



**UNC Tomorrow Listening Forum
Summary of Public Input
Rocky Mount (Nash Community College)
September 10, 2007, 4:00 pm**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Main themes expressed by the public:

- Only education can bridge the gap between the old economy and the new one
- Create better jobs for the region's students to come back home to (stop the out-migration of the region's brightest youth); UNC must play a role in bringing economic transformation in the region
- Improve coordination between K-12 public education, Community Colleges, UNC, and Private colleges and universities – education much become more seamless
- Improve access to and affordability of higher education
- Improving K-12 is critical – the region needs more teachers, better teachers, more math and science teachers, and better quality of UNC education for teachers
- Educate more health care workers (nurses in particular) to serve the region
- Produce students with stronger math skills, communication skills, and soft skills
- Make UNC more relevant to rural and underserved areas – expand degree programs and course offerings through more innovative delivery methods such as distance ed, satellite campuses, and more partnerships with Community Colleges and private colleges
- Develop and deliver more educational programs for adult learners, especially programs geared toward economic needs of the region such as entrepreneurship
- Motivate all students to succeed in K-12 and go on to college
- Bring UNC resources to bear in addressing critical community and social problems
- Communicate better with the region about the resources and programs UNC has to offer

DETAILED SUMMARY

Access to UNC

- Make UNC education more accessible and affordable. (mentioned three times)
- There should be a seamless link between K-12, community colleges, and universities in the state. (mentioned six times)
- Make education more available—distance education and better transportation for rural counties.
- Focus more on curricula articulation between K-12 and the CCs and between the CCs and UNC—transitions should be seamless. (mentioned several times)
- Provide more distance learning and satellite programs—both for formal education and for continuing education. (mentioned two times)
- The UNC system should market itself better to more effectively inform the state about what is available and accessible.
- Find effective ways to motivate youngsters to want to get an education like they want to get a driver's license.
- Continuing education is lacking or is sub-standard in the UNC system; needs to be more responsive, more demand-driven—like the CCs. (mentioned several times).
- Develop economic designations (Tiers 1, 2 and 3) as the basis of an incentive program or subsidy system for college applicants. For example, a Tier 1 student might be eligible for a substantial tuition discount
- High admission standards have excluded many students from access to a college education. UNC has the responsibility to serve all students.
- Find a way to serve those students who have SAT scores of 800. The average SAT score in the Rocky Mount area is 845. Consider conditional acceptance, rigorous summer programs, or vocational education. UNC should not be a university for some of the people.
- Online classes have been a big help, but more are needed as are more on-site classes, especially in nursing.
- Make graduate degrees more accessible and more affordable, e.g. in journalism.
- Since the Wesleyan campus will not become a part of UNC, it will be very helpful to have satellite campuses or programs. What can't UNC share some classroom facilities with CCs, such as Nash CC and offer more university degree programs.
- Consider more executive-type programs where faculty go to the students and also work in the real world to connect better with current workforce needs.
- Less emphasis on SAT and GPA for admission to UNC institutions.
- Standards for getting into Chapel Hill are too high. Need to accommodate average kids.
- Consider other models that are not “brick and mortar”, e.g. (e.g., Hickory, Kannapolis, Danville, VA, Higher Education Innovation Council in the Triad) or UNC Online for reaching rural students.
- The university needs to get reading for the influx of Spanish speakers.
- UNC is the only institution in the state in the position to see that P-16 is a seamless process.



- UNC System needs to assume leadership in developing a seamless system of education between K-12 schools, community colleges, private colleges and universities, and UNC system schools. Such a seamless system should also be leveraged to facilitate professional development among administrators, faculty, and staff.

Economic Transformation

- Provide leadership in economic development. Gateway Technology Center which is a collaborative effort between ECU and NCSU is an example of the type of partnerships needed to encourage economic development in the state.
- Provide technical skills in accounting, management, marketing, and human resources.
- Help maintain jobs and the industry-base in E-NC.
- Better leverage Carolina Gateway Technology Center through faculty at NC State and UNC Chapel Hill.
- Educate more technology-literate students for higher value-added workforce occupations.
- Facilitate industrial recruitment and promotion in partnership with Chambers and university – industry partnerships.
- Banking sector needs qualified workers—who can pass drug tests and background checks and can progress in their career paths.
- There is a health, education, and engineering shortage in the region. For example, there are not enough engineers in E-NC to approve initiatives in a timely manner. UNC should use staff, graduate students and faculty to help serve these underserved areas.
- Help to relieve the effects of poverty with access to better transportation and to the Internet. Focus some research efforts on understand how other communities have solved similar problems.
- Use university talent to help stimulate start-up businesses in the region; work closely with SBTDCs.
- Each of the 16 campuses should adopt of the 16 poorest counties in the state and ‘pour’ resources into projects to improve those communities. Goals should be set and measured.
- Help to project what jobs will be available in five years, and design programs to prepare workers for them.
- Serve as an accelerator for economic transformation.
- Make service, outreach, and applied research attractive to professors (rethink reward system in academy).
- Consider new funding model (rather than “profit-center” model) – needed in order to provide sustained service and to provide services to the most needy businesses and industries.
- Assist in building economic and industrial base in region (jobs).
- Provide strategic planning assistance to communities.
- Help K-12 graduate students.



- Build leadership skills.
- Create new models for support of industrial and manufacturing.
- Assist small, niche businesses in integration (supply, distribution, marketing, etc.) – put small businesses together in network.
- Create new model of providing services – not just MBA students. Need multi-disciplinary and multi-campus approach (utilize “on the ground” knowledge of community colleges and intellectual capital of UNC professors).
- Make expensive equipment (for prototype development) available.
- Help rural counties keep the jobs they have; help develop the workforce.
- Help rural counties develop and promote e-commerce.
- SBTDC services in rural counties needs to be expanded.
- Efforts to attract federal dollars for economic development need to be better coordinated—state dollars are not leveraged well—more partnering is needed.
- Need for an economic Think Tank.
- Need University to respond to the demand for qualified workers. University needs to do a better job of identifying and equipping students with the competencies and skills needed in the 21st century job market.

Curriculum

- Focus more on job skills and less on liberal arts. Prepare students to meet the challenges of life—the world.
- Design curricula that specifically meet the needs of the E-NC region.
- Educate students to be more aware of globalization and internationalization trends to be better prepared for the global economy.
- Consider establishing an ECU Teachers College in Rocky Mount along, with potential for nursing training centers.
- Graduate students with STEM, communication, and analytical reasoning skills, computer skills, social/cultural skills
- Do more to expose students to entrepreneurial activities as potential career objectives (how to develop and run a business) (mentioned two times)
- Make sure all graduates have mastered the basic skills.
- Find creative ways to bring college education to the prison population.
- Make sure that the various curricula actually prepare students for the jobs in their communities.
- Nash and Edgecombe counties can benefit from more master’s degrees.
- There is a disconnect between the business world and what the university does—students need more practical experience, connections to real world—too many UNC grads know little about the real world of finance.
- The educational system should also focus on getting students exposed to other cultures.
- The UNC system should assist entrepreneurs develop strategic plans.
- The UNC system could organize a “think tank” of practitioners who could put pieces together to revitalize rural economies.
- Re-focus on the vital mission of the University system—undergraduate education.



Community Development

- Inventory what the university system is currently doing and find out where the needs are.
- Inform the community of how it might access the resources of the UNC—let the population know what resources are available and how they might be accessed-- Web site or booklet might be helpful.
- Faculty reward system should include service to the local community.
- Help bring value-added processes to our agriculture—produce more from our agricultural products instead of shipping everything out of state.
- The region is beginning to expand its tourism sector and is establishing more services for the aging population, etc. The UNC system can help to shape this change instead of just letting happen.
- Help to educate business and legislative leaders on global competitiveness and the future of the economy.
- Work more closely with community groups such as NC REAL, Cooperative Extension Service, and similar groups; inventory them and maintain continuity in collaborative relationships.
- UNC must fill the leadership roles that have been lost in the communities--although communities will continue their relationships with the CCs, the UNC system's expertise is critical to building stronger communities.
- Collaborate with the CCs to provide a community mentoring program.
- Help find ways to empower parents to help their children.
- Better leverage faculty expertise in communities, especially in impoverished communities.
- Better fund extension programs and better market outreach—much outreach is not well-publicized or well understood.
- Increase outreach - *"real-time resources to meet real-time problems"*
- Expand beyond Gateway Center
 - Use Gateway Center as model to deliver other services to meet needs of regions.
 - Consider other relevant models (satellites, face-to-face, Internet).
- Provide life-long learning
 - Technologic skills
 - Continuum of certificates as workers develop and industries change
- Provide continuum of services to small businesses.
- UNC should be a driver of the state's research agenda in all areas.
- Help rural communities connect with the rest of the world.
- UNC needs to help find effective ways to respond to the mental health crisis in the state. The university system needs to listen to the needs of the industry.
- Utilize retired "baby boomers" to help with cultural change; have them partner with University (organize, deploy, and support them).
- UNC needs to find ways to help with the question of what to do with those students who are not going to college.



- Need to get into churches to connect to African American and lower income communities.
- University system needs to ensure that investments in research will lead to economic growth.
- Need stronger partnerships among universities in UNC system to address regional problems.

Health Care

- Produce more qualified nurses and other health professionals.
- Link with community colleges in several disciplines, especially health sciences, so students can earn baccalaureate degrees.
- Academy should become aware of process to get license in mental health (substance abuse, developmental disabilities) (license needed to bill).
- Focus more on preventative health care.
- Help entrepreneurial entities in the health care industry.
- UNC system should help deal with health problems of the poor in rural counties.
- University needs to develop a strategic plan for health and human services—to respond to the current crisis in mental health delivery.
- Provide more continuing education for nurses and other health care professionals.
- Help address the need for more social workers and mental health specialists as there is extensive needs arising from changes in the state’s mental health system.
- There needs to be more active engagement of health care students in clinical practice in the community.
- Currently there is a disconnect between licensing requirements for MH clinicians and apprenticeship opportunities. Therefore, we are facing a crisis in mental health services.
- Staff that support doctors in UNC medical schools need to be better trained to serve an increasingly diverse clientele.

K-12 Education

- Provide more well-trained teachers for the public schools (mentioned several times), especially in math and science
- Increase opportunities of lateral entry teachers.
- Help K-12 graduate students with STEM, communication, and analytical reasoning skills
- Extend professional develop programs to K-12 teachers.
- Help K-12 improve HS graduation rates and rate of college enrollment of the poor, minorities. (Mentioned three times)
- Need for higher quality preparation of teachers. Student-centered teaching (the latest trend) is little more than students feeling good about themselves instead of focusing on rigor.
- Do more to retain teachers; “celebrate those who are doing it right. Find ways to appreciate teachers. “There is no line of people waiting to get into teaching.” (Mentioned two times)



- Develop effective ways to improve high school graduation rates. Increased high school graduation rates will likely lead to increased graduation rates in CC and universities. (Mentioned two times)
- Help develop commitment to training among young people.
- Focus more research on public school education—better teacher education.
- Resolve the “disconnect” between UNC and the public schools.
- Teachers must be trained to respond to the needs of the diverse student population of the region. They should not just give information, but should provide purpose-driven education.
- Help to increase the numbers of certified (licensed) teachers in the communities of E-NC.
- Prepare teachers to support entrepreneurship education in high schools as well as other programs that lead to job placement in local businesses.
- Motivate youth – make advantages of UNC degree visible
- Universities should help retired people become K-12 teachers - great resource that is being wasted.
- Help students understand that community college is a wonderful experience/opportunity for many that are interested in trades and technical support jobs—universities might not be for everyone.
- Help to provide internship/other real-world experiences for students.
- Try to do more to attract the best students into teaching.
- Help bring more advanced placement courses to rural E-NC.
- Need University system to be more actively engaged in K-12 education. Most students can not qualify for admission to UNC system schools.
- Critically review and evaluate UNC system teacher training programs with an eye toward improving the quality of the training offered. Re-engineer teacher training programs so that they do a better job of “training teachers how to teach the diverse populations they will face in NC classrooms.”

Others

- UNC institutions with similar programs should work more collaboratively.
- The primary mission of the university is teaching, not research. It should return to this mission.
- Build partnership not just with fellow UNC institutions, but also with the independent colleges and the NC community colleges.
- Explore new models to effect change---from poverty to prosperity.
- Help improve the image of E-NC.
- All programs of the UNC need to be evaluated in a cost-benefit framework as we assess the impact the system can have on economic and other community development efforts.
- Smaller campuses should receive more equitable funding from legislature.



Notable quotes:

“What UNC does in the future might very well determine the success of the entire East North Carolina region.”

“Business does not operate on a semester system.”

“The biggest export of Nash County is each year’s graduating class.”

“My son graduated from NC State. He was not prepared for the real world. He is not going any where. What do we do to help him and others like him?”

“Make university education as desirable as driving a car.”

“The university should provide real-time resources to meet real-time problems.”

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