



**UNC Tomorrow Listening Forum
Summary of Public Input
Triad Region (Gateway University Research Park)
October 8, 2007, 4:00 pm**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Main themes expressed by the public:

- Need for UNC to be more involved in the region – Collaborate more with business and community organizations; develop “think tanks” to help address community issues (such as growing gang activity); help develop stronger regional focus in economic development and addressing regional issues
- Economic transformation – Become more engaged in economic transformation (helping existing industries like furniture evolve in modern economy); focus research and curriculum on region’s 5 economic strategic clusters (aviation, transportation & logistics, advanced manufacturing, biotechnology & life sciences, and finance); offer more entrepreneurship and small business development programs
- Increase flexibility in program content and delivery – Offer more continuing education, evening and weekend classes, online and distance education; update curriculum more rapidly to reflect rapidly changing economy and world
- Student skills – Educate students with stronger “soft” skills (creative thinking, analytical thinking, oral and written communication, etc.); encourage development of the arts which stimulates creative thinking; strengthen student knowledge in math, science and technology; develop more internships for students to gain “real-world” experience
- K-12 – Focus on “birth through college”, not just “kindergarten through college;” educate more and better teachers, and more math and science teachers; reform schools of education so teachers are better prepared for the environment in which they will teach; improve advising and counseling functions to help students make better informed academic and career choices
- Develop a “seamless” educational system – Stronger collaboration with Community Colleges, improve articulation agreement to facilitate transfer of students; teach UNC classes on Community College campuses; develop more 2+2 programs
- Health care – Educate more nurses and nursing faculty; improve mental health care



- Gateway University Park – Continue to support and develop Park; use as a model for inter-institutional collaborations
- Environment and Sustainability – Show leadership in campus development and facilities that are energy efficient
- Hispanic population – Increase educational attainment of Hispanic population to avoid creating a “permanent underclass”
- Minority students – Increase educational attainment of minority students, especially African American males
- Increase minority business participation in UNC procurement and contracting
- Create incentives for, and remove barriers to, faculty becoming more engaged in community and regional issues with renewed focus on public service component of UNC’s mission
- Maximize existing resources – Don’t duplicate programs unnecessarily, and strengthen existing programs before creating new ones (ex: engineering)
- Maintain access and affordability of higher education – Increase financial aid and scholarship programs for lower income students



DETAILED SUMMARY

Yvonne Johnson, Greensboro City Council

- The NCA&T State University – UNCG Gateway Research Park is an excellent example of collaboration and has real potential for significant employment generation and new, innovative research applications particularly regarding water and air quality including alternative fuels.
- Triad needs to become known as a regional ‘think tank’ addressing key issues in the area including building trust and social capital through student internship placements in creative ways. Particular focus could be race relations and linkage with other universities and colleges, and improved integrated links with Greensboro Partnership and Chamber of Commerce.
- Need to examine future job possibilities especially in advanced earnings industries and sustainable economic niches that are environmentally friendly, and especially training programs.
- University could play a revolutionary role in transforming gang behavior by providing alternative approaches and solutions.

Don Kirkman, Piedmont Triad Partnership

- Diversity of state and Triad pose unique challenges particularly regarding recent manufacturing ‘tsunami’ (one of only two regions suffering net job losses in recent years) and need to recognize the critical role of higher education institutions in transforming the regional economy.
- State of Workforce report is even more dismal regarding job creation in the region. Almost 46% of new future jobs in the region will require little formal educational training and new regional vision plan requires a Marshall Plan to rethink city/county centric thinking and focus on regional solutions. However, redundant and mediocre assets in higher education facilities are not pushing region to a world-class city status – especially inter-university collaboration within the Triad and the entire state.
- Develop a new paradigm of collaboration that seeds ‘world-class’ training and research.

Pat Danahy, President, Greensboro Partnership

- Gateway Research Park is model of cooperation between UNCG and NCAT and part of the city’s economic backbone, and is capable of becoming a model for the



UNC system especially with the Joint School of Nanotechnology thanks to Senator Kay Hagan and Maggie Jeffus's efforts in the state legislative. Both the Park and new School have the potential to transform the region's manufacturing economy into a competitive knowledge based economy.

- Potential future industry clusters include transport logistics and aviation, biotechnology and life sciences, financial services and advanced manufacturing. But need a continuum of education excellence through K-12, Community Colleges and the universities in the region.
- Joint venture of UNCG and Bryan Foundation to fund and educate and train the best math and science teachers in underperforming schools is crucial to the success of the region.
- Need to redirect resources to bolster NCAT School of Engineering and strategically place student internships into these industry clusters. Need to make the School of Engineering one of the 25 best in the country.
- Additional state assistance in the area of technical and engineering training is crucial.

Ed Kitchen, Bryan Foundation and Gateway Research Park

- Gateway Research Park and Joint School of Nanotechnology is a key strategy but it is a new and innovative hybrid model that requires substantial and constant coordination and nurturing between UNCG and NCAT. Need to focus on clear objectives and to maintain a fast-paced culture of change based on innovation.
- Two clear priorities include doing a better job through K-16 education in terms of producing more teachers and training students through Math and Science Centers based on new innovative models. Second, we need attractive communities and land development/transportation policies that can attract new industry. The region's university assets can guide us through this process.
- Need improved marketing of UNC system and need to host new CEOs by touring through the UNC facilities (e.g., School of Music at UNCG). Also, need to do more than just seek grants and funding, but collaborate in new ways. Faculty also need to engage practitioners and place student interns in the community. Finally, need soft skills and communicative, multidisciplinary perspectives to enhance oral and written skills.

Peter Marsh, Workplace Strategies

- We are competing nationally and globally and need to attract diverse talent since clients are diverse. Need to retain talent to lower costs and need to deliver



exceptional products. Creative thinking requires freedom of thought which includes teaching alternative solutions to a given problem, teaching collaborative disciplinary perspectives (e.g., math and art)

- Good graduates are no longer good enough – need less entitlement and more work ethic with technological skills, need to communicate with businesses about appropriate hard and soft skills in team building exercises
- Appropriate business skills are crucial in all majors at college and ongoing education and retention is critical in career development. For example, new design industries in region are doing well since lower cost of living than larger cities but need ongoing professional development and urban studios in downtown programs will help keep, retain and attract young talent.
- Need to become a research partner with businesses to help develop research grants and applications, and need a 'go-to' partner to help acquire funds.

Nigel Austin, GMAC Insurance

- Early childhood development is economic development. We need to change the frame of reference for defining economic development. Students are not prepared when they enter college and this needs to be addressed. Early childhood development intervention is crucial as an investment that might enhance later achievement and mitigate behavior problems and prison incarceration. Invest in Birth – 16 not just K – 16.
- Achievement disparities along racial lines in middle schools are a problem as is teaching retention/retirement. Great need for more nonwhite teachers and more nurses otherwise the region will face substantial workforce problems and shortages. BUT need more faculty and more space to train these nurses and teachers.
- Need more faculty actively engaged in the community and student internships to facilitate the knowledge-based economy and more focus on economic development (engineers, math, science, biotech). Outstanding quality of life needs all this to sustain momentum.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

- Retaining new talent that is graduating from universities is not being facilitated in substantive ways and need additional integration across the races.
- Need for more certificate-type training for local elected leaders to professionalize local leadership particularly in land-use and development (e.g., Urban Institute) and



need to reduce high school dropout rates possibly through faith based community initiatives to facilitate soft skills.

- Universities have no political boundaries and can facilitate regional discussions and integration. Need to be connected and encourage community service as a requirement for graduation.
- We know the type of industry clusters we are attracting and we need to restructure and be more proactive in training the workforce to be ready. Good examples would be independent film-making, production companies and journalism and mass communication. NCAT has been very progressive in placement and business startups.
- Career Fairs tend not to have a large number of local firms and companies participate BUT the region may not offer enticing job opportunities. Talent is not being retained in region. Need to more aggressively recruit firms to these Fairs.
- Tourism development is a neglected cluster particularly given the region's natural attractiveness plus small business development needs more attention.
- Economic development and university partnerships are the key to leveraging resources. Planning appropriate workforce development strategies requires these sorts of partnerships. Academic leaders need to be on EDC Boards and local businesses need representation on Board of Trustees etc.
- Need more cooperative programs that include internships especially through 3+2 programs with one year out. Also, informal internship and study abroad.
- The 'Horse Park of the South Park' in Rockingham County and the related equine facilities supported through Golden Leaf funding is affiliating with NCAT and NC State and may trigger a new tourism cluster north of Greensboro.
- Need for more collaboration with High Point University and the World Furniture Market given 12 million square feet of floor-space and the 85,000 visitors twice a year.
- Need for light rail stop near UNCG/Lee Street to facilitate corridor development to south of campus through Lee Street Merchants Association and City Corridor Study.
- NC Arts Council 'Building Creative Economies' report is a reminder that arts and the Center for Design Innovation in Winston Salem are key elements of any economic development strategy that is knowledge-based. Since creative thinkers are at the center of any economic development initiative through soft skills.



K – 12 ISSUES

- Incoming students to community colleges lack foundational skills and under-prepared students are a foundational problem and need to work on mitigating these problems with the UNC system.
- Student –city relationships need to be improved through student placement internships.
- Need for statewide broadband networks where the UNC system can play a role as guardians of this high quality information network.

DIVERSITY ISSUES

- Support the efforts of the UNCG Center for New North Carolinians, to help immigrants help themselves. Center for New North Carolinians is an important mechanism for the region and can play a role in facilitating in-state tuition for Latinos without legal citizenship standing. UNC system should strongly support the Dream Act – allowing Latino high school graduates from NC public schools in-state tuition at UNC schools.
 - Be aware of the needs of undocumented students.
 - Support these students to get college degrees—top 15 – 20%—and link them with organizations doing business in Latin America (e.g., Syngenta and Market America) and return to the country of their parents to serve the companies that are doing business in those countries. These can be talented bilingual workers.
 - If undocumented immigrants get no higher education, they will stay here and compete for blue collar jobs. If they return to their countries and are doing well their parents may follow them back, thus speeding up the reverse migration process from U.S. to Latin America.
- Differential growth rates by county has led to some counties lagging far behind and need for UNC system to assist 30 counties on the ‘edge’ through a transformative model focused on a small number of priorities (e.g., entrepreneurship programs, continued education, access to health care)
- Minority Small Business Assistance - Lots of R&D and resources goes into training small businesses, but not the kind of businesses that locate in minority communities. Often lower-income minority owners may have come from blue-collar manufacturing jobs and they often are not eligible for conventional financing and lack other entrepreneurship skills. We need programs aimed at getting them up to speed and that help them start businesses. We cannot expect them to fit into the existing program aimed at other small business owners who might not have the same sort of constraints. Minority small businesses are not ready for QuickBooks training; they



need a boot-camp based on an understanding of these cultural/socio-economic differences.

- Encouraging minority awareness of higher education opportunities - All the research shows there are disparities in minority student college attendance. Why not do something as simple as having minority college students go into high schools and middle schools and educate kids about the college experience. They could inspire, coach, educate. If we cannot get enough black teachers to serve as role models, at least send the college kids back in once in a while and let them see its possible for them as well.
- Rapidly growing immigrant populations with high dropout rates results in unclear career pathways and need to build appropriate pathways otherwise major competitive disadvantage.
- Rural communities like Ashe County have students that face unique challenges including access, support and convenience unless they move to a major metropolitan area BUT can be resolved with better integration with local community college and more distance education. THEN need for support systems when such students arrive at a major campus.

PROGRAM DELIVERY ISSUES

- Student –city relationships need to be improved through student placement internships
- UNC system needs to focus more attention on the engineering program at NCA&T before offering engineering programs at other institutions.
- The NCSU Extension staff are isolated from regular faculty. They do not know who is doing what and are not encouraged to seek out assistance from rank and file faculty. Their focus is entirely on NCSU and they do not believe they are engaged (or really should be) with any other UNC institution.
- Need to offer many more summer programs in math, science and nursing particularly for underperforming students and particularly bright students
- Need more graduate programs in area and aggressively market these programs plus more interdisciplinary initiatives especially between UNCG NCAT especially to retain talent.
- Need for more evening and weekend programs to facilitate convenience and access BUT needs more funding and support BUT could be cost-effective



- Educate teachers and parents about deferments and cancellations for loans, e.g., nursing, teaching, and medicine.
 - Financial aid office needs to become more aware of creative financing for higher education—military deferments, etc.
 - First generation college students and their parents are not aware of financial opportunities for college.
 - School councilors need to be aware of this also, though they are so busy that they may not be the best ones to share this information.
- University collaboration requires new thinking on promotion and tenure if faculty are to be incentivized to act particularly given pressure to publish BUT Foundation grants to help faculty to teach teachers in early childhood education is one way to do this. What gets measured is what tends to get done so reward faculty for their work with public schools and other parts of the community
- Nussbaum Center for Entrepreneurship has been a successful incubator and is well linked with UNCG and NCAT BUT need to teach our students the application of theory through real-world experiences that are not book-related. Also, need for more collaborative efforts and career services that are more fully funded and staffed.
- University – community college linkage needs to be improved by focusing on learning not teaching using more innovative evaluation techniques to facilitate retention.

NOTABLE QUOTES

“Creative thinking requires freedom of thought.”

“Today’s good graduates are not good enough. You have to be exceptional in today’s global marketplace.”

“UNC system and the Triad need to move quickly to enhance School of Engineering at NCAT and the new Joint School of Nanotechnology between UNCG and NCAT.”

“We tend to covet our campuses within our town and county borders – we have the collective assets within this region to be bolder and better, but we need to work collaboratively.”

“We need a new paradigm for collaboration where the resources of the entire UNC system are marshaled.”

“Universities need to be more nimble and flexible – more than they are used to doing it, and as fast as business *has* to do it.”



“It’s not about ‘K-12’ anymore; it should be about ‘B-16’ [birth through college].”

“How can UNC benefit the counties ‘on the edge’? How does it bring prosperity to those areas that are worse off than they were 50 years ago?”

“What gets measured is what gets done.”

“We need to harness and unleash all the knowledge on your shelves and get it out into the community.”

“Make your existing programs great before creating new ones.”

“Our students are changing every day, and we aren’t keeping up.”

“We are creating a permanently disadvantaged class of people in this country . . . I can think of now worse a situation than to have our fastest growing population [Hispanic] also be our least educated.”

“The resources spent on getting students into college are wasted if they don’t graduate.”

Detailed Summary compiled by:
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UNC Tomorrow Scholars Council