strongly wired this way such that they are unable to or unwilling to contemplate a dilution of quality no matter what our new priorities may be. This noble attribute of Clemson is matched by a second one: an interest in increasing our overall Impact. Therefore, our new goals and implementation plan must protect or enhance quality as we aspire to increase our impact.

Second, because higher education is crowded by large universities with investments in faculty and facilities many times those at Clemson, it is imperative that our visionary goals be structured in a way that lead to Distinction and Differentiation in an increasingly competitive and disrupted market. In other words, to compete for resources with our aspirational peers, we must invest at least part of our resources in our areas of strength and in emerging areas outside of those dominated by other universities. According to our web pages, every-day dialogues, existing strategic plans, and success stories on campus, it appears that Clemson’s strengths and potential for differentiation lie within the realms of Innovation, Creativity, Digital Information, and

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1 The goals shown here are those given to the committees at their initial meetings on December 9 2014 and are already being revised. For the most current version, see the 2020Forward website.
Leadership especially where these collide in interdisciplinary ventures. Note: we will invite the committees to consider these as starting points with an option to add or modify them.

Phase 1: Development of the Three Visionary Goals
Due February 1, 2015

Coordinating Leaders:
Ellen Granberg, Department Chair, Sociology & Anthropology  granber@clemson.edu
Brett Dalton, Vice President for Finance and Operations  dbrett@clemson.edu

Team structure and general function:
- Teams consist of 10-15 people nominated by the Clemson community and selected to reflect a diversity of ideas and perspectives
- One team for each of these starting initial visionary goals:
  - Pre-eminence on undergraduate learning
  - International reputation in graduate studies
  - National reputation in research
- Please be mindful that discussions and a plan that answers the questions below are to be completed by February 1, 2015.

Charge for teams
- Examine the stated goal assigned to your committee and consider how it relates to Clemson’s themes for distinction (i.e., Innovation, Creativity, Digital Information, and Leadership, or modifications of these as you see fit).
  - Is the goal properly stated or named?
  - Is it worthy of our effort and attention?
  - Are there very important goals Clemson should do in lieu of this one or of one of the other stated goals?
- Using your best judgment of our capacity to grow and succeed, please set an aspirational target or range of targets for us to achieve (e.g., to reach between top 75-100 in NSF reported annual research expenditures)
• Develop 5-10 MAJOR, implementation strategies that address what you see as the most important barriers to overcome, or the most important opportunities for us to seize. Please never mind small things or many details, just give us the big constraints and big opportunities. We strongly urge you to consider the following elements as you develop this list:
  o **For the Undergraduate goal:** Please consider language indicating that it is important to ensure a high and consistent level of quality across the academic enterprise, including individual majors, our general education, and non-credit bearing academic experiences. Program performance in all areas should be at a level of national prominence.
  o **For the Graduate Goal:** Please consider language that we should identify those graduate programs in which Clemson can realistically achieve an international reputation, and consider including some major strategies for building and improving these areas.
  o **For the Research goal:** Please consider language that directs Clemson to identify those research areas of focus in which Clemson can realistically achieve national prominence, and consider including some strategies for building and improving these areas.
  o **For all of our committees:** The second phase of this refocus involves a close examination of the university’s structure and a possible reorganization; consider adding any thoughts about programs, structures, or ways of doing business that will need to change in order to realize this refocused vision.

• Identify places or means within your goal for increasing international connections and increasing diversity. These two elements are very important to Clemson’s future.
• Identify new sources of external or internal funding that you think are possible as we pursue your goal. In particular, what opportunities have we not pursued very well in the past?
• Be attentive to barriers that hamper collaboration across college and departmental lines; include recommendations that address these.
• Choose 1-3 metrics that we could use to track our success. The metrics should be useful for us to compare with ourselves over time and with other universities. See examples posted on the strategic planning web page.
• When you are nearing completion, please prepare a simple SWOT analysis [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SWOT_analysis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SWOT_analysis) to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. This will help us as we move on to Phase 2 of our planning.