



**UNC Tomorrow Listening Forum
Summary of Public Input
Sylva (Southwestern Community College)
October 4, 2007, 4:00 pm**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Main themes expressed by the public:

- ◆ Higher Education in the region – Establish a satellite campus of WCU in Henderson County to increase access to higher education and expand economic opportunities in the region
- ◆ K-12 – More and better teachers, more math and science teachers, more administrators; increase access to masters-level programs for teachers, offer more scholarships and tuition relief for teaching students, become more directly involved in improving K-12
- ◆ Health Care – More nurses, allied health professionals, pharmacists, long-term care providers, physical therapists, and occupational therapists; establish 3rd and 4th year medical school program in Asheville to address physician shortage in the region; focus research on gerontology; establish a Center for Aging in Hendersonville
- ◆ Develop a “seamless” relationship with community colleges and strengthen the articulation agreement to facilitate student transfers
- ◆ Flexible course delivery – Expand distance education course offerings; offer educational programs at non-traditional times
- ◆ Student skills – Educate students with stronger soft skills (creative thinking, problem solving, analytical reasoning, and oral and written communication), stronger math and science skills; establish more student internships
- ◆ Educate more engineers to address regional shortage
- ◆ Small business development – Expand entrepreneurship education programs; provide technical assistance such as developing business and marketing plans
- ◆ Hispanic population – Increase educational attainment for Hispanic students, and increase access of Hispanics to the workforce (such as nursing) that requires higher education
- ◆ Increase access to need-based aid – Keep higher education accessible and affordable; educate high school guidance counselors on higher education



opportunities and financial aid options; provide more information to parents and students about need-based aid options

- ◆ Recruit more college students from local area and region
- ◆ Explore expanding the “New Century Scholars” for 6th graders to excite them about higher education and academic excellence
- ◆ Outreach in the community – Use UNC resources to address important community issues; support and expand arts and cultural programs; partner more with business and community organizations
- ◆ Environmental sustainability – Show leadership in developing sustainability and conservation programs on campuses and throughout the UNC system; teach environmental literacy programs to all students



DETAILED SUMMARY

K-12 Education Issues

Shortages

- While there is less need for teachers in the west than in much of the state, math and science teachers are still in short supply as are ESL teachers as are minority teachers in all areas
- The real shortages are in capable administrators, particularly assistant principals and principals— incentives are needed to send good candidates back to school –a program at grad level like Teaching Fellows

UNC Campuses Partnering with Public Schools

- With local schools in obtaining grants
- With high schools in offering college courses at high schools
- Help NCCAT and school systems by providing a directory of potential faculty members who could be helpful in teacher development programs
- All UNC employees and students should mentor K-12 students
- Faculty members in the arts need to spend time in public schools, encouraging imagination and creativity
- Schools and universities should encourage all students to go to college and not leave out rural mountain poor
- Some college students would be better off learning a trade instead of entering university and UNC should aid in the sorting process

Curriculum

- Teachers need more education in their content areas
- Speaker series in local high schools could motivate K-12 students to more fully participate in higher ed

Leadership

- Reinvent K-16 education to ensure that students are acquiring critical thinking, problem solving, and communication skills and are also learning to value hard work, professionalism, and the need to be self-motivated
- UNC is the only institution with the stature and intellectual resources to lead the reinvention of public schooling



Higher Education Issues

Knowledge, skills, attitudes and values UNC should be imparting to students

- Critical thinking, problem solving, and communication skills as well as learning to value hard work and the need to be self-motivated and to ask questions
- A work ethic, professionalism, a sense of purpose, the ability to be a change agent, and the ability to change
- In areas such as technology, health care, and mental health change is occurring faster than the educational system can keep up with, so students must learn to be change managers
- Students should receive educations that make them more adaptable—they should learn how to learn and think rather than learn in a rote manner
- There are often gaps between what is taught in the academy and the practicalities of the real world—UNC could involve more students in internships of various kinds, and work harder to get students to put together their academic and work-related experiences
- Prospective teachers need to know realities of classroom, prospective business people need to know how to write a business plan and read a financial report, how to deal with other employees and customers, and have appropriate business etiquette skills
- Training in computer and writing skills for online students
- Awareness of mental health issues
- Sensitivity to each region's unique heritage and culture (at all levels, students to institutions)

Curricula and related changes needed

- Do not forget the arts and humanities
- Provide more certificate and degree programs online for business-related areas
- Expand teacher education to 5 yrs, 4 yrs is not enough time to do the job
- Strengthen the infrastructure of advising prospective teachers so students who are likely to quit early as teachers leave the field before they get into schools
- Use cable TV as means for delivering distance courses
- Have more of an arts and crafts focus at WCU, perhaps in a satellite program
- Specific programs needed in the west include a masters in communication, degrees in financial planning, pharmacy, energy conservation, universal design, and health and fitness, and law enforcement, and doctoral programs in unspecified areas

Access and affordability

- Rural working poor are getting left out of higher ed—UNC needs to: (a) find way for poor students to get SAT for free; (b) have mountain schools recruit first in their own areas; (c) do a better job of helping poor find funds for attending the university; (d) find ways to support craft skills and traditional mountain ways
- Help students decide on what they want to do, starting in middle school



Research

- Grants in applied research are mal-distributed with most going to flagships
- More than in other states, resources devolve to flagship universities with regionals left out

Outreach: Henderson County

- Provide more opportunities for non-traditional degrees through branch or satellite campuses in places like Henderson County—there are many resources in Henderson County that could help UNC
- The Kellogg Center would provide a good place for a WCU presence in Henderson County

Internal issues

- PACE emphasis on centralized printing and computer purchasing have been a disaster at the University—they failed in business and industry and will not work well in the university either
- More health science faculty are needed and salaries in that area need to be raised
- Put UNC-TV on satellite-transmitters are ineffective in mountains
- More out-of-state waivers needed, especially in graduate education and more funds for research are needed

Environment Issues

- UNC needs to be cognizant of its impact on local communities and natural environments and work to minimize the negative effects of that impact
- UNC can help educate developers about appropriate land use and care of the social and physical environment
- UNC needs to be model of an environmentally sensitive organization and promote local efforts in such areas as greenway development, local development to cut down on driving, etc.
- WCU should be helping the area in developing water and sewer infrastructure
- Encourage local food production and use on campus

Economic and Community Development Issues

Workforce needs

- WNC's economic development is not bordered by state lines but extends into Georgia and South Carolina—UNC needs to take into consideration how that impacts the attraction of intellectual capital and economic development needs and consider tuition reciprocity with these areas
- UNC should encourage entrepreneurialism
- Small business development is key but undercapitalized and lack a business plan but WCU Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation will help



- More engineers are needed

Collaboration

- Minority businesses want to be part of the economic development, but professional often leave due to lack of opportunity; UNC should do more to hire minority contractors—not favors but equity in economic competition
- WCU can be central force in revitalizing Cullowhee's downtown and in supporting tourism and agri-business
- Revitalize the Chancellor's Roundtables to hear from local communities and network academia better with various sectors of the economy; UNC needs to be conduit to bring outside influences into the community
- University should consider involvement in the automobile industry
- Provide more than workforce development and instead leadership training to push sustainable ethic and retirement migration development through Centers of Excellence for our state; may facilitate industrial recruitment.
- Institute for the Economy of the Future at WCU has worked with Nantahala Outfitters to help with marketing and economic impacts of Smoky Mountain corridor on North Carolina side BUT many faculty are involved with teaching and other commitments and require financial contracts.

Health and Social Issues

- WNC suffers from the mal-distribution of medical personnel in the state, particularly physicians, so UNC should help with distribution
- West Care supports 3rd/4th year med school in Asheville; a residency program in dentistry would be useful too, especially if geared to elderly
- Grad program in health informatics needed
- Provide more health personnel to replace retirees, especially nurses, PTs, OTs, and pharmacists and for minority health care workers of all kinds
- WNC is particularly influenced by the growth in the number of aging and UNC could cooperate in the development of centers for dealing with health and wellness of the population – developing centers where health, psychological, and other gerontologically-related students could get practical experience (some elderly would be happy to pay for such services)
- Many retirees want to give back—UNC can encourage and take advantage of volunteerism and be a catalyst for community service
- There is a major shortage of social workers in rural areas and Henderson County
- Black males dropping out of Asheville schools at alarming rate—UNC must be driving force in dealing with this problem
- A Henderson County UNC presence would attract Latinos to higher ed
- Provide UNC ed programs in prisons
- Henderson County offers special opportunities for research on the 65+ population



Notable Quotes:

“Online classes are great, but there is nothing like sitting in a class with a professor.”

“The University needs to be reinvented to produce students who think instead of memorizing.”

“Creativity is a core mission of the UNC system.”

“Progress does not benefit everyone, especially poor rural mountain folk.”

“Change is outpacing what students bring from their educations.”

“The public education system is in trouble and we need to fix it.”

“The University should take a ‘zero-based budget’ approach to curriculum review.”

“Our middle class is stuck in low-paying jobs with no pathway to higher education.”

“If we don’t solve our community’s problems now, in 100 years, my great-granddaughter will be speaking before a panel of your great-grandchildren talking about the same issues that we are today.”

“You [UNC] may not reach all of us directly, but you do reach all of us through the students you teach.”

Detailed Summary compiled by:
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