

# BENCHMARK SCIENTISTS' UNDERSTANDING OF A UNIVERSITY STRATEGIC RESEARCH PLAN

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## INTRODUCTION & PURPOSE

- Texas Tech University began developing a strategic research plan in 2021 which has since been published (TTU Strategic Research Themes Development Roadmap, 2023)
- This study aimed to determine what benchmark scientists understood about the plan, its themes, and its purpose

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- Diffusion of innovation theory guided this study
- A variety of factors influence the diffusion of innovation through a social system (Rogers, 2003)
- Communication channels and the willingness of faculty drive the diffusion of the strategic plan within Texas Tech

## METHODS

- One-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted
- 8 interviews were scheduled over 3 weeks
- A 25-question interview guide with open-ended questions was created and used
- Otter.ai was used to transcribe each interview
- Open and axial coding was done by hand, then themes were developed

## RESULTS

### Knowledge and engagement levels

“ **Knowledge of the plan ranged significantly**  
Participant 2 - “I can't tell you to be honest, I don't know much about it” ”

“ **Faculty were either highly engaged or not at all**  
Participant 1 - “I was on the planning committee for the climate change theme” ”

### Plan ambiguity

“ **Faculty are unsure what theme they belong to**  
Participant 2 - “a number of people were speaking up and saying that they didn't know where they fit, and I was one of them” ”

“ **Funding promises should be fulfilled**  
Participant 1 - “I don't know where we are with the dollars that we were supposedly getting” ”

“ **Communication has been almost non-existent**  
Participant 2 - “since this plan has been developed there's been little to no communication” ”

### What a plan can and can't do

“ **Plans cannot dictate what research occurs**  
Participant 1 - “My research is my research” ”

“ **How the plan should work**  
Participant 3 - “it works best as a signal” ”

## CONCLUSIONS

- Benchmark scientists understanding of the plan was low due to a lack of communication and diffusion through the Texas Tech system
- Communication efforts need to be increased to ensure that faculty comprehend and support the plan

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Faculty should be engaged throughout the development and implementation phases (Best et al., 2015)
- Adequate resources should be allocated, particularly for communication to stakeholder groups (Fernandez et al., 2023)

## FUTURE RESEARCH

- Expand the study to include different departments and colleges at Texas Tech
- A comparative study between institutions that have implemented a strategic research plan, R-1 or land grant

## REFERENCES & ABSTRACT

