

UNH FACULTY SENATE
MOTION # XXIII-M6
*on endorsement of executive summary of
Faculty Senate SWOT results*

1. Motion presenter: Scott Smith and Erin Sharp
2. Date of Faculty Senate discussion: October 15, 2018
3. **Motion: The Faculty Senate endorses the executive summary of the *Faculty Senate SWOT Results* with the Agenda Committee instructed to add a statement of limitations of the process – not specifically with regard to diversity – plus inclusion of CCLEAR faculty. (See Appendix for submitted executive summary.)**
4. **Senate action: The motion passed with and passed with 48 votes in favor, 6 votes opposed, and 2 abstentions.**
5. Senate chair's signature:  _____

Forwarded to the following on November 15, 2018

President James Dean

Wayne Jones, Interim Provost

P.T. Vasudevan, Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs

All deans

SWOT Analysis: Faculty Input

Introduction

The UNH Faculty Senate conducted a SWOT survey in the early fall of 2018 in concern with a similar evaluation conducted by the President and his executive staff. We asked faculty senators to consult with their constituents and respond to a Qualtrics survey with their top three answers concerning the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. We received 30 responses (38%); we received, therefore, between 70 and 90 individual comments for each category. Below we offer an executive summary of the responses, which we intend to attach as a preface to the full results in an Excel file. In three categories—all but Opportunities—the responses fell naturally into a few categories. The responses to Opportunities were, however, diffuse and difficult to categorize easily.

Strengths

1. Location and Campus (20x mentioned)

Many noted the attractiveness of the campus, its beautiful location, and its proximity to Boston and natural wonders (mountains, lakes). In addition, the safety of the campus, support of local businesses, and the possibility of research and experiential learning opportunities within reach were mentioned.

2. Faculty (19x mentioned)

These comments were focused on two main points: a) that faculty are dedicated, committed, and knowledgeable; b) that students have “high touch” experiences with faculty—distinctive from other state schools where TAs are the norm. One comment was representative: “Excellent teaching and research faculty, who ‘together with hard-working students and staff’ make UNH, indeed, a combination of a New England liberal arts colleges and a research university, as our website says.” This sentiment is repeated in other contexts.

Many of the comments were echoed in the next group, and it was sometimes difficult to determine to which category a comment should fall.

3. Student Experience and Opportunities (19x mentioned)

Because of its size and focus on undergraduate education, “UNH has the ability to give students personalized attention,” specifically in the following areas: study abroad, internships, and especially undergraduate research. The Hamel Center and the URC were singled out by one as having “taken giant steps forward in the past 10 years.”

4. Reputation and Status (13x mentioned)

Many noted our centrality in the state and that UNH was a land, sea, and space grant institution. Some individual colleges (Paul, CEPS, Law, and CHHS) were noted as having strong rankings. Also, research was noted as a strength, both in terms of faculty scholarship and undergraduate research.

5. Administration and Management (5x)

There were some comments showing that we were efficient (by necessity), had stable enrollments, and a knowledgeable president. Also, RCM was once mentioned specifically as an instrument that "encouraged innovative and entrepreneurial programs".

Weaknesses

1. Financial (27x)

It will come as no surprise that our constrained financial resources is the most cited weakness. Eleven responses pointed at the lack of state support explicitly (some also saw this charitably as an "opportunity"); several more did so implicitly. This results, in the faculty's estimation, in damage to our core academic mission, our ability to conduct research (especially internationally), the potential to make much-needed renovations to buildings, and to recruitment of students who are looking economically at colleges and universities. The lack of state funding, means that we are almost entirely tuition-driven (8x mentioned). The third item below can be seen as a pendant to this group.

2. Administration Issues (21x)

Faculty are concerned with a number of issues involving the administration, although it should be pointed out that these may reflect a long history that does not involve the current administration. One major concern is stability; many point to the constant turnover in administrators in key roles (dean- and provost-level posts), which leads to shifting priorities that stifle clear strategic thinking. Others point to the absence of transparency in the past, which has led to a lack of trust. Some feel that the size of the administration is outsized and that it takes away faculty resources (the rise of lecturers vs. TT faculty is seen as a result). Finally, there were several comments that pointed to the challenges of inter-college interaction, including over Discovery courses. Finally, the lack of shared governance and top-down decision-making are major concerns for faculty, who feel alienated, especially when they believe the administrative leadership is not fulfilling the academic mission of the university.

3. Facilities and Resources (13x)

Many faculty point to aged infrastructure (e.g., dorms, academic buildings). More point to the fact that the physical plant varies dramatically across the university (Paul School vs. the Paul Creative Arts Center), which may reflect a value judgment that privileges some programs over others. One comment noted that the "desired identity (R1) doesn't match the offered resources."

4. Diversity (4x)

Perhaps surprisingly, there were only four explicit concerns about diversity on campus. Diversity was, however, frequently mentioned as an **opportunity** (see below).

5. Strategic Planning (3x)

Some see UNH as reactive rather than proactive or strategic. One writes, "UNH seems to want to be everything all at once (if that will bring in money), instead of focusing on what it can do well. We seem to lack focus or mission." Some comments in section 1 above implicitly point to our inability to plan strategically because of resource constraints.

Other comments that have some other support:

"Some student do not take learning seriously, but view a diploma as a passport to a job and nothing more"

"Lack of a robust foreign language requirement: UNH claims to be interested in internationalization but our students are not prepared."

"Too much emphasis on research; we are a landgrant—it is a three legged stool—teaching, service and research!"

Opportunities

Note: the responses for "Opportunities" were particularly diffuse, and many commented on *internal* opportunities. This may reflect a misunderstanding of the SWOT process, which looks to external opportunities, but more likely this is representative of the decentralized nature of a university setting.

1. Capitalize on Location and Local NH Environment (17x)

Consistent with "Strengths, #1" above, many saw the opportunity to leverage our location better to "capitalize on NH quality of life" and to recruit students. Similarly, some thought that we could better promote programs that are related to our unique geographic location (marine and estuarine programs). Many thought that we could better collaborate and integrate with local and state economies, as well as increase (or promote or increase) the ways in which faculty and students make significant impacts on the state. See next.

2. Collaboration, Public/Private Partnerships (7x)

Several faculty pointed to the possibility of public/private ventures to meet the needs of the university where there are no funds (e.g., housing, failing infrastructure, etc.).

3. Increase Diversity (7x)

A priority remains increasing diversity at the campus, including international students. Increasing the number of students studying abroad was also mentioned as a way to increase global awareness and diversity.

Other (several)

Several comments saw the opportunity to define itself as a strong liberal arts school that helps students “navigate the moral/ethical issues of our time.” Some urged the university to shift priorities within the university (focus on undergraduate education, language instruction, microcredentials, teacher preparation). Another focused set of comments [suggested](#) that there are opportunities to market ourselves more honestly and more effectively at the same time, “I’ve never been at a university where faculty were more accessible to students and engaged with students in their work.” The value of small class size and high quality instruction could be a strong selling point. There were two that saw an opportunity in increasing online programs, including undergraduate degrees—though others saw this as a threat.

Threats

1. State Funding and Relationship with the State and Legislature (24x)

Again, our financial weakness remains a threat to the long-term survival and thriving of our institution. A major concern is how UNH is perceived by legislators.

2. Competition (15x)

UNH is in an increasingly competitive environment, which is exacerbated by the demographic challenges (see #4 below). Faculty pointed to competition from: regional state universities (UMaine), NH community colleges, colleges and universities outside of NH (a lot of “outmigration”), and online institutions (SNHU). In addition, the faculty believe that other institutions are marketing themselves better, in part because UNH does not clearly define what makes it distinctive. The high cost of UNH is a hindrance (4x mentioned)

3. Current Political Climate (10x)

The threats to UNH are similar to those encountered by other institutions of higher learning. There is a lack of political will to support affordable higher education, an increase in anti-intellectual ideology, as well as in suspicion about the value of the humanities—all felt on the national and state level.

4. Demographics (9x)

Unsurprisingly, many pointed to the demographic challenges as a major threat to our sustained success.

5. Faculty/Administrator Balance (6x)

Faculty are concerned about the growth of administrative positions, which are often viewed as at the expense of faculty positions.

