



THE UNIVERSITY *of* NORTH CAROLINA
GREENSBORO



10/25/2016

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro participated in a UNC Board of Governors Strategic Plan Public Forum on October 25, 2016 with 84 attendees. Attendees consisted of faculty, staff and students. The sign-in sheets are included as an appendix to this report. The written comments and spoken comments from that event were synthesized and compiled by UNCG Associate Vice Chancellor for Strategy and Policy, Chief of Staff and other key faculty and staff and the executive summary of the themes, key issues and remarks are reported below.

1) ACCESS

- General Points
 - Access and Equity are interconnected.
 - We should also be concerned about access for students with disabilities. They are often left out of conversations involving diversity.
 - The universities provide not only undergraduate degrees, but certificate programs and graduate education. We see ourselves as playing a key part in life-long learning, and in providing access to educational experiences that provide individuals with the ability to take on increasing levels of responsibility and/or to change course in their careers.
- PK-12/Teacher Education
 - We have many strong teacher education programs. Recruitment of new teachers is a challenge due to many factors outside of the control of the UNC system, and the same can be said for retention of teachers (e.g., pay, low morale due to emphasis on testing and not teaching, failure to recognize and reward value of continuing education, significant behavioral issues in the classroom). Just as we acknowledge that recruitment AND retention are important in higher education, so should we with PK-12 teachers. The UNC system can act as a partner to address the recruitment, training, and retention of teachers, administrators, and counselors.
 - Major concern for both K-12 and college/university level is the erosion in the “esteem in which teachers are held.” We need to raise the esteem in which educators are now held.
 - With the depth of needs related to increasing access to higher education, having 1 of 2 goals in this category related to training more teachers for the PK-12 system is an interesting, and somewhat puzzling, choice, particularly given the challenges related to attracting young people into teaching. We are deeply invested in having students come to us who are well prepared, and would like to talk about other ways in which we can partner with the PK-12 system to foster this. For instance, pedagogy, student learning outcomes, and general expectations for performance and behavior along the PK-16 trajectory are not necessarily understood, let alone aligned to promote successful transitions from one stage to another.
- Points Related to Increasing Access and Therefore Enrollment
 - Acknowledge that a college education for first-time college students is not only transformative for the student but their families as well. Moreover, first-generation college

families have less related cultural and social capital (and knowledge and skills) for managing and navigating higher education (more student and family supports needed). It's not enough to just recruit students from diverse backgrounds (which occurs when you increase access) – we should acknowledge the diversity of support needs that come with increased access to higher education and provide for them.

- As class sizes increase, so does the potential for the quality of the educational experience to decrease, especially as it relates to the 21st century skills identified in the Student Success area.
- If higher education is a human and civil right, then access and success will also require a commitment to ethical considerations such as justice and democracy.

2) STUDENT SUCCESS

- Definition
 - It is important to expand our thinking about developmental competencies. One of the 4 pillars of success is helping students develop a sense of self -- this is not at all addressed in the strategic plan. Challenge is not about the degree but about choosing the right path. Core questions are: “Who do we want to be?” and “What we want to do?”
 - We need to better address issues of mental health as it impacts student success via retention and graduation, and later success professionally.
 - We need to cultivate an entrepreneurial spirit among our students, not just the expectation they will be employees. Given the importance of small businesses in our economy, they need to be prepared to be successful in this environment.
 - Ability to engage in the **global** community is and will be an important competency for the success of our students.
 - The success of our students, and of society at large, is tied to the ability of future generations to exercise ethical decision-making and to productively engage in the democratic process.
- Elements to Consider
 - Faculty-to-student ratio is an important part of student success, particularly within schools whose student populations are less advantaged. Hiring of large numbers of adjunct faculty does not solve the problem; there are currently programs in which students may graduate without ever having had a tenure-track faculty member, and therefore they won't benefit from the state-of-the-art research and knowledge that these individuals bring to the classroom.
 - The approach to promoting student success should take into consideration the diverse needs of our diverse student bodies for future success.
 - A developmental approach to the college success may be helpful. For instance, there are certain points in the process that are particularly challenging for student success. The first year of college is one of those, and the American Association of Colleges and Universities has valuable information on reconfiguring the first-year experience.

- A liberal arts approach to education is key to developing the 21st century skills mentioned in the draft document. Skills like critical thinking and effective communication are core student learning outcomes within liberal arts courses.
- The plan seems to be more narrowly focused on undergraduate education. Graduate education is a key part of preparing the next generation of teachers and leaders, and for giving college-education adults the opportunity to pursue new directions in their careers.
- Metrics
 - Given the variety of student populations across the system, we need appropriate metrics to measure success. For example, “time to degree” is impacted by the demographic characteristics of students.
 - Outcomes such as critical thinking and problem solving are difficult to measure and careful attention should be paid to how metrics in areas like these are established. There is expertise within the UNC system faculty for exploring these issues.

3) AFFORDABILITY AND EFFICIENCY

- Definition
 - Access and affordability are deeply intertwined. If we are to consider education as a human right as Spelling suggests, we must address affordability and the impact of student debt.
- Elements to Consider
 - The practical realities of affordability, efficiency, and sustainability of our higher education system need to be constantly monitored and balanced. All systems have a point at which this precarious balance breaks down.
 - The current burden related to maintaining compliance with local, state, and federal regulations is tremendous and directly impacts affordability and efficiencies.
 - We see the impact of financial hardship on our students every day. We hope for a financial system that reduces the burden on our students without reducing access or compromising quality.
 - Ask the campuses what operational issues they have in common that could benefit from system-level support; don’t assume at the system level that you know what these are. Each campus operates differently, but there are some common challenges that we face that we would be glad to tackle collaboratively (e.g., transition to Banner XE). Attempts to centralize other services that might immediately come to mind could have the opposite effect, creating confusion, delays, and frustration.
 - Campus employees consider themselves to be public servants. It would be ideal if their dedication to the NC public higher education system could be acknowledged through tuition waivers for employees with children attending colleges within UNC system.

4) ECONOMIC IMPACT

- Definition
 - Include the Arts in STEM (STEAM) to acknowledge the vital role of culture and arts for attracting talent and for quality of life.
 - Would “Community and Economic Development” or “Economic and Community Impact” better express this concept?
- Elements to Consider
 - It is important to think about education of people resources (e.g., critical thought, an understanding of the world, etc.) as a reflection of economic impact.
 - North Carolina is a beautiful state with abundant natural resources. The UNC system can and should play a significant role in the management and preservation of these resources for the next generations to come.
 - A liberal arts education is an important good, i.e., it supports preparation of job skills for employers, but also supports “skills” that are cross-cutting and supports community engagement.
 - It would be helpful to better understand the types of jobs available for our graduates in the fields that are being promoted here, particularly in the areas of STEM and the health sciences. What do they look like? What are the qualifications needed to be successful in these jobs? Which of these jobs require graduate education?
 - There are significant regulatory and compliance-related issues that come with externally funded research. We have systems in place to manage these, including using recovered indirect costs to fund the necessary staff to support research. When we hear that those funds (or their equivalent) are on the table for budget cuts, that sends a different message about support for research.
- Metrics
 - Measuring the scope of services that the universities provide and the impact of those services and partnerships within the community will be important.

5) EXCELLENT AND DIVERSE INSTITUTIONS

- Definition
 - As written, Excellent and Diverse Institution seems to focus on differences across universities rather than issues of access, social justice, and the importance of diversity for providing opportunities for students to be engaged with those who are different from themselves. In addition to HMI and MSI, we need to create goals for the entire system with respect to diversity.
- Elements to Consider
 - Data regarding campus climate is important if we are to identify needs, develop benchmarks, and allocate resources for recruiting and retaining human capital.

- Excellence in the public higher education system is linked to excellence in the public PK-12 system.
- Excellent faculty and staff - excellent people – are needed to drive excellent organizations. Competitive compensation and benefits is one key aspect of the ability to recruit and retain excellence employees.
- Commercialization of research is but one way in which research has a very real impact on society. It is important to support forms of knowledge production that are not easily commodified but have other benefits.
- Will each campus having an “area of distinction” serve to create more animosity/more territoriality/less choice for students? Please keep this under consideration as an unintended impact.
- Metrics
 - Excellence will look different across different institutions given the differences in our student bodies, missions, and areas of emphasis.

6) OTHER ISSUES TO CONSIDER

- It is important to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategic plan, e.g., pre/post evaluations. Also, what can we learn from the successes and failures of past strategic plans?
- Across all areas of the plan, please consider impacts of policies and decisions made over the last decade that have presented new and different challenges to higher education and to the UNC system schools.
- More attention to the vulnerabilities and needs of contingent (non-tenure track) faculty is required, and recognition that they play a critical role as faculty.
- Adding brief problem statements to the plan – i.e., the reasoning behind the goals put forward – could help further define the reasoning and context for each goal and clarify the ways in which specific metrics can inform progress.
- Campus-based faculty and staff – those on the “front-lines” – should be consulted early and often in plans that directly impact the campuses. If there are particular areas identified as problems or gaps, bring those to the campuses and ask for insight. It’s possible that, after seeing the problem through the lens of the campuses, it will turn out that the problem is misdefined, resulting in proposed solutions that will not lead to the desired outcome. Or, if the problem isn’t thoroughly defined, key elements needed to solve the problem may not be included in the solution. For instance, one could guess that the reason for the goal to produce more PK-12 teachers is because, across the board, we have a teacher shortage, but that shortage is only driven *in part* by the numbers of teachers entering the profession. Given the large attrition rate, putting more teachers into a pipeline with known holes still won’t result in an adequate teaching workforce. And, the UNC system does not ultimately control key factors in the ability to attract individuals to teaching, such as teacher salary, but campuses do and can partner with school districts to help address factors related to working conditions and professional development.