



**NORTH CAROLINA AGRICULTURAL
AND TECHNICAL STATE UNIVERSITY**



November 14, 2016

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North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University participated in a UNC Board of Governors Strategic Plan Public Forum on November 10, 2016 with approximately 136 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 NC A&T faculty members with the executive summary of the themes, key issues, and remarks reported below.

1) ACCESS

- Pay much more attention to needs of rural students—especially in Eastern North Carolina
- Mentor young men (as young as 15 years old) throughout high school – as an example, one commenter coaches youth baseball
- We need better enrollment information for native Spanish speaking students
- Hands-on targeting of low income families to convince them of importance of higher education
- Address poverty as it is at the root of the problem of access and student success
- Better college preparation courses for all students
- Improve pipelines to under resourced schools (elementary and secondary)
- Remove stigma from community college and use the “fairs” to facilitate improved pipelines from CC to University
- Let’s have performance-based awards and incentives once students are in the UNC system: this can improve graduation rates and GPAs
- Do not address access by diverting students away from colleges with lower college prep to community colleges – this will decrease access, not increase it, and it penalizes HMIs and HBCUs
- We need appropriate resources for first generation college students; improve college counseling with regard specifically to improving access
- Give tuition breaks for state employees and their kids as a function of time employed
- Consider opening university sponsored charter schools for early childhood ed., k-12, and adult ed.
- Review course offerings to address problem of students not being able to take needed courses
- Reduce redundancy and smooth access by recognizing that students often take college courses that repeat their AP courses in high school
- Work experience in certain situations should receive credit hours
- Waive application fee for low income students and provide more opportunities for high school students to visit universities
- Reduce stress on students and parents from single family homes
- Work study programs should be sensitive to single parent realities
- Let’s have better online information on majors and programs, including graduate programs like those in Journalism and Mass Communication

2) STUDENT SUCCESS

- Place students on college track in elementary school
- Improve coordination between colleges and k-12 so that students have a concrete sense of the work required in college
- “Partner” students with religious, political, and business leaders
- Emphasize transition to college that reduces number of students who seem “in the dark,” or “clueless”
- Monthly (or more frequent mentoring) advising focusing more on improving student’s weak areas
- Mentor at-risk students carefully by including non-faculty staff members who want to help
- Create more opportunities for at risk students – more “entry points”
- Take college preparation more seriously – too many students arrive unprepared or prepared only with the mantra that college is necessary
- Key survival skills must be taught in mandated college experience courses for freshmen
- Improve life skills: financial management and cursive writing skills for legible signatures
- Hold more conversations with community college and high school administrators
- Encourage regular contact between faculty members and local high schools
- Improve first year advising and assessment
- Standardize advising for the whole UNC system to improve graduation rates – note success of Chapel Hill’s “college advising corps” and “virtual advisor” programs
- Improve coordination between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs to get a more holistic understanding of student success
- Student learning gains should be assessed with criteria going beyond standardized test success
- Retention metrics should start later (sophomore and junior year, not freshman or sophomore year) to avoid penalizing certain majors
- Fund math departments so they can provide much better remedial math services
- Facilitate study abroad – but do not make it a requirement unless low income students can get required financial support
- Research and share findings on why students stay and why they leave – retention
- Increase financial incentives for high achievement – tuition reduction, etc.
- Focus not on a common curriculum but common skills necessary for 21st century – critical thinking, problem solving, global literacy, etc.
- Improve “mental health” training for faculty so they can administer “first aide”
- Focus more on non-cognitive components of student success
- Improve student success by hiring better faculty
- Offer degree programs that can be attained in under 4 years – core competency requirements for first two years should be reduced
- Create user friendly student apps to connect students to university events
- Our 2.0 requirement is too high for freshman – return to our “stopped scale”
- Increase certificate programs
- Restore funding for the summer bridge programs
- Create our own measures of student success instead of overreliance on national tests
- Institute robust tutoring systems for students with student friendly hours

STUDENT SUCCESS (continued)

- Include laptops in cost of tuition
- Place cap on student withdrawals
- Students need to be paired with teachers who care about student success
- Encourage training and ongoing professional development for advising, or hold teachers accountable
- Critical citizenship should take priority over STEM (citizenship first, professional expertise second)
- Encourage real world examples of critical thinking
- Find mechanisms to connect student success to faculty reward – create a system wide clearing house for online courses, especially summer courses
- Provide a public forum for student input on what academic experiences led them to be successful
- Look to Guilford College as model for teacher education
- What do we mean by student success? Do we mean life satisfaction or happiness?

3) AFFORDABILITY AND EFFICIENCY

- Increase student aid for families with incomes higher than current threshold for whom college is still unaffordable
- Reduce fees related to teacher education
- Reduce fees in general (fees have largely replaced tuition as sources of financial burden)
- Find ways to reduce textbook costs, which can be upwards of \$1,000 per year
- Increase cooperation between local businesses and university to increase enrollment at lower cost for students
- Increase financial literacy to help families save for college and reduce debt – send reps from GA to high schools to facilitate this
- Prepare “cost simulators” for parents to help them see that college is within reach of every student – especially “middle class” students who cannot afford sticker price but price out of aid
- Employ the research of the faculty on utilizing technology to improve departments like payroll, which is technologically backward
- Better succession planning would be an important form of efficiency
- Offer incentives to colleges that freeze tuition for “x” number of years
- More work study opportunities
- Reduce student debt – create more debt relief mechanisms and reduce the need to work full-time and attend school full-time
- Encourage open access publishing
- Design and implement performance based assessment
- Create additional scholarships thru better collaboration with corporations
- Create “paid into” scholarships from the small application fees sent in along with their essay
- Provide scholarships for low income students who maintain a 3.3 minimum GPA
- Include transfer student success as part of measuring efficiency
- Educate people on availability of state supported college tuition savings funds
- Redirect resources from failing to thriving programs

AFFORDABILITY AND EFFICIENCY (continued)

- Survey students living on and off campus to see the relationships between college success and living arrangements
- Have more student forums to discuss tuition and fees – before the tuition and fee increases, not just after
- Define efficiency more clearly

4) ECONOMIC IMPACT AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

- Retention of graduates in local community
- Senior capstone project focusing on community involvement
- Reducing debt is key, especially if we want students to enter crucial but lower paying fields – healthcare, social work, teaching
- Provide data showing importance of college degree on economic impact and community involvement
- Community involvement will encourage students to stay in our area – students are our greatest resource
- 74% of people with STEM degrees are not working in a STEM field – expand STEM to embrace the Humanities, should be STEAM not STEM
- Upper administration at A and T is genuinely blind to the importance of Arts and Humanities
- Ensure all schools in the system have access to state of the art technology – such resources cannot be entirely dependent on enrollment growth (see comment below in “other issues”)
- Nobel prize winning economist Heckman has shown that early childhood education returns 7 dollars for every dollar invested – there is a forum at N.C. State focusing on early childhood education February 17, 2017 and GA representatives should attend
- Give incentives for economic development directly to universities instead of to companies, who may leave during difficult economic times – see N.Y. for model of University derived businesses that stay in area
- Publicize faculty efforts at community service, even if these efforts are not remunerated – there must be state funded programs facilitating N.C. employer recruitment of UNC system graduates
- Our system must recognize the importance of technology transfer services that universities provide – even as few patents (5-6%), university and industry, are able to be commercialized
- Productivity in patent generation should be an important part of P and T decisions
- We need more programs to address the needs of non-traditional students

5) EXCELLENT AND DIVERSE INSTITUTION

- Count service more as part of promotion and reward good teaching
- Improve research infrastructure – renovate training labs for example
- Provide start-up money to faculty and do this equitably
- Make salaries across UNC system more equitable

EXCELLENT AND DIVERSE INSTITUTION (continued)

- Provide better support to the “research active” faculty – reduce teaching load
- Pay our faculty better and give them better teaching loads or they will leave
- Reduce numbers of adjuncts and replace retired faculty with tenure lines – we need the flexibility to give outstanding faculty raises without requiring them to shop elsewhere (richer PWIs) where we will then have to compete with offers we cannot match, causing us to lose faculty (often minority) to PWIs for whom minority faculty are in high demand
- Research why diverse students (white, Asian, Hispanic) have a lower retention rate than rest of population (this example seems to reference NCA&T)
- Create a consistent work-life balance across campus
- Research why good faculty leave our campus
- Ensure funds in system are divided fairly based on enrollment numbers
- Dramatically improve the diversity of our health care workforce
- Better alignment of nursing program benchmarks
- Provide funding to attract minority academics
- Implement programs to engage minorities
- How do we define and measure diversity
- When enrollment increases, faculty and staff should increase also
- How do we retain engaged staff who want training in multiple areas
- We need an interuniversity study on pay equity among staff
- Diverse budgeting for different departments to meet diverse departmental needs – one size fits all does not make sense here
- We need fairness in program approval – our online MBA has not been approved while sister institution applying later has been approved
- We should have a first-year course in civility and cultural sensitivity
- Teach more relevant subjects
- There’s a danger that our STEM focus will lead to the devaluation of general education

6) OTHER ISSUES TO CONSIDER

- Develop an ethos of care among administrators so they are more attentive to marginalized students
- Allow students more freedom to construct own curriculum
- Provide a pool of funds for more grants as MSIs
- HBCUs should have the same access to talented faculty and staff as PWIs – this is a double standard
- State support of UNC institutions should not be based so heavily on enrollment growth – the value of diversity cannot be captured by such a focus
- Reduce red tape in the promotion process for faculty and staff
- Improve housing for incoming students
- Overly strict curriculum guidelines stifle the need to explore and grow
- Value our HBCUs