

SETTING DIRECTIONS FOR EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY
Review of Planning Process
Faculty Senate Meeting
November 7, 1989

Thank you for the opportunity to talk with you this afternoon about East Carolina's future and the method by which we will go about the difficult task of determining what we want that future to be. Bob Schellenberger and Jim Joyce have asked me to talk with you briefly about our strategic planning process--both what we've accomplished over the past 14 months as well as what we plan to accomplish over the next 6 months. As I prepared my for today I tried very hard to keep my outline concise yet meaningful. I will do that.

In September of 1988 we commenced the planning process with an off campus retreat, at which time Chancellor Eakin, the Vice Chancellors, the Deans, about 15 administrators, the Faculty Senate officers, and the chair of the Educational Planning and Policies Committee reviewed a proposed model for planning at East Carolina. Over the course of those two days, we talked about each and every aspect of that model. We even simulated various exercises within the model to gain a deeper understanding of what we were about to undertake as a University. After much discussion and healthy debate we reached a consensus about how we wanted to approach planning at ECU.

Within a month after that retreat, the planning model was presented to the University community in the form of four University-wide forums and 1,000 brochures outlining the planning process. Invitations went out across the campus to all units, to student organizations, to the Faculty Senate, and to EP squared.

Shortly thereafter, we started by forming four workgroups comprising faculty, staff, students, alumni, board members, and community leaders. These groups were to coordinate the early stages of planning. Nominations were solicited from the Vice Chancellors, Deans, and the Faculty Senate. In December, we were ready to begin.

One of these groups engaged in an analysis of the threats and opportunities that exist in our external environment. The second group went about the very difficult task of identifying our internal strengths and weaknesses. A third group was responsible for perhaps the most difficult task of assessing the values held by the people who make up East Carolina.

Very early on in their work, these groups consulted with EPPC and shared with that committee their plans for proceeding with their task--that is, the process by which they would accomplish their charge. These three groups completed their preliminary work in March and April and presented draft reports to the University community for review and comment. What resulted from that review process were revised reports that reflected the findings of the committees, informed by individuals and groups across campus. Again, faculty, staff, senators, administrators, students, alumni, and board members were invited to participate, and did. As you recall, a special Faculty Senate meeting was held to discuss the reports. The work group final reports were distributed to all of the groups mentioned above in April and May.

During the first week in May, a second planning retreat was held to discuss our progress to date and to set some priorities for the 1989-90 academic year. Senate officers participated in those goal-setting discussions. Also during that week (in fact at the retreat), the strategic planning advisory group met for the first time. Their charge was to use the results from the preliminary analysis and develop a set of recommended strategies to move the University into the future. They too were advised by EPPC on their process for accomplishing their task. The group was also fortunate to have as one of its members the Chair of the Faculty along with one other senate member. All of you have seen by now the draft SPAG report. As I understand it, you will be discussing it in detail later this afternoon. Some of you have already communicated with the Advisory Group about your concerns and/or your endorsement either at the University-wide forums or in writing. You will find that the Advisory Group listened to the comment from the campus community, and they are here today to receive further advice and comments from you. Their revised report will be completed within the next few weeks and submitted to the Chancellor for his consideration.

Informed by the many, many hours of careful study and thoughtful discussions over the past year, Dr. Eakin will draft a document that articulates a vision of what the future should hold for ECU. He will share that vision with all of you (the Senate), the vice chancellors, deans, Board members, students, and others. He will talk with you at your December meeting and after careful consideration of all comment will present a mission statement and a set of university-wide goals to guide unit planning, committee deliberations, management of the university, and our day-to-day decision-making.

One of the initial steps toward implementation of university goals is the development of implementation plans containing a series of university-wide functional strategies. These plans address such areas as financial strategies, facilities-related priorities, effective management of our enrollments, faculty and staff development issues, the structure of the organization, our information technology environment, and our goals for public outreach. Seven planning teams have been meeting for about two weeks now and will continue to meet through the semester. Their draft reports will be circulated for review in December and January, and these plans in final form will provide further guidance to the units as they begin developing unit goals and objectives to guide their activities and commitment of resources over the next two years.

As we move into the final stages of the UNIVERSITY-WIDE process, we have begun the initial steps in the UNIT planning process. This semester, units have been looking at their own strengths and weaknesses, environmental opportunities and constraints, as well as their values as a unit (particularly how those values relate to those of the institution as a whole). Once the university goals and implementation plans are completed, units will then begin work on their priorities for putting the goals into action. The guidelines, procedures, and format for unit planning will be discussed with EPPC before they are issued. The unit planning process will take place in the Spring semester and will result in a final comprehensive Strategic Plan for the university this summer, in time to guide our request for state appropriation for the next biennium. As has been the case throughout the process, draft documents will be circulated for review

and appropriate revision prior to final approval by Dr. Eakin and the Board of Trustees.

In July of next year, after a 20-month process, we will have a strategic plan that includes university-wide goals, university-wide implementation plans, and individual unit plans. This plan will guide our decision making and policy setting. Planning at the department and office level will be guided the plan. Essentially, the strategic management of the entire university will be guided by the plan. Mechanisms will be established to monitor our progress toward our goals and to measure the institution's effectiveness toward accomplishing the University mission. The SACS self-study process will be predicated on our planning efforts to date. All of these implementation, monitoring, and update efforts will be closely coordinated with appropriate University groups and, of course, the system of faculty governance.

Most all of us here at this university understand that planning is vital and necessary in order for an organization to remain viable, competitive, strong, and responsive. At a time of limited resources and impending faculty shortages, it is a prerequisite for achieving institutional excellence. Planning is intended to result in several very important outcomes: increased institutional standing, increased resources, and increased public and political support. Most of all, it will better equip us to fulfill our mission and to serve our students, the region, and the higher education community at large.

I have heard some describe our process as top-down. Others comment on its collegial orientation. Still others see it as a decentralized process. It is all of these things. Participatory because it involves individuals throughout the university; Administrative because the Chancellor sets the overall directions for the institution; decentralized because units actively participate in the development of their own unit plans, and collegial because it is structured to involve the Faculty Senate literally every step of the way.

Planning is a very difficult thing. It makes us think about the future at a time when there aren't enough hours in the day to think about eating lunch. It forces us to talk to each other about our own vision, a vision that may not even be in clear focus in our own minds. It means something is going to change, sometimes at a time when we were just getting comfortable with yesterday's changes. And it requires us to be creative with our precious resources--our time, our money, and our ideas--at a time when we might feel as though we just used up our last ounce of creativity in the classroom or laboratory.

There is only one alternative to planning. That is no planning. And from what I have observed over the past 17 months since my arrival on this campus, no planning is not an alternative at all. The people here care too much about this institution to take the chance that we can continue to do great things without a thoughtful plan to guide us. We care too much to turn our future over to fate or happenstance. So, as we continue our planning efforts (and as many of you know planning is a continuing process that doesn't end), let us all be mindful that woven throughout our differing and sometimes divergent opinions about the future is the common unifying goal that we want East Carolina University to have distinction as a truly fine public university. Thank you.