# THE UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING

# Statewide Strategic Planning Listening Sessions

# *Jackson, Wyoming*

# Wednesday, November 30, 2016

A member of the community stated that, in response to ways to recruit additional Wyoming high school graduates and community college students, it would be an idea to expand or bring more into balance the liberal arts with the many sciences, as Wyoming has a rich tradition of the humanities and support for the humanities and art. He added that as an alumnus it was an aspect of UW that should be funded better and could have an increased emphasis placed on them. The community member stated that he was pleased to see Alyson Hagy in attendance at the session, as she was so closely connected with the creative writing program within the English Department, which could be increased and improved to better benefit numerous writers in the state. He added that in regards to UW’s Outreach efforts, he suggested that the UWyo Magazine be sent to every high school senior in the state to show them the different things taking place at UW to further capture their interest.

Another community member stated that she wanted to thank UW for their hard work to better the articulation with the community colleges. She added that it had made a big different to student to enable them to transfer to UW at a Junior class standing. The community member stated that there were simple things that would make a difference in terms of recruitment of high school and community college students. She explained that when the Saturday University Program took place in Jackson there were magnificent professors that came to present and suggested that they come to the towns they were visiting a day early to visit the high schools where they could interact and lead workshops for the students, as well as visit the community colleges to make presentations in specific classes. The community member noted that presentations in the classes would allow the students to get excited and have a direct connection with the faculty and their knowledge.

A member of the community stated that she was excited to have University President Nichols and the group from UW in Jackson for this session. She stated that it was great to see that so many students scored a 24 or better on the ACT and were attending UW. The community member expressed concern regarding the fact that there was a low recruitment rate of those student in relation to how many students in Wyoming gradated high school each year, adding that UW and the state should have all of those students going to UW. She added that high schools responded to having an adult associated with UW reach out to them personally and say they wanted them to attend UW. The community member suggested that people associated with UW, such as faculty and staff, make a concerted effort to adopt a high school or a small group of students. She added that through this process, if spread across all employees, they could be tasked with writing letters or placing phone calls to inform students that they had reviewed their high school transcripts and other information and to inform these students that UW employees want them at UW. The community member added that UW could make a difference through personal contact and relationships that began early in these student’s educational careers. She added that many students in this part of the state were applying to schools like Stanford and Yale and attending these institutions because of the data that had been presented regarding the high test scores of students in the state and because these students had been well prepared. The community member added that UW could draw more students in, including students that may not have had the expectation to attend college. She concluded by stating that continuing the partnerships with the community colleges to insure the transfer of credits would benefit the many students that were already working to begin their college careers through the community colleges while still in high school.

Another member of the community echoed previous comments about potential authors in the state of Wyoming. He stated that he knew half a dozen people that were writing their own books currently. The community member added that these books were being written solely based on the richness of material that Wyoming had to offer and the resources available to those people. He stated that he had thought for a long time that the Jackson area should have a graduate program, not in place of the community colleges, but it seemed that the area provided a lot of great talent that would support a graduate program and would also provide a boom to the community. The community member suggested programs in the areas of environments program, air quality, and animal life.

A community member stated that Dean Ray Reutzel with the College of Education had recently provided positive comments about the direction of the college and the quality of the students entering the colleges and the level of work that was being conducted. He stated that any of that information that departments on campus had, could be put in the hands of prospective students and parents to help bring students to UW. The community member noted that it was important that people understood that UW was offering programs that were just as high end and competitive as other schools in the region that Wyoming students were considering.

Another community member asked about the figure that was presented about the number of Wyoming residents that held a bachelor degree. She asked if any research had been conducted to see the students who had graduated from UW and had left the state to find jobs that were not currently available to them in Wyoming. The community member stated that she thought it would be helpful to understand this aspect, because a great deal of that loss was in response to the economy and businesses offered in the state. She added that it was a sad figure that so many well educated UW graduates were lost to other states.

A community member stated that based on their experience with universities in Brazil, there was a different reality about universities. She asked what the University of Wyoming did to accommodate international students.

University President Laurie Nichols stated that UW had about 800 international students enrolled and it was an area where more could be done to reach a goal of having 1,000 international students enrolled. She added that there were a lot of advantages to having international students on the University of Wyoming campus, especially in a state like Wyoming where diversity is not as broad or diverse as one would like. University President Nichols added that the ability of UW to provide a global education within the state was another benefit to increasing the number of international students on campus and was a rich mix. She added that this was an area that should be noted with importance when looking at the overall enrollment picture.

A member of the community stated that he was involved with hospitality locally and was excited to hear that steps were being taken towards a four-year applied science program and even more excited about the potential for a hospitality degree at UW. He noted that he had begun to play a role in this exploration process for this degree through the College of Business. The community member asked if University President Nichols could provide an update and the next steps for implementing this program. He added that this process was working to help keep UW graduates in Wyoming once they graduated.

University President Nichols stated that currently UW was in the exploratory stages of implementing this degree program. She added that UW was visiting with Central Wyoming Community College to see if there was the potential for partnerships. University President Nichols stated that UW would like to move forward in the hospitality or tourism degree that would be a major work force degree for the entire state, adding that tourism was the second largest industry in the state. She added that the Strategic Plan provided the opportunity for UW to fine tune and align the degrees offered with the overall needs of the state. University President Nichols noted that this would potentially be an interdisciplinary degree with coordination between the Haub School of Environment and Natural Resources and the College of Business.

A community member stated that she was a proud parent of two UW alumni and was wondering if there were any plans to expand the outreach programs that was housed in the Center for the Arts located in Jackson.

Interim Dean of the Outreach School Alyson Hagy stated that one of the reasons she was participating in the Statewide Listening Sessions was to hear from the people across the state involved in the Outreach School. She stated that currently the Outreach School was being looked at to undergo a reorganization. Interim Dean Hagy added that they would not be retracting the Outreach School from any community in the state. She stated that the main question that they were working to answer was what should the Outreach School be doing in the regional centers in partnership with the community colleges to increase the university presence in these areas. Interim Dean Hagy stated that Jackson was an interesting site to approach since it was not a central hub, however it was critically important to the overall mission.

A member of the community stated that he was going to add comments to previous comments made regarding statewide economic development and the role that UW should play in that process. The opposite side of those comments about the ability of UW to increase the degree programs that would be relevant to economic opportunities in the state are the degree programs that do not necessarily train students for where the jobs reside or are expected to be. He suggested the implementation of a reality testing mechanism to aid in a better understand for students and faculty regarding these opportunities. The community member added that these improvements would be very important in the research arena to provide a reality testing mechanism, like was currently being offered through the Haub School of Energy Resources. He stated that the Haub School had its own Board of Directors that worked to set their main priorities but they currently were putting in a great deal of effort into coal conversion that has a questionable market. The community member explained that implementing a mechanism to test the market for the research dollars materializing at UW could help to better determine the economic development that this research would produce to benefit the state.

A community member explained that he believed that anyone could learn things based on experience, adding that he spent 42 years at UW. He stated that one thing that upset him and concerned him about the current state of the University was the across the board cuts, where everyone was suffering. The community member stated that this process was a great way to lose the quality faculty that UW currently had. He explained that in his experience, the first people to leave in situations like these were the ones that could leave based on the skill set they possessed. The community member added that he believed the problem with not filling positions immediately following their vacancy was that it created a low morale amongst employees. He stated that it would be much wiser if UW picked specific areas where it would like to excel while still creating a variety of programs, while eliminating programs that were not performing. The community member suggested that the best way to determine whether an area was successful was through the placement of students following graduation. He stated in the department he taught in they frequently placed students in the finest universities in the country and world for graduate education and worked with recruiters from major corporations to visit the department to engage the students in the program. The community member added that he hoped the council would give his comments deep thought as the plan was constructed.

A member of the community explained that as University President Nichols traveled the state every community would most likely express a need for UW to have a larger presence within the communities. He suggested that there were numerous ways for UW to accommodate this need, including different departments from across campus going out into the communities to create partnerships. The community member explained that he had recently worked with faculty members from the Berry Biodiversity Institute and the College of Education and offered the option for these individuals to come to Pinedale, as both groups had been looking for communities to engage with but were unsure about how to make those connections. He added that many communities may not know how to make these connections either, noting that UW could create a unique way to connect these two groups that would be fruitful on both ends.

A community member stated that another powerful recruitment tool was the alumni present across the state. She added that, although she was not a UW alumnus, she was a long time Wyoming resident who had witnessed how strong the alumni network was throughout the state. The community member suggested having the alumni go to the high schools and the community colleges to talk about UW through their personal experiences to show these potential students what could be done with a degree from UW in the state of Wyoming, because many of these alumni are leaders, make a difference, and are notable within the state.

University President Nichols added that she had been working with the Executive Director of the Alumni Association Keener Fry to have alumni help recruit students. Since these conversations stated, UW Alumni had made over 400 calls to prospective students in the hopes of recruiting them to attend UW.

A member of the community suggested that based on the information presented, the high schools in the state were doing a great job of producing students who were pursuing their bachelor’s degrees but then seem to disappear. He suggested that often times these students do not see the value of raising their families in Wyoming and seem to be interested in the salaries they can received upon leaving the state. The community member added that since so many of the UW graduates are leaving the state once they graduate, there will be a continued impact on the state economy. He suggested that UW work with the hospitals and businesses to have them help recruit prospective students by offering jobs once these students graduate from UW.

A community member thanked University President Nichols for hosting the session in Teton County. She stated that she worked at the Teton Science School and wanted to address the practical application of research. The community member added that she had been working with faculty in the College of Education, the College of Arts and Sciences, the Haub School of Environment and Natural Resources, and the EPSCoR Office at UW to help with the application of the research being done at UW and bringing that research into the K-12 classrooms through teacher training, professional development, and direct work with students. She stated that the Teton Science School was excited to continue those partnerships and to help expand those partnerships through initiatives like the Science Initiative.

A member of the community stated that he was a transfer student who received dual majors through the College of Agriculture, he asked what the push was to get more kids in the state interested in the agriculture community, especially since it was such a hot commodity in the state. He also suggested a push for Wyoming companies to better engage with student to recruit them to their companies after graduation, allowing more students to stay in Wyoming.

University President Nichols stated that currently efforts were being made to bring more students to UW and allowing them to finish their degrees within a four-year window at an incredibly affordable cost. She added that often in the national media there was a prominent conversation regarding the amount of debt accrued by students while they are in school, however at UW 55% of the student body leaves without any debt. University President Nichols noted that this was an amazing percentage, and for the students that do leave UW with debt, it is a small number in comparison to other universities. She explained that the work ahead of UW would involve bringing more students to UW to increase the amount of Bachelor’s prepared residents in the state, noting that things needed to better connect so that these students were receiving competitive jobs in the state once they graduated so they were more inclined to stay.

A community member stated that business partners across the state were more inclined to become involved once they saw the products that were being produced by UW through their students. He noted that the interest was present, but it needed to be approached in a different manner.

A member of the community explained that there was a system called CIEE that had agreements with universities to provided work place trainings for students interested in specific fields that allowed for students to have real world and hands on experience in their desired field. She noted that these connections enriched the student’s education and gave students a direct connection when they began looking for jobs following graduation.

A community member stated one opportunity that could benefit students across the state and encourage them to attend UW was the ability for these students to attend a conference at UW. She stated that there was a culinary and hospitality completion that took place on campus five years ago. These competitions and conferences allowed high school students to go to campus and get an idea of the culture while engaging with their peers from across the state. The community member encouraged more opportunities of that nature. She concluded her comments by stating that one question high school students often asked was about the class sizes that they would encounter at UW and wondered what the ratio currently was.

University President Nichols stated that the class size at UW was about 15 students per class, which was a figure that no other land grant institution could compare to. She added that the student to faculty ratio was 14.8 to 1., again a ratio that no other region, research, land grant intuition could compare to. University President Nichols stated that these figures should be at the front of any marketing campaign pressured by UW because it was an indicator of quality. She added that UW was doing a terrific job of offering what students were looking for in a university, but the story was not always told very well.

A member of the community spoke to the importance of implementing a hospitality program that could produce a tremendous trained work force that was critical and important to the continuation of hospitality in the state of Wyoming.

A community member asked if undocumented Wyoming high school graduates paid international student tuition, out-of-state tuition, or if they were treated like an in state resident?

University President Nichols stated that these students qualified for resident tuition rates at UW but did not have access to the Hathaway Scholarship Program.

A member of the community explained that companies were starting to nest their R&D next to towns, where there was a talented pool of graduates being produced and looking to come to the work force. She stated that a 5-10-year plan should include partnerships with the business council and government to attract companies to establish their R&D programs in a state that had a lot of benefits for business. The community member added that between faculty, staff, and graduates there was a lot of talent. She added that there was no reason that the state of Wyoming and UW could not go after projects such as these to pull in talent and bring more recognition of programs.

A community member noted that he believed that UW had trouble telling the people in the state all of the great things that were happening at the University. He added that all of these great research and degree programs at the university, he felt, had not been shared and many people had not heard of them. The community member stated that the plan needed to be implemented to create a group that worked to sell the University and inform people about the great and neat things happening on campus. He noted that telling people about these opportunities would give them more reasons to want to attend UW.

A member of the community stated that getting kids from across the state on campus to enhance their work with UW Extension Office and 4-H had been a challenge in terms of the. She suggested that UW work to find cheaper ways to accommodate these types of groups, especially when cheaper venues were offered across the state. The community member added that it was important to get these students on campus and on the University radar through these summer campus and opportunities.

A community member added that she had faced similar challenges with a 4-H program in another city in Wyoming. She noted another issue she had preciously encountered was there seemed to be a disconnect between the high school counselors and the University, especially when the change occurred in the University Studies Program. The community member suggested working more closely with the high school counselors to inform them of the workings of the University, like where to find checklists of degrees and checklists for completing those degrees, since they were currently working to advise students that were taking dual enrollment courses that they hoped would apply to their degree program at UW, and if they were unaware of changes made the USP credit, they would be unable to advise their students properly. She also suggested that the University bring people from campus to speak to groups of students about the great degree programs and help them start preparing in high school. The community member stated that she had previously used grant funds to bring these types of people to their high schools so that their students could be advised about which courses to take in high school.

A member of the community stated that previous comments had alluded to the high school counseling offices, which were key. He stated that he had four kids that had graduated from high school in Jackson and it seemed that the counselors mainly focused on providing information about the Ivy League schools and helping students get to those colleges not UW. The community member stated that over the years, many of these students attended these Ivy League schools for one year but came back and continued their education at UW. He asked why these students were not starting their careers at UW and suggested that more be done to bring the counselors to UW and educating them on the University.

University President Nichols thanked the community member for his comments and provided the community members with some statistics, noting that many students who left the state to attend college in another state were the top level students. She added that this figure caught her attention, adding that these students should be staying in Wyoming because UW offers an outstanding education at a very affordable price. University President Nichols explained that as someone coming from outside of the state, employers want students from Wyoming because they are great workers and that needed to be sold better through recruitment and offering them a high quality education. She added that she was excited to see what work could be done to elevate the Honors Program to provide a challenging curriculum and small classes. University President Nichols noted that as she continued her travels around the state, she would be going into the high schools and meeting with students and counselors to get feedback from those directly involved.

A community member stated that the University should look at older residents of Wyoming who want to go back to school to receive advanced degrees because this currently was an untapped resource.

A member of the community stated that it should be a priority of UW to be a safe and welcoming place for a diverse group of students.

A community member asked if the budget constraints would affect the Hathaway Scholarship Program.

University President Nichols stated that UW did not directly run the Hathaway Scholarship Program; it was run by the state. She added that the Hathaway would continue but there were concerns about funding that program currently. University President Nichols noted that these discussions were taking place in the Legislature, but it would continue. She noted that this program was critical to keeping good students in the state to continue their education.

A community member stated that she had worked with UW for many years and it seemed that UW had a unique opportunity to be a resource to the communities in the state to solve problems and issues they may be faced with. She added that currently the extension services were working to solve these problems and issues but it would be a great benefit to the state and these communities if UW was not so silent, as the communities greatly cherish UW.