



**UNC Tomorrow Listening Forum  
Summary of Public Input  
Elizabeth City (Elizabeth City State University)  
September 20, 2007, 4:00 pm**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Main themes expressed by the public:

- Improve K-12
  - More and better teachers; certify current teacher aides
  - Incentives for students to become teachers
  - Develop more public school administrators
- Address the “male problem” and “African American male problem” at all levels of education – increase the educational attainment of males in general and African American males in particular
- One size doesn’t fit all; the University must be responsive to regional needs and increase outreach by all UNC assets and resources to better serve underserved regions
- Produce college graduates with stronger hard knowledge (science and math) and soft skills (creative thinking, problem solving, communications)
- Educate more nurses and other health care providers (such as pharmacists)
- Establish more direct engagement with regional economic transformation (biotech, aviation science, marine science), better communication about university resources, and clear portals for accessing those resources
- Better integrate the campus into the region (community service programs, internships for students, partnerships between UNC and business community)
- Maximize existing resources such as SBTDC, Cooperative Extension, and School of Government, as well as campus facilities (such as during the summer)
- Expand adult education programs and distance education throughout the region; recognize that lack of broad band internet access hinders utilization of distance education
- Build “seamless relationships” with Community Colleges and private colleges
- Reach into southeast Virginia as a potential pool for students and partnerships
- Develop leaders of tomorrow – ethics and personal responsibility are lacking in today’s world



## DETAILED SUMMARY

### **Economic Transformation & Workforce Development**

- Enhance economic competitiveness of the region
- Develop new education and training programs that fit the region, including aquaculture, fisheries, biofuels, biotech, construction management, hospitality & tourism
- Devise worker retention strategies, especially in the high demand fields (i.e., nursing, teaching [especially for science and math teachers], and pharmacy)
- Work with local employers to devise strategies to reverse the “brain drain”
- Better coordinate university education and training programs with targeted industrial recruitment
- Offer courses that will benefit local small businesses to help them grow, prosper, and remain in the region
- Establish business incubators
- Allow private sector firms to build research & development facilities on campus
- Invest greater university resources in workforce development
- Encourage Regional Airport expansion and support development of Aviation Industrial Park
- Advocate for broad band access throughout the region
- Facilitate strategic alliances between university & industry to address workforce needs
- Given the rich farmland in the region, consider marketing the area to biotech research and development companies

### **21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills and Knowledge**

- Provide existing workers with programs to improve communication and technology skills
- Degree programs need internships for students to get “real-world” and “hands on” experiences
- Provide leadership and sense of urgency that K-12 and university graduates need to be better prepared
- Expand AP course offerings and more college courses for high school students
- Students need training in cognitive skills (problem solving, decision making), professionalism (attire, work behaviors, work ethic); dress code for students to prepare them for workforce
- Create high tech jobs so K-12 students see the advantages of going on to universities
- Forge strategic alliances between university and regional businesses, with an eye toward creating internships and summer, part-time, and permanent employment for university students



## **K-12 Education**

- Position improvements in K-12 education as a key driver of business recruitment & retention
- Encourage K-12 & higher education curriculum innovations in the areas of entrepreneurship, soft skills acumen, financial literacy, character education (i.e., values, morals, integrity, and ethics), and cultural sensitivity (i.e., diversity training).
- Support existing/devise new programs that encourage and assist science and math teachers to earn Masters degrees as a recruitment and retention strategy
- Expand the Transition to Teaching Program
- Devise strategies to reduce the dropout rate in public schools
- University should forge a formal partnership with the K-12 public education system
- Revamp teacher education and training programs to better prepare aspiring teachers for the tasks at hand
- Greater support for Viking Fellows Program as a teacher recruitment and retention strategy
- Focus on science and math education: targeted scholarships for majors in these fields, differential pay, and establish more science & math institutes across the state.
- Focus on teacher aides and provide scholarships for them to pursue advanced degrees; will help with retaining teachers in the region
- Address the school administrator shortage problem. Devise incentive packages to attract the best prospective school administrators (currently, the PEP stipend is not enough to attract the best and the brightest)
- Develop year-round teacher education programs
- Raise entire NC standards for its educational system
- Teach foreign languages in lower grades
- Catch problems early in primary school
- Help students develop self-discipline, life skills, life management (financial literacy)
- Motivate students to achieve academically - change rural culture where students think they don't need a good education
- Align university teaching curricula to how K-12 students learn

## **Increase Access to Higher Education**

- Because the Northeastern NC regions straddles the NC/VA border, in state tuition needed for students "over the border" to attract talented Virginians to the university – this is important in training the next generation of teachers, nurses, etc.
- Advocate in-state tuition for undocumented immigrants who qualify for admission to the university
- Devise strategies to address the lack of educational attainment among African American males; provide them with tutors and role models
- Provide more distance learning and online programs
- University should partner with local employers to create pipeline programs that will channel more minority studies in fields like pharmacy, nursing, teaching, etc.
- Consider developing a school of basic studies with open enrollment and no tuition to reach those without the educational backgrounds to attend the university. Viewed as a cheaper and more viable option than prison.



- Devise a seamless relationship with Community Colleges and private colleges; need more 2+2 programs
- Build upon and leverage successful programs that work well for minority and economically disadvantaged students

### **Health, Environment, and Community Outreach**

- University should offer training in allied health fields
- Focus on the resolution of health disparities as a competitiveness issue
- Improve health of region's population by graduating more health professionals; educate health care professionals who are evidence-based practitioners
- Offer BSN and PhD in Nursing at ECSU
- Provide training/symposia for minorities taking MCAT, PCAT, and who are trying to get into nursing and pharmacy
- Tie scholarship support to working in the region, especially in high demand fields such as teaching, nursing, pharmacy, and the allied health.
- Advertise ECSU courses and enrichment activities beyond Elizabeth City in the counties surrounding the university.
- More research on global warming
- Help region come together as a neighborly community (fragmentation and competition are current model)
- Help local governments and businesses by providing expertise in research and data collection, administration
- Create one-stop portal at university so citizens can get help in economic development

### **ECSU Needs**

- More endowed professorships
- Greater support for the Pharmacy Training Program and BSN Program
- Resources to expand the pharmacy and aviation programs
- Better delivery system for student services
- Build dorms for ECSU; forge public/partnerships to building additional student housing on or near the ECSU campus.
- Increase security at ECSU (shootings on/near campus)

### **Notable Quotes by Topic Area:**

#### ***Regional Competitiveness***

"In economic development we are generalists; we need to be able to call up the universities and get people to help us when we are going out."

"If each university had a clear cut portal for economic developers to call to get the expertise, then we'd be able to get where we want to go on the campuses."



“The School of Government helps a lot, like the [Cooperative] Extension service, that’s the kind of thing we need to have.”

“Every school should have a list of researchers who can help us with a range of topics.”

“The regional diversity needs to be factored into the regional solutions. There are some lasting cultures here that have to be overcome. There is a long history of a difference in economic outlook. People don’t expect to ever own their own home.”

“We have to have distance learning available. Everyone should be within 30 minutes of some opportunity for more learning. We don’t have broadband. We don’t have access to the systems.”

### ***K-12 Education***

“The kids aren’t failing. We are failing the kids.”

“You can’t close the achievement gap if you don’t close the teacher gap.”

“We certify but do not qualify our teachers.”

“We have to push the reading – but appropriately. There is an emphasis on volume, not quality (“the number of books a week”).

“We might want to slow down on some of the technical push and make sure that the kids can communicate and assimilate material. In Japan, they focus on basics first before they go to the technology. The computer stuff comes later.”

“We need to teach the kids how to use their heads, not their hands on the keyboard. This means outside the box thinking.”

“Our children have to know how you can get past yourself and your immediate needs to where they can value education.”

### ***Workforce Development & Preparedness***

“Workforce development is our single biggest issue. The local businesses can’t get prepared graduates. The grads we do have don’t have the right skills. This includes the “soft skills” and communications, verbal skills and problem solving - not just technical skills.”

“As an employer I don’t care how many formulas they memorize. I want someone who can solve problems and communicate the solution.”

“Re-training is a big issue as well. Our jobs are changing and those who have the skills to work, who know how to work, need to know how to change their work.”



“People need to be technically unafraid. They also have to have the right values and social norms.”

“When I was first elected I had to look hard to find the vocational education programs; they were the best hidden secret in the community. In those programs, kids had to learn discipline, they had to show up and work or they were out of the program. That is the kind of program we need.”

Detailed Summary compiled by:  
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