

Weaknesses – Summarized from Discussion Group Summaries

Key areas emphasized by reporting facilitator, Dr. Joe Melcher –

1. We need to involve students and alumni in recruitment
2. In admissions we need a more specific fact sheet for recruitment. We are perceived as being an upper-class environment. We are not perceived nationally; perceived not to treat students like adults
3. There seems to be a lack of balance and clear criteria for promotion and tenure. There should be more credit for service. Programs in the liberal arts need to be recognized and promoted. Library resources need to be increased. Faculty should not be asked to carry out the work of administrative departments such as, for example, dealing with the W\$. There were questions asked as to whether faculty were keeping up with technology. Faculty should have a forum to share accomplishments. The campus quality of life needs to be improved, for example facilities for child care or elder care.
4. Faculty needs to recognize the Xavier mission and buy into it. Facilities such as the gym need to be improved. There are problems with the heating and cooling system; there is no faculty lounge; no place for students to congregate. Students are not participating in on-campus cultural activities.

Themes (summarized) emerging from the breakout sessions

- We don't recognize small departments (over-emphasis on larger and science)
- Departments don't feel supported in attempts to start new programs
- Meetings focus on individual departments, not University as a whole
- Less money/resources available for liberal arts
- Research/teaching load a barrier to tenure
- University engagement in advertising, marketing
- Don't fully utilize possibilities of institution in recruiting
- Research expectation divides faculty
- Extent of faculty voice in evaluation and tenure criteria
- Resources and time for faculty development (including technology training for instruction)
- Faculty morale and retention (work load; pay; criteria for promotion/tenure; voice)
- Lack of clear, balanced criteria for promotion/tenure (including credit for service; more decentralized reviews)
- Lack of funds for library materials
- Insufficiency of research infrastructure
- Imbalance of majors
- Available financial resources (endowment and financial aid)
- Insufficient resources for course development
- Lack of shared faculty governance
- Weak processes supporting student registration and financial aid

- Faculty and staff morale
- Not enough fostering of life and arts outside the classroom
- Insufficient knowledge regarding our competitors
- Too much administrative load for faculty
- Lack of student places to congregate
- General quality of life facilities on campus (facilities; recreational; classrooms; faculty lounge)
- Adequacy of space to grow
- Endowment size in relationship to student body size
- Inadequate academic background of students

Strengths – Summarized from Discussion Group Sessions

Key areas emphasized by reporting facilitator, Dr. Joe Ricks –

The five key strengths identified were,

1. The mission statement
2. Dedication of faculty and staff
3. Student output quality
4. Visionary leadership
5. Reputation

On a scale of 1-10 (poor-good), the mission statement received a 4. It was felt that we were living it but not leveraging it. The group could not come to a consensus on (2). The scores ranged from 7-8 to 3-4. Student output quality received a 6 for pharmacy and the natural sciences. But it was felt that it was not being leveraged. On average, 100 students per year were going to medical school, but where were the other science students going? Visionary leadership receives a 7, but it was thought that we were humble to a fault. Our reputation needs to be spread.

Themes (summarized) emerging from the breakout groups.

- Academic achievement is valued
- Academic diversity
- Resilience and adaptability
- Allied health/premed programs
- Students are appropriately prepared for post-graduate opportunities
- Opportunity for those with weak ACT/SAT scores to graduate and succeed
- Propensity to collaborate with other Universities
- Collaboration among departments
- College of Pharmacy; pre-pharmacy; pre-medicine
- Commitment of SBS
- Dedication of faculty and staff
- Departmental missions aligned with University mission
- Diverse degree offering
- Dr. Francis and Xavier leadership
- Facilities in the sciences
- Long service and experience of some faculty and staff
- Diverse student body
- Strong focus on education and personal attention
- Financially diverse student body
- HBCU and with demonstrable history
- High academic standards
- Strong identity awareness
- Large number of organizations nurturing leadership

- Rock solid liberal arts curriculum
- Location and visibility of campus
- Mission
- Rapid post-Katrina restart; beacon of hope; institutional resiliency
- Research capacity in the sciences
- Small size of University fosters collaboration
- Small size of some departments allows one-on-one nurturing
- Spiritually centered; standards with sympathy
- Student-focused environment
- Student community involvement; students inclined to volunteer
- Technology support and technology use
- Unique history (local/national)

Opportunities – Summarized from Discussion Group Sessions

Key areas emphasized by reporting facilitator, Dr. Thomas Weise –

1. There are opportunities to improve the quality of life for students, faculty and staff. There should be more services and more programs, more buildings, a health and fitness center, stores, child care, elder care, transportation, more parking and student study places.
2. There are opportunities to improve the quality of educational experience for students. We should build on strengths of existing teaching excellence and reputation. Focus the Xavier community on living the Xavier mission. Expand service learning across the curriculum. By expanding local and regional collaborations, develop opportunities for student service, research, and leadership in each curriculum, thereby setting Xavier apart from other institutions. Build pipelines to graduate schools by building on infrastructure. Increase interdisciplinary interaction. Build non-traditional programs even if some of these might be short-lived. Maintain and expand the diversity of the student population.

Themes (summarized) emerging from the breakout sessions.

- Enrich learning through partnerships with companies
- Allied health programs: biomedical engineering
- Focus on opportunities for our graduates in federal and state governments and in industry
- Further collaborations with local colleges
- Build on model/recruitment of Asian American students in COP
- Recruit international students
- Focus on recruiting diaspora students
- Local opportunities – LSUMC; TUMC; Film; rebuilding
- Recruit non-African American students (e.g., Hispanic)
- Offering of non-traditional degrees; certificates
- Vocational education focus
- Satellite campus(s)
- Programs in med technology; mini-courses for non-XU students
- Partnerships
- Quality of life experiences – N.O. culture; music; Saints; being a part of N.O.
- Biomedical research

Threats – Summarized from Discussion Group Sessions

Key areas emphasized by reporting facilitator, Dr. Thomas Bonner –

1. In the post-Katrina environment, the quality of life on campus has deteriorated. There are problems with increased crime; students are concerned with their safety. There are no recreational facilities within walking distance of campus and little public transportation.
2. Recruitment and retention of faculty and students are perceived and real. There has been no satisfactory explanation of faculty lay-offs post-Katrina. Faculty are overloaded and somewhat underpaid. There is a lack of physical resources.
3. As a school with a small endowment and a tuition-driven economy, there is a tension between pragmatics and idealism. Our mission, no matter how noble, means that we recruit from a smaller pool of students than most universities. This situation calls for more intense PR and recruiting campaigns using technological and print sources as well as conventional personal contact. Distance learning can erode the number of credits students take on campus. And there is concern for diminishing federal financial aid.
4. Continuity of leadership. What will happen when Dr. Francis retires?
5. Possible competition with other schools. Will LSU establish a school of pharmacy?
6. The perception that Xavier has a narrow scientific and technical focus. Xavier is seen in a narrow way by many because of the nearly sole emphasis on pre-med; it needs to be seen as a “full service” university, perhaps adding programs like allied health and international/intercultural studies. Presently, resources do not allow for interdisciplinary programs.
7. The institution’s identity as black, Catholic and liberal arts presents many responsibilities
8. Poor management of financial departments
9. Rising numbers of under-prepared students and students working twenty hours or more outside the university.
10. An increasing focus on research lessens the time faculty can devote to their students.
11. The perception of the university within the immediate neighborhood. Xavier is still not seen as contributing to the local community.

Themes (summarized) emerging from the breakout groups.

- New Orleans post-Katrina environment (recruitment; retention; safety)
- Potential diminishing of federal aid
- Community perception of Xavier University
- Public understanding and valuing of liberal arts education
- Potential student undervaluing of liberal arts education
- Local schools competition

- Competition from other schools in new programs; online courses; emergence of new schools
- More research opportunities at other institutions
- Not equal treatment by other institutions when partnering
- Nursing school competition for allied health students
- On-line courses and for-profit institutions – cheaper and convenient (e.g., University of Phoenix)
- New Orleans schools
- Educational, economic and social inequalities for our student recruitment pool
- High cost of living in New Orleans
- Hurricane threat
- Mama factor
- Leadership of city and country
- Morale problems in New Orleans
- Diminishing reputation for excellence
- Ability/willingness of alumni to support Xavier after graduation
- Narrow range of students in recruitment pool
- Other institutions offering pharmacy programs; emergence of competing new pharmacy school
- Perception of Xavier as having narrow academic focus
- Importance of local market and the rising proportion of under prepared students there
- Crime in neighborhood
- Shrinking local recruitment pool
- Xavier's perception in its neighborhood as interloper