

Special Meeting of the Board of Trustee
December 2, 2024 - 6:00pm
M.D. Thorpe Administration Building

CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order by Chair Johnson at 6:05

TRUSTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: On file

Roll call performed by Natalie Jones.

ACTION ITEM(S)

Interim Chancellor Catherine Edmonds opened the meeting and introduced Dr. Meghan Doyle from RTI Center for Education Services, she is the Senior Manager Organization Improvement & Transformation.

Dr. Doyle outlined the strategic planning process for 2025-2030, and stressed the importance of stakeholder engagement, including students, faculty, and community members, in shaping the new strategic plan.

Trustees expressed worries about the delays in the search for a permanent Chancellor, which have affected the strategic plan's development timeline. The need for the new chancellor's input on the plan was emphasized, along with the importance of maintaining institutional momentum during this period. The challenges of job recruitment in a 21-county service area were also discussed, with Tiffany Jones stressing the need to train local students for available jobs and engage non-traditional students.

The group identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats related to the institution's strategic planning. Strengths included the aviation program and affordability, while weaknesses involved fundraising, retention, and staffing issues. Opportunities for growth were noted, such as enhancing enrollment and building corporate relationships, particularly in light of the current momentum surrounding HBCUs.

Strategic Planning Discussions

Chair Johnson and Dr. Doyle engaged in introductions and shared their roles in the university's strategic planning efforts. There was also mention of a strategic plan presentation and concerns about conducting such planning without a permanent chancellor in place.

Applications and Budget Concerns

The conversation included updates on early decision applications, with a specific candidate waiting for a response, which is expected on January 30th. Participants expressed optimism about the potential for job placements, particularly in aviation, contingent on budget availability.

- Overview of the strategic planning process and timeline for the upcoming five-year plan.
- Discussion of stakeholder engagement, including focus groups and interviews.

Discussion on Data Collection and Stakeholder Engagement for Strategic Planning

Tiffany Jones highlighted the importance of incorporating data from campus climate surveys and suggested examining similar institutions outside the UNC system for benchmarking. Trustees confirmed that both campus climate data and comparisons with similar universities would be included in the environmental scan.

- Discussion on the inclusion of various academic majors beyond aviation and athletics.

Strategic Planning and Leadership Transition

The delays in the Chancellor search, originally scheduled to begin in November but now pushed to January. Trustees expressed concern that these delays could hinder the development of a strategic plan, and the need for the new Chancellor's involvement. There was a consensus on the importance of moving forward with the strategic plan regardless of leadership changes.

Strategic Planning and Community Engagement for ECSU

- The difficulties in attracting jobs to a 21-county area, with a focus on training local students for employment opportunities. Tiffany Jones emphasized the significance of non-traditional students and the need for tailored programs to meet their unique needs. There was a call to engage with corporate partners and explore investment opportunities in the region.
- Importance of aligning the strategic plan with the university's goals and community needs.

Addressing Strategic Planning and Development Challenges

The importance of incorporating athletics and various academic programs into the strategic plan, noting that many students are not involved in athletics. There was a consensus on the need for better infrastructure and a clear fundraising strategy to support these initiatives, as well as the importance of engaging with external stakeholders for financial support.

- Fundraising strategies and the necessity of increasing endowment and staff for development.
- Need for updates on the previous strategic and facilities plans.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats Discussion

The group identified strengths such as the aviation program and affordability, with Kathryn Holding emphasizing the importance of financial advancement. Weaknesses included low enrollment, staffing challenges, and a lack of endowment, as discussed by various speakers. Opportunities for improvement were seen in enrollment growth and leveraging Board of Trustees connections, while threats included potential cuts to financial aid and reliance on part-time staff.

Next Steps and Strategic Planning Discussion

The Trustees plan to finalize the committee membership and will send the generated information back for review. Data collection is set to start after the holidays, and updates will be provided in March. Participants expressed appreciation for the involvement in the strategic planning process.

Action Items:

- Incorporate feedback from the Board of Trustees into the strategic planning process.
- Provide data and information on the current state of the university based on the last strategic plan.
- Conduct focus groups and interviews with various stakeholders, including students, faculty, and community partners.
- Data collection for the strategic plan will begin after the holiday break.
- Identify and engage a steering committee to guide the strategic planning process.
- The steering committee will begin collecting data and identifying themes in January, led by the university's leadership.
- Robert will lead the work group to ensure data collection aligns with university expectations and prepare a draft environmental scan.
- Prepare a draft environmental scan for review by the Board of Trustees in March.
- Updates for the board regarding the strategic planning progress will be prepared in March.
- Engage with local businesses and industry partners to understand their needs and expectations for graduates.
- Ensure that the strategic plan aligns with the UNC system requirements and accreditation standards.
- Schedule monthly updates with the steering committee to keep them informed of progress.
- The old strategic plan will be put on the screen for review.
- Feedback from the SWOT analysis exercise will be collected and categorized.
- The steering committee membership for the strategic planning process will be finalized.

- Generated information will be sent back to the board for review adjustments and.

Key Questions:

- What updates can we provide on the previous strategic and facilities plans to inform our current discussions?
- Will the environmental scan include benchmarking against similar institutions outside of the UNC system?
- How can we ensure that all academic majors, including kinesiology and psychology, are represented in the strategic plan?
- What specific strategies can we implement to enhance our fundraising efforts and attract philanthropic support?
- How will the strategic plan address the needs of local businesses and the job market in the region?
- What are the potential threats to the university's funding and student enrollment that we need to consider in our planning?

There being no other business, Chair Johnson adjourned the meeting at 7:43 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Natalie Jones