

# President's Staff Sack Lunch Q&A

## Oct. 13, 2015

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- 1) In looking at the master plan, I've noticed the new green space and the new buildings on campus. However, I've noticed that in spite of the expanding campus, the Facilities complex remains the same. Are there plans to expand the Facilities complex to meet the needs of the growing university?**

President Smatresk said he and Bob Brown [vice president for finance and administration] have spent a lot of time looking at the space along with the space team, facilities and UNT System and campus leaders. We feel that the master plan needs a fresh look in light of some of the initiatives we've taken on and in light of our growth.

Smatresk said after UNT completes the parking and master transportation plan, locates electrical substations, gets the College of Visual Arts and Design building planned and determines where a new 1,000 bed dorm could go, then leaders will take a look to make sure that we haven't outgrown our capacity to support the campus infrastructure.

Smatresk pointed out that UNT still has space at Woodhill Square, Discovery Park and in the area south of I-35. All of those have to come into play as our campus evolves, he said. I will suggest it at a town hall meeting coming up.

- 2) In reviewing the 2013 master campus plan I know that a music tower is set to replace the functions of Bayne Hall, the Music Annex, and the practice buildings. I'm super encouraged by the [Texas Higher Education] Coordinating Board's recent approval of TRBs [Tuition Revenue Bonds] for new the CVAD space. Could you possibly speak to an updated capital projects timeline for Phase 1 master plan projects?**

President Smatresk said after UNT leaders reevaluate, we're going to be working on a number of projects. Some are already slated. There are going to be some renovations at Discovery Park. There will be a renovation at SRB [Science Research Building]. We have to clear out some spaces and knock down some temporary buildings as we move into the new Union and other facilities.

I think we need to let our dust settle and then we can reevaluate what the plans are, Smatresk said. I suspect that this year, we're going to catch our breath. Not to say we don't have interest in master planning, but we've been going at a pretty good clip. We've committed an awful lot of funds to some of the maintenance and renovation issues that we have. I know that we have a lot around dorms that we have to be able to take off and put online. So, we're going to take care of basics, get ourselves squared away, and then we'll come back and visit some of the more highlight features of what we're going to be doing here.

We will be putting in a walking path from the Honors Hall and the Gateway Center moving toward the center of campus. That specific project is meant to enhance and add some tradition to the campus will probably commence sometime this year, I'm not exactly sure when, he said.

- 3) Given how last week went, how hands-on do you see yourself being with Athletics over the next several months?**

President Smatresk said that athletics is the front porch of the university. It's a great way to engage. When athletics does well, students apply in greater numbers and the campus atmosphere is enlivened. I don't know a president who's in Division 1 who doesn't care about athletics and how well they perform.

Certainly, I'll consider myself a partner with the athletics program along with a number of other folks because athletics doesn't stop at the boundaries of our university. We have regents and a number of donors and alumni who are all extremely interested. Part of my job is to act as a conduit for both internal and external information and help make sure that we are moving the university forward in every single one of our divisions.

You can ask our vice presidents whether I am a hands-on or hands-off kind of a guy, but I think the point would be paying attention to details and executing as a team is really important, he said. Athletics is part of that team so we'll all continue to work together and make sure we do the best we can.

**4) How are you planning on carrying forward the initiative of strategic planning through the colleges and especially the departments?**

President Smatresk said there are a number of things going on with strategic planning right now. First, there has been ongoing departmental/college-wide strategic plans. Most of that happened before I got here, he said. I visited departments and colleges in a listening exercise last year and heard a lot of hopes and dreams. I didn't find any of those to be out of line for what we want as we progress down that long road toward Tier One status.

What I will say is that making sure there is a crisp understanding of how we're investing in units and where those units are going and how they're going to improve their educational and research mission is extremely important. How well people interact with student retention and how well we're doing in making sure classes are available are important.

To begin to open up the planning process, last summer we had about 125-130 people at our planning workshop. We rotate a lot of the faculty and staff members through that so that everyone gets a taste to see how it works. So that's one way we engage broader slices of folks, along with deans and some chairs.

The second way is we're going to be holding a series of town halls. Those town halls will have two stages. There will be four town halls held this fall on the topics of:

- Improving our research and graduation output
- Improving retention and recruitment
- Improving a sense of community, pride and engagement on campus
- Working on our identity and what we say about ourselves

Those four will be announced publicly and every single individual on campus is invited if they want to come to express their thoughts, hopefully in a constructive way, on those topics.

*[Editor's Note: The town halls are in the process of being scheduled.]*

That feedback will be gathered through our planning process, which is fairly formal by now, and it will be rolled into spring exercises in which we engage focus groups around the issues and begin to craft a serious implementation steps.

For colleges, I have to say, under the leadership of Provost [Finley] Graves, the deans have become much more of a leadership team and we're working very well together to begin to attack some of these big issues like, how do we collaborate better together, how do we improve our standards in promotion and tenure, and what role will their units be taking to help us achieve Tier One status?

So, that's kind of a long answer and yet it's probably only a fraction of what we're actually doing. We welcome any input that any department, faculty or staff member has to help us do a better job at moving this institution forward in our primary mission to serve.