Goal 2: *Create a student–centered environment to facilitate students’ intellectual growth and success.*

What are we doing well, what is the deficit, what do we need to capitalize on and what are the threats of not completing this goal?

**February 4, 2010 Focus Group**

**Strengths**

- Teaching and not research is priority at this institution
- Resources in our School and the support given to us
  - Partnerships (like with the library)
  - Willingness of other areas to work together and share information
  - Everyone has the buy-in to make Ship a better place
  - Cross-fertilization of ideas -- all will help students
- Right size- smaller, students are not numbers, connection with faculty
- Nature of faculty responsibility in advising – connects teaching with learning – support functions are related to teaching – These important services are not adjunct activities but central to the mission
- Research and service learning opportunities/interest of students
  - Student learn to connect to the community/opportunities for learning and research (Ship to Ship programs) mentoring/working with HS
- We develop programs to help student be successful. Everyone in School has that background and has conducted research in this areas. We assess what we do to see if it works – if it's effective.
- Faculty are truly interested in the success of the students – we are committed to meeting with the students who are not doing well.
- Faculty exchange helps new faculty understand the university as a whole
- Administration is on board with same goals – all speak the same language
- Placement testing improving -- moving away from resource based support – coming up with smarter, more creative ways to address student needs
- Having a position to support student athletes (of of 3 in state system) – Is a recruiting tool and student choose SU because of it.
- Good leadership
- Lots of experienced people working in academic support
- Aggressive facilities master plan reflects our commitment --Right buildings for the physical needs of student is recognized
- Don’t over rely on technology, DE, F2F instruction important – traditional university—students connect with a face
- Technology
- Good work with experienced based learning-- interns
Weakness

- Our future has to be in technology and we may not be up to task. example: DE not developed well – we need to be where the students are
- Our developmental programs are more from our brain than from our heart
- BB not friendly
- Need training for tech tools
- Technology (both strength and weakness) – if using technology solely for instruction, it’s a weakness, we need to use it for other learning. We need to use the tools students have with them all the time.
  - “We’re trying to address a 3D Avatar generation with Black and White movies” – like it or not, if we’re going to be student centered, we must target the learning on their modalities, not ours. We need to learn their learning modalities and understand our constituencies. They are different than before – different from us and what we are comfortable with... no stereotype of typical students.
- Use of GAs instead of creating staff positions
- Don’t recognize needs of those that don’t fit traditional college student mold (non-trads, vets, students with disabilities). Must recognize some students are at a disadvantage.
- Funding issues – as population rises, we don’t see the staffing rising to support them
- Physical structure of where support services are – currently all over campus and in buildings without disability access – Need to be centralized
- No common/standardized procedures for processes like wait lists, enrolling in classes, scheduling – all departments do things differently and students get the run-around
  - If add up all undeclared, business general, ed general, we are bringing in 50-60% of our students into programs from which they cannot graduate and then we put roadblocks in their way when they try to get into majors. (THIS IS ALSO A THREAT)
- Procedures in place that disadvantage and create barriers for undeclared students
- No first-year seminar
  - Almost all the transitional issues we bring up could be addressed by an FYE, but we STILL don’t seem to be able to have these programs even though all the research says they work. Why not?
- We are not embracing learning communities as we should (they do work).
- Advising is not valued as part of promotion and tenure process – establishes a lose/lose situation
  - According to our advising consultant/expert –the biggest weakness of our advising system is the model imposed upon us by the CBA
  - Many faculty don’t feel they have the time/training to do what is necessary for students
  - We don’t have a simple set-up for referrals – where to go/what to do? No cheat sheet available. Why? Lack of communication? Doing nothing is never a good strategy.
  - Need to know where to direct the questions.
New faculty are not ready to advise – too much information. Faculty exchange is good but faculty need more training -- maybe a mock advising session. It’s overwhelming.

- Because we are who we are, we are often resource driven so we offer educational opportunities that suit the university and not necessarily the students’ purposes.
- Use the underprepared students or conditional admits for enrollment purposes and we sometimes misrepresent to students what kind of support we can offer. (example: Offer 2+2 and folks think SU offers nursing – don’t – or we admit students who want Pre-K -4 and when no room put them in another program (4-8) without asking them. Once they find out they need Calc, they will want out. Where do they go?
- University making lot of decisions for students in first semester scheduling. It’s not student centered and we’re and not teaching them how to be students.
- We’re missing opportunities -- Not offering programs students are looking for (example: Hotel management)
- Discrepancy in messages in admissions and the reality of what we offer. Promise biology/nursing/teaching etc. and not really available, especially to weaker students.
- Bringing students in undeclared and telling them they can get into majors when can’t and we make it so difficult/so many barriers, they leave.
- Some departments assign advisors too late – transitional issues are from day 1—students need contact with support immediately.
- We put students into courses based on a template and no conversation about what is really appropriate for them. All the research says for good retention, start where the students are and start slow – don’t sock them with the hardest courses right out of the gate. We don’t talk to them until they are here.
- Admitting students right up until classes begin and they are missing orientation and support need
- Our signage stinks (OM has no Braille, no kiosks, where are elevators, drivers cannot find buildings
- Access issues –where are handicapped doors? How do students eat when they can’t carry a tray? No signs where to go for assistance.

Opportunities

- Technology
- A referral guide for students could be an opportunity/who’s who and where to go for information
- Let non-faculty advise and teach or collaborate better and appreciate the strengths of those who are here and who may not be faculty but who have great expertise and use it appropriately.
- Tap into the expertise we have on campus (marketing, etc- have hidden resources for signage and mentoring)
- Expand the mentoring programs
- Make sure all appreciate and understand the spirit of university
Threats

- Budget – inability to adjust tuition and out-of-state tuition
- Resources trickle to programs and trickle to students
- Rigidity of some departments
- How do we handle the technology coming – can be a threat to students who learn differently?
- Students cannot get into classes they need/want to be able to graduate in 4 years (especially undeclared)
- No First-Year Seminar
- Flexibility of our competitors (also an opportunity) – community colleges -- If we don’t do it, they will go elsewhere
- Dev Ed outsourcing. If go elsewhere, the students won’t come back. Turning business away
- Misrepresentation of what is REALLY available here at Ship. Is my child getting my money’s worth? Negative message
- Centralization of the state system – articulation, FA, admissions
- External FA resources—if goal is to recruit the best and brightest, we need to make scholarship money available. We miss lots of deserving students – need more flexibility in how award scholarships
- Quality education versus a quantity education—threats from state system to pick where you go and what you do.
- Culture of consumerism – 4-year Graduation rates not the only way to measure quality – legislators only look at one method of assessment -- need to educate people
- Legislators making decisions about developmental students – losing access – what happens to average student?
- Budget – what gets cut first? Supplemental things and those student service centered programs that are currently understaffed but experiencing growing demand from students.
February 12, 2010 Focus Group

Strengths

- Great F2F instruction program – branching out to DE but too much can be a threat – good we don’t have to do totally on-line
- Good offerings and not overextended/has depth
- Good we have a GE – Ship student is not just jumping immediately into their major
- Undeclared program is strength and opportunity – folks trained to help students decide differing paths – undeclared program focuses on students needs
- Strong faculty
- Advising is student centered – they care about students, genuine interest in students’ success
- Academic Programs and Services and LC in the library – In fact, the whole movement to join the CUB and the library (ALSO OPPORTUNITY) – allows student to go to one place for help Is very student centered – especially for adults and can get information in one stop shop
- Learning Center movement to library gave legitimacy and access
- Student being taught directly by the faculty – not GAs

Weakness

- Need to do a better job marketing what we do well
- We need programs that are flexible enough so folks can complete a degree other than 9-5, need a non-trad student schedule (Also an OPPORTUNITY)
- We need to think more creatively – not just adding resources but shifting -- could create a robust evening/on-line component (Friday/Saturday/weekends) (OPPORTUNITY)
  - Students need to feel they can do entire degree that way and not just cobbled together
- Curriculum approval process is byzantine – we cannot be nimble and create a course in less than a year. It takes so long we can’t react to what students need. – our sister institutions are not as bad, it’s our local interpretation. UCC transition from paper to on-line difficult for some
- Weakness in understanding on-line education and pedagogy –it’s peer learning versus lecture
- Underprepared students and those who should not be here – we accept too many of the latter – lowered admission standards and don’t give enough support to them
- Don’t give enough support to honors program – our sister institutions do honors living quarters – some places have an honors college – we don’t know how to support an honors program
- Publicity – PR function doesn’t work here, we can’t get news out unless do it yourself
- Lack of knowledge of what is going on here (at SU)– lack of centralized communication – web-issues, messages not sending out – we’re far ahead of where used to be but still not as powerful as could be
• We’re doing advertising pieces but need more – TV, computer, radio – not enough (Consider more computer monitors around campus)
• Union issues – local interpretations can be a problem

Opportunity

• Can develop a good distance ed program – need to do it appropriately
• Look at 14 institutions and see what they are doing well and adopt, take advantage, use them as resources, work together to get better—has to be a mindset to do this (can also be a THREAT)
• Use the buying power of the 14 for resources to get better pricing, do things together – don’t isolate selves – must be top down/force the system into relationships
• Dual enrollment/dual degrees – institutions work together – share students, share expenses and share revenues – each institution gets a piece of the pie – is 60% of the costs of doing it alone
• Opportunity for producing on-line course together in a coordinated fashion (we all face the same threat from purely on-line programs – strength when we work together)
  o Charge less per credit hour and make it up in fees.

Threat

• On-line programs – we’re behind, we’re losing students because we don’t offer more on-line
  There are quality programs out there competing for students. It’s a disservice to ignore this
• Must have quality to survive
• Relationship or lack thereof with community colleges – not integrated here and lots of students are looking at CC as a cheaper way to get their first courses there. How many of our faculty involved in teaching GE could be affected if/when there are fewer students who need those courses. If had good relationship with CC, could allow for more of our faculty to teach upper level courses (OPPORTUNITY)
• Financial Situation – Economy
• 6 hour history requirement/tail wags the dog -- GE, in general, drives everything in a curricular way here – Everyone has to get through the boxes (boa constritor). Do we really need all this history for 18 year olds? It causes turf wars and we can’t experiment, students can’t get breadth of coverage. We can’t use our people well and enhance GE for the better or offer a richer experience (faculty experience as well as the student experience)
  o GE committee has invited others to share ideas on BB
• Scheduling – frustrates students and forces them to take things they don’t want, they are not enhancing their experience in anyway. Doing it as we do, we send kids out frazzled. (Especially first year students and undeclared). Librarians experience this because they advise undeclared – Students are assigned to classes and then end up in a major that won’t accept that course (they were pre-assigned) in a particular category. – We need to be more student centered. We do it because it’s easier for us and not what is best for students.
• Digital advertisement of classes not what it should be – need to give more information about what course will be about. – Need to more clearly define what student will be getting by being more specific in scheduling packet.
• How we schedule students not student centered—when and how, choice they have etc. Scheduling is a threat, weakness, and an opportunity
February 16, 2010 Focus Group

Strengths

- Student government/leadership – students are empowered to make decisions
- Communication system of SIS /Records/ Access 24/7
- Advising – conceptually
- Common areas -- gathering spaces, Starbucks, CUB, Adirondack Chairs
- Faculty encourage teams and collaborative learning
- Teacher /student relationships
- Freshman orientation
- Campus is a strong community
- Small class size
- Personal attention from faculty and staff
- Mix of learning environments
- Speakers
- Academic day
- Internships
- Faculty teach courses not T.A.’s

Weaknesses

- Advising
- Increased number of grad students and the need for balanced resources
- First year experiences does not exist
- Transfer orientation - could be improved to support this population
- Counseling support needs
- Lack of diverse course offering in non-traditional time slots
- No overlap of student group schedules – difficult to have meetings
- Students are underprepared

Opportunities

- New housing - living learning communities
- CUB renovations
- Increased number of gathering space
- Distance education
- New groups of students - military, non-traditional
- Link transfer students into the community earlier

Threats
- Resources are deteriorating
- Traditional schedule does not meet student needs
- Need more support services – learning center, counseling center, office of Disability
- Not meeting students' needs for services – social issues
- Current economy
- Policy changes at the PASSHE level
- PASSHE is taking away SU id
- Not using expertise within our own community
- Need to better manage Media and communications
March 2, 2010 Focus Group

**Strengths**

- Library – great resources and accessibility, comfortable atmosphere
- Student Senate – comfortable place to voice opinion, a place where students can be heard
- Clean Campus – appreciate a clean campus, well kept, no visible trash
- Learning Center – easy to set up appointments, non-intimidating environment
- Workshops - can attend whatever workshop they want, good location and accessible
- Academic Support – specialized office for just student-athletes, student-athletes feel appreciated and comfortable to use this resource, non-intimidating, open-door policy
- Upcoming events (Email) – excellent communication regarding important upcoming academic dates and information from academic support office for student-athletes, as well as student affairs information from Dr. Serr, students feel well informed
- ASP – having this program is important for at risk students, not all universities have this program, allows students an opportunity to prove they can handle college work when their application materials and high school records may illustrate otherwise
- Academic Advisors – easily accessible, usually always willing to help
- PACES - this class should be required for all undergraduate students, expand the focus beyond undeclared students. PACES is extremely helpful during the first semester of college
- Internships – internships for credit are a great way to “force” and encourage first-hand learning experiences before graduation. Internships for credit should be part of every curriculum
- Allow students to sit in on dean selection – including students in this process is important, allows the students to feel included, a sense of ownership of their university, and feel heard. Keeps students up to date with what is happing on campus
- Most professors are willing to give extra time to talk about class related information during office hours. It is helpful that most professors’ offices are located near their class rooms/ lecture hall – good use of physical space.
- RHA van – shows effort to ensure safety
- 24 hr computer lab – constantly being used, definitely needed on campus, easy and assessable
- Everything is fairly close- compact campus , easy to get around
- REC Center – promotes wellness, before the REC Center students had no place to work out on their own
- Athletic Weight Room – good for student-athletes (keeping teams together and for recruiting purposes) and good for non-student-athletes (the REC Center is less crowed because all athletes use the athletic weight room instead

**WEAKNESS**

- Publicity for the Learning Center workshops and other resources is poor, needs improvement, need publicity beyond email announcements
- University is not involved with the community enough
  - Nothing else to do but “drink”
  - Not many alternative “hang-outs”
  - If Ship was more involved with the community, the community would want to give back to Ship and possible create healthier activities off campus for students.
• Priority scheduling – student-athletes who do not have priority scheduling miss significant class time. All student-athletes need priority scheduling. For example:
  – Focus participate # 1 missed the same class 6 times this semester due to lacrosse
  – Focus Participate # 2 missed 4 classes and 2 exams last semester due to soccer
  – Focus Participate # 3 still missed 7 or 8 classes even with priority scheduling
  – Focus Participate # 4 & 5 did not miss any class. Their games are held on Saturdays only.
• Dining Hall
  – After 11:30 where does someone go to eat? Nowhere to go.
  – Mystery food – labels are not updated, cannot identify food
  – Small portions
  – Need Healthier food – food is fried, too greasy
  – More “meal deal” options in the CUB
• Why can’t students use the Luhr’s Center? It is only for the community, not for students
• Books in the library – Where did they go? The transition to electronic resources in the library is not being communicated to students.
• Bathrooms on campus need improvement
• No night or weekend transportation, no transportation into town during this time, RAH transportation only runs during the weekdays, safety concern
• Undue holds on accounts
  – Ex: turn a laptop in 30 minutes late
    – $10 fine and a hold
• Dining hall temporary passes are only good when the ID office isn’t open; ID office is not open on weekends or week nights. Can’t eat without a student ID card
• Athletic Locker Rooms
  – Unsafe
  – Out of date
  – Compared to other universities locker rooms are terrible
• Price of books for class (biggest complain)
  – New volumes every semester – professors continue to ask students to purchase new editions each semester when older editions can still be used. This is asking students to buy more books when it is not necessary. Students are very frustrated with textbook requirements and prices.
  – Can find books cheaper online – students are refusing to buy books from the university book store because of the price. Some students attempt to take classes without buying any required text books due to price.
  – Students cannot afford books – book prices do not set up students for success in the classroom

Opportunities

• Educational Speakers/ Champs-Life Skills programming
  – Alcohol awareness speakers
Elementary School – great for internships, observation, very convenient for El Ed. majors
Clubs/groups – plenty offered
Internships for all majors – good experience before graduating, excellent way to enhance resume
Pepsi – Bottling Company, good career development opportunity
Job Fairs and Internship fairs – always being offered
Work study – opportunity for students to make money

Threats

Professors are still not willing to work with student-athletes to make up excused absences due to competition. Professors really make this process difficult even when faculty memos are distributed in the beginning of each semester.
Terrible parking situation – too far away from buildings on campus, safety concern, not enough parking on campus, ticket prices are increasing considerably, staff are not ticketed for parking in the commuter lot, yet students are ticketed for parking in staff lots.
Scholarship money – not enough athletic or academic scholarships available
Residence Halls need to be replaced/improved
Construction in the middle of the year – loud, distracting, ongoing
  o Reisner
    ▪ Shut down road outside of Reisner
  o Huber Arts Center
    ▪ Shuts down the road
  o Robb Athletic Field
    ▪ Start construction in the winter, why???
    ▪ Snow disrupts construction
    ▪ Student-athletes aren’t able to practice on field
      • Forced to practice inside
      • Season is about to start and they have yet to practice outside