# THE UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING

# Statewide Strategic Planning Listening Sessions

# *Laramie, Wyoming*

# Wednesday, December 7, 2016

A member in the community mentioned that his son was going to college this year and had been admitted to the University of Wyoming. He noted that when looking at FAFSA they provided information about graduation rates, the university stood out with a very low graduation rate. He mentioned that he was giving a negative comment because the presentation had been so positive and he wanted to make sure everyone knew the reality.

University President Laurie Nichols stated she also shared the concerns with the retention and graduation rates.

Another community member mentioned that the university was a land grant institution and anyone could be easily admitted. She noted that there were a lot of students that wanted to be in the medical field, but their SATs were too low that they could not be admitted to the programs. She stated that sometimes the University should tell the students that they should not go into a profession that they wanted because of their grades and scores in high school.

One of the community members stated that she would not come back to the University for the same PhD program that she took in 1995 because the quality of instruction and research was not at the same level that it was when she attended the University.

Another community member stated a concern that the Science and Math Teaching Center was being pushed away. She noted that the students were not being prepared well enough and the university should start pushing more for the Science and Math Teaching Center to assist with closing these gaps.

A member in the community commented that a freshmen asked her where the great college experience was that she was supposed to be having. She mentioned that she asked another group of students what their college experience was like and they answered that they connecting with small groups, had opportunities in the Greek system or the Residence Hall where they connected with people, and there were a lot of students that were not involved in those kinds of activities. The community member mentioned that she hoped that the university could take students and talk to them about their college experience so that faculty and other students could understand what being a student at the University was actually like. She added that the university could do more in supporting the Greek system, ASUW, and RSOs to help freshmen find a group that they would like to be a part of. She commented that if a student did not find a group in the first few weeks of being on campus, they would be among those students who dropped out.

Another community member mentioned that there was a huge issue of diversity. She noted for the university to not lose sight of diversity and she noted that the main thing to retain students was a sense of belonging.

One community member stated that after talking with different students in the last few years, most of the students said that if they had not been in the Greek system, they would have left the University. She noted that students wanted to find a community and those that ended up giving back to the University were ones that had a connection and had some sort of reason to come back and give money. The community member stated that as the University looked at their budget getting tighter and tighter, it would want those people that left to have a reason to come back. She added that people that end up having high positions in their careers, it was typically because they had the leadership experience from things like the Greek Life.

Another community member stated that another point she wanted to add to the questions posed in the PowerPoint was “How could the University be more effectively a good neighbor to the citizens of Albany County?” She noted that there were some issues currently. The community member stated that one was when international students came to the university without adequate resources to support themselves and their families. She noted that a good portion of these students were unable to work because of their visa or currency regulations in their countries and some were dependent on the community. She stated that the university had a responsibility to determine student’s resources to live in Laramie before they arrived. The community member stated that she would like to see the university get re-involved with the community transportation authority and issues with the parking spaces throughout the campus and community.

One member in the community stated that she loved the conversations about community in general for the students. She noted that in the last 20 years, there had been a public perception that Laramie and the university struggled with their relationship. She commented that the community relationship was very important to the citizens of Laramie, but it was also important for the students at the university. The community member stated that there had been days when the city of Laramie and the University had provided duplicate services, but they were separate. She asked for the Strategic Planning Council and the Trustees to consider the idea of bringing a community engagement to the plan that would include community collaboration, cooperation, partnership and outreach. She added that she was asking that the University consider this in the plan to incorporate the concept of community engagement and collaborations that would help find a solution to provide more opportunities to work with the University and in the community to enhance the university’s long term plan. For a complete list of the community members dreams and aspirations, please see the document titled City of Laramie City Council located in the WyoGroup Folder.

Another community member shared that there would be crisis response training classes for all of the city responders in stress management, suicide prevention intervention, and post intervention coming to the city in September 2017. She added that this should help with aid for the community and the University.

A student from the University talked about her experience at the university. She noted that she was a transfer student from CWC and was a non-traditional student and a veteran. She had participated in IMBRE which was a program that did undergraduate research and allowed the University to collaborate with the community colleges to provide opportunities for the undergraduate students to do research. She noted that this was a great opportunity for her and education wise had been a great benefit to her. The student also talked about her opportunities to work in labs and attend undergraduate research day while at CWC and she noted that by the time she came to the university, she already knew the faculty that she would take classes with and the faculty that she would be working with in the labs. She suggested that something the university should look at for the future was some of the programs that helped to get the transfer students involved in the university before they got to campus.

Another community member stated that looking at the big picture for the University, it was important to continue to strengthen the sciences, the engineering, and the entrepreneur programs to help create jobs in the state. He noted that when Underwriters Labs was brought to Laramie, they hired a consultant from Silicon Valley. He stated that the consultant commented that there was so much potential at the university and in the community, adding that the community had everything needed to become another Silicon Valley. The community member mentioned that the rest of the state was looking at the University and wondering what the university was doing for the state.

One member from the community commented that she grew up in Rock Springs and a lot of the activities that she did in high school were focused in Laramie. She noted that when she moved to Laramie, it was hard to transition because the opportunities were limited and it was hard to find work. She added that the thing that kept her here was the quality of life. The member stated that the more that the University could do to help support the quality of life. She stated that she appreciated seeing all the new activities being done for students, like for new students and the fall activities that were healthy fun activities. The member added that she would like to see better coordination of those activities with the community. She asked where the university said no and if it had to say no when it came to the public. She noted that when going to the legislature for requests, they would get hammered because they thought that Laramie got everything because Laramie had the University and it made it hard to have the discussion about the fact that the university was great, but that did not mean equal prosperity in the city.

Another member of the community mentioned that if the community wanted to recruit people here to have business, there needed to be a community that people enjoyed. She brought up different aspects of the town that had art and how art made life better for everyone. She asked that the university not forget about the arts. The member added that the community had a lot to offer for the University.

One member from the community asked what the University was doing to help the DSS and the SSS programs to improve the help for those students that needed the extra help. He noted that there was a professor that told him and his brother that his brother did not deserve the extra help because it would not be an even playing field. He commented that the athletes at the University got tutors with at least a master’s degree and the DSS and SSS got students that did not have degrees or qualifications to actually tutor someone. He stated that the athletes got the tutors immediately and the kids in disability services had to wait 5-6 weeks before getting a tutor when they were already at a disadvantage.

Another member of the community noted that when trying to recruit students to the university, there were aspects that did not get showcased to the students. She suggested that the University try to find a way to do a peer to peer model to help engage with the students on their visit. She added that if the university was not intentionally recruiting students that it wanted to retain, there would not be the successes that the University was hoping for. The community member commented that international students and minority students were not included in any of the statistics. She noted that diversity was important for the University as a land grant institution. The community member also commented on private giving and how it was important to still make sure that the smaller programs like arts and humanities were still getting funding along with the STEM programs. She stated that there were not any vibrant communities for people to work in when graduating from the University, which was a main reason why they left the state after school. She mentioned that having the conversation about enhancing the STEM field was important, but also enhancing the culture was important.

A member from the community stated that she had seen the difference in assistance to students that were transferring to the University from LCCC which was a positive thing. She added that it might just be easier for LCCC in Laramie because the community college was so close but that it may not be the same for other community colleges in the state. The member talked about the fact that Laramie was poor and people around the state may not understand that. She noted that the library did not get any funding for materials from the state and that everything they had was all donation based. She commented that there was some disconnect between the community feeling as if the University was so much and the community had so little because of that.

Another member from the community mentioned that there seemed to be a lot of talk about STEM at the session, but he did not feel that way at the University. He stated that it felt as if everyone was always talking about the football team or an event that was going on with the arts, but there was never any mention about the research that was going on. He added that if the students and faculty were not hearing about it and not getting excited about it, then the community would not get interested or excited to build a business based on the research because no one knew about it. The member noted that the only thing that went on at the University to highlight the research was Undergraduate Research Day, which was not as well attended as it should be. He suggested to start talking on campus about science and make the university more of a science place and not just a football place.

Another member from the community discussed the proposed elimination of the bachelor’s degree in Russian and the master’s programs in French and German and some of the other proposed elimination of the other programs. He noted that he understood that the main concern was the lack of enrollment in certain programs. He added that in Europe, there was an upsurge in enrollment in these programs and UW did not know what might spill over to the University. The member mentioned that there was some potential benefit in language programs. He added that if the University was looking at increasing enrollment, that increased enrollment would also create an increased interest in the different languages. He noted that the University should at least maintain those programs because there were a lot of job opportunities around the country and the world for Russian languages.

A community member mentioned that UW was a University and should not become a technical school, or a science school. He noted that a university encompassed the arts, the fine arts, languages, English, and others. He stated that it would be a shame to become one sided.

Another member from the community stated that it was great to hear from the community, but her fear was that the community in Laramie and the county was going to suffer a great deal with further reduction in faculty and staff. She added that the key was if the University did not keep the faculty and staff employed, the city would deteriorate. She noted that as a community, Laramie and the University needed to find a way to keep the faculty and staff.

One member from the community stated the Laramie was such a small town and a small University and she had a vision that when new freshmen and new faculty came to town, there was an orientation to where they were living, the people and community in the town, and the resources that the town provided them.