University of Arizona College of Education

DATA GATHERING REPORT

May 11, 2018

STRATEGIC FOCUS ASSOCIATES

2018 STRATEGIC PLAN

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA College of Education

MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD!

Executive Summary

PUTTING THE FUTURE INTO FOCUS

As the University of Arizona conducts its strategic planning process, we continue to work on a strategic plan for the College of Education. By the end of 2018, the college will have a plan that guides decision-making for the next five years. For this reason alone, it is imperative we have a plan that reflects the contributions of everyone in the college, as well as those of our stakeholders. This report presents the results of our data-gathering and analysis phases, and now we are prepared to act on the data to create next steps. We are grateful for your participation thus far, and we continue to need your input as we move through this process. Our goal is to develop a shared vision and united strategy that puts the college's future into focus. Please read this over the summer so that we can get back to work in the fall!

INTRODUCTION ("PRE-AMBLE")

Higher ed – on the verge of disruption?

"Underneath the surface, upstart institutions are perfecting radically new education technologies and business plans at the same time that young people and their parents are becoming more frustrated with the traditional higher-ed mode, and more open minded about alternatives. There is every reason to suspect that, quite soon, these new institutions will do to higher education what Sony did to radios and Apple did to computing."

- Stuart M. Butler from *The Coming Higher-Ed Revolution* (2012)

The path forward for most Institutions is pursuing strategies to enhance relevance and strengthen their value proposition.

What is Strategy? Why are we engaging in a Strategic Planning process?

Strategy is quite simply the process of getting critical resources (time, talent, dollars, activities, etc.) correctly allocated to have the greatest impact on the College, the University, and its stakeholders. Strategy aligns the College to the larger context of the University, the community, and the environment (social, economic, etc.) and supports the College to deliberately make choices for the future.

HOW will we do this?

The College of Education has chosen to engage in a collaborative strategic planning process, a process that allows organizations and educational institutions to achieve rapid results with high levels of commitment from their leaders, employees, and stakeholders. The process we have decided to use to develop our strategy is below:

"DISCOVERIES" TO DATE – BENCHMARKING AND INTERVIEW ANALYSIS

INTERVIEWS

17
Leaders in the College

8
Deans

FOCUS GROUPS

FACULTY

2 Groups // *9 Participants*

COMMUNITY

1 Group // *6 Participants*

STAFF

1 Group // *21 Participants*

ACADEMIC PROFESSIONALS

1 Group // *11 Participants*

STUDENTS

2 Groups (1 Graduate + 1 Undergraduate) //

8 Participants

ONLINE SURVEYS

SURVEY 1
78 Participants

The first survey invited people to participate by verbally recording their answer to a question:

"Imagine it is March 2023 (five years from now) and we are proud and excited about the impact we have made on Education. What would tell us we had been successful?"

SURVEY 2
62 Participants

The second survey was a follow-up to the first (a deep dive)

KEY THEMES EMERGING FROM THE DATA

Disruptive Forces

Planning for the future (strategic planning) has always been a difficult task for organizations. It is often difficult to imagine a future different than today – which often causes organizations to remain with the status quo. To overcome the status quo, strategists suggest that organizations must first uncover the "drivers" or "sparks" for change. This part of the report identifies the disruptive forces, in thematic areas, that emerged from a variety of perspectives as answers to different interview and focus group questions.

- **Technology (distance learning) is pervasive and is likely to continue to be.** ("Soon everyone will be able to attend college online in their pajamas")
- **Education is a small College in a research intensive University** – College of Education is often overlooked or seen as the K-12 College (vs. a resource for the University)
- **College is unaffordable – and increasingly inaccessible; more "non-traditional" populations want to become education professionals** and we need these kinds of people – access for these populations seems difficult today ("We are at a turning point/existential crisis with declining enrollment")
- ***Deprofessionalization*** – ranging from private and charter schools that are not required to have licensed professionals in teaching or administration, to state and national competitors to recent policies that have opened additional pathways to teaching, we cannot assume that the value of professional education is self-evident
- **Educators in Arizona are undervalued** – Low pay, recent protests, student debt forces graduates to leave the state for better pay

Who are our primary beneficiaries?

This is an important question to consider, because as we plan, priority creep and initiative proliferation can turn a strategic plan into a "wish list" that disperses, vs. concentrates resources. Good strategies identify both the *benefits* the institution seeks to provide, and the *beneficiaries*. Interviewees and focus groups confirmed that the primary beneficiaries of the College are:

- Children that our students (educators) ultimately impact; learners of all ages (within the University and in the community)
- Students (89% of our graduates remain in state – thus impacting our schools and communities)
- Community (impact Tucson, other "border towns", the State, and even international through research)
- Faculty (great faculty, productive, etc. impact new knowledge, student outcomes)
- Staff (dedicated and well prepared staff impact the results of faculty and student)

What are we most proud of about our tenure/relationship with the College?

A critical piece of strategy building is understanding where we are strong already, and thinking about how we build on those strengths. The focus groups and interviews described:

- Quality of faculty and staff (my department, my program, my colleagues, etc.)
- Dedicated, inspired students
- College emphasis on diversity and social justice (College supports different points of view)
- STEM Learning Center involvement
- Research to practice

What is the future the College prefers? What is impossible for us today, which, if we made it possible, would change things (in Education) fundamentally for the better?

To help all stakeholders imagine a future for Education that they want to be part of, we first asked all stakeholders to answer the question **"Imagine it is March 2023 (five years from now) and we are proud and excited about the impact we have made on Education. What would tell us we had been successful?"**

The top 10 themes that emerged from this survey are listed below:

1. Increasing collaboration across college and university
2. Supporting students to graduate debt free and on time
3. Strengthening college/community relations
4. Increasing international and bi-national presence
5. Increasing policy presence
6. Emphasizing social justice, diversity, and inclusion more strongly
7. Making professional prep more available to all students
8. Making graduate study more relevant and affordable
9. Becoming more innovative with our instruction, particularly through digital literacy
10. Supporting high quality research agendas that have local, state, and national impact

We then conducted focus groups, posted online questions, and conducted interviews (with leaders external to the College) to explore further the themes listed above. The data from each of those methodologies (focus group, online survey, and interview) interestingly produced different results, outlined in the next section.

FOCUS GROUPS (STAFF, FACULTY, STUDENTS)

Themes most commented on (in order of most to least frequently commented on):

1. Become more innovative with our instruction – "innovation" more broadly was focused on by several focus groups:

- "The world is changing (due to advances in innovation/technology) and we need to change <with> it."
- "Our product needs to be desirable and different."

2. Increase collaborations across the college and university:

- "The College should be respected on campus and at the University leader level for the research we do, and to be seen as innovative thought leaders on campus."
- "Today we are not good at tooting our own horn – we are just the building to get to the street. We should be reaching across the University and collaborating more broadly."

3. Support high quality research agendas that have local, state, and national impact:

- "High quality, high impact research will make the difference in the future."
- "We need to better focus our research on the areas that matter – those areas that will have a direct impact on students."

4. Increase policy presence:

- "We need to be informing the practice at the University and Community – we need to get involved in policy creation to do that."
- "If we were more visible in the community, our community leaders would really want our students."

5. Emphasize social justice, diversity, and inclusion more strongly:

- "We are already doing this well – we do need to get better at creating and promoting programs that promote access for non-traditional students."

Other issues that emerged from these focus groups (Faculty, Staff, and Students):

- **Silos exist today in many different ways** ("We need to succeed as a College vs. as individuals or departments," "Faculty vs. staff," communication silos)
- **We do not always practice what we teach/value** (we do not always observe ourselves teaching, we do not always provide a safe, inclusive environment for our students)

INTERVIEWS

INTERVIEWS & FOCUS GROUPS WITH EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS (COMMUNITY, OTHER UA CAMPUS LEADERS)

Note that we did not present the themes to these groups, rather we asked: "What is the College of Education's value to the University (or community)?" Themes most named (in order of when it was offered in the interviews):

1. Educator Preparation (K-12)

This Was Almost Always Mentioned First by Interviewees

- "The College of Education is a source for preparing and advancing the teaching workforce of Arizona."
- "Teachers are the foundation of society, and the College needs to prepare them well."

2. Community and State School System Policy

- "Education in Arizona is fundamentally broken. We need UA College of Education to step in and help everyone."
- "The College of Education is undervalued. It needs to be more involved in Tucson and the state."

3. A Key Resource/Partner/Collaborator for the University

- "Today the College of Education is not seen as a University resource, and it needs to be. Especially in the areas of assessment and pedagogy."
- "We'd like to reimagine our current curriculum and your College is uniquely qualified to help us."

ONLINE SURVEYS

Top four themes most commented on (in order of most to least frequently commented on):

1. Emphasize social justice, diversity, and inclusion more strongly

- "We need to be activists for local populations (Latinos, Native Americans, refugees, immigrants) by using our research based knowledge to inform the UA and local communities of how to create more inclusive spaces. We need to be models of these practices. We need to live it. It is not enough to say we believe in diversity then not practice it ourselves with hiring or with how we compensate personnel. We cannot perpetuate the practice of paying women less for doing the same job as a man. We need to demand of the university that they support these efforts financially."
- "Our college has excellent faculty, best practices, and expertise that can and should be shared pertaining to not only social justice, but educational policy overall."

2. Become more innovative with our instruction

"Innovation" more broadly was focused on:

- "I believe that pre-service teachers should be well trained to use all of the digital tools available to them. Often teachers are asked to integrate these technologies into the classroom, and don't have the time or resources to explore them in the depth that they would be comfortable with."
- "This seems a natural fit for us as digital literacy touches all disciplines."

3. Strengthen College and Community relations

- "As we strengthen our relationship with the community and the colleges within Arizona and the Western region, the COE will benefit. We will benefit from having more prepared students with less debt incurred due to more strategic course planning and advisement especially for teacher preparation programs. We will see a more diverse group of students based on varied socioeconomic background, language, and experiences."
- "I would like to see the college expand its reach into the surrounding Tucson and Southern Arizona communities, via new partnerships with local businesses and/or community organizations, and strengthened collaborations with a broad range of LEA partners (beyond the Tucson area school districts which are our frequent collaborators). Such expanded partnerships will strengthen the position of the college in the community, and will help the college to fulfill the principles of its land-grant mission."

4. Increase collaborations across College and University

- "Increased collaborations across college(s) and/or universities fulfills a segment of all themes emerged, from a macro perspective, including global, national/regional, state, and local, wherein policies are implemented and decision for positive impacts should be made/adjusted."
- "It is really important for the rest of the university to understand the kind of research support on best practices we can share with them. This is especially critical with us being a Hispanic Serving Institution. We don't want to just be one, we want to be an exemplary one."

WHERE ARE WE GOING FROM HERE?

What do you think our impact as College should be in the future? Thinking carefully about the disruptive forces, what do we need to consider for the future? Even futurists have difficulty answering this question – and what we know about strategic planning is that it is less about getting the vision exactly right, and more about aligning the whole college (faculty, staff, students, etc.) around a single mission and vision. Bill Shore (CEO of Share Our Strength) writes *"One of the boldest ideas is the eradication of malaria, which for thousands of years has killed millions of children. Recent advances offer powerful leadership lessons applicable to a wide range of institutions and underscores the degree to which* ***we are all held back not just by failures of financing or strategy but by failures of imagination****."*

We are hoping that you will all bring your best imagination/vision to our College wide retreat on September 7. We will come together as a whole college to map our strategy in an interactive meeting. The purpose of the meeting is to define the path towards the future we prefer as a College. We will only be successful if we all come together and use our imaginations!