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AUTHOR Johnson, Mark; Brenton, Angela
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ABSTRACT

The University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR) and Little Rock's Pulaski Technical College (PTC) have both used the focus group process with key constituents to understand institutional needs and priorities and public expectations of their institutions. The model followed by both institutions consists of the following three phases: forming the group, considering the composition, locations, and scheduling; conducting the group, including issues related to defining the purpose, controlling discussion, and recording results; and using the results. When holding their focus groups, both colleges used a computerized decision support center located at UALR, providing individual computer terminals for all participants and allowing for both verbal interaction and simultaneous and anonymous responses to questions via the computers. The focus group participants at PTC represented employer groups reflecting the major areas of the college's occupational curriculum, while participants at UALR consisted of business leaders, educators, and parents. Benefits gained by PTC from the process included information that will help the college define strategic directions, the ability of the college president and staff to received direct feedback, and improved public relations. For UALR, the process revealed that constituents knew less about college programs than had been assumed, shed light on constituents' expectations, and increased their sense of identification with the college. (TGI)

Assessing Regional and Community Needs Through the Use of Focus Groups

Mark Johnson
Pulaski Technical College
3000 W. Scenic Dr.
North Little Rock, AR 72116
(501) 771-1000

Angela Brenton
University of Arkansas at Little Rock
2801 S. University
Little Rock, AR 72204
(501) 569-8383

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Introduction and Background

This presentation reports the processes of two campuses who have sought to integrate the views and needs of their constituents more systematically into their planning processes. Our purpose is to demonstrate the value of community focus groups in strategic planning and to share our experiences and lessons learned.

The University of Arkansas at Little Rock and Pulaski Technical College in Little Rock have both used a series of focus groups with key constituents to understand their needs, priorities and expectations of their institutions. They have also indirectly found the focus groups an excellent way of educating community constituent about educational programs and successes, and of increasing identification with their campuses in the community.

Both UALR and PTC used a computerized decision support center for conducting all or part of the focus group sessions. The decision support center, which Angi directs, is located at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. It has individual computer terminals for each participant. This is an ideal setting for a focus group because each participant can respond simultaneously and anonymously to each question posed to the group. Using a software product called Group Systems V developed by Ventana Corporation, the facilitator can then display all responses on a central screen, and the group can discuss, cluster, and rate or rank order each response. We realize that many of you may not have access to such a facility, so our intent is to discuss focus group practices and procedures that are not dependent on special equipment.

In this paper, we will give a brief background on the use of focus groups including a model for forming and conducting them. We will then describe how this model was applied by each institution, and end by discussing benefits and lessons learned in the two processes.

Background on Use of Focus Groups

Morgan (1988) offers a description of focus group interviews: "...(F)ocus groups are basically group interviews, although not in the sense of an alternation between the researcher's questions and research participant responses. Instead the reliance is on interaction within the group, based on topics that are supplied by the researcher, who typically takes the role of a moderator. The fundamental data that focus groups produce are transcripts of the group discussions."

First used in marketing research, focus groups have been recently extensively utilized in social science research, anthropological investigation, and medical research.

Downs (1980) lists five advantages of using focus group interviews:

1. Focus groups give respondents a chance to talk freely, without the strictures of systematic questioning;

2. Focus groups are relatively economical and easy to conduct;

3. The interaction in a focus group is multiplicative, with each respondent becoming a richer source of information than he or she would be alone;

4. Clients can participate in or observe groups without the rest of the group being aware they are clients, permitting them to see and hear respondents give their ideas; and

5. Focus group interviews can supply quick results.

Morgan and Krueger (1993) discuss some particular advantages for academics using focus groups with community constituents. They argue that focus groups are particularly appropriate when there is a gap between professionals and their target audience. They explain, "A gap between professionals and the target group can be due to such factors as language, culture, and region.... Many professional disciplines are facing crises because their language and logic are too different and removed from the people they are trying to serve. Physicians, professors, teachers, architects, business executives, attorneys, and others have all developed ways of thinking about reality that may be substantially different from the people they are trying to reach." They further explain how the interaction in focus groups is a powerful tool for bridging the gap: "Because the interactions in focus groups provide a clear view of how others think and talk, they are a powerful means of exposing professionals to the reality of the customer, student, or client. In addition, because the professionals work with the research team to set the questions for the discussions, they can get immediate and vivid feedback about how others respond to their ideas." (p. 16)

Morgan and Krueger go on to discuss the human connections that focus groups can forge among the participants and the sponsoring organization: "By creating and sustaining an atmosphere that promotes meaningful interaction focus groups convey a human sensitivity, a willingness to listen without becoming defensive, and a respect for opposing views that is unique and beneficial in these emotionally charged environments... The friendliness extends to both the participants, who typically enjoy their interactions together, and to the end users of the research, who feel they get a much better understanding of others' points of view through listening to their discussions. ... (A) successful focus group can help to forge a human connection between those who commission a project and those who serve as the subjects of the investigation." (p. 18)

Downs (1980) outlines a three-phase model we used in conducting our focus group processes to gain constituent input. His model is summarized in the outline below:

1. Phase One: Forming the Group

A. Choosing the participants
B. Regulating the composition of the group
C. Choosing a good location
D. Scheduling

2. Phase Two: Conducting the group

A. Defining the purpose
B. Orienting the group
C. Controlling the discussion
D. Keeping a sense of progress
E. Recording the results

3. Phase Three: Using the results

A. Summarizing the qualitative data
B. Providing feedback to participants
C. Translating the data into action.

In the sections below we discuss the ways in which UALR and Pulaski Technical College used this basic model in creating and conducting their focus groups to gain constituent input.

Pulaski Technical College Focus Groups

Background

Pulaski Technical College was converted from a postsecondary vocational school to a comprehensive two-year college, with degree granting authority in 1991. Over the past five years, it has been occupied largely with fulfilling its basic statutory mandate — creating associate degree programs, establishing a transferable general education curriculum, enhancing its faculty both in numbers and credentials, strengthening the library, and pursuing regional accreditation.

The primary service area for Pulaski Technical College, the Greater Little Rock Metropolitan Area, is Arkansas' major population center, and Pulaski Technical College is the only public two-year college in the county, creating a significant challenge to develop and expand to meet community needs.

Approximately a year ago, the President and the Board decided to initiate some longer-range strategic planning — to think beyond the initial tasks of assuming the trappings of a college. Their first priority was to obtain input from our community, to help to identify needs that should be addressed. The need assessment process will be the primary focus of this presentation. But to place it in context, the complete strategic planning process has several important components:

- The planning process is being conducted under the guidance of the President and the Board of Trustees, who will propose a vision and priorities and will approve the final plan.

- A faculty/staff Planning Committee has operational responsibility for planning and will craft a set of strategies for achieving the vision and priorities after they are determined.

- The first step of the planning process has been to conduct a series of community focus groups to identify regional needs.

- The College has also conducted an in-depth survey of the faculty and staff regarding priorities, and will continue to interact with faculty and staff throughout the process.

- The assessment of needs through focus groups is being supplemented by an analysis of economic and demographic data, state and local priorities, and other studies of regional needs.

- The findings will be presented at a Board retreat as Board members discuss a vision and priorities for the College.

Within this context, community focus groups (the focus of this session) were used to assess regional needs. We conducted five focus group sessions over a period of six months, using the computerized conference facility which Angi directs. We want to discuss how we used the Downs model in selecting group members, conducting the focus group, and using the results in our strategic planning effort.

Forming the Groups

The mission of Pulaski Technical College is to support the economy of the region and to provide educational opportunities for Arkansans. The college has both occupational degree programs and a general education transfer curriculum.

Given the College's mission, and the interest of the Board in supporting the regional economy, we were especially interested in obtaining input from business and industry. Therefore, three of the focus groups were employer groups, reflecting the major areas of the occupational curriculum — manufacturing companies, business service firms, and heath care providers.

The other major dimension of the mission is to enhance access to higher education, to include educational opportunities for first-generation college students and non-traditional students. Therefore the fourth focus group was comprised of representatives from the three public school districts in the county. And the fifth group was comprised of representatives from community-based organizations and human service agencies. In each case, we asked the group to commit to a single three-hour session.

A number of considerations went into selecting participants. First, we tended to invite companies and other organizations with whom we have worked. The samples, therefore, were not random, however we were not conducting a marketing study to find out how much people knew about us. We were trying to obtain informed input on how we could best serve our community's needs.

In deciding whom to invite from each organization, it came down to contacts. As a matter of protocol, we contacted the CEO of the organization first, if we had access to that person. We usually wound up with someone other than the CEO, and that may be a wise choice since half of the CEOs who agreed to come cancelled at the last minute. A good mix of managers/administrators and front-line people (such as personnel recruiters and school counselors) may be the best choice.

Our groups ranged from about 9-12 people. We found that we had to invite about 15 people and to call them the day before the session to insure this level of attendance. We also had three to five College faculty and staff at each meeting, primarily as observers. Having faculty and staff attend helps the findings to carry more weight when presented to the institution.

All of the sessions were breakfast meetings from 7:30 to 10:30 a.m. The employer groups liked the early meeting time because it minimized the impact on their workday. The reaction from the other groups was more mixed. One important factor was whether the participant had to get children off to school or day care in the morning.

Conducting the Focus Groups

We conducted all five of the focus groups in the computerized conference center at UALR. Each participant had a user-friendly computer terminal through which they could provide anonymous responses to each question posed to the group. Angi served as facilitator for all but one of the sessions. At the end of each question, Angi was able to display the group responses on a large screen in the front of the room. The group could then discuss, cluster, and prioritize their responses. An important element in all sessions was oral interaction among participants as well as electronic input. We encouraged participants to ask questions, explain responses, and discuss disagreements.

At the end of each session we received a computer-generated transcript of the entire meeting. We found the center to be useful and cost-effective. However, I realize that most of you do not have access to such a facility. Therefore, I want to concentrate on a few generic issues relating to the conduct of focus groups.

First, careful planning is essential. For each of our focus groups, we developed a list of questions, comparable to an interview guide. We started and finished with open-ended questions, and we attempted to present a logical sequence of questions, tailored to the particular group.

Prior to each session we corresponded with each participant, explaining the purpose of the meeting. We repeated this information at the beginning of each session, along with an orientation to the College and an overview of the equipment and process we would be using in the meeting.

The single most important point in planning and conducting a focus group is clarity of purpose. In our case the purpose was to identify the needs of each constituency and to brainstorm about strategies for jointly addressing those needs.

Another important decision is the choice of a facilitator. We contracted with Angi to facilitate our focus groups and were pleased with the results. You may not always need to use an outside facilitator, but there are some advantages. First, a professional facilitator has skills at managing a group discussion. Second, the person is neutral, and is perceived as neutral by members of the focus group. If you do not use a professional facilitator, I would recommend that you at least consult with one as you plan your focus group.

Second, it is important to devise ways to manage the flow of discussion and the recording of results in your focus group. As previously mentioned, the computerized center aided in the recording and discussion of results. But what if you do not have access to such a facility? Although the process takes longer, you can use index cards to obtain input from each participant. I'm sure you have all seen facilitators use flip charts to record and synthesize group discussions. Given adequate time, you could use a lap-top to record responses, distribute copies to your group, and allow them to rate or rank the list of responses. If you are operating under time constraints, you could send this material to your group in a follow-up mailing and ask them to respond. The advantage of the extra effort is that you will have a degree of group consensus on issues, rather than a random collection of individual responses on each question

Using the Results

Since the planning effort of Pulaski Technical College is on-going, our use of the data is preliminary. For each session, we generated a 20-25 page computer summary of comments and results. In the absence of such a computerized transcript, it might be helpfulto audiotape and transcribe discussion.

Our purpose was to seek feedback on the educational needs of our various constituencies and strategies for working together to meet those needs. What we learned was not surprising, but it was important to ask the questions and receive the answers directly from our partners and customers.

We learned that there is a great demand for technically skilled workers who also have good people skills, communication skills, and problem-solving skills. We learned that businesses were interested in forming partnerships with us to encourage more students to choose technical programs so that they can fill vacancies in their companies. These business partnerships will help us do a better job of educating students, parents, teachers, and counselors about technical programs and careers.

This is the agenda of the new federal School to Work program, so this was a topic of interest in the school district focus group as well. Perhaps the key point that came out of our discussions with the schools is that we share a common goal of better serving students who will not pursue a university degree and a white collar career.

Community organizations and their clients have some very clear needs for short-term educational programs that will lead to immediate employment but also provide a stepping stone to a career. And they need a lot of support services, including counseling, testing, financial aid, child care, and transportation. What this constituency needs, for starters, is better information about what is already available.

So how will we make use of this feedback from our focus groups? Just from these few general examples, you can see that the focus groups provided some important strategic guidance for our College. A major use of the "data" will be to brief our President, Board, and Planning Committee on the feedback from our constituencies, as a partial basis for our strategic plan.

Given the limited size of our "samples," I guess I would argue two points. First, I would place more confidence in the global feedback of the sort just shared than on the more specific findings, such as what specific types of skilled workers are needed in the health care field. Second, particularly with the more specific finding, I am inclined to use "investigative reporting" techniques with the information. That is, I would not use this information to make action recommendations unless I can verify it with other sources.

Apart from the strategic value of our focus group findings, we are also using selected findings to pursue more operational strategies such as how we can work with area school districts to better serve non-university bound students. As with any complex issue, it is easier to identify a need than it is to develop a solution.

UALR 2000 Community Task Forces

Background

UALR 2000 was a unique strategic planning process at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, initiated by a new Chancellor in the first six months of his tenure. He had entered a university plagued by financial mismanagement and a poor public image. He felt that to regain public confidence and credibility, he must initiate a bold plan to align the university with the needs and priorities of the community.

UALR 2000 was conducted in three phases over two and a half years. In Phase One, the focus of this paper, community constituents of the University joined faculty and staff in developing a prioritized set of expectations for a metropolitan university and its impact on the community. In Phase Two, response teams of faculty and staff considered the expectations of the community and drew up campus responses to community concerns. The campus response was then reviewed by members of the Community Oversight Committee to determine the extent to which the campus met the expectations of the community. In Phase Three the Chancellor issued a final report outlining specific commitments to change on the basis of community expectations and campus responses.

The extended focus groups were a part of Phase One. Groups of about 25 members each, with two thirds of each group from the community and one third from campus, met about four times each. Each task group was assigned a specific topic. The five areas of focus included Economic Development, Education, Health and Human Services, Public Policy and Law Enforcement, and Quality of Life. Each group was asked to prioritize community issues and needs and to make a prioritized list of recommendations for how the university could form partnerships to address those vital community priorities.

Phase One: Forming the groups

We wanted to constitute each task group with a majority of community members so their voices would be dominant. By having each group include some faculty and staff members, we hoped to create a dialogue between the campus and the community. However, campus members were instructed to assume a listening posture, and to provide information only when requested to by the community members. By these instructions we hoped to avoid the instinctive, "Yes, but..." response to community ideas.

We first assembled a Steering Committee (with the same 2/3 community and 1/3 campus composition) with community leaders from business, government, medicine, education, and the nonprofit sector. This group helped us with names for the task forces.

We tried to create as much diversity as possible in each task force — by age, gender, geography, race, socioeconomic status, and occupation. We wanted to include some individuals who had been supporters of the University in the past, but many who had previously had little contact with the University. After great discussion, we decided to include individuals in each group who were somewhat expert in the subject matter discussed (such as business leaders for economic development and school board members and educators for the education group), but also to include some average lay persons with an interest in the subject (such as parents in the education group). Each group was co-chaired by a faculty or staff member and by a community leader.

Each group, after an initial large kick-off orientation meeting, set their own times and meeting places. As often as possible, we tried to schedule meetings off campus in places accessible and comfortable for the community members. We tried to vary meeting times so that they were most convenient for the majority of members. We found that early morning and late afternoon times were the most preferable. Most groups chose to meet about two hours in each meeting. Most groups had an attendance rate of over 70 percent of members at each meeting.

Each group chose to conduct some of their sessions at the IBM Team Focus Center, a strategic decision support facility, equipped with a groupware system which allowed groups to brainstorm a large number of ideas in a short amount of time, and to gain consensus and prioritize ideas through instantaneous electronic voting procedures. Most groups felt that the use of this Center aided anonymity, which increased honesty of responses and made input less threatening. They also felt that it increased the efficiency of time spent in the effort. However each group also spent a number of sessions in more traditional discussion activities to maximize the human interaction of members.

Conducting the groups

One faculty member coordinated the entire Phase One Effort. That faculty member selected and trained five faculty facilitators to plan and coordinate the group process. Each of the five faculty members received one class reduction in their teaching load during the effort. They met once a week to coordinate activities and discuss questions and concerns. Each facilitator was trained in focus group interviewing, including the role of a facilitator, handling problem participants, eliciting ideas from quiet members, reaching consensus, etc.

The facilitators used a template to follow in designing their group effort. Each group was asked to address five broad questions which would assist them in identifying and prioritizing community concerns, and in recommending how the university could be involved in addressing concerns, then in prioritizing those recommendations.

All of the community task forces were oriented in a large group meeting to kick off the effort. That meeting was led by the Chancellor, and covered extensively by the media.

Recording results, and keeping a sense of progress was greatly facilitated by use of the IBM Team Focus Center, and by assigning staff support to the effort. One half-time administrative assistant was assigned to the effort, and a graduate assistant was assigned to each task force. The Team Focus Center aided in recording results since all ideas were electronically recorded, eliminating the need for transcripts and minutes. It also assisted in productivity, which aided in keeping task force members involved with the effort because of a sense of productivity and momentum. The staff support allowed us to mail complete records of each meeting to each participant within two days of each meeting. One could gain the same results without such a Center, but it would take more time in transcription of results, and might delay feedback to members somewhat.

The staff support, release time, and use of the IBM Center were expensive. The total planning effort cost $42,000, and was underwritten by a grant from the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation, a local charitable foundation dedicated to fostering community partnerships.

Using the results

The most challenging part of summarizing the data for us came as the Oversight Committee struggled with synthesizing results of five separate task forces into one overall summary document. The use of the Team Focus Center also assisted us with the summary process, since each group had developed a prioritized list of needs and recommendations. This process combined qualitative and quantitative data in a way that made an overall summary easier. However, each group developed strong identification and commitment to their ideas, and sometimes reacted defensively when the number one recommendation from their task force did not emerge as the overall number one priority in the summary report.

Providing feedback to participants was the most valuable part of the process. As mentioned previously, each group member received the results of each meeting within days. Each group also received drafts of the task force report for review and comment, and received reviews of the Oversight Committee summary report draft for review and comment. Public hearings were held for the presentation of task force reports to the Oversight Committee, and for presentation of the Oversight Committee Interim Report. We also tried to facilitate celebration and closure of the process through a celebration lunch at the conclusion of the Task Force process, and with a large public press conference and reception (attended by almost 600 people) at the release of the Chancellor's report at Phase 3. During Phase 2 and 3 of the planning process, we tried to keep all the participants from Phase 1 informed as to the progress being made.

A number of specific programs and initiatives were specific responses to the input from the community, including a Center for Campus and Community Partnerships, significant involvement of the University in supporting educational and government reform efforts, and a Criminal Justice Institute to support research and training in law enforcement, funded by $3 million from the state. Another session at this conference reports on the tangible results and progress based on the UALR 2000 initiative.

Benefits and Lessons Learned - Pulaski Technical College

First, with respect to the "content" of our focus group discussions, our findings will have an important value in helping us to define strategic directions for the College. Not that the feedback was especially surprising, but our President, our Board, and our Planning Committee needed to hear it from our partners and customers in the community. The focus groups also have given us many ideas about specific programs and services which will require further "probing."

Second, is the value of having the President and selected faculty and staff at each of the focus group meetings, so that they could hear the feedback directly. We tried to avoid having large numbers of College staff at the meetings. But I think the staff presence reinforced the message that we were interested in community input.

Third, the focus groups have had significant public relations value for the College. Virtually every group commented that they appreciated being consulted or were favorably impressed that Pulaski Technical College had asked for their input.

Our five three-hour focus groups were also a tremendously efficient way to gain a lot of input from a wide variety of informed people. Of course Angi's computerized conference center made our sessions even more productive. But I would argue that even "low tech" focus groups are an efficient way to obtain broad input.

What would we do differently next time? With respect to forming the groups, I would start with more CEO's — not necessarily to invite them to participate but to ask them to designate a representative from their company to attend. You would get more commitment from the representative that way.

I was not totally satisfied with the attendance at all of our meetings. There may not be any single solution to this problem. If I had it to do over, I would have invited more people and assumed a 60-75 percent turnout rate.

One of the five focus groups was less effective than the others. This was the community organization group. For one thing, we used an alternate facilitator for that session which broke our momentum. Another factor was that this was the most diverse group of organizations and people. Although all the other focus groups went extremely well, I realized after the community focus group that we had broken a cardinal rule that you should always pilot an interview guide. I think this would have made a difference.

With the benefit of hindsight, I would make at least one other change. I have mentioned that we received computerized transcripts of each of our focus group sessions, so we have a thorough record of the discussion. Even so, it would have been useful to ask the faculty and staff representatives to get together to exchange notes after each session. This would be even more important when you do not have a transcript.

Despite the inevitable flaws in any such effort, my colleagues and I at the College are pleased with the results of our focus groups. They were an efficient way to get substantial feedback from our community. And the public relations value was significant. If you are seeking not only to identify needs but also to create partnerships to address those needs, I believe this type of interaction with your partners and customers is very worthwhile.

Benefits and Lessons Learned - UALR

We feel our experiences with involving our constituents with focus groups yielded both important information for our institution, and process benefits. First, the focus groups produced information which was not intuitive. At UALR, we found out that the public knows less about our institution and programs than we assumed they did. We found that our constituents valued excellent undergraduate teaching above all our missions, and placed much less value on basic research than we do. We found they were interested, and further along than we were, in calling for new forms of faculty reward systems that value applied activity and teaching equally with research.

We found that the public expected us to be involved in the solution of important community and state problems — from public school issues to fighting crime to fostering economic development. We found that the public draws its impression of our institution not from media, but from word of mouth conversations. Even though the public desires involvement of the campus, they want it identified with the institution, a UALR initiative rather than a private project of an individual faculty member. We discovered a high degree of frustration among the public with their ability to access programs, individuals, and expertise within the university. Over and over, we heard the demand for "one-stop shopping," implying an accessibility and user-friendly character of the campus as a whole.

Process Benefits

In addition to information, we also gained process benefits. Important constituents of both our institutions now feel a higher sense of identification with us from their high-level participation in on-going planning efforts. The universities took the posture of actively listening to the views, priorities, needs, and frustrations of our constituents, and that made an impression. In the process of participating in discussions on the future of the institutions, constituents were indirectly educated about our programs and plans. By the same token, our faculty and administrators who sat in on the sessions were educated first-hand about the views of our constituents about our programs, hearing things many of them had never heard directly before.

At UALR, these process benefits have translated into a higher profile and more positive image in the community. Several external indicators support this conclusion. Private giving to the university is up dramatically. A referendum to establish a sales tax to fund a downtown arena, which will be the home to UALR basketball, as well as other uses, passed resoundingly after two previous defeats. The university received a state appropriation of over $ 2 million to establish a Criminal Justice Institute to coordinate campus efforts to provide training, consulting, and research to local and state law enforcement officials. The University has been asked to serve as a partner with the city and county on federal grant applications for education and urban renewal initiatives. Just this year, the Chancellor was asked to lead an effort to involve UALR faculty from various disciplines, in an effort to study and recommend complete restructuring of the State Department of Education. These are only a few of the dramatic changes on our campus which have stemmed directly from the UALR 2000 community task groups.

Lessons Learned

If we had it to do all again, we might change a few things. Even though we tried to make the task forces diverse, it was most often the minority members and grassroot organization members who did not attend. We don't fully understand the reasons why — whether locations or times of meetings, fear of technology, composition of the group, or other factors, led to less participation.

We did not involve the faculty fully enough in the first phase. Even though four to five faculty and staff members served on each of the task forces, the effort was not fully enough publicized on campus as it was occurring, leading to some resentment and confusion with results when the groups completed their tasks. Campus involvement and ownership of the process should have been stressed more.

The decision to let each group start with a blank slate without giving them a great deal of information about current university efforts in the area was a mixed blessing. We did not want to bias the effort by leading the task forces to rubberstamp our current efforts. Instead we wanted to hear from them what they thought was important, and what they wanted us to do about it. In many cases, they recommended that we get much more involved in areas in which we already were involved. Faculty in a few cases pointed to these cases to undermine the credibility of the effort. Yet, it was enlightening to find out that the public was largely unaware of our efforts. In other cases, we were expending effort, but not on the types of programs the public thought most important.

We knew at the time we invited the public to make recommendations for the priorities of the university in community partnerships that we were taking significant risks. If we sought input, then chose not to follow the recommendations of our constituents, we might risk greater alienation than if we had never asked. Yet we found our community partners very reasonable in this way. At times, we followed their ideas, and gave them feedback on how we were being responsive. At other times, we simply told them why we couldn't do what they suggested at present. In either case, it was vital to be publicly responsive to their ideas, whether the answer was yes or no.

UALR 2000 was a tremendous effort that continues to shape the very nature of our institution. The community task forces were at the heart of institutional change on our campus.

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