The Research Working Group met for the first time to discuss potential collective goals, obstacles, and potential innovative solutions to improve research opportunities on our campus. The issues outlined below are only the first draft of our ideas and questions, and should be viewed only as a working document that will take greater shape and clarity over time. The term research is being used broadly in this document to include all academic scholarship of our faculty, e.g. lab or community based, creative endeavors, or funded and unfunded scholarship.

Aspirational Goals

- Optimize the integration of undergraduate and graduate students into research/scholarship activities (ensure that students at all levels (undergraduate and graduate) are integral to the process).

- Research goals/identity
  
  o Depending on the metric and review group, we have achieved national distinction as a University. We are currently ranked approx. 165 by US News and World Report and 147 for total R&D dollars in 2009. What is our aspiration? Should we raise the bar, and if so, how high? It was stressed that the ranking should be an expression of the excellence that we are striving to achieve rather than the goal itself. The discussion included helping SDSU to identify and develop areas of strength that lead to academic distinction.
  
  o Become the best research university we can be, without sacrificing teaching mission, or compromising access/diversity. Our hope is to develop a blended model that seeks excellence in student education AND research rather than focusing almost exclusively on one or the other.
  
  o Ensure student engagement at all levels, recognizing that research can be a life-changing experience for some students. Similarly, undergraduate and graduate researchers can contribute as agents for change of our faculty and programs as well as contribute directly to our scholarship.

- All (tenure/tenure-track) faculty should be active researchers (defining research broadly), while similarly, all tenure/tenure-track faculty should be engaged with our educational/instructional mission.
  
  o Achieve broader research engagement across faculty, students, and staff.

Major Obstacles to Achieving Aspirational Goals: Initially, we are just listing, without priority, all different obstacles identified by members of the working group.

- Time
  
  o Class sizes have increased, which make it difficult to spend sufficient time with students to allow research engagement.
  
  o Release time issues

- Money/Revenue
  
  o We lack support for travel/conferences.
  
  o Infrastructure support

- CSU structures that create boundaries and barriers to effective research programs.

- Ability to grow and improve our graduate student programs –
  
  How can we improve/attract more high quality students into some programs?
  
  o How do we improve the breadth of our programs to include more international students?
• Infrastructure
  o Library resources are lacking
  o Quantity of space and quality of space is insufficient (money for renovations?)
  o “Taxes”/costs associated with grants development and implementation that deter people from seeking funding. Taxes refers to the indirect costs of research support.
• Reward structure – our inability to provide acknowledge and reward faculty making exceptional contributions except at time of promotion is problematic and limited.
  o Some faculty are able to augment their salary if outside funding is available – but this not possible for all faculty.
  o Is there a role for philanthropy in this regard (e.g., to provide or supplement salary)?
  o Consider how to recognize people in ways that boost morale and celebrate successes.
• Lack of student support for research outside of funded labs, which reduces degree to which faculty can engage students in research
• How do we create an environment where our faculty, including our newer hires, are able to see SDSU as a university where they can thrive and build a successful research program

Solutions to overcome obstacles (to be discussed next time) – Only a very brief discussion was initiated at our first meeting.
• Identify alternative approaches to generating revenue
• Implement a reward system that allows people to be as productive as possible
  Can philanthropy provide a role, alternative ways of supporting salary?
• How to facilitate public/private partnerships – consider implementing a corporate affiliates program

Additional Discussion Topics included:

• What should be the degree of engagement of students in research? What is optimal?
• How do we define research?
• Research to generate new knowledge, or new ideas, innovation.
• Consider a graduate/undergraduate mentorship program to increase involvement in research
• How to we generate goals in the context of known obstacles? For example, faculty may be limited in the number of students they can involve in research. Advice is to first consider where we want to be, to identify goals.
• Who are our peers, what other models are similar and can help guide our goals? Who are our reference groups?
• We should be “SDSU” – develop our own vision so others want to be like
  Translational effort, community engagement, and application is what sets us apart
• What we do is a blend of fundamental and translational research, this may one of our more unique strengths
• Our level of connection to the community is also unique
• URC has mentioned that branding issue may be the key issue – establishing our research identity is more of a PR issue than redeveloping areas of excellence, which already exist.
• Is our unique strength being a “small” research institution, or is giving that experience (as if we were small) what sets us apart?
• We need to demonstrate involvement in research through measurable output? How do we define productive scholarship? This may differ across departments.
• Who is our audience for the major goals/initiatives?
• Goals should be internal, but branding and presentation to the public will be important. We are better than people believe, and we need to make people aware of this.
• Given infrastructure issues, how do we prioritize so we can grow?
• Right now people are working in small groups, and could be brought together for interdisciplinary efforts that create better synergy and efficiency.
• Consider new options for lab fees, e.g., for independent studies.
• Are there services we do not see as “core” for which students might be willing to pay fees?
• Given inability to support merit increases, it is important to protect concept of overload