



Board of Trustees Retreat

November 10, 2014

Board of Trustees Retreat August 6-7, 2013 Executive Summary of Discussion

During the first day of the Board of Trustees retreat, several key issues were discussed relating to the challenges and opportunities for UNCG moving forward. Highlighted below are a number of key themes, along with several action items to be undertaken this academic year to address concerns voiced by the Trustees and executive staff.

External factors that will impact UNCG in the next decade.

Higher education, particularly at publically funded four-year colleges and universities, faces numerous challenges in the current financial, political and educational climate. Institutions face declining public support, rising tuition, increasing technology costs and other negative pressures while still attempting to fulfill their role in educating all of the qualified, motivated citizens of their respective states. UNCG, specifically, faces a “perfect storm” of external factors.

Challenges facing higher education, generally:

- Society is more cynical about the cost-to-benefit ratio of a four-year college degree.
- State budgets are tighter than in years past.
- Financial aid is an ongoing concern.
- Traditional student population is declining, nationally.
- Technology can enhance learning, but also adds significant cost.

Challenges more specific to UNCG:

- Though the university’s academic review & restructuring have helped it gain considerable credibility from policymakers, there is now a new crop of legislators and Board of Governors to convince.
- With regard to selectivity and academic esteem, UNCG is somewhere in the middle, statewide. It does not have the excellent academic reputation of an institution like Duke, but it is also regarded more favorably than numerous institutions within the state and region.
- Along similar lines, UNCG faces a disadvantage with regard to national rankings (*US News & World Report*, for example), as ranking agencies tend to focus more on inputs

than outputs, which does not capture the comparatively good job UNCG does of moving students toward graduation, educating underprivileged students, etc. This disadvantage notwithstanding, UNCG is still among a small percentage of universities represented in The Princeton Review's list of top universities, and has been ranked for its value and its specific programs (counseling, MBA, kinesiology, etc.).

- UNCG has not made a strong case to distinguish itself from other universities in the state, region and nation. What kind of university does UNCG want to be? Where does it already excel? These questions have not been clearly answered, and those answers have not been clearly communicated.
- UNCG knows, anecdotally, that it out performs many universities in filling the learning and opportunity gaps its students bring with them at enrollment, yet it struggles to quantify the precise value added of a UNCG degree.
- Sixty percent of UNCG students live off campus and 70% hold jobs.
- UNCG has been singularly unsuccessful in garnering visibility at local, state or national levels;
- Recent enrollment results have been flat, and recent state mandates to raise out of state tuition and eliminate financial incentives for teachers to pursue advanced degrees will likely exert further downward pressure on enrollment, particularly at the graduate level.

Balancing Access and Student Success

- UNCG has an historic commitment to providing education to all qualified North Carolinians who are willing to work for it. Indeed, it has been recognized nationally for success in helping disadvantaged students succeed in higher education.
- However, providing unlimited access for an increasingly challenged student population requires enormous investment of resources which must be considered in the context of an overall business model.
- It is imperative that the university determine a viable mix of student academic and financial characteristics to guide future recruitment and enrollment decisions.
- In considering its enrollment policies and practices, UNCG must take care that it does not create a non-sustainable business model. Vulnerable students must be cared for, but without a firm commitment to academic quality, the university cannot sustain itself academically or financially.
- Currently, approximately 50% of UNCG students are Pell Grant eligible and, in striving to provide opportunity to such a large population of disadvantaged students, the university must take care that it does not do a disservice to the other students who look to UNCG for academic quality and the competitive advantage of a highly regarded degree.
- Technology offers promise as a tool for increasing academic quality and making it easier for working, commuting students to access the courses they need but, with only 5% of current students choosing to study via available online or other distance learning methods, it is clearly not a short term solution for the university's challenges.
- Programs like UNCG Guarantee is a prime example of an ideal balance between access and success, but must be promoted earlier in the admissions process to be more

effective and requires that additional funding be directed towards the effort, keeping a sustainable model in mind. .

- Higher need students should be served, but they are undeniably the university's most expensive students. UNCG must find ways to balance these students with some sort of revenue generation.
- In meeting its historic commitment to providing access, it is vital that UNCG not sacrifice educational excellence.

Ensuring Academic Success

UNCG currently experiences high levels of student loss between the first and second year of enrollment. This comparatively low retention rate indicates that the university may not be thoroughly identifying why students exhibit failure to persist. UNCG is currently 9th among its national peers ((*Bowling Green State University, Miami University of Ohio, Portland State University, Old Dominion University, Virginia Commonwealth University and others*) and 6th among aspirant peers (*University of Central Florida, Oregon State University and Georgia State University*) in retention between freshman and sophomore year.

- The current admissions formula may be flawed, and should be replaced with a formula that doesn't admit more students than the university can carry through to success.
- Students are often delayed by non-academic factors, like inadequate course offerings, inefficient advising, etc.
- The university can do more to appropriately advise students in a way that makes optimal use of their time and minimizes that which would slow the students' progress to graduation.
- The university can do more to focus on "customer service" in financial aid, course registration, etc., allowing students to focus on academic achievement.
- Living-learning communities yield 10% higher retention. Expanding those communities may help to maximize student success.
- Transfer students graduate at much higher levels than traditional students who enter as freshmen. More energy could be put into recruiting transfers. Some 60,000 area residents have some college experience but no degree. There is opportunity to recruit these students and help them graduate.
- The university needs to aggressively pursue curriculum mapping to ensure there aren't unnecessary graduation requirements that could hamper otherwise successful students.
- Faulty data may be a problem as well. Data collection, storage and analysis on student recruitment, success, etc. is a serious challenge, and therefore decisions aren't always based on reliable empirical business intelligence.
- Faculty and staff are not always sufficiently engaged in the pursuit of student success. Every faculty and staff member must be involved in and responsible for student success.
- Programs that do offer a fast track to graduation or an enhanced student experience, like UNCG in Three or study-abroad programs, are not adequately emphasized to prospective or current students.

Technology as challenge and opportunity

- New technology does bring with it some challenges:
 - Cost of development, implementation and upkeep
 - Need for new training for faculty and staff
- Despite challenges, UNCG has the capacity to be an advantage rather than an obstacle.
- While UNCG can't support every technological need, highest priorities can be built or developed.
- Massive Open Online Courses (or MOOCs), online courses designed for large scale interactive participation, allow current students, prospective students and alumni access to courses.
- "Flipped courses," wherein lectures are offered via MOOC and students interact with professor during discussion sessions, laboratory time, or other more direct, hands-on interaction enable student and professor time to be used most wisely. Pilot testing for flipped courses at UNCG begins Spring 2014.
- UNCG must work to develop knowledge of what employers want and need, and develop courses accordingly. University faces a technology gap and more of a gap in understanding demand.
- In other words, **"Technology can be a tool to help students finish college sooner and better."**

Community connection

UNCG is meaningfully engaged in our community, with inextricable ties to our city, region and state. However, university must be more visible in its connections. UNCG is an anchor institution for the community, and we must work to make that known.

- Focus on UNCG's long legacy of service. "Learn to do well and do good."
- Need to develop programs we can announce, and engage partners in the process before those projects are widely announced.
- Collaboratory: Could this become UNCG's concierge service for community partnership?
- UNCG has programs that play well on the national stage: Learning across the lifespan, innovation leadership, healthy people and communities, arts and culture. Those should be a part of our identity.
- The audiences for UNCGs best programs are often varied from one another. Therefore, messaging may need to be specifically targeted and carefully nuanced. Message must match audience.
- Media relations: UNCG cannot only use local media for press. Needs statewide and nationwide coverage.

- Pitches can be more carefully crafted based on issues. Journalists need an angle. Examples: How is UNCG handling budget cuts and still increasing retention and graduation rates? How is UNCG addressing education costs?
- UNCG is also a beautiful part of Greensboro. Many awards for campus aesthetics. There should be a concerted effort to bring people to campus so they can see. Tool to engage community.
- As we engage community, UNCG should come in with what WE can offer THEM, included tailored research, internships, specific programs to train qualified employees, etc.
- We must collaborate with other universities, not compete. Potential for synergies with other area higher education (A&T, WSSU, UNCOSA)

Keys to enhancing UNCG's brand/identity

- Focus on student experience (Living-Learning Centers, improved "customer service")
- Focus on educational outcomes: Prove that we are better at preparing students.
- Diversity, and not just in terms of ethnicity. Many veterans, adult students, and students with disabilities.
- Leader in community engagement with deep ties to community, region and state. Service learning, experiential learning.
- Leader in minority student success.
- Leader in transfer student success.
- Commitment to liberal arts education.
- Meaningful, useful research, scholarship and creative activity.
- Innovations to lower costs and improve quality (UNCG Guarantee, UNCGin3, iSchool, Middle College, etc.)

Key Takeaways

- Develop Messaging/Branding/Communication/Points of Differentiation
- Focus on Serving Students: Customer Service, deliberate retention and graduation strategies
- Develop Sustainable Business model for enrollment
- Enhance Business Intelligence and use of data in decision making.
- Create Operational Efficiencies to support strategic direction
- Seek out partnerships to meet the needs of community, but that are based on UNCG's strengths.

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Key Recurring Themes

- Be Intentional
- Be on the Offensive
- Collaborate (Internally and Externally)

- Tell the story
- Understand the politics
- Play to our strengths

Three pivotal action items

1. **Analyze all available data about student body composition. Determine what a “successful student body” looks like? What level of vulnerable students is optimal? Use this information to adjust admissions formula.**
2. **Analyze data on student success after admission. Use to determine specific interventions that can keep students on track and primed for success.**
3. **Develop a clear marketing message that conveys institutional strengths to desired target audience(s).**