

The College of New Jersey
Strategic Planning Taskforce
Internal Focus Groups Executive Summary
January 2012

Strengths

Strong academic programs

- Strong academic programs with a focus on undergraduate education
- Variety and multitude of academic programs
 - Variety of majors
 - Masters in specialized programs
 - Integrated/interdisciplinary programs
 - National leader in community-engaged learning; students are on numerous service teams contributing locally.
 - Emphasis on transformative learning experiences
 - Undergraduate research opportunities, e.g., MUSE program
- Favorable faculty/student ratio
- Small classes
- Highly selective in admissions
- A shared sense that academics is at the center of what we do
- Academic transformation raised the level of excellence
- Engagement with outside partnerships is integrated into learning
- Respect for good teaching
- Accessibility of faculty and administration allows for faculty attention, research mentoring, and help in finding internships
- Liberal Arts core educates students to think so they can go out in the world and survive, opens them to new opportunities and develops interpersonal skills
- FYE and First Year Seminar program sets the stage for liberal learning
- Liberal learning curriculum transcends every major resulting in robust programs
- Mixture of liberal arts learning and professional programs

- Shift to course-based curriculum, streamlining the size of the curriculum to focus on deep learning
- Good instrumentation in science labs
- Interdisciplinary collaboration
- WILL program – provides leadership opportunities for women
- Performing arts facilities are good
- Strong extracurricular and co-curricular options
- Students feel academic facilities are top notch
- High retention rate (every student has a niche)
- Tutoring is easily available (departmental, tutoring center, accessible faculty)
- Celebrations of student achievement
- External speakers enhance learning
- Focus on fostering student development
 - Research
 - Public speaking
 - Performances
 - Participation in competitions
- Different librarians for each school/library
- Four credit classes – transition seen as positive by students, staff, and faculty
- Targeted cohort goals
- Graduate, professional programs, and institution articulation agreements

Supportive and welcoming campus climate

- Strong sense of community, between and among constituency groups (faculty, staff and students)
- Students, faculty and staff are very positive about the College when they arrive
- People want to be here based on student, faculty and staff retention rate
- People are accepting of diversity
- Healthy student cultural and athletic programs encourage work/life balance
- Students respect professors - don't have a sense of entitlement
- Faculty and staff dedication makes the experience well-balanced for students
- Students, faculty and staff make things work with limited resources
- Strong commitment to the institution keeps morale strong
- Welcoming, Personable, Friendly
- Approachable faculty and staff
- Collegial, open, collaborative, and caring community of learners
- Freshman year experience – Welcome Week and First Seminar are unique and make the community solidify.
- Commuting student felt welcomed and encouraged to stay on campus
- Committed to preserving staff despite financial hardship

- Tuition remission for children of faculty and staff is very appealing
- Human resources at TCNJ achieves a lot with little
- Pleasant place to work; strong faculty/staff retention

Talented engaged faculty

- Many talented and accomplished faculty members who are leaders in their areas of expertise
- Dedicated and passionate; reputable and helpful to students
- Not hierarchical among faculty; very positive faculty peer culture
- Ability to attract top faculty due to the type of institution, quality of the institution, caliber of the students, and our location
- Untenured faculty feel that departments and schools want them to succeed
- Faculty are allowed to be creative
- Faculty are student oriented, available outside class
- Personally engaged – know students strengths and weaknesses
- All work done by faculty (no teaching assistants)
- Commitment to teacher-scholar model; big draw for faculty since the model values research and student-centered teaching integration
- Attention to faculty workload helps to support excellence
- Teacher/scholar model has helped us hire the right people
 - Both dedicated, excellent instructors and scholars
 - Scholarship permeates instruction.
 - Embedded into the content of the courses
 - Encourage students to participate in research.
 - Innovative nationally
- Faculty workload reflects a comprehensive, balanced approach
 - Faculty research
 - Faculty teaching
 - Faculty service
- Many faculty are philanthropically involved in some way, activism, volunteerism, community speaking and service

Identity and reputation

- Public institution with a private feel
- Strong brand and reputation in the region and state, but we need more brand recognition and more definition to the brand (why we deserve the reputation we have) – even within the state but definitely outside of NJ
- Provides students of average means access to a transformative education

- Currently appropriately sized - class sizes enable students to have excellent opportunities to know their professors, have meaningful discussions, and work on small group projects
- Good value for undergraduate students, less so for graduate students
- Large enough institution for national reach but small enough for optimal class size
- We have many centers of excellence (e.g., science and athletic programs) that help in developing regional and national reputations
- High enrollment – reputation attracts students
- High retention rate; always working to improve
- High graduation rate
- Strong regional networking enables recruitment of students who will have successful careers; be leaders
- Affordability/value compared to private institutions

Leadership and governance

- Strong, stable leadership
- Accessibility of cabinet; students have more access than other schools to meet with cabinet members
- Adaptable and flexible institution with regard to changes in society, education, and technology; Constant state of openness to improvement is positive
- Focuses resources on students and academic experience
- Leadership is responsive to pressing issues
 - Developed systems and committees to identify students at risk of harming themselves and others as a result of Virginia Tech incident.
 - Behavioral Assessment and Response Team established
- College is not wasteful of money; spends money strategically based on mission
- Strong capital investment – new buildings & campus town project
- System of shared governance allows us to handle issues in a collegial way, gives all parties a voice
- Strong leadership by the Deans
 - Improving the advisement model
 - Engaged learning
 - Centers of Programs in Excellence

Campus physical environment

- Beautiful campus – a real campus, with real architectural/planned vision – first impressions matter
- Physical buildings have been well planned; e.g. Library and Multimedia Building
- Good location – Suburban setting, but close to two large metro areas

- One faculty member indicated that facilities needs have been addressed (library) in a relatively short time
- Facilities are support liberal arts education
- Campus is easy to navigate
- Housing availability on campus
- Many felt campus security is good
- Attractive and clean campus; nice landscaping
- Appreciate staying true to a traditional style with new buildings
- Small campus (easy to travel around)
- Friendly environment
- Central location in the state
- In-state for many students
- Campus town project will add a lot

Student characteristics

- Our strength is our students – they are dedicated to studying and are strong academically
- Students are enthusiastic about coming here
- Students are well brought up and respectful individuals
- Bright, hardworking, good attitude
- Appreciate their education; no sense of student entitlement
- Students are motivated and have plans for themselves
- Accepting attitude of all students regardless of affiliation with clubs, Greek life, athletics
- Involved on campus
- Well-prepared for their futures
- Happy

Student development and support services

- Strong support services for students – though they are not used as well as they could be and need to be expanded due to being already at capacity
- Strong career center (including LionsLink)
- Athletics is a center of excellence
- Bonner Center and community and engaged learning
- Internship opportunities
- Preparation for life after school
- Students included in campus decisions
- Tutoring offers Personalized scheduling
- Health Center
- OAVI
- CAPS

- Residential Education programming on learning life skills
- Food Service
- Students really study at the library – a magnet at the center of the campus
- Students are highly involved in scholarship, field experiences, community based experiences as well as in extra-curricular activities
- Size of student population and number and diversity of activities gives students a chance to explore their interests.
- Student leadership development opportunities
- Outreach to and assistance for students of concern or who are struggling
- Unique learning opportunities - e.g. study abroad, research, internships.
- Business offers networking opportunities with employers through class speakers
- Many students expressed that Career Center provides good exposure to potential employers, particularly for business and engineering majors
- Quality programs results in great hiring outcomes at graduation (School of Business)
- Well-respected in many fields internally and externally – amongst academics, employers and state-wide

Weaknesses

Weak alumni relations

- Insufficient alumni giving
- Alumni as well as current campus community members identify with smaller campus groups, rather than TSC/TCNJ as a whole
- TSC vs. TCNJ still an issue among alumni
- Develop a system to improve engagement with alumni, especially TSC alumni
- Lay the groundwork with current TCNJ students

Lack of diversity in student population

- Lack a diverse student body
 - Racial
 - Cultural
 - Socioeconomic
- Need more out-of-state and international students
- Improve services for international students
- Resources needed to serve diverse student populations and provide them with opportunities to succeed (and address concerns over achievement gaps where they exist among students)
- Diversity remains a concern, with students not participating across cultural groups (African American student active in AAA, Union Latina, and BSU).
- Awareness that access to TCNJ among different populations should not be sacrificed as we pursue academic reputation

Limited facilities to support campus life

- “Campus Life” space is seen as lacking, with limited space for students to “hang out” (BSC and Library Café only), and a lack of outside seating for casual interaction.
- STUD not competitive; need a destination Student Center
 - Lack of such space could make it increasingly difficult to attract students who would choose other schools with better Campus Life facilities.
- Lack of space for student activities, i.e. a conference center
- Numerous concerns were raised about dining (primarily by students). There is a demand for increased variety in dining options.
 - Extend hours of operation; late night

- Need more variety
- Need healthier food options
- Add another all-inclusive dining hall
- Want flexibility in meal equivalence
- Facilities are outdated and inadequate
- Physical Enhancement Center (PEC)
- Housing conditions and availability
 - Upper classmen housing
 - Quality of residence halls
- Lack of space for expansion; room to grow
 - Academic space
 - Recreational space
 - Housing
 - Parking
- Lack of “college town” environment affects out-of-state recruitment.
- Library resources
- Lounge space
- Parking

Academic program improvement opportunities

- Course availability
 - Which programs run when
 - Class seats unavailable when needed
 - Concern about impact of growing enrollment on course availability
 - Need to manage enrollment so availability isn't compromised.
- Self-designed major program is complicated to orchestrate; little guidance provided
- Strict liberal learning requirements inhibit professional track development (i.e. engineering).
- Articulation agreements
 - Graduate school
 - Professional programs
 - Transfer of credit policies
- Grading system
 - Varies across classes/professors
 - Need to standardize
- Graduate programs not competitive
- Increase transformative learning experiences.
- Provide more internship opportunities
- Enhance national networking opportunities to expand career opportunities
- Build the study abroad program
- Improve academic advising and mentoring

Uneven faculty performance

- Some students wonder how whether professor evaluations really matter and feel professor evaluations need to be taken more seriously
- Concern for the quality of some adjunct faculty for the growing reliance on adjunct faculty
- Some professors don't engage in available technologies (i.e. SOCS).
- Inadequate professional development and support for faculty

Low staff morale

- Staff is overworked and understaffed
 - affects morale
 - Impacts student services
 - Lack efficiency
- Inadequate mentoring, development and support
- Professionalism lacking; improve customer service

Student issues and concerns

- Penalties for off-campus conduct are too harsh.
- Shortage of campus jobs
- Location (the surrounding area)
- Student apathy (involvement gap)
- Lack of school pride; school spirit
- In-campus communication between campus life and students
- Student life on campus versus off
 - Off-campus activities and facilities
 - Accessibility to off campus
 - Lack of transportation off campus
 - Bubble campus; insulated
- Recreation
 - Improve weekend campus life; deter the suitcase campus reputation
 - Lack recreational space
 - Lack of "something to do"; student engagement, night life
 - Few social outlets besides Greek and athletics
 - Little support for athletics by faculty or students
- Institute a Sophomore Year Experience to minimize the sophomore slump.

Improve student support services

- Provide more support for transfer students.
 - Improve the transfer experience
 - Develop an FYE-like experience
- Not sufficient mental health support
- Administration offices are not easily accessible and useful
- Registration system needs improvement
- Improve the PAWS interface
- Improve student financial services
- Improve library resources and their use; better journal resources

Improve campus security

- Multiple student concerns – slow response rate by Ewing PD
- Parking lots unsafe; not enough light intensity
- Need for more blue light security phones
- Signage on campus is poor

Improve academic advising

- Aim for good student outcomes; well-employed, strong graduate school placement
- Help foster career and real life experiences: internships; includes on-campus opportunities in Payroll, IT, etc.
- Promote student interest in entrepreneurial careers
- Strengthen the Center for Global Engagement
- Expand career opportunities; seen as valuable by employers
- Meet the diverse student body's advising needs
- Meet the unique needs of transfer students
- Meet the unique needs of international students
- Plan for a team approach to advising which includes both faculty and staff
- Focus on advising resources to help students maximize their time here
- Faculty advisers need a broader knowledge base to assist students in academic decision making and graduation in 4 years

Improve campus climate and community

- Faculty expressed a desire to renew sense of an intellectual community
- Foster a community where students can be honest about their experiences at TCNJ i.e. “tell us what we’re doing wrong”
- Revitalize campus life and increase engagement of faculty, students, staff, and alumni

- Engage community members in decision making and increase members support for decisions i.e. “everyone should be an ambassador for the College”
- Increase faculty/staff buy in of plans and priorities
- Improve the quality of campus life so students will stay on campus
- Aspire to have the best “quality of life on campus” for faculty/staff and students (healthy, happy, fulfilled, valued and appreciated)
- Healthy student lifestyles (nutrition, sleep, exercise and stress management) need to be a focus – need the facilities and staff and staff to support this
- Advocate for more programs and activities offered through the College, clubs, and organizations
- Despite growth in on-campus population, TCNJ may still be a “suitcase school”
- Concern over low attendance at events and athletic contests, there was a clear expression of the view that there was not enough in the way of events to keep students nearby on Tuesday nights and on weekends.
- Increased student and staff participation in college activities, including athletic programs, is seen as a critical issue to improving campus life and school spirit.
- Strengthen/establish College traditions; TCNJ lacks school spirit and traditions and community involvement
- Campus leadership needs to be present at campus events and visible to members of the community – get out of the offices a bit more and mix with students, faculty, and staff, enhance engagement with students

Poor communications

- Advertising of programs
- Internal and external communication
- Given the small size of TCNJ, communication channels are not as well developed as one would expect.
- Too much “noise”

Bureaucracy too slow

- Governance process is slow on some issues; evaluate for what is warranted and what isn’t.
- Too much bureaucracy and inefficient procedures
- Data underutilized in decision-making.
- Collaboration slows down processes; sometimes arthritic
 - Need to seek approval from too many folks.
 - Stymies progress
 - Everything seems to be a fight.
 - Need leadership who says “just do it.”
- Decision-making in isolation; Do-It-Yourself culture

Culture sometimes limiting

- Highly inbred culture – causes some siloed thinking
- New Jersey parochialism
- Insufficiently proactive
- Too image-focused as opposed to solution-focused
- Too much political interference from the state government
- Cultural conflict between academics and business.
 - Academic side uses shared governance.
 - Business side operates by fiat rather than consensus.
 - Lack of shared values
 - Need to better integrate academics and Student Affairs.
- Union vs. management mentality

Improve planning and follow through

- No culture of strategic planning
- Need strategic planning on issues related to strong, competitive campus that excites people and parents.
- Inability to articulate dreams of the Deans' Council beyond the walls of the College
- Need to be brutally honest with each other regarding how to change course.

May be losing our competitive edge

- Don't take students for granted.
- Can't afford to sit on our laurels.
- All faculty and staff must recognize we are in a competitive environment and need to continue to push ahead even in the times of doing well.
- Cost of doing business goes up every year; we're at risk of being less competitive.

Insufficient information technology infrastructure

- Technology falling behind
 - IT sustainability and growth is a concern
- Lack of WI-FI
 - Strength
 - Update
 - Campus-wide
 - Security

- Only 30% of inside space has wireless internet.
- Poor cell phone reception in the buildings
 - Resulting security concerns
- 18-year-old phone system

Poor town-gown relations

- We need to bridge the gap between the local community and TCNJ to improve the relationship
- Need more engagement with Ewing community.
- Safety for students living off-campus need to be improved- there is a disconnect between Ewing police and TCNJ students living off campus
- Focus community service in Ewing, not just with Trenton
- College seems isolated when we are so close to Philadelphia and NY
- Student and staff respondents expressed considerable concern over the relationship between the College and the Ewing community
- Multiple statements saying that they expect that Campus Town will address many of these concerns

Critical Issues

Improve administrative support services

- Collaboration across College departments is not strong. There is a do-it-yourself nature to campus operations and a “silo effect” across campus. Some campus operations are seen as territorial, which prevents effective collaboration. There is a critical need to find ways to collaborate to ease the strain between departments.
- Campus services (dining, Health Services, CAPS, housing, etc.) have not kept pace with the increasing student population.
- Effective communication is lacking, with key players sometimes being absent from important meetings resulting in important ideas getting lost. There needs to be a better system to gather and share ideas. Respondents felt that there is no effective process in place for effectively communicating information.
- There was a sense that the growth of bureaucracy and administrative structures at the College needs to be controlled. There are too many committees on campus.
- Reduce bureaucracy and red tape; increase effectiveness
- Re-proportion staffing
- Provide more staffing for financial aid
- Strive for the best career services
- Business practices require reevaluation among staff offices (that limit office effectiveness and student success.)

Keep TCNJ affordable for students and families

- The cost to students of obtaining an education at TCNJ was a significant concern across all constituent groups. Respondents indicated that in-state tuition at TCNJ is close to out-of-state tuition at other schools, which is leading TCNJ to cost itself out of the market.
- An education here is expensive and students are having increasing trouble paying bills.
- The need for more financial support for students, including increased scholarship support, was seen as necessary to retain good students.
- The increase in admissions raised concern over difficulty in getting into classes, which could delay graduation, thereby increasing overall cost to students by requiring additional semesters to take needed classes.
- Increase number of scholarships awarded
- Diversify revenue to help keep tuition low

- Students are concerned about the high cost of summer and graduate school (too high for the credits).

Upgrade information technology and support services

- Equip campus to be completely wireless and easily accessible and usable
- Ensure effective wireless speed
- Information technology needs to be accessible, unified and integrated
- Wireless access on campus is limited and not high in quality; insufficient compared to peer institutions and NJ state colleges and universities
- The College's telecommunications system is considered to be outdated (no caller ID, speaker phone, have to pay for long distance).
- The PAWS system drew criticism from faculty and staff. It is considered to be difficult to use, including difficult for students to use to find courses.
- Improve computer access and access to printers
- The College's website is considered to be poor – built with frames, and having poor videos and poor sound quality.
- More training and support, especially during technology transitions, e.g., implementation of new systems and processes.
- There is the sense across all constituent groups that a clear strategic vision for technology and technology utilization is lacking, and that currently available technology does not meet the College's needs and is not at an adequate level of sophistication. Advancements in technology will have to be addressed, including creating and maintaining computer labs, improving computer capability in classrooms. We need to adapt to the changing technology of today.
- There is also the general feeling that there is not adequate tech staff support to meet the College's needs, including helping departments make the most effective use of available technology.

Invest in maintenance and upgrading of facilities

- Few large spaces to hold events for large audiences on campus (also impedes development of town-gown linkages with surrounding community)
- No main conference center for large public gatherings
- There was the strong sense that we must make long-term investments in facility upkeep and deferred maintenance; saving some money in the short-term may result in permanent and more costly damage to facilities.
- Particular mention was made of the Student Center being outdated in its design and not adequate for today's students' needs.
- Parking was also identified as a particular area of concern. Current parking availability is seen as insufficient and that it will be further taxed with additional growth at the College and by the building of the Campus Town.

- Improve amenities (gym, student center, other student spaces) – make students want to be here
- Student needs should drive facility planning
- Replace older facilities and put underutilized spaces to better use
- Faculty identified a need to expand Armstrong, too small for its uses, need more computer labs
- Facilities master plan needs to be executed in a timely fashion
- Successful realization of Campus Town project

Improve faculty resources and support

- Recruit, hire and retain the best faculty, and keep it diverse
- Minimize the use of adjunct faculty
- Mentor faculty to be advisors; doesn't come with a PhD
- Set and achieve the percentage of classes taught by full-time faculty.
- Review use of adjunct faculty
 - Some feel there are too many adjuncts
 - Adjuncts are not supervised, evaluated, or mentored
 - Parents and students notice
- Not all faculty advisors are wholly willing and/or qualified to support students.
- Consistently review faculty performance
 - Five-year reviews of faculty
 - Used to be done; not lately
 - Limited incentive to continuously improve
- Ensure that marginal teachers are actively working to improve their teaching and using student feedback
- Improve support for faculty research and scholarship (including less red tape for grants)
- Enhance the role of the Teaching and Learning Center to help faculty with technology, research, and teaching
- Academic shortages need to be a priority to reduce reliance on adjuncts
- Reduce the demands for committee service
- There is the general sense by faculty respondents that they are burdened by increasing expectations around teaching, scholarship, and administrative duties, as well as by increasing class sizes. Morale is not high among faculty as a result, and there is the sense that the impact of the transformation had uneven effects, with 20 percent of the faculty doing 80 percent of the work.
- Numerous faculty respondents raised the issue of the importance of interdisciplinary work and the development of interdisciplinary majors and minors. However, due to competing responsibilities, faculty lack the time to devote to that development work.
- New faculty are overwhelmed by workload/expectations.

- There is a need to evaluate the weight that the College places on teaching, scholarship, and service. Tenure, promotion, and increased SOSA and sabbaticals were identified as critical to faculty.
- Concern was raised about faculty evaluations from students in terms of the impact upon the faculty reward system. Such evaluations are seen as potentially self-serving, i.e., low evaluations may be given by a student to a faculty member who made the student “think” or “work.” Therefore, using student evaluations in the evaluation for tenure and promotion is problematic.
- Numerous faculty members stressed the need for increased focus on scholarship to feed the classroom and increase faculty morale. A refinement of the teacher-scholar model was also recommended to attract high quality faculty.
- There was the strong sense among faculty that faculty department chairs are critical to success of departments in their role as a bridge between students, faculty and administration. However, there was concern that it is becoming more difficult to be a faculty chair (support for faculty chairs has diminished; administrative workload has increased tremendously preventing chairs from helping their faculty assist students in reaching their long term goals). The primary role of the chairs should be as *academic* leaders.
- Lack of consistent, stable leadership in the Office of the Provost was also seen as a significant contributing factor to morale and workload concerns. Faculty do not feel that they get leadership and support from administration and that expectations on administrators are lower than those on faculty members.
- Faculty retention and reward (promotion and tenure) issues were also raised as significant concerns. Particular concern was raised by at least one faculty respondent regarding female faculty in the sciences who “get stuck” after tenure without promotion (time to promotion for females is nearly double that of the males – females are heavier on service to campus and that is negatively impacting them).
- Family friendly practices for faculty are necessary – dual careers are a reality and there is no support on campus (child care is only one element problem is larger – need to take into consideration demands that dual working couples have) – human resource issue; don’t cater to the new generation of faculty; no relationship with other institutions to support faculty.

Improve student life to remain competitive

- Lack of sufficient on-campus housing and inadequate upkeep of those facilities were identified as major concerns by numerous student respondents. (Some faculty and staff also expressed similar concerns on behalf of students.)
- Particular concern was raised about various buildings going off-line over the next several years for repairs, thereby further taxing the limited housing supply.
- Concerns over “flat pricing” for all residential facilities was also raised. Students clearly differentiate among the various residential facilities in terms of qualities

and amenities; however, all pay the same on-campus rates. One fee with varying amenities perceived as not fair.

- Upper class students, who do not have guaranteed housing, raised particular concern about the timing of notification of available beds. Those students do not learn until the spring whether they will have housing and, by that time, the best off-campus options are gone.
- Provide on-campus housing options for students who plan to study abroad for a semester.
- Connection to on-campus community more difficult if forced to live off campus
- Quality of housing poor in some cases
- The College should assist students in finding off-campus housing and helping students to navigate the rental market.
- Maintain focus on overall student development and overall student experience outside the classroom
- Not enough staff to support students
- Counseling providers insufficient in number to meet the need.
- Service students with disabilities
- Improve financial aid and related services
- Improve integration of transfer students
 - Difficulty of acceptance
 - Provide adequate housing
 - Establish an FYE for transfer students
- Provide student offerings 24/7.
 - Availability; lack of upper classmen housing
 - Quality; need air conditioned dorm rooms
 - Students dislike the lottery process
- Expand dining options
 - Provide healthy food choices
 - Ensure affordability
- Establish “Campus Town”
- Need a “destination” Student Center; draw students
- Increase opportunities for recreation
 - Finish sidewalk around the loop for runners
 - Improve athletic facilities - PEC
- Space needed for student events – conference center
- Increase parking
- Improve availability of health services
- Improve sense of safety and security
 - Lighting on campus; dark at night
 - Security personnel
 - Video surveillance
- Increase studying options, i.e. more library hours
- Complete the transition from a commuter to a residential school

- Academic/student affairs integration must continue to be a priority

Improve Staff/Administrative Resources and Support

- Widely-held perception that staff are overworked and suffering from low morale as a result
- Concern that TCNJ's competitiveness will be endangered by chronic under-staffing and under-resourcing
- College needs to figure out what a staff model should be in in this era - currently stuck in a 1950s model
- Fear (and realization) of burnout
- Lack of non-monetary incentives for staff (and faculty)
- More management opportunities for staff and pathways to get them there
- There is the general sense among staff that there are fewer staff doing more work and with fewer resources, which has negatively affected staff morale. HR support for staff is also seen as lacking. Question was raised as to what will be the repercussions of these challenges, with particular mention made of the fact that we have already been losing staff to other schools..
- An assortment of other issues, e.g., the quality of office space and health care benefits, were also identified as negatively affecting staff morale.
- Staff recognition was raised as a critical issue as a way to demonstrate respect for, and appreciation of, staff. It was suggested that we need to find ways to compensate people without more money.
- Flatten the hierarchy – streamline decision making and empower front line staff
- Provide greater transparent regarding decision making and maintain staff involvement in the decision making process
- Need better succession planning for when we lose people
- Develop professional growth opportunities
- Establish a retention plan for high quality on-boarding
- Business practices require reevaluation among staff offices (that limit office effectiveness and student success.)

Assess and improve academic programs

- Create meaningful undergraduate experiences engaged learning, study abroad, faculty research
- Assess the effectiveness of the FSP program: would a communication/writing course serve our students better?
- Re-examine the honors program; courses not of adequate quality, not enough courses to meet demand
- Increase opportunities for interdisciplinary experiences
- Evaluate the general education program; the wide menu approach

Plug into national issues

- Sustainability and environmental issues
- Social justice and cultural equity
- Economic sustainability and capacity building
- Municipal land use; connect to the crying need to issues in Trenton
- Develop international partnerships.
- Pay attention to national and state contexts we are making decisions within

Key Priorities

Establish strong leadership and a clear direction forward

- Recruit and retain strong, stable leadership, Vice Presidents and Deans
- Bring the budget, strategic plan, and master plan together.
- Balance commitment to the mission and our need to expand revenue sources.
- Ensure facilities master plan is aligned with institutional needs and the College's updated strategic plan.
- Foster a campus culture that is open to change.
- Encourage creative thinking with regard to: business practices programming, flexible staffing models
- Foster appreciation for a culture that values assessment to inform decision-making
- Leadership participation in events to increase traditions
- Faculty-staff cross planning is lacking; lack of collaboration
- Develop an institutional will – this needs to exist to enact change
- Realign cabinet level decision-making with our core academic mission
- Lose the sense of “we-they,” as in “they aren't giving us the information we need,” “they are not doing their jobs effectively and serving us,” and “they treat the workplace as a business, not as a community” perception that we don't all feel like “we're in the same boat”
- Hire a strong provost who embraces our public mission and shared governance system

Deliver the right mix of academic programs

- Clarify TCNJ's academic focus; Are we a liberal arts college or pre-professional college, or both?
- Enhance interdisciplinarity
- Identify three to four signature pedagogy and signature undergraduate experiences
- Tie into the 21st century learner and marketplace.
- Identify the next step to take in community-engaged learning.
- Consider alternative delivery methods and new programs
 - Online education
 - Blended courses
 - Alternative schedules
 - Certificate programs

- Partnerships with corporations
- Alliances with other institutions
- Continue to support summer and intercession programming
- Reevaluate the weakest programs and make hard choices
- Evaluate graduate programs
- Enhance the Global Studies program
 - Overcome administrative obstacles for getting students back and forth.
 - Increase the number of students in the program.
 - Groom students to win international awards; it's a way for us to break out of the regional image we are locked into.
- Complete the academic transformation
 - Have only completed phase one
 - Need facilities and resources to match the transformation.
 - Not enough resources to support new faculty
- Evaluate current school structure.
 - Seven schools has led to loss of institutional focus and sets up competition for scarce resources.
 - Institutional identity is difficult to achieve.
 - If we consolidated schools, we could have Associate Deans, which would let us build bench strength.

Define our institutional identity

- Need to strongly articulate an honest, genuine identity that is accurate, and to clearly communicate a vision for the next 3-5 years.
- Decide whether the College's current mission can sustain it through changing times – changes in technology, economy, population, etc., and whether we are straying from our current liberal arts mission, which may not be represented consistently across all schools within the College.
- While the issue of student housing was raised frequently by students primarily in terms of a lack of available housing, the larger issue of the College's self-identification as "primarily residential" was also raised. If the College houses only 60 percent of its undergraduate population, is it truly "primarily residential"?
- Numerous comments were made across the constituent groups about the inadequate/ineffective marketing of the College. Part of the challenge was identified as being a "name recognition" problem. "The College of New Jersey" and the "TCNJ" acronym are recognizable primarily only within the state. There was also a concern that TCNJ is not known for anything in particular that sets it apart from other institutions of higher education.
- Clarify what we expect TCNJ students to be when they graduate, both academically and socially and use that to refine our mission statement
- Go forward with a clear vision; be the national model we aspire to be
- Revisit the College's mission to meet the changing needs and economic times

- The absence of a sense of tradition – a sense of something for students to look back on after they leave – was raised as a concern that speaks directly to image/identity.
- Numerous respondents (primarily staff) suggested the need to adapt to changes in delivery modes, e.g., online learning, blended learning, etc., to hold or increase “market share.” Implementing adult education programs was also suggested in that same regard.
- At the same time, other respondents (primarily faculty) cautioned against moving too quickly to adopting new delivery modes merely to increase revenue because of the implications for the College’s image/identity and mission/vision.

Build national and international reputation

- Find a niche that the College can fill in the national marketplace of higher education and clearly define our competitive advantage
- Need to develop key performance indicators show how we are a national exemplar
- Maintain key TCNJ “points of difference” in the face of financial challenges
 - Good student: faculty ratio
 - Small class size
 - Class and section availability
 - Mentoring relationships between faculty and students
- We are not communicating who we are effectively to prospective students (both in-state and out-of-state) as well as other state-wide constituencies
- Concern that we lack even a state-wide reputation, much less a regional and a national reputation – need to develop a more effective public relations campaign
- Website does not serve TCNJ as well as it could. Perceived lack of promotion of events and multiple concerns about website quality/difficulty in finding information in general on our website. Both faculty and staff recognize the need to promote faculty achievements more widely and effectively, e.g. on the website.
- Define and articulate institutional identity that affirms mission and is achievable.
- Cultivate and strengthen traditions.
- Sharpen and coordinate the PR message.
- Maintain low tuition and TCNJ status as an “exemplar.”
- We haven’t fully exploited our unique position as a small, selective state school

Diversify and Increase Financial Resources

- Identify new funding streams and create a sense of urgency for doing so
- Develop a three to five-year plan to generate revenue; include building the endowment.
- Develop a sustainable business model

- Improve the way we do business.
- Seek alternative sources of funding to support the business model.
- Continue TCNJ commitment to keep the education affordable.
- Identify the minimum resources to maintain the status quo
 - Increase recognition of the resources required to do so.
 - Prime faculty thinking and innovation – ask them “What would you do if you had 15% more?”
- Promote courageousness and innovation
- There was widespread agreement across all constituent groups that inadequate financial resources is a major concern and that efforts must be made to expand revenue generating opportunities without reliance increasing student body size and/or tuition
- There was a desire for greater transparency regarding funding problems – knowing how much “we are short” in funding. Additionally, concern was expressed over the College’s debt level, and questionable financial stability, which affects fee structures.
- Improvements in development/fundraising were identified as critical, as well as increasing other revenue generating opportunities through means other than only increases in tuition and fees. In this regard, a number of staff and a few faculty respondents suggested exploring revenue producing graduate programs, developing online courses, blended education programs, and adult education programs to increase revenue.
- Desire for revenue may cause us to stray from what’s important; we shouldn’t modify our pedagogy and standards as a way to raise money
- Caution was also expressed regarding what resources might be taken from the campus to support the development of the Campus Town Project.

Recruit and retain highly qualified students

- Need to make decisions about right-sizing student body; right-sizing must include a clearer expression of our institutional identity
- Keep increasing the caliber of students but keep the number of students down
- Need to increase the out of state student population
- Need to make TCNJ affordable and accessible to all students and make sure we have the tools to support students from non-traditional TCNJ backgrounds
- The issue of “right sizing” the College was raised frequently across all constituent groups as a critical issue.
- There is the concern that continued growth in the student body will further tax already limited resources, including classroom space, class availability, housing, dining, other services (e.g., counseling, health, etc.).
- The question of “what type of students do we want here” was raised. It was felt that, increasingly, admitted students are not prepared to do the level of work the

College says it requires. This has led to a decline in retention rates, with an increasing number of students looking to transfer. Lowered SAT scores to increase admissions raised the concern that this practice would devalue the College, preventing it from maintaining/improving academic quality and rigor.

Institutionalize strategic planning and assessment

- Build internal capacity for strategic planning; make it the way we do business
- Get “buy in” of entire campus community to the outcomes of the strategic planning process
- Implement planning effectively to demonstrate value and benefit.
- Strategically prioritize programs
 - Be brutally honest
 - Can’t be everything to everybody
 - Need to decide what we’re going to stop doing.
 - Risk withering away excellent programs by spreading resources too thin
 - Limited resources require us to make choices
- Achieve strategic allocation of resources
- Foster a culture of innovation and promote understanding about what it takes to be great.
- Make strategic initiatives visible and prominent on the webpage and beyond
- Figure out what we’re not going to do due to financial constraints
- Focus on core programs and understand that we can’t do it all
- Follow the plan and be able to tie actions and activities back to the plan
- All department and school strategic plans should be linked back to the institutional strategic plan
- Make sure that the strategic plan and the operational plan go hand in hand
- Look at peer schools and see what the trends are so we can plan
- Be proactive in the use of data
- Strategic planning should be an empowering process (“my” strategic plan)
- Each Department should be deliberately engaged
- Continue to provide opportunities for campus members to be “heard” e.g. focus groups

This summary was prepared by Morton Winston, Jon Stauff, Lori Thompson, Debra Frank, and Ceil O’Callaghan based upon recorders notes from focus groups conducted in November and December 2011. Approximately 320 people participated in these focus groups.

