



## UNC Tomorrow Faculty Listening Forums Executive Summary

*To receive input from UNC faculty on the needs of our state and how UNC can best respond, President Bowles conducted faculty listening forums involving faculty of all 17 constituent UNC institutions.<sup>1</sup> Below is a summary of the major issues expressed by the faculty.*

### **Our Economy, Our Communities, and Our Global Readiness**

- Economic transformation – We cannot deny the strong role the University plays in developing communities; it is important to translate those successful strategies to poor communities in need of economic development.
- Global readiness – The University must produce students that are more globally aware and able to compete. We should increase the following opportunities: international exchanges/study abroad for both students and faculty, foreign language requirements on our campuses as well as the diversity of languages offered, and preparation of more foreign language teachers both for public schools and higher education. Where physical study-abroad is not available (or affordable), make better use of technology to infuse cultural diversity and awareness in the classroom.
- 21<sup>st</sup> century skills – The University should recognize the role the liberal arts education plays in training students in communication (oral and written), problem solving, teamwork, critical thinking, and analytical reasoning skills. These skills are not necessarily “soft” as they are some of the most difficult to master and to teach – such skills are also referred to as “transferable skills” or “habits of mind”. Our students need these skills to compete and to be lifelong learners within their professions. Increasing internships, service learning, and student work opportunities will also help develop soft skills and reinforce learning. Students also need education in financial literacy.
- Math and science education – The University should incorporate math and science courses in the general education requirements on all campuses. All graduates should possess a fundamental mastery of these important subject areas to increase competitiveness both nationally and internationally.

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<sup>1</sup> As of November 7, 2007, forums have been conducted for all campuses except UNC-Wilmington and UNC-Pembroke. Input from the faculty at these campuses will be incorporated into this executive summary and distributed.



- Writing skills - University graduates must be able to write clearly and concisely. Their professions will require it and we should encourage writing development through focused writing programs across all curriculums (including in the public schools). Employers should also communicate the importance of these skills to encourage students to focus on them in seeking a job after graduation.
- Literacy skills – University graduates must have strong literacy skills. Poor literacy skills increase poor performance in math (students who can't read the math problems can't solve them).
- Importance of the arts – The University must recognize the important role played by the arts in educating students and developing the soft skills for which employers are looking. Students educated in the arts are especially well-equipped to solve problems, think outside of the box and to be creative. The arts also lead to the creation of new ideas and new things, which are essential to progress in any community.

### **Our Health and Our Environment**

- Public health challenges – University researchers realize that our state is unable to meet the needs of every person with illness. Faculty researchers should be included in the development of the solutions through the application of research and best practices (ex. mental health reform). The state also has a need for more health care providers (nurses, pharmacists, physicians, therapists, etc.).
- Leaders in environmental stewardship – The University must take the lead in applying research and advances in environmental technology and sustainability, and we must lead by example in our own buildings and campus activities.

### **Our Children and Their Future: University Access and Public Education**

- Access – Tuition and fees are impeding the access of a University education in many of North Carolina's regions. Awareness of such costs as well as books, supplies and fees must be considered regularly. Additionally, the cost of distance education/online courses should also be revisited to ensure we maintain access for our non-traditional students. More financial support from the private sector (scholarships, grants, etc.) should be encouraged, especially for middle-class students who don't qualify as "low income."



- Community college partnerships - The articulation agreements between the community colleges and the University must become more seamless across the entire state to increase efficiency and ease of use for students. A stronger relationship with the community colleges would yield reduced pressures on University enrollment and a chance for ill-prepared students to take remedial courses and build their confidence and skills prior to entering a university.
- K-12 Issues - Many students are ill-prepared for University coursework. In response, the University should focus on core subjects early on in education. Faculty should apply research to aid in the pipeline challenges that exist in the recruitment of particular populations to our campuses (ex. Males and African American males in particular). Work ethic and commitment of students is another area where faculty research may be applied.
- K-12 Teacher shortage – The University should take the lead in the movement to professionalize the teaching profession by: encouraging the legislature to increase teacher pay (especially in the most competitive subject areas like math and science), providing additional mentoring and professional development that matters to teachers; increasing scholarships for students to recruit them into teaching; working to provide students with a better sense of the reality of today’s classroom - increasing their exposure to diversity; recruiting more minorities into the profession of teaching (as well as minority faculty); increasing flexibility in programs - especially for non-traditional students looking to switch careers; and creating opportunities for retiring faculty and professionals to lend their expertise.
- Support systems for students – The health and well-being of our students should be of the utmost concern of each campus. Ensuring the mental health of each student is essential to creating a learning environment in which students can thrive. Providing counseling (mental, drug and alcohol) as well as career services are essential. Student services should be enhanced, including those for academic advising, counseling, and health care (student health services).
- Undocumented students – Not providing these students with a sound education is yet another form of brain drain. The US needs more educated workers and researchers, so we should not leave this group behind.

### **Our University’s Outreach, Engagement, and Innovations**

- Faculty professional and personal development – University faculty need greater support and growth opportunities and should be developed as teachers and as whole people by providing services such as: health and



wellness programs, grant writing exercises, counseling, technology advances/online course development (University of Wisconsin is a sound model of such faculty focused development centers).

- Faculty Recruitment & Retention – The University should commit to competitive salaries/benefits, especially health care benefits, in order to recruit and keep the best faculty around the country. Free or reduced tuition for children of faculty should be considered. Providing high-quality laboratory facilities are also essential in these efforts. This issue will become increasingly important in the near future as the baby-boomer generation of faculty ages into retirement.
- Quality control – Campuses must maintain the quality of each course regardless of the selected method of delivery. Standards of our degree programs must be maintained in order to send out graduates with a degree that means something. We must do so while remaining focused on the mission of higher education, not a vocational mission.
- Libraries and information technology – Resources in campus libraries and in IT advances should be centralized and shared where possible to increase the holdings for those campuses that have limited access to such resources. One innovative suggestion was to contract with Google Books to digitize library volumes and share digital materials with other campuses.
- Research (both basic and applied) – Basic research is at the core of the University’s mission. Research leads to creation and innovation and must continue to be supported and advanced. In addition, applied research should be rewarded and valued as it is the means by which we share our research with the public. That translation is key to bridging the gap between basic and applied research for our state’s citizens.
- Faculty rewards and incentives – Many faculty expressed willingness, even enthusiasm, for increased engaged work, public service, and applied/translated research. However, rewards and incentives structures (Promotion and Tenure policies) must be revised to enable such faculty to engage in this work; current policies create barriers to engaged work because of significant publication requirements (referred to at one forum as “publish or perish”) and lack of release time (including funding for release time).
- Student, faculty, staff, and administration – University leadership should provide multiple (periodic), meaningful opportunities for these groups to interact and discuss issues pertinent to the future of the institution. University leadership at both the campus and system level should also work to eliminate bureaucracy. Staffing needs on campuses include information technology, campus police, and student services.



- Inter-institutional collaboration – Increasing partnerships and collaborations across UNC institutions will help maximize existing resources, avoid unnecessary duplication, and strengthen UNC’s ability to be responsive to the state’s needs. Current administrative barriers to easy inter-institutional collaboration should be eliminated (streamline and make consistent administrative functions, grant administration, accounting systems, etc.)
- Role of the regional university - Regional universities offer options to students that prefer/have to stay close to home for college and should be funded in a manner that allows them to maintain those offerings.
  - Need for new programs with regional focus (ex. PhD Physical Therapy at WCU, doctoral of clinical psychology at ASU, PhD in Nursing at UNC-C, masters in disaster management at UNC-CH, and doctorate of criminology/social justice at FSU)
- Lack of resources – Recognizing that dollars are not infinite, the University must engage in better strategic planning and resource allocation that is not focused solely on year to year needs (like the legislative process), but rather on the development of strong programs and assets over the long term that will produce the results we need.
  - We must also recognize in our priorities that competing nations have increasingly better facilities for research, that the funding model for degree programs and campuses should be revisited to be sure we are investing appropriately in our priorities and that there exists a “digital divide” among our campuses.
  - The University should look to a year-round funding model that will better utilize resources, allow faculty and students more flexibility and opportunities, and speed up degree completion.
  - Many campus facilities and infrastructure are lacking, ranging from research and lab space to library resources to IT to student housing