

Advancing the Brand and Reputation of NC State  
Task Force Meeting Minutes  
Friday, April 24, 2020  
1:30 p.m. – 3:00 pm  
Zoom Meeting

Welcome

- Benny Suggs provided a welcome.
- Briefly reviewed notes from the last meeting.

Task Force Discussion

- Discussion about the *SWOT Analysis* and *Goals and Strategies* documents.
  - Question about the difference between Goals and Strategies sections.
  - Discussion about the intent at this time is getting the big ideas, steps and themes down that will help us achieve the brand and reputation we are looking for.
  - This step is about building on our discussions and beginning to formulate the big ideas and big steps that will keep us out of the weeds and move us toward a task force report that will influence the strategic plan at a high level.
  - Brad and Benny will collate responses and report back the similar ideas and themes.
  - This step will also help inform what other task forces we should connect and collaborate with.
- Committee members provided feedback about the importance and need of research being well represented in the Strategic Plan.
- There's a branding/communications strategy about the research that is already occurring that is an opportunity.
  - There is opportunity to do more and better research, but an even bigger opportunity to communicate better about the research we've already done.
  - About the PR and branding - the storytelling - that goes along with that excellent research.
- Rather than select a generic research or other generic categories, suggestion to focus on research and other topics that are unique to NC State and have impact on people's lives.
  - This will help differentiate NC State from similar-type universities.
  - Characterize what is unique about what we do.

- For NC State, focusing on the practical things we are doing that affects citizens will make a difference in terms of the dissemination of information to the public.
- Suggestions for overall Strategic Plan.
  - Suggestion for having a task force focused on the different areas of research - such as how to recruit people, how to keep people, how to even better harness cluster hires, how to have world class facilities, etc.
  - We are also a teaching institution. Also have a task force focused on being innovative about teaching, flexible related to teaching, using new technologies and methods, etc.
  - Given what is happening right now, should some of those types of task force groups be time dependent, so when things like the COVID-19 situation happen, we have those groups active.
  - Taking what is happening today to inform the processes to shape groups could be very important and beneficial.
    - Be prepared and responsive to make the most out of challenges when they present themselves, whether it is hurricanes, pandemics, market crashes or whatever.
  - Suggestion for feedback from the chairs to the steering committee - when we think about task forces, we should be aware of potential themes that are coming from different task forces today that should be their own theme (like research) - and/or, create mini-task forces or groups to hone in on issues that are not as big but are important and timely, such as crisis communications, operational excellence, mental health, etc.
    - That can be something we use for our brand, because we Think and Do. We think fast and do it even in times of crisis and uncertainty.
- Suggestion for the importance of having faculty experts known and prepared to push to the media.
  - If we have a way of collecting expertise of our faculty expertise, then when events happen we can be prepared to have our faculty experts ready to provide comments to the media.
  - Need a process inside the university that pushes our faculty to the forefront on any crisis, any good news and any bad news.
  - There is a lot of this going on and much success pitching and placing NC State media experts. As a case in point, the university has highlighted and pitched to media 24 faculty experts in a wide range of areas related to Coronavirus that have generated hundreds of new stories in top outlets across the nation and world. One faculty member alone has been featured in more than 800 different news articles as a result.
    - The continuing challenge is that many faculty (and likely staff) are not aware of these expert lists or of the resulting media placements. We need

a better system for keeping faculty and staff updated on key brand-related news and information.

- Decentralized nature makes this a challenge.
  - Can to do a better job preparing lists around key topics ahead of time.
  - Want staff to do more to connect our faculty to media and policy makers.
  - There needs to be an education process that goes on so that faculty can tell the communicators across campus when they have good news to tell.
    - Faculty don't often know what the communications offices do across campus.
  - There is a big opportunity to better inform and educate the faculty about how to most efficiently and effectively communicate research and other news to the media and public.
    - Not just media, but also other outlets such as presentations and TedX-type opportunities.
    - With the right supporting education, training and motivation, this could be a great opportunity.
- Quick discussion about the challenges of the percentage cap on out-of-state-students and the related budget implications - not being able to keep the differential.
    - At other universities, a lot of out-of-state alumni go back to their home states and promote their alma mater.
    - Recognized need for more university flexibility and decision-making ability.
  - Brad Bohlander provided a presentation about how the NC State brand was developed and the tools, systems and processes that help communicate and advance the brand.