

Strategic Planning Committee 2007-08 SWOT Analysis

Strengths

Weaknesses

Internal

- Well regarded educational programs with particular strengths in **teacher education, health sciences, and applied learning.**
- Location – Western NC is a scenic, highly desirable place to live & work.
- Student access to faculty including opportunities for undergraduate research and a growing number of active and collaborative learning experiences both at home and abroad.
- WCU is the only post-secondary institution to provide professional undergraduate and residential graduate degrees.
- Recent recognition of WCU as an ‘engaged’ institution; specifically those initiatives related to our QEP and adoption of the Boyer model such as service learning, IEF, and academic departments that encourage community outreach.
- The new facilities under construction/renovation such as Stillwell/Natural Sciences, Recreation Center and new dining and residence facilities will aid recruitment and retention.
- The processes and people are in place to leverage new partnerships with school districts, business/industry, and the military.
- Significant number of nationally/internationally known teacher-scholars including a competitive number of endowed chairs.

- Inadequate undergraduate retention and graduation rates.
- Inadequate staffing levels to maintain customer service quality, address regulatory and compliance issues, and promote and implement a continuous improvement process.
- The system of planning and budgeting fails to match planned expenditures to available resources in a deliberate and coordinated manner.
- Inadequate technological infrastructure to support institutional needs or mandatory compliance/security/regulatory requirements.
- Inconsistent marketing brand/message inhibits enrollment and recruitment efforts.
- No customer relationship management framework exists to address consistency in communication and information use and dissemination needs (this includes, but is not limited to customer service).
- No campus plan to address current and future institutional diversity needs.
- Insufficient merit aid to recruit and retain quality UG and GR students.
- Inadequate faculty coverage in some programs results in poor quality advising.

Opportunities

Threats

External

- UNC-system focus on addressing the state's teacher (K-12) and healthcare shortages - plays to WCU's strengths in terms of programs and personnel.
- Development of Millennial Campus - potential for public-private collaboration between WCU, local government(s), and private entities
- Job creation is increasing in the region, most notably in high tech, the service sector, and bio-tech/pharma (e.g., Google's computer data center in Caldwell County) – potential to provide training, consultative support, and educational opportunities to entry level employees and to adult workers who will change careers multiple times.
- Diverse in-migration to the region (mid-career, retirees, immigrants) – opportunity to promote existing services, expand programming, develop newcomers as donors.
- WCU's commitment to engaged learning will necessitate increased community partnerships that will strengthen community relationships providing more opportunities for collaboration.
- GA's receptivity to branch campuses.

- Students don't see WCU as a ‘first choice’ institution which results in loss of significant numbers of undergraduate admits to other UNC universities.
- Rapid increase in regional housing costs is reducing affordable housing options for faculty, staff and students.
- The rising trend nationally for students coming to college with special needs including lack of academic preparation and social, emotional, and dependence issues.
- Limited off-campus social opportunities/venues decreases satisfaction with college experience and impedes integration of students into the community.
- Marketplace competition for SPA employees due to low WCU salary opportunities in those positions.
- Uneven reputation of WCU in the community.
- Rising direct (tuition, room/board, transportation, etc.) and opportunity (childcare, loss of short-term wages, etc.) costs of higher education.
- Increasing numbers of students with significant emotional and social support needs and requiring counseling and interventions for alcohol and substance abuse.
- Regional location/culture inhibits recruitment of an ethnically and racially diverse staff and faculty.