

University of North Alabama SWOT ANALYSIS

The Strategic Planning Committee conducted an extensive review of the external and internal environment in which the University operates. A review of the University's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) was conducted. While this list is not exhaustive, it does provide a useful context for the development of the planning framework. Key SWOT issues are identified below.

Strengths:

- **Positive Campus Climate** – This addresses the high morale among employees; the quality of, and collaboration among, the senior leadership, faculty, and staff; and the overall feeling of safety and well-being on campus.
- **Economic Force in the Community** – An economic impact study conducted in 2011 revealed that the University's impact on the local economy is over \$280 million, including direct and indirect employment, payroll, taxes, spending, charitable gifts, and community service.
- **Quality Academic Programs and Student Services** – Strong administrative support of academic programs and student services contributes to their quality, including the small faculty-student ratio and the personal attention that students receive.
- **International Program Support** – Strong administrative support contributes to the success of the program, as well as strong international partnerships and an emerging interest in study abroad opportunities.

Weaknesses:

- **Aging Facilities** – Substantial deferred maintenance and older buildings require funding to maintain and restore.
- **Lack of Financial Resources** – Reductions in state funding; the necessity to update programs and services; and rising fixed costs contribute to the lack of available financial resources.
- **Lack of Political Representation** – As a smaller institution, we have less representation in Montgomery and fewer opportunities to promote ourselves.
- **RPG (Retention/Progression/Graduation)** – Some contributing factors may include the uncertain economy, high costs, lack of degree options at night and on the weekends, undersized facilities, lack of scholarship funding, and lean staffing.
- **Our Response to Changing Dynamics in Higher Education** – Ongoing environmental assessment will be required to keep the University at the forefront of the changing dynamics within higher education.

Opportunities:

- **Expanded Global Focus/Partnerships** – opportunities for fresh perspectives, programs, and partnerships

- **Expanded Enrollment Management** – the appointment of a Vice President for Enrollment Management and a refocus on recruitment and retention (enrollment management plan)
- **New Residence Halls** – the replacement of old traditional residence halls with modern facilities to focus on freshmen live-on and the first-year experience of college
- **Location/Heritage** – Given our location, we have multi-state access to students. Moreover, our proximity to the Tennessee River, rich local history, musical heritage, oldest institution of higher education in the state-- all present opportunities for growth and development.

Threats:

- **State/Federal Funding Reductions** – a continuing reduction of state support and the need to generate new streams of revenue from non-traditional sources; keeping the cost of attendance affordable
- **State/Federal Public Policy Changes** – particularly in the area of student financial aid
- **Competition** – nearby community colleges and other higher education institutions in the State and region recruit from the same student pool; perception that the University of Alabama and Auburn University are THE places to go
- **Poor Academic Preparation** – a challenge that students are not prepared to perform college-level work; need for remedial classes; lack of first-year seminar
- **Uncertain Economy** – It is a challenge to afford a college degree and a challenge for the University to maintain quality.
- **Focus on Blue Collar Jobs** – perception that a college education is becoming less important when compared to availability/high pay among blue collar careers