PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Strategic Planning Forum #2

Academic Programs

Wednesday, January 27, 2016

Shawnee State
UNIVERSITY

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Overview

As part of Shawnee State University's strategic planning process, three community forums were held where participants were asked to explore the themes of access, academic programs, and service to students and the community, all in the context of the University's new guiding principles.

The second forum focused on "Academic Programs."

Participants discussed the qualities that give an academic program a competitive advantage in student recruitment. More than 100 faculty, students, staff, and community members participated in the forum.

Feedback from these forums will inform the institution's strategic plan.

Introduction of the Topic

Participants were provided with an overview of the forums, the strategic planning process, and the guiding principles. Key information shared included:

- Shawnee State University has more than 80 unique academic programs. These programs were created in response to workforce, student, or community demands, as the result of faculty interest, or because of their role in providing a well-rounded liberal arts education.

- While all programs should be meeting the highest levels of quality, not all programs provide a competitive advantage – meaning they set Shawnee State University apart from other institutions.

- Industry experts have warned that "universities that do not differentiate themselves may be doomed to failure." Small, public regional universities, like Shawnee State University, are at greatest risk.

- Shawnee State University has little or no brand recognition. Local students (about half of SSU's student population) choose SSU because of its location and low tuition. Students outside of the immediate region choose the institution because of its low tuition and small class sizes.

- Nationally, academic programs tend to drive a student's choice of colleges. The top "major" at SSU in 2015 was "general studies," which is not a chosen major, but an indication of the volume of students who are undecided or taking general classes in hopes of getting into one of SSU's health sciences or other select programs.

Guiding Principles

MISSION

A mission statement succinctly describes why we exist — our purpose.

WE PREPARE TODAY'S STUDENTS TO SUCCEED IN TOMORROW'S WORLD.

As a university, we serve many roles in society. At the heart of it all, we exist to prepare students to succeed today, and into the future.

VISION

A vision statement stakes a claim on our aspirations and states the kind of university we plan to become.

WE WILL BE A BEST-VALUE UNIVERSITY OFFERING A WIDE RANGE OF HIGH-QUALITY SIGNATURE PROGRAMS.

Our vision is to be recognized as a "best-value" university, combining academic excellence and student success with affordability, and establishing signature programs that give us a competitive edge.

ENDURING VALUES

Enduring values provide a foundation for everything we do. They guide how we behave in our interactions with our students, families, alumni, friends of the University, and each other. They tell our clients what is important to us and what they can expect from us.

STUDENT-FOCUSED SERVICE

We place students at the center of everything we do and every decision we make.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

We value the diverse perspectives of the people within our community — on and off campus — and our role in enriching the lives of those who work, live, and discover here.

AUTHENTIC DIALOGUE

We respect open, honest, and sincere two-way communication.

THOUGHTFUL RISK-TAKING

We value innovation and encourage those around us to dream big and explore new possibilities.

CULTURE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

We look for opportunities to make what we do well today even better tomorrow.

Forum Planning Activities

Participants were assigned to one of 12 groups with 8-9 participants per group. Following the topic overview and review of the institution's guiding principles, participants were asked to:

1. Identify the qualities that give an academic program a competitive advantage in student recruitment.

2. Identify which academic programs at Shawnee State University have a competitive advantage locally, regionally, nationally, or internationally.

3. Identify what Shawnee State can do to strengthen its competitive advantage into the future.

Results

Common Themes

Several Shawnee State University programs have positive notoriety, either through national rankings, job placement, or graduate school acceptance.

- SSU ranked #8 in the nation for game design programs.

- Graduates from MOT in high demand.

- Many health science programs and plastics engineering technology in high demand.

- High placement in medical school from pre-med program.

Opportunities exist for Shawnee State University to capitalize on MOT, Health Sciences, and Engineering and Tech programs, including gaming and plastics.

- These signature programs set Shawnee State University apart.

- Signature programs should be marketed more heavily – and to targeted populations.

Students and families want to know that their degrees will lead to a job.

- Programs with high job placement after graduation offer a competitive advantage.

- Students also want to hear about the success of former students.

In addition to signature programs, steps can be taken in all programs to increase quality and help students become career-ready.

- Students look for internships and programs that give them an opportunity to gain experience in their chosen fields through experiential learning, including study abroad.

- Focusing on flexible scheduling, the use of technology in delivering courses in new ways, and ensuring accreditation of programs enhance competitive advantage.

Group Discussions

The following summaries for each key topic were presented during each groups' report-out to the entire forum audience.

Group 1

Qualities that give an academic program competitive advantage in student recruitment

- Graduation rates and the rate of job placement
- Excellent and unique offerings

SSU academic programs that have competitive advantage locally, regionally, nationally, or internationally

- MOT (especially 3+2)
- Gaming and tech – we're nationally recognized

What SSU can do to strengthen its competitive advantage in the future

- Flexibility of course delivery (online up). Students want to do things at their own pace
- "feed the runners" – invest in programs with competitive advantage

Group 2

Qualities that give an academic program competitive advantage in student recruitment

- 2-year degrees, particularly in health sciences, get jobs immediately, internships, ease of job placement
- Success of former students

SSU academic programs that have competitive advantage locally, regionally, nationally, or internationally

- Nursing
- Pre-med

What SSU can do to strengthen its competitive advantage in the future

- Targeted marketing of SSU & Scholarship
- Partnership for 2+2 and grad schools
- More programs (AD-BS-MS, AD-BS, AD-MS)

Group 3

Qualities that give an academic program competitive advantage in student recruitment

- Connection between major and a career
- Job placement – first-generation students, especially, want to see that at the end they will get a job

SSU academic programs that have competitive advantage locally, regionally, nationally, or internationally

- Gaming – nationally ranked
- Plastics – students drawn regionally

What SSU can do to strengthen its competitive advantage in the future

- Marketing – strategic and based on demographics
- Recruitment – early 6-7 grade, frequent 6-12, both at their schools and on our campus

Group 4

Qualities that give an academic program competitive advantage in student recruitment

- Employability
- Unique course offerings

SSU academic programs that have competitive advantage locally, regionally, nationally, or internationally

- Plastics Engineering
- Gaming – Arts & Engineering

What SSU can do to strengthen its competitive advantage in the future

- Communicating what we offer, involve faculty in recruitment and provide exposure to grades 6-12 (schools/admin/parents)
- Map out specialized research pathways for students,

Group 5

Qualities that give an academic program competitive advantage in student recruitment

- Job placement of graduates
- Relationship between faculty & students with high course rigor

SSU academic programs that have competitive advantage locally, regionally, nationally, or internationally

- Graduates of all accredited programs
- Graduates of Engineering Technology including programs that collaborate across disciplines

What SSU can do to strengthen its competitive advantage in the future

- Exceptional faculty, internships (practicums) & accreditation to strengthen curriculum
- Authentic & ongoing dialogue with students that results in positive outcome, make sure students have a voice

Group 6

Qualities that give an academic program competitive advantage in student recruitment

- Built-in internships & connection to industry to give students experience so they are job ready
- Placement potential

SSU academic programs that have competitive advantage locally, regionally, nationally, or internationally

- Graduates of all accredited programs in Associate, Bachelor & Master degree Programs
- Locally: health sciences, MOT, pre-med, education
- Regionally: pre-med, business, plastics
- Nationally: gaming - engineering

What SSU can do to strengthen its competitive advantage in the future

- Connect with fields of opportunity, major industry
- Publicize success stories

Group 7

Qualities that give an academic program competitive advantage in student recruitment

- Job placement/further education
- Accreditation/board pass rates

SSU academic programs that have competitive advantage locally, regionally, nationally, or internationally

- Marketing of Gaming & Simulation programs (i.e. 8th in Princeton Review)
- Success rates for accredited programs
- Health sciences, teacher education

What SSU can do to strengthen its competitive advantage in the future

- Market program strengths & job placement in collaboration with admissions
- Add/Ensure accreditation

Group 8

Qualities that give an academic program competitive advantage in student recruitment

- Programs that offer experiential learning
- Built-in internships, strong faculty connections within the program, strong advising, study abroad, portfolio opportunities

SSU academic programs that have competitive advantage locally, regionally, nationally, or internationally

- Health Science: Nursing, PT, OT
- Biology, pre-med
- Gaming, tie business to gaming

What SSU can do to strengthen its competitive advantage in the future

- Academic planning: work on scheduling and build in experiential learning
- Recruit & keep good faculty
- Get students more involved in (& fund) professional student organizations, conferences, competitions

Group 9

Qualities that give an academic program competitive advantage in student recruitment

- Student-centered programs
- Programs that consider job market demands & produce quality employees

SSU academic programs that have competitive advantage locally, regionally, nationally, or internationally

- Game design – nationally recognized & appeals to student interest
- Nursing – meets regional needs
- Health Sciences

What SSU can do to strengthen its competitive advantage in the future

- Better communication (internally & externally)
- Increase online education

Group 10

Qualities that give an academic program competitive advantage in student recruitment

- Prep for employment in field of interest, vocational outlook
- Uniqueness (Plastics, Gaming, MOT, etc.)

SSU academic programs that have competitive advantage locally, regionally, nationally, or internationally

- Plastics Engineering
- Digital Gaming & Design

What SSU can do to strengthen its competitive advantage in the future

- Co-op/Internships
- Class availability/scheduling (online, alternate times)

Group 11

Qualities that give an academic program competitive advantage in student recruitment	• Small size/faculty engagement • Students are different, need to know this is right fit
SSU academic programs that have competitive advantage locally, regionally, nationally, or internationally	• Professional programs (MOT, Health Science) • Tech Programs, plastics, gaming, business
What SSU can do to strengthen its competitive advantage in the future	• Use graduates to tell our story • Social media/branding, make the system fit students, not students fit system • Scheduling (Flexible/continuing/Bach comp) • Look at continuing education, 2+2, 2+3

Group 12

Qualities that give an academic program competitive advantage in student recruitment	• Quality of preparation • Placement rate • Degree – market transition, transferable skills, clinical sites
SSU academic programs that have competitive advantage locally, regionally, nationally, or internationally	• MOT • Education • Gaming • Psychology
What SSU can do to strengthen its competitive advantage in the future	• Private school class size & quality • Keep diversity but add more practice sites and study abroad "think locally and prepare globally"

Participants

Group Discussions

Becky Thiel, Administration
Steve Rader, Faculty
James Simmons, Faculty
JoAnne Charles, Staff
Andrea Wyatt, student
Todd Jenkins, Community Supt. NW
Marcie Simms, Administration
Kim Moore, Faculty
Adam Miller, Faculty
Janet Stewart, Staff
melissa Johns, Student
Cathy McCoy, Community GC SW
Nick Meriwether, Faculty
Elinda Boyles, Administration
Mich Nyawalo, Faculty
Marla Thoroghman, Faculty
Sarah Boehle, Faculty
kassandra Mullins, Student
Rick Scarberry, Community
Marc Scott, Faculty

Amy France, Faculty
Janice Johnson, Faculty
Cathy Bailey, Faculty
Susie Ratcliff, Staff
Dr. George White, Community
Brenda Haas, Administration
Tony Ward, Faculty
Ben Rappold, Student
Brii Bothag, Student
Lee Ann Pate, Faculty
Chuck Warner, Staff
Pat Spradlin, Faculty
Emily Shope, Student
Charlotte Hardy, Staff
Jennifer Hammonds, Staff
Virginia Pinson, Faculty
Amber Montavon, Student
Connie Mulder, Community
Leah Whitehead, Student
Nancy Bentley, Faculty
Daniel Evory, Student
Kelli Smith, Staff

Debbie Weber, Faculty
Tiffany Hartman, Staff
Sherri Powell, Staff
Brandy Wilkerson, Student
Ann Marie Gillespie, Administration
Barry Lucas, Faculty
Jodi Dunham, Faculty
Jennifer Pauley, Faculty
Deb Scurlock, Faculty
John Whitaker, Faculty
Julie Wisniewski, Community
Gene Burns, Faculty
Jonica Burke, Staff
Weni Carpenter, Faculty
Nikki Karabinis, Staff
Amanda Means, Staff
Coby Long, Faculty
DeAnn McKenzie, Staff
Brittany Bazler, Student

Strategic Planning Leadership Team

Jeff Bauer
Elinda Boyles
Bob Trusz
Paul Madden
Brenda Haas
Andy Napper

Marcie Simms
Becky Thiel
Eric Braun
Chris Shaffer
Elizabeth Blevins
Andrew Feight

Michael Barnhart
Mich Nyawalo
Marc Scott
Tony Ward
Ginny Pinson
Rick Kurtz, Ex Officio

Forum Thought Leaders & Facilitators

Jeff Bauer, Acting Provost
Christine Raber, Occupational Therapy
Paul Madden, Dean of the College of Professional Studies
John Whitaker, Mathematics
Michael Barnhart, Fine, Digital, and Performing Arts