

The Challenge: *Bring Tennesseans together to plan for a future that both reflects and makes the most of the richness and diversity of our state, its people and its places.*

PLANNING WITH A PURPOSE

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Building a better quality of life and a more robust economy for all Tennesseans is important. The papers in this publication represent the key issues that policymakers and citizens must address to achieve these goals. A cynic might say, “the suggestions are good, but how is this possible and who will make it happen?”

Most leaders know the problems—they have been identified many times. Identifying the problems isn’t the hard part. The hard part is successfully delivering a solution. Does Tennessee have a comprehensive master plan for the year 2020? Our leaders in industry, education, health care, and government cannot maximize their efforts if they don’t know the plan or where they fit into it. So, what is the solution?

Tennessee should establish a long range planning board representing a cross section of the state’s diverse population. The group’s mission would be to address the long-range issues that are critical to our state’s economy and quality of life. These issues cannot successfully be addressed solely by governmental leaders. The government can and should institute a planning process, but the private sector and local community leaders must buy into the result because ultimately they will be the core reason for any plan’s success or failure.

I recently visited Omaha Beach in France, the location of the greatest military plan to date. The plan was devised by the political and military leaders of the free world and included a mammoth logistical operation and an armada of thousands of ships. The price of failure was mass casualties and possible world domination by a lunatic. By all measures, it was a successful operation. Was it because of the plan, the ingenuity of the American soldier or both? Likewise, while a plan to improve the quality of life and economic condition of Tennesseans is critically important, the plan’s success or failure will depend on the leadership in our cities and communities and the efforts of individual citizens.

Just as a sergeant on D-Day was faced with remaining in place and taking more casualties from entrenched German troops or moving out, our citizens must overcome the inertia of complacency and the comfort of “the way things have always been.” We must elect local and state officials who are more interested in creating a strong Tennessee than in their own election or reelection.

This in no way diminishes the validity of shaping a participatory plan to address the critical issues brought forth in this document. If higher education officials, transportation- related businesses, and environmental groups are to meet our expectations and make Tennessee better for all citizens, then they need to know the plan. As Thomas Freidman stated in his latest book, *Hot, Flat and Crowded*, a plan is “at once the right thing to do, the thing people really want to do, and the only way to do business.” Tennessee should use these guiding principles to establish a long range planning board to address the myriad issues we face.

As a higher education administrator for 30-plus years, I have helped draft many plans only to see them set on a shelf and gather dust—not a solution for success. For planning to be meaningful and effective, two preliminary actions must take place. Elected leaders and captains of industry, commerce, and service must commit not only to carefully consider the recommendations, but also to report back to the public the actions taken and the progress made. There must be front-end consensus that such a planning group is needed and that its work is important—indeed critical—to the future of Tennessee. The governor, legislators, business and union leaders, educators, and main street leaders must publicly acknowledge the need for and be a part of the creation and empowerment of the long range planning board.

Secondly, the planning group's composition must be broad-based and bring together bright and properly motivated leaders who are geographically, racially, and economically diverse. This group should commit to take the necessary time to study Tennessee's needs and develop a set of timely recommendations. On the front end, the planning group should agree to proceed with a collegial attitude to explore, discuss, and recommend solutions for the issues to help build a better Tennessee. The Oregon Progress Board, established in 1989 by the legislature as an independent state planning and oversight agency, provides a good model. Its website cites its objective as "simply to point out where Oregon is (through data collected in the Oregon benchmarks), and propose where Oregon ideally should be (through the goals of Oregon's long-term strategic plan)." The processes of establishing benchmarks and measuring progress toward those benchmarks give the public the meaningful feedback crucial to attaining the needed buy-in from various constituencies.

The results of such a long-range planning group could include proposed legislation, a call for a constitutional convention to address critical structural issues, a new mission for local leadership programs, a paradigm shift for P-12 and higher education finance, or any number of other options adopted by the study group. Machiavelli wrote in The Prince words that speak to the difficulty of the task at hand. "It ought to be remembered that there is nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct, or more uncertain in its success, than to take the lead in introducing a new order of things, because the innovator has for enemies all those who have done well under the old conditions, and lukewarm defenders in those who may do well under the new. This coolness arises partly from the incredulity of men, who do not readily believe in new things until they have had a long experience of them." Even though Machiavelli wrote these words in 1511, they are relevant today and very succinctly point to the difficulty of working to change Tennessee's future.

While I don't know the exact percentage, I would estimate that 75% of all taxpaying Tennesseans have children or grandchildren. If for no other reason than this, we should not only be concerned, but we should be moved to action to ensure that our state addresses the issues that will provide a better quality of life for our children and grandchildren. A broad-based planning process would be a good start, but if change is to occur, we must be participants in the process, not mere spectators.

Since I wrote the preceding paragraphs, we have inaugurated a new President. The economic conditions in the world, United States and Tennessee have worsened and may have yet to bottom out. While these difficult conditions make planning and action even more urgent, they also make the need for change more readily apparent. Regardless of one's "politics," President Obama and

his new administration represent a new environment for change. Funding from the Obama administration stimulus program has provided a window of opportunity for Tennessee to address some of its issues without the negative impact of radical funding reductions. Higher Education and infrastructure are examples of important stimulus funding assistance. We are currently having our “Pearl Harbor moment” and how our governmental and community leaders react, remains to be seen. The need for planning is face smacking evident. Let us not let this opportunity pass.

CHANCELLOR NICK DUNAGAN



Dr. Nick Dunagan began his work at UT Martin in 1973 as director of development. His most recent job assignments included executive vice chancellor, vice chancellor for student affairs, and vice chancellor for development and administration.

He has also served as interim chancellor three times (1985-86, 1997-98, 2000-01), and he currently serves as executive director of WestStar, the university's regional leadership program for West Tennessee. He is a member of the Weakley and Obion County's Economic Development Councils, the Volunteer Hospital Board of Trustees, and co-chairs the Weakley County Reading Railroad Board. He was selected the 2006 Weakley Countian of the Year by the Weakley County Chamber of Commerce. He also received the 2006 Otis L. Floyd Award for Excellence in Administration, presented by the Tennessee College Public Relations Association.

A native of Caruthersville, Missouri, Dunagan is a 1968 UT Martin graduate, a 1971 graduate of the University of Missouri School of Law, and received a doctorate in higher education administration in 1990 from Vanderbilt University. He is a retired colonel in the Tennessee Army National Guard and is an active member in the Martin First United Methodist Church.

He is married to the former Cathy Porter, a UT Martin graduate from Humboldt, Tenn., and they have four grown children and four grandchildren. The three married children and their spouses all graduated from UT Martin. Drs. Stan and Stephanie Dunagan live in Paris and work in Martin and Paris respectively; Cody and Glenna Dunagan live and work in Memphis; and Brett and Tracy VanderMeeden live and work in Paducah, Kentucky. The fourth, Casey, is in graduate school at the University of Maryland after spending 3 years in Luanda, Angola, as an international mobile engineer.