

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro Environmental Scan Summary for Strategic Planning

December 12, 2014 Workshop Presentation

March 16, 2015 Workshop Presentation

On December 12, 2014 and March 16, 2015 the Strategic Planning Committee and an expanded group of University leaders and stakeholders convened for a facilitated session to review data and documentation in order to begin to identify:

1. The environmental factors most likely to have a positive impact on the University as well as those likely to have a negative impact.
2. Institution-wide Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats facing The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

[Environmental Scan Attendees](#)

[Power Point presentations Session I](#)

[Power Point presentations Session II](#)

I. Summary of Frequently Cited Environmental Factors Most Likely to Impact the University Positively

- *Student, Faculty and Staff Diversity*

There was a sense of pride among participants that the University has made a strong commitment to diversity in its broadest terms and is better prepared than most universities to serve a growing number of diverse students. Participants cited in-house “*expertise*” of the faculty and staff and a commitment to address the needs of an increasingly diverse student body.

Although excited and passionate about the University’s track record in serving diverse student populations, there was the caution that the University needed to be ever vigilant in serving “*new*” cohorts of students in both a nimble and intentional manner.

The generational workforce “*shift*” at the University was also cited as an opportunity for the University to recruit faculty and staff of diverse backgrounds, experiences, and skills (given the pending retirements of a significant number of faculty and long serving staff). The challenge for the University is managing the recruitment and subsequent retention efforts in an intentional manner.

- *The Changing Learning Landscape*

Participants suggested building on the programs already in place including experiential learning, undergraduate internships and research, and study abroad experiences.

Those assembled were positive about the University's existing academic technology infrastructure and the commitment of faculty to explore how best to provide e-Learning opportunities for students.

- *Community Engagement*

Participants believed that UNCG should be proud of its record engaging the GSO/Triad. The challenge is how to further embed community engagement intentionally in the teaching, research and service missions of the University. The University recognizes faculty for such contributions in the Promotion and Tenure Process. Questions were asked about how the university can formally recognize community engagement in the performance appraisal of staff.

II. Summary of Factors Most Likely to Impact Negatively the University

- *Public Perception of Higher Education*

Many expressed their concern about the diminishing support for higher education by the American public and the state of North Carolina, specifically. There appears to be a lack appreciation of the "value added" provided by a university degree. In general, there is declining confidence and support for higher education politically, economically and socially. How will these expressed beliefs impact UNCG over the next decade? What impact do these sentiments have on college going rates and the willingness of first generation and other students to assume debt?

Further, many legislators and the public at large look to higher education as an economic generator for the state rather than a place of learning and discourse. What impact (both positive and negative) might this have on an institution's mission and the communication it needs to undertake to describe adequately and poignantly its mission, vision and values?

- *Tuition-Price Conundrum*

The higher education business model is difficult to sustain. As the University continues to reach out to socially-economically disadvantaged students, financial aid needs grow. Students' indebtedness is a serious issue. How can sufficient resources be generated to support student/family financial needs and compensate faculty and staff fairly and competitively? How can the University make significant investments in capital outlay and technology as is required to sustain and keep up-to-date its academic and student programs?

- *The Changing Nature of the Professoriate*

Budget cuts have led to a major shift away from tenure and tenure track faculty lines to adjuncts and other part-time personnel charged with the teaching mission of the University. Additionally, many long-serving faculty will begin to retire in significant number (approximately 25% of the current UNCG faculty over the next decade).

- *Assessment, Accreditation, and Accountability*

Although UNCG faculty and staff understand the need for accountability and reporting and respect the fact that UNCG is an institution held in the public trust, there are mounting concerns about the layers of regulation and reporting that go hand-in-hand with assessment and accreditation activities. Additional staff skilled in Institutional Research and data analytics are required to respond to the growing number of Federal, State, GA and other reporting requirements. Is there sufficient technology (for example, data warehouse) support and trained personnel to address efficiently these geometrically increasing requests for data and information? How should the University balance compliance and reporting needs with those of mission delivery?

- *E-Learning Technology and Cost Effective Course Delivery*

III. Institutional Strengths

There was significant congruence among the participants with regard to Institutional Strengths. Those cited most frequently included:

- student diversity
- location
- community/civic/economic engagement
- state support (compared to most other states)
- community college relationships
- strong research faculty
- strong professional masters degrees
- comprehensive and highly regarded academic programs
- part of a respected state system of higher education
- beautiful campus
- forthcoming union square campus
- health/health education programs
- Bryan School of Business and Economics
- global partnerships and opportunities for students
- scholar-teacher model
- strong arts programs

IV. Institutional Weaknesses

Participants cited the following with regard to Institutional Weaknesses.

- lack of an effective university brand/lack of focus/identity
- inadequate academic preparation of students before entering the university
- compensation (staff and faculty)
- lack of faculty and staff diversity
- absence of robust job placement data
- data quality and availability challenges
- financial resources
- the degree of decentralization for administrative resources
- absence of childcare
- failure to be nimble and proactive in response to changing higher education landscape
- inadequate internal and external communication

V. Institutional Opportunities

The following themes emerged as opportunities.

- development of new programs with high demand and reconfiguration of portfolio of programs
- succession planning
- 25% of the faculty will retire giving the University an opportunity for targeted hires
- new ways to leverage learning through technology
- strategic ties with corporations/foundations
- increasing international student enrollment
- internships and other forms of experimental learning
- connect with alumni who have not been engaged with UNCG

VI. Institutional Threats

It was noted that many of the threats listed can be mitigated if appropriate opportunities are pursued.

- shrinking resources
- a culture that sometimes involves the “*denial*” of uncontrollables
- absence of institution-wide succession planning

- political environment (need to drive university's destiny using data and a compelling value proposition)
- need to establish and articulate identity
- not as nimble as we need to be
- underprepared students
- competition with UNC constituent institutions
- regulatory environment
- competing demands of Greensboro that often pull the University away from its core mission
- remaining a regional institution; need to go beyond?
- triad economic base
- competition with community colleges for students and resources
- lack of sense of pride
- competing views of the role of faculty governance

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