# THE UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING

# Statewide Strategic Planning Listening Sessions

# *Cody, Wyoming*

# Wednesday, November 30, 2016

The community member stated that Cody was a tourism based community, and the University should look to provide a degree in tourism so that students upon graduation could help the hotels and restaurants to get quality management level staff. A UW Representative replied that they were looking to add new programs, and part of that process was making sure that programs were aligning with the economy of the state and particularly the workforce needs.

A community member mentioned that he cared about UW because he had two kids who had attend the University. He suggested that UW look into providing more active learning courses to better engage the students in the course.

A community member mentioned that what she heard mostly from young people was that they needed money and support to receive their college education. She added that Wyoming and UW needed to have something that they could rely on for funding. The community member added that it was difficult for these students to come to UW to get an education, even at the community college level, when funding was weighing on their minds. She suggested that one option that the University could provide students to assist with funding would be to provide undergraduate research opportunities for students as soon as they arrived on campus. The community member added that these experiences would give the opportunity for students to sample what their careers would look like upon graduation, while also getting them outside of the classroom.

Another community member added that he had been doing a lot of reading about job opportunities in Agriculture and the last figures he read was that there were 50,000 jobs that needed graduates to fill, and only 30,000 that were qualitied to fill them. He suggested that he would like to see the University strengthen the Agriculture programs and recruitment for those programs, and they should include the community colleges. He thought that students got into program that they might like, but they never get a job in that area, so students should be shown what job opportunities would be afforded to them through specific programs. The community member added that the ability for these students to interact with the agriculture producers across the spectrum could prove very rewarding. He noted that he would like to see a strengthening of the Agriculture program, and the recruiting for it, some improvements on the buildings, and working to make these programs more attractive because agriculture builds the bricks and mortars in the communities around the state.

Another community member added that she was a parent of students who graduated from the University and one concern she had was that she had watched as her sons and their friends had come in with peak achievement scholarship, but many of them who had gone into STEM majors had a problem with the transition from the high school math and science classes to the college level courses. She added that many of her son’s friends flunked out of Calculus, and they would feel very defeated., asking if there was any work within the college and the secondary schools to inform the common plan of the college level standards to better prepare these students for a smoother transition.

A UW Representative replied that the alignment of high school math, community college math, and UW math had not been completely figured out but needed to be worked on.

Another community member added that it was really hard for kids coming from small schools to go to Laramie and feel like they can succeed, noting that she was a huge proponent of students attending a community college first to create a successful transition. She added that UW’s goal to increase the number of students from Wyoming high schools attending UW immediately following high school graduation could be very difficult as these transitions were not always successful. The community members second concern was that the Outreach School was not doing enough to reach citizens of the state that were mid-career to inform them about the graduate degree programs that were available to them. She added that these programs took time and dedication, and it was not easy but it was doable, noting that this could increase the number of citizens that held master’s degrees.

Another community member wanted to speak from an economic development prospective, especially for citizens in the northwest corner as they were a long distance away from the University. She added that from an economic development perspective when they worked with business there was a challenge in the area of building a good work force. She added that Cody had a very engaged community college that worked very well with local business, but there were times that a four-year University was essential to recruitment, retention, and attracting a work force. The community member noted that she loved the research center located in Cody but she had a UAV project that needed UW engagement. She added that in Powell there was a makerspace which was doing crowd funding that could also use UW engagement, as it was an opportunity to engage students in a nontraditional way that was outside of the classroom. The community member added that from an economic development perspective those relationships with the communities and the workforce helped in diversifying the economy.

Another community member brought up the fact that rangelands were a huge land base in Wyoming and served as a base for many important things to Wyoming like livestock grazing, wildlife, water quality, aesthetic value, and recreation. Wyoming has had the number one program in rangeland management. She wanted to convey how important that degree program was to Wyoming and providing the future of range managers.

Another community member added that he had a situation with his son graduating as valedictorian with a full ride in Mechanical Engineering, and he flunked out in 2 years. He was very excited to hear that the initiatives were moving forward with the community colleges. He believed that if those programs had been available, he would have a son with an engineering degree. His son was now back in school, and he was doing well. He flew through high school and got to UW and it did not work for him with the lecture oriented classes. The programs being pushed right now would have worked better for him and others in Wyoming.

Another community member stated that she thought it would be better for UW to approach the hardships that students were facing with remediation from a different level. She suggested that UW begin to work with students while they were still in elementary school. She stated that UW could work with counselors around the state to start having students think about their future from a very young age.

A community member brought up the situational poverty and nontraditional pieces of members of the Cody community. She would like UW to look towards the outreach and extension offices and how they could partner with programs at other universities that UW was not currently offering. The community member added that as a North West College Alumni, she was excited about the articulation that was taking place between UW and the community colleges. When she graduated as a nontraditional student she did not have the same opportunities that current student did and she hoped these partnerships would continue. She noted that through the outreach programs UW could affect people that were trying to go back to school so that they could changing their futures.

A community member asked instead of what the University could do for the community, he asked what could the community do to help the University in view of the budget cuts.

A UW representative replied with some general, stating that it all began by being in attendance at the session, noting that their input was tremendously helpful. She added that the University was going to have to change how they did business, so UW had to figure out how to do more things on its own. The UW representative stated that this could be done but they would need the communities’ support, especially as UW changed enrollment and the business model. She added that it would be important to keep offering input.

Another community member asked if the strategic plan was going to look at high school success rates, and work towards bettering the entire K-12 system. A UW representative replied that this should be a robust part of the strategic plan.

A community member added that seed production was a small put important part of the Big Horn Basin region of the state, which required the success of the research stations to continue to be successful. He added that the state seed lab played an important role in the success of seed production in the Big Horn Basin. The community member noted that these were two support systems from UW that were critically important to this corner of the state. He added that these research stations need to have and produce well educated people that could go back to the farms to grow seed, especially young people. The community member stated that a program in Field Management would be a great partnership for UW to foster with Northwest College as a program that would work to better the economy of the state. He added that he knew when budgets were tight the smallest programs were cut first and he hoped UW would consider how the implementation of this program would benefit the state.

Another community member expanded by saying that 94% of the seed in Wyoming was raised in the Big Horn Basin, and that was why the industry had been moved to this region. He added that as a seed producer the programs provided by UW had been an incredible resource for him. He stressed that timeliness was important and they had had a hard time the last few years to get seed analysts, or even people trained in seed to support their production. He added that the other problem had been that major corporations were controlling many aspects of the industry, and there were very few seed production companies that were left in public domain, were controlled and produced by universities, and that was really important for land grant universities.

A community member stated that he thought UW was a great school, it provided a great education to many kids. His concern was that so many of the students got their degree, and went and got jobs out of state. He asked if UW could work with the economic development organizations across the state to possibly collaborate on their proposals to show perspective companies that if they came to Wyoming there was a pipeline for employees.

A community member suggested that it would be nice if there was an app created to make a more seamless transfer process from the Community Colleges to the University. He said how it had been a hard and time consuming process for his daughter. He added that kids pay attention to their phones, so it could be something to think about.

Another community member expressed concerned about the loss of the humanities field. He also thought it was a concern across the state. He suggested that UW work better to balance the education being given to its students.

A community member commented that it seemed like one of the greatest pools of students was from the Community Colleges. He thought there needed to be more interactions with the deans and professors. He believed part of the problem was that the Community Colleges were not fully aware of all the opportunities that UW had to offer, so they found somewhere else to go that they perceive as having more opportunities. He felt like this process would involve staff and professors in a more formal process.

A community member wanted to noted that he felt that the farther away from Laramie citizens lived, the harder it was to see the magnificence of Laramie and the campus. He added that any opportunity that UW had to get kids and parents to the campus, would sell a lot.

Another community member added a more recent prospective as a recent graduate from Casper College and a returning graduate student. She explained that the reason she did not go to UW was because the application process was incredibly difficult and the follow through from the employees was terrible. The community member added that the employees never got back to her and they fell through on their phone calls and their assistance. She stated that she found an online school that was more conducive to her current lifestyle, adding that this was something UW relaly needed to reevaluate.

Another community member added that only 23.8% of Wyoming citizens had a bachelor’s degree. She added that the state must have a lot of kids that were first generation students, and that was why they were not going to go to college, and if UW wanted kids to enroll for the first time, it needed to be easier.

Another community member added that her daughter started at Northwest with two advisors, one at the Community College and one in Billings. She stated that whenever she went in for advising they always had the advisor from Billings on the phone with them. The community member added that one of the things parents needed to realize was that these students needed to take the more difficult classes to get a degree. She added that there should be some way to have the double advisement, which could help solve the problem with transferring credits.

A community member added a comment that she had been in and out of Wyoming her whole life, and her son would be attending the University in the fall. She added that she was also receiving a degree and after she graduated in May, she would be going on to a graduate program, and she did not know if she could stay with UW. The community member suggested that UW look at contracting with someone in the smaller communities who was able to teach the weekend long intensives for the students around the state. She added that having to travel for these weekend put additional pressure on their careers, and many people who worked for UW had to leave the institution because they would not be supported to receive their graduate degrees.

Another community member seconded that a graduate program was on their radar. She added that working with extension offices would be valid for the professionals in the communities. She also commented that having gone to another school, their programs, active recruitment, and pursuit of her was a really important factor. She added that the personal contact she received from these other institutions was a huge selling point and it would be critical for UW to reconsider their strategies if they wanted to increase their enrollment.

Another community member added that she got her masters through UW and had been looking into getting her PhD, but there were no possibilities to do that through distance education or online. She did not want to leave her job, so she had to start look at different programs outside of the state. The community member through that the recruiting efforts from others were more in depth, so students tended to go out of state and she could not argue against that to have them go to UW. She believed that the key to finding more ways to get students to UW would be by having them visit the campus. The community member added that it was a great campus and had so much to offer, and students were not able to see that.

Another community member added that he graded from NWC in 2011, and when he was getting ready to graduate he had to look at other colleges. He added that the process of transferring was very frustrating. He decided that he wanted a bachelor’s degree, so he found an online school that had the same piece of constant contact during the application process. He added that with his generation, that was a huge factor. The community member added that the online component and the ease of use was really important and drew students in. He also commented that the Outreach School was great, but the ability to provided more opportunities was important. UW was not going to fit what he needed for a master’s degree, and he was upset about that.

A community member brought up one of the things that excited her about the talk, was that the University was taking a hard look at enrollment and asking how they could increase it and their degree programs. She added that this was the first time she had heard momentum about the status quo changing. She also mentioned when looking at the recruiting of high school students, she had looked at research that showed that high school students were struggling because they wanted to go into a career, and realized that it was not what they wanted to do. The community member added that this lead to these students wanting to quit or change paths which added extra time to earning their degree. She also stated that the other type of student knew what they wanted to do, but they had no idea about how to get there. She recommended UW work to get back to the high schools and helping student more fully understand their choices.