Meeting the Challenges:

Growth

While the University's growth and development have been quite positive overall, they have increased substantially faculty teaching, scholarship, and service expectations.

Teaching Expectations: As student enrollment has increased, so have class sizes. In the last ten years, the average lecture class size has risen from 17 to 28. Additionally, the average age of the undergraduate student population has been declining over the last decade, decreasing from 33 to 25.

More important, faculty face the challenges of teaching in cross-disciplinary learning communities in the first year and beyond, effectively integrating more electronic resources in their courses, and focusing more on pedagogical methods that enhance learning. President Furgason has characterized our challenge: "A&M-CC is not only about getting bigger, but also getting better."

Scholarship Expectations: The introduction of doctoral degree programs and the increased number of graduate degree programs are requiring faculty to conduct more research and scholarship in their areas of specialty. Furthermore, the University growth is encouraging programs to meet higher standards, such as those required by prestigious accrediting organizations. These higher standards require faculty to be current in their areas of specialty, thereby increasing their scholarship and research workload.

Service Expectations: The continued growth in enrollment and in academic programs require the faculty to be more involved with students in academic and career advising, with a more diverse array of college and University communities for committee work, with local communities for educational and professional development, and with regional and national organizations for academic and professional purposes.

Because of these new challenges, the faculty increasingly need professional development in teaching, scholarship, and service.

Prior to the SACS accreditation process of 2000-2001, University faculty formally studied and identified elements necessary for conscious, continued, and institution-wide faculty development. In 1998-1999, the Research and Scholarly Activities Council proposed seven recommendations to enhance scholarly productivity, one of which called for “a rigorous program of faculty mentoring, development, and reinvention.” The members of this Council also drafted a Faculty Leave Rule proposal in 2001-2002, which was approved in 2003. From 2000-2003, the Faculty Development Advisory Committee worked to define “a focused faculty development program based on program reviews, faculty evaluations, and other sources with the express purpose of improving student outcomes.”

The collective work of these past faculty reports provides the blueprint for the current strategic plan. Their recommendations, documents and references were consulted and incorporated as this plan was designed. (The appendix lists the people who have contributed to this process.)

New Statement of Vision, Mission & Goals

During the past two years the University faculty and staff have engaged in reexamining and revising the University’s mission and