

Alumni Strategic Planning Input Summary

This summary includes the results for the:

- Focus group with the Alumni Association Board members (10 participants)
 - Alumni Association Board members online survey responses: 6 responses
 - Alumni general survey – 21 responses (1963 to 2014 graduates; various degrees represented)
1. *When asked what they enjoyed most about being a student at Frostburg State University, the alumni mentioned: **the classroom environment** (small classes; interaction with instructors; quality of instruction; hands-on experiences; 1-on-1 attention), the **relationships built with faculty, staff, and fellow students**; and the **opportunities provided for involvement** (e.g. Greek life; interface with administration; personal growth experiences - worked hard, played hard; work study).*
 2. *The alumni were asked what experience at Frostburg State University had the biggest impact on them and why. The alumni mentioned the impact **faculty** had on their experience (the collaboration had with faculty and their support); the **opportunities provided on and off campus for student involvement/engagement** (e.g. study abroad with faculty; judicial board opportunities; campus radio station; Greek life); and **academics** (special courses taken and the attendance policy which provided motivation for participation and engagement).*
 3. *The alumni identified the following as *strengths of the institution*: **affordability** (good value for the cost); **location** (beautiful setting; out of state feel but in state price); **small campus environment and small town community feel**; **successful alumni**; **diversity**; **range of majors and programs**; **opportunities provided for student involvement** (experiential learning opportunities; Greek life; sport teams); **the quality of instruction** (up to date material; small class size; dedicated and invested faculty; student focused); **and the faculty, students, and staff relationships** (FSU makes you feel like a family member).*
 4. *When asked what they think are the *weaknesses of the institution*, the alumni emphasized the following: **a weak sense of connection to the school** (limited institutional identity; lack of sense of community and pride in being an FSU student; not enough campus activities); **lack of alumni engagement** (more resources should be spent on engaging the alumni); **the image of the institution and current marketing efforts** (party school; the admissions counselors and outreach specialists need to better present the school; frame remote location as a plus; utilize alumni in recruitment efforts; not promoting FSU in Baltimore/DC area); **concerns over safety** (presence of gang activity and all the inherent negative elements; underage drinking; parties; perception of violent place and party school); **academic quality** (making too many exceptions for students who cannot meet the minimum academic requirements; some weak coursework; quality of teaching and student conduct-need for clear standards; more diverse faculty; too many adjunct faculty); **location** (too rural; too remote; weak cooperation with the town) and **student housing** (old dorms).*
 5. *The alumni were asked to identify what they see as possible *opportunities for the institution* considering the current social, political, and economic environment. The respondents emphasized opportunities in relation to: **academic programs** (growth of existing programs and acquisition of novel ones – sales, public service, environmental*

education, teacher education, cyber education – focus on IT security; rural health topics; renewable energy; degrees for outdoor activities; tourism; more master level programs, local and regional academic, economic, social and cultural needs that the university can respond to; FSU needs to have something it's specialized on – used to be teaching); **academic quality** (maintain small class sizes and faculty-student interactions; cost effective learning; undergraduate research; cutting edge training; real-world experiences; flexibility in the academic programs – best experience for students; opportunity for renewal and restoration of high quality, student centered institution image with a focus on teaching and learning); **developing collaborations** (with local businesses; community colleges; joining the universities at Shady Grove, more urban area; more state interactions/interactions with other programs across the state- e.g. communication programs; Satellite campus in Baltimore/DC area); **100-year anniversary** (tell the FSU story/history; establish school pride; share more alumni stories); **online and adult education** (online graduate programs for working adults; expand online and off campus classes); **location** (capitalize of the area; the natural environment; the environment provides the ability to be totally immersed in a study area and not be distracted by other things; Appalachia – environment and culture;); **gap year** – provide experiences at FSU – study abroad; adventure sports; internship, etc.; **new funding campaign** (fund for capital improvements); **new facilities are critical**; and **marketing through social media**.

6. When asked what they see as possible *threats or challenges for the institution* in the years to come, the alumni emphasized the following: **college affordability** (rising costs, funding); **competition** (increased competition by private universities; competition from online and other universities); **demographics** (decline in college age education); **image concerns** (decline of FSU as a reputable 4 year institution of higher education; weakened credibility and trust in the region - strategic steps are needed to move forward; local population resistance to the university; party school; no local pride in the university; vision of self); **academic quality** (lowering admission requirements; weak teachers' preparation); **enrollment numbers** (loss of African-American numbers; shrinking enrollments; brick and mortar classrooms not ideal for millennials); **political environment** (current presidency; Department of Education oversight; more lobbying needed in Annapolis to address the needs of the region); and **safety concerns** (hacking; active shooter; crime)
7. *Given the discussion on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, the alumni were asked to identify principal action priorities for FSU moving forward.* The action priorities identified were focused on: **academic quality** (highly competitive academic school; value of education; developing programs for students facing academic challenges; creating a team of academic advisors; diverse faculty; adopt new ideas and techniques); **student spirit and sense of connection to the school**; **improving marketing efforts** (separate your uniqueness); **provide opportunities for student engagement** (extra-curricular activities; internship/externship opportunities); **alumni engagement** (bridging the gap between students and alumni); and **student safety**.
8. The alumni were asked to provide **advice for the new FSU President**. The advice provided emphasized the need for the President to: be accessible, visible, and have an open door policy; to be real and genuine; to be transparent and communicative; to meet with alumni; to engage the alumni in promoting university initiatives; to listen to all parties involved; to advocate for students; to engage the students; to be an active and

caring member of the university; to embrace the diversity at FSU; to be emphasize at the state level what the university does well, and to continue to be an innovative university.

The general survey sent out to the alumni, asked for **advice for the FSU leadership**. Some of the advice mentioned included: to bring back the great reputation to FSU; to listen to current and potential students and their needs from teachers and university; to improve community involvement; to keep rates low; to upgrade resources for students; to keep investing in minority attendance of the university (Baltimore/DC area recruitment); to be transparent; to listen to employees; to engage the alumni; to keep classes small, to stay modern; to stay on top of trends in education; to focus on integrity and mission; to have a focused strategic plan; to give grant money to outstanding prospects; to invest in the IT department/ IT security; to offer sales classes; to provide flexibility (avoid just brick and mortar opportunities); to not “water down” any programs; to focus on the faculty employed and the character development of the student graduates; to provide tuition payments for students who wish to join teaching professions; to seek opportunities off campus (e.g. U at Shady Grove).

In addition, the general survey sent out asked alumni to identify **institutional values that FSU should demonstrate in the future**. The values identified by the alumni included:

- Commitment to teaching and learning (high quality teaching and learning experiences; measure results for continues improvement; raise standards); value of education; commitment to high standards
- Commitment to students
- Improve student commitment and engagement
- Quality students
- Student/faculty work ethic
- Accountability
- Critical thought
- Diversity
- Strength in a broad general education
- Cooperate with community colleges
- Value of alumni
- Value of area
- Value of people and community
- Inclusiveness, cooperation
- Integrity
- FSU renewal and restoration needed
- Get creative and understand your audience