

**PROPOSAL FOR A DELIBERATIVE THINK TANK:
A 3-Year Pilot Project**

**A Faculty Senate Initiative
Eastern Illinois University**

PREAMBLE:

For decades we have seen a reduction in state support of higher education, a trend that is now exacerbated by shifting student demographics. The 2016-2018 state of Illinois budget crisis threw these damaging trends into stark relief, crystallizing the need for our institution to recognize and pre-emptively adapt to the reality of changing macroenvironments impacting higher education.

The budget crisis necessitated institutional reactive response. The 2017-2018 Vitalization Project and the follow-up Fall 2018 Vitalization Review Committee drafted numerous reports and proposals for responding to the crisis. Several members of the Vitalization Review Committee began informally talking about the need for an institutional body, a think tank, dedicated to *pre-emptively identifying* developing macrorends that could impact higher education and our institution.

The think tank concept was introduced and approved by the EIU Faculty Senate in the 2018-2019 session. As the Senate discussed the topic, the scope of the think tank emerged: The think tank should be a dedicated group of persons, steeped in strategic organization skills and lateral thinking abilities, devoted to looking beyond the day-to-day management of the institution.

The think tank will be a deliberative body, focused on data collection, analysis, and forecasting. It will identify macrorends and issues of impact and importance to the institution, and bring those issues to the larger campus community. The think tank will identify macrorends and issues, and may also propose solutions, and it will bring both to the shared governance bodies of the institution: The President's Council and the Faculty Senate.

It is essential that this body pre-emptively identify macrorends. The entire purpose of the think tank is to engage in forecasting such that the institution's shared governance bodies can move beyond reactive decision making under stress and toward a nimble and responsive governance that creates an institution which is quick to adapt and to position itself for success in future higher education environments.

VISION:

An Eastern Illinois University (EIU) in harmony with its chosen future!

To accomplish this mission,

- We will help make EIU a “learning organization”
- We will attempt to conjoin adaptive decision-making with regenerative processes and initiatives
- We will engage in research and advocacy concerning topics pertinent to our university

MISSION:

The mission of the think tank is to help explore and propose solutions to the myriad challenges faced by EIU, to engage in forecasting by identifying emerging macrotrends impactful to higher education and the institution, and to help improve policy and decision making through continued research and analysis.

To accomplish this mission, we aim to:

- Encourage enlightened debate on issues affecting the university and its constituents
- Promote sound policy, and program development
- Be committed to dissemination as well as education
- Make sure that quality and objectivity will comprise our values
- Ensure that research and analysis will span the issues that matter most to the institution
- Be transparent and open in our deliberations and results thus obtained
- Ultimately inform individual and institutional decision-making

SCOPE OF WORK:

The think tank will engage in research and advocacy concerning topics pertinent to our university’s health and the well being of its students and employees, and as much as practicable, its various constituents. The primary responsibility of the think tank is, therefore, the generation of ideas, conducting thorough analysis, and if necessary, provide models, experiments or exhibits.

In all cases, the implementation of the ideas emanating from the think tank’s deliberations and decisions, if any, shall be in accordance with existing university policies and procedures, and in harmony with the shared governance system of the university.

DURATION:

The think tank is a pilot 3-year project. If successful, the think tank will continue to exist as long as it is productive and viable. The faculty senate, in consultation with the university president, may take action to discontinue or abolish the think tank as circumstances warrant. Because the work of the think tank contemplates the long term, and because research and analysis takes time, it is necessary to anticipate that results may not be visible right away.

MEMBERSHIP:

The initial composition of the membership will include: three persons appointed by the president, three members appointed by the faculty senate (3-year terms), and one student member appointed by the student government.

Faculty Senate Appointees (3-year terms, Fall 2019 through Spring 2022):

Dr. Teshome Abebe
Dr. Michael Dobbs
Dr. Melinda Mueller

President Appointees:

TBD

Student Senate Appointee:

TBD

The think tank may request that additional ad-hoc members be temporarily jointly appointed by the President and the Faculty Senate, depending upon the requirements for expertise or other necessities. While the membership to the think tank is limited, the think tank will invite input and issues awareness advocacy from the university community, and consult with individuals, groups and entities as deemed necessary and/or desirable.

OTHER:

To facilitate its work, the think tank may adopt rules and procedures as necessary. The think tank rules and procedures are subject to review and approval by Faculty Senate and the President.