UNCO Phase 2 Qualitative Report

Social Research Lab at the University of Northern Colorado

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Social Research Lab
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Prepared By
Hannah Conner, *Deputy Director*

Contact
Hannah Conner, *MA, and Deputy Director*
Hannah.Conner@unco.edu
970-351-3385

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The *Social Research Lab* (SRL) of the *University of Northern Colorado* prepared this report at the request of *the University of Northern Colorado*. All identifying information has been removed and identified data is stored securely at the SRL only. The SRL is dedicated to assisting individuals and organizations in all stages of data collection and analysis.

Any questions about this report and/or inquiries about specific data should be directed to Deputy Director Hannah Conner at *Hannah.conner@unco.edu* or *970-351-3385*.

Executive Summary

Overview

The following report provides qualitative analysis from the UNC community open forum led by the University of Northern Colorado Presidents Office. The open forum was conducted in the Spring of 2022 and focused on collecting feedback on the proposed 4 Key Actions that will be implemented for phase 2 of the 2030 Rowing Not Drifting Strategic Plan. You can learn more about the 2030 Rowing Not Drifting Strategic Plan here.

This report provides in depth analysis which includes thematic coding from open-ended responses and descriptive data tables. This report is broken down into two primary sections: executive summary and findings. The findings section is further broken down into qualitative subsections, which summarizes themes.

The open forum asked participants to provide constructive feedback regarding the proposed Key Actions for phase 2 of the strategic plan. All feedback was transcribed and used to code emerging themes. All qualitative data in this report were coded for themes using Excel.

Findings

This findings section is an overview of the key findings.

- Key Action 1
    - The UNC community would like to ensure successful student engagement.
    - The UNC community would like a more robust student orientation.
    - The UNC community would like continued work with student career readiness.
    - The UNC community would like to leverage alumni relations.

- Key Action 2
    - The UNC community would like to see tactics that aim to create competitive compensation.
    - The UNC community would like to see recruitment and retention prioritized.
    - The UNC community would like to focus on boosting employee morale.
    - The UNC community would like to prioritize investing in employees.
    - The UNC community would like to see strategies to ensure a balance workload for employees.

- Key Action 3
    - The UNC community would like to create tactics that aim to elevate Unite trainings.
    - The UNC community would like to invest in student organizations.
    - The UNC community would like to prioritize mental health.
    - The UNC community would like to clarify what constitutes as campus safety.
    - The UNC community would like to measure goals for Key Action 3.

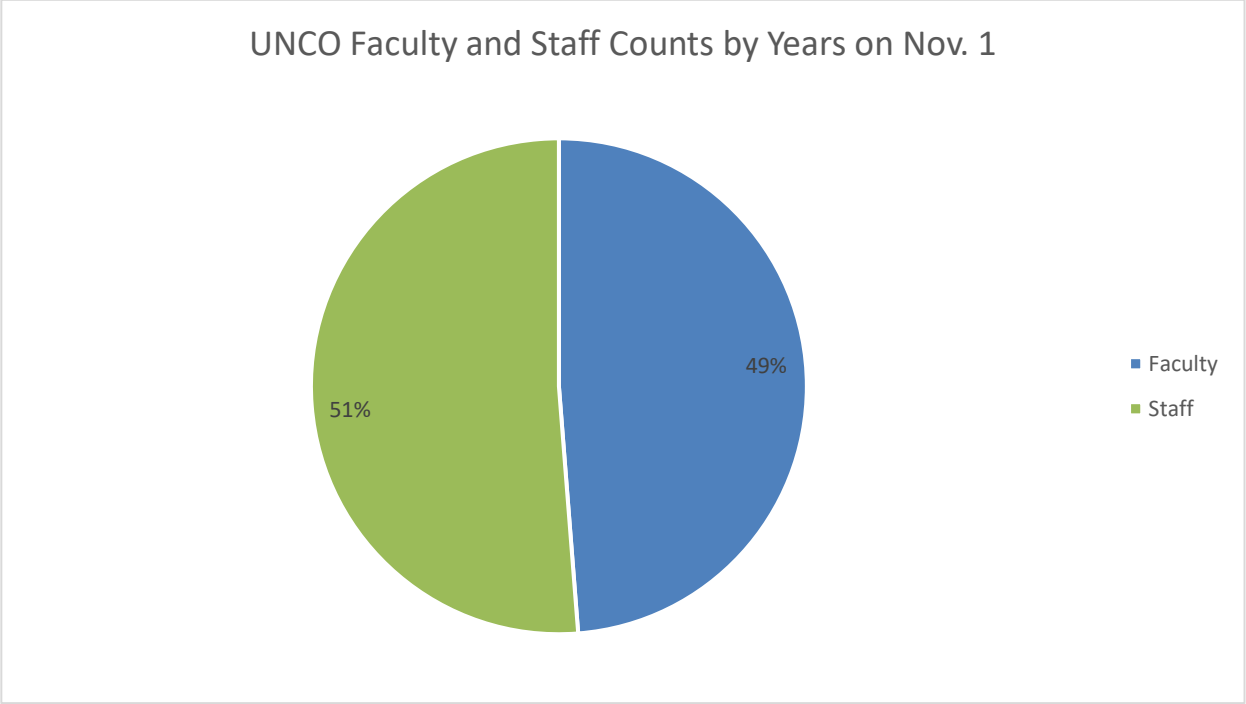
- Key Action 4
    - The UNC community would like to see a more narrowed focus in language and strategies for Key Action 4.
    - The UNC community would like to have a clear plan for improving infrastructure.

- The UNC community would like to focus on campus stories and successes.
- The UNC community would like to define metrics to measure goals for phase 2 of the strategic planning.

Demographics

The Phase 2 feedback open forum was conducted in the Spring of 2022. 16 tabling groups participated in providing feedback for phase 2 of the 2030 Rowing Not Drifting Strategic Plan. While demographic information was not collected at the open forum, secondary data was pulled from UNC Human Resources website. The most recent Human Resources Data from 2021 states that there are 1,532 faculty and staff employees as of November 1st, 2021. More information about UNC's Human Resources data can be found: https://www.unco.edu/human-resources/about-us/unc-human-resources-data.aspx.

Demographics Charts



Objectives

The following objectives were defined by the client and sent to the Social Research Lab during the development of the project scope. The survey was created to address the objectives and asked multiple questions to assess each objective. The recommendations and highlights are based on the objectives and the finding section is organized by the objectives, with a subsection for each objective.

Obj. 1	The University of Northern Colorado would like to assess feedback for Key Action 1 of phase 2: Prepare to serve and be successful in nurturing the growth of every student.
Obj. 2	The University of Northern Colorado would like to assess feedback for Key Action 2 of phase 2: Make UNC a destination for fulfilling employment opportunities by investing in faculty and staff members growth.
Obj. 3	The University of Northern Colorado would like to assess feedback for Key Action 3 of phase 2: Foster a community wherein all students, faculty, and staff feel welcome, included, and safe.
Obj. 4	The University of Northern Colorado would like to assess feedback for Key Action 4 of phase 2: Invest and implement measures that strengthen the position of the University.

Recommendations and Highlights

1	Qualitative responses suggest that participants would like to ensure successful student engagement, a more robust student orientation, continued work with student career readiness, and leveraging alumni relations as priorities for Key Action 1 of phase 2. Additionally, many participants noted reducing Key Action 1 length as well as suggesting measurements that can help further develop Key Action 1. (Addresses Objective 1)
2	Qualitative responses suggest that participants would like to create tactics that aim to create competitive compensation, increase recruitment and retention, boost employee morale, prioritize investing in employees, and having strategies to ensure a balance workload for employees for Key Action 2. (Addresses Objective 2)
3	Qualitative responses suggest that participants would like to create tactics that aim to elevate Unite trainings, invest in student organizations, prioritize mental health, clarify campus safety, and measure goals for Key Action 3. (Addresses Objective 3)
4	For Key Action 4, participants would like to see a more narrowed focus in language and strategies, a clear plan for improving infrastructure, a focus on campus stories and successes, and defined metrics to measure goals for phase 2 of the strategic planning. (Addresses Objective 4)

Findings

Phase 2 Key Action 1 Feedback

Participants were asked to provide feedback on Key Action 1 proposed for phase 2 of the strategic plan:

- "Ensure the entire university is well prepared to serve and be successful in nurturing the growth of every student by meeting them where they are with services, tools, resources, engagement, and opportunities that help them to thrive in exploring, expanding, and achieving their ambitions and fullest potential."

Main findings that emerged from the data included participants interest with continued work on career readiness, student engagement, and student orientation. Additionally, participants left helpful suggestions regarding the formatting of Key Action 1 as well as an implementation process for measurements of success of this Key Action. Further information for these findings are provided below in the qualitative subsections.

Qualitative Finding 1: Continue to work on career readiness

For proposed Key Action 1, participants provided feedback about how they would like to see continued work to ensure career readiness for students. Some participants specifically emphasized the need to create workshops, provide interview preparation, and focus on career competency. Specific quotes that highlight some participants feedback on Key Action 1 are provided below.

"***More focus on career readiness – workshops, resume and interview prep, etc.***"

"More career readiness for students at the beginning."

"Embed career competency into curriculum and co-curricular activities in collaboration with Center for Career Readiness."

"Preparing students to be successful in placement and job opportunities after UNC."

Qualitative Finding 2: Ensure Student Engagement

Another qualitative theme that emerged from the data was about the need to ensure student engagement stays a top priority for Key Action 1. Specifically, some participants mentioned focusing on removing operational barriers, being responsive to student needs, and to provide students tools for success. Additionally, many open forum groups listed student engagement as their top priority for key action 1 for phase 2. Comments below highlight this finding.

"Recognize importance of engagement of our remote/hybrid/online students and investment in our offerings for these students."

"Understand students' goals and abilities and prioritize helping students reach their full potential."

"Identify and remove operational barriers to student success."

"Lean into flexible options for students: semester length, night vs. Day classes, hybrid, etc."

Qualitative Finding 3: Enhance Student Orientation

Another theme that arose from the open forum was specifically about enhancing the student orientation process. Many participant groups noted the importance of enhancing the experience of student orientation and suggested a more robust orientation and to add orientation staffing for phase 2 of the strategic plan. The comments below highlight participant interest in enhancing student orientation.

"Orientation: a systemic, long-term opportunity to foster sense of belonging on campus: it tells our students how and why."

"Dedicated staff that have specific roles that only focus on."

"Orientation – back to more robust format."

"Rethink student orientation. Ex: Tech night to learn Canvas, learn about university resources."

Qualitative Finding 4: Leveraging Alumni Relations

Some participants noted the need to utilize alumni relations more thoroughly for Key Action 1. Some participants noted the importance of leveraging alumni relations to help network current students with career readiness. Comments below address this qualitative finding.

"Effectively engage and leverage alumni network for student career and workforce readiness."

"Link Advancement's alumni career data to academic advising."

"Alumni involvement – increase bear to bear initiative."

Qualitative Finding 5: Create a space for graduate student success

Participants provided feedback about making space for graduate students in Key Action 1. Some participants noted the need to include graduate students in phase 2, specifically with defining their role on campus. The comments below highlight this theme.

"Graduate student support."

"Figuring out the role of graduate programs in addition to broader goals."

"Where do graduate staff fit? GA's are heavily relied on to fix staffing demands."

Qualitative Finding 6: Reduce wording of Key Action 1

Another theme that arose from the open forum was specifically about reducing the language for Key Action 1. A majority of participant groups noted that the length of Key Action 1 was too long and suggest cutting back on the wording. The comments below highlight this finding.

"Language is fine, a bit lengthy."

"Proposed key action – reduce verbiage."

“Revise key action to be less wordy and more concise/measurable.”

“Too wordy – get to the point.”

Qualitative Finding 7: Creating Measurements for Key Action 1 successes

Some participants noted the need to create measurements to ensure UNC can adequately report on the progress of Key Action 1. Participants discussed a general sense of measurements needed while others provided suggestions of what to measure for Key Action 1. Comments below address this qualitative finding.

“Improve data access and utilization.”

“Qualitative analysis + documented procedures before decisions are made and communication with students throughout the process.”

“Once or twice a year required session on updates to resources, support, staff, processes, etc. So, all fac/staff know how to offer info to students (ex: manual w/ relevant area updates/changes).”

Qualitative responses suggest that participants would like to ensure successful student engagement, a more robust student orientation, continued work with student career readiness, and leveraging alumni relations as priorities for Key Action 1 of phase 2.

Additionally, many participants noted reducing Key Action 1’s length as well as suggesting measurements that can help further develop Key Action 1.

Phase 2 Key Action 2 Feedback

Participants were asked to provide feedback on Key Action 2 proposed for phase 2 of the strategic plan:

- "Make UNC a destination for fulfilling employment opportunities by investing in faculty and staff members' growth, providing them with the tools and support they need to succeed, and honoring their contributions to the success of our students, university, and community."

Main findings that emerged from the data for Key Action 2 included faculty and staff's feedback about compensation, recruitment, retention, employee morale, employee investment, and workload balance. Additionally, many participants provided suggestions of best ways to implement Key Action 2, helping provide a way to measure goals for this Key Action. Further information for these findings are provided below in the qualitative subsections.

Qualitative Finding 1: Invest in Educating Staff and Faculty

In the open-ended response section for Key Action 2, many participants provided feedback about integrating a plan to increase compensation packages for employees. Specifically, some comments addressed ensuring all faculty and staff have competitive pay in comparison to other institutions, as well providing packages that include flexibility and paid time off. The comments below highlight participants feedback specifically about compensation.

"Prioritize improving compensation."

"Increase $ to hire diverse candidates."

"Re-evaluate benefit package premiums."

"Pay faculty/staff 100% of our peer institutions."

"Compete with pay on a national average, not just with our peer institutions."

The comments above highlight participants hope that UNC integrate more competitive compensations as part of Key Action 2. Participants noted the importance of being a competitive peer institution, and incentivizing employees through better compensation packages.

Qualitative Finding 2: Proactive Recruitment and Retention Practices

Participants noted during the open forum how imperative it is to integrate proactive recruitment and retention for Key Action 2. The comments below highlight many participants feedback and suggestions for tactics about ensuring measurable recruitment practices as well as retaining current employees. Additionally, some participants noted that a more comprehensive onboarding process for new employees is necessary for Key Action 2.

"Instead of destination for fulfilling employment opportunities – focus on being a leader in employee retention. Provide a meaningful platform for employees to contribute to changing processes and removing obstacles that impact student service and learning."

"Establish internal career paths. Partner with career readiness to promote UNC

jobs to students. Proactive recruiting and sourcing."

"Improve onboarding for new employees (department and university)."

"Faculty/staff onboarding plan that are more inclusive of all aspects of the university and culture."

Qualitative Finding 3: Increase employee morale

Some comments left by specifically suggested prioritizing employee morale for Key Action 2. Participants noted that morale at UNC needs to be increased and suggested more celebration of current employees and ensuring strong communication before impactful decisions are made. Comments below highlight this finding.

"Make UNC a place where people are happy to come to work."

"Communication needs to be intentional and come early – before decisions are made. I.e., ASCs deeply impacted employee morale which still hasn't recovered."

"Methods to continue to improve morale. $/programs to celebrate successes/milestones/personal/professional."

"Prioritize innovative morale-boosting efforts."

Qualitative Finding 4: Investing in employees

Some participants provided feedback about prioritizing employee investment for Key Action 2. Specifically, participants left tactic suggestions about best practices for investing in staff and faculty. Additionally, participants mentioned this finding as a top priority to integrate for Key Action 2. Comments below highlight feedback regarding investing in employees.

"Invest in training for your standing position."

"Invest and embrace relevant professional development that matches career progression."

"By investing in ALL faculty and staff. More research support for staff, not just faculty."

"Having to increase professional development funding to gain better skills in current role to grow."

Qualitative Finding 5: Work on employee workload balance

Participants provided feedback about prioritizing work life balance for Key Action 2. Specifically, participants left tactic suggestions about best practices integrating structures for work life balance for employees. Comments below highlight feedback regarding workload balance for employees.

"Create balanced workload to allow for professional development."

"Balanced workload = adequate staffing levels."

“Providing a way to track volunteer hours/community service outside of your requirements so that it can be put on a resume (provide a certificate to show the completion of outside work).”

“Flexible schedules, locations, train supervisors on how to successfully implement, Do we need a 40-hour work week? Consistent accountability.”

Qualitative responses suggest that participants would like to create tactics that aim to create competitive compensation, increase recruitment and retention, boost employee morale, prioritize investing in employees, and having strategies to ensure a balance workload for employees for Key Action 2 for phase 2.

Objective 3: Key Action 3 Feedback

Participants were asked to provide feedback on Key Action 3 proposed for phase 2 of the strategic plan:

- " Foster a community and culture wherein all students, faculty, and staff feel welcome and included, safe, and valued in order to nurture a vibrant and constructive environment well suited to collective and individual success."

Main findings that emerged from the data for Key Action 3 included participants feedback about Unite trainings, investing in student organizations, prioritizing mental health resources, creating strategies for student engagement, and creating a process to measure goals for this Key Action. Additionally, many participants provided suggestions of best ways to implement Key Action 3, helping provide a way to develop tangible tactics. Further information for these findings are provided below in the qualitative subsections.

Qualitative Finding 1: Elevate and mandate Unite Trainings

In the open-ended response section for Key Action 3, many participants provided feedback about promoting and mandating Unite Trainings. Some comments request strengthening the content of Unite Trainings. The comments below highlight participants feedback specifically about Unite trainings.

"More access and promotion of UNITE trainings."

"Performance plan expectations to include DEI and UNITE attendance and implementation."

"Elevate UNITE trainings to institutional expectations for participation with associated funding."

"Mandatory UNITE training for fac/staff. Tie it to promotion and tenure."

"Mandated staff and faculty training (UNITE and HR supervisor)."

The comments above highlight participants suggestions that UNC mandate Unite trainings for staff and faculty. Many participants noted the importance of making UNITE trainings part of institutional expectations.

Qualitative Finding 2: Invest in student organizations

Faculty and staff noted during the open forum to invest in student organizations for Key Action 3. The comments below highlight many participants feedback and suggestions for tactics about ensuring increased opportunities for student organizations and clubs. Comments below highlight this finding.

"Dedicated spaces for student organizations. We have a lot of underutilized space. Simplify student org bureaucracy."

"Support/foster/invest in student organizations."

"Encourage and invest in clubs (E-sports as an example). Make space for them."

"Students feel there isn't anything "going on" on campus. Nothing seems to be happening to engage in – how do we find

out when and where activities are occurring? No activity, no belonging, we don't have a robust student union!"

Qualitative Finding 3: Prioritize Mental Health

Some feedback from participants specifically suggested prioritizing mental health for Action 3. Specifically, participants noted that mental health at UNC needs to strategically focus on ensuring students feel welcomed and valued. Some participants also noted how integrating childcare can also have a positive impact on mental health. Comments below highlight this finding.

"Childcare, mental health, wellness support."

"We say mental health is a priority, but our own actions don't reflect the need (I.e., limiting counseling appointments)."

"Access to services. Specifically mental health (also tied to community through outreach and access)."

"Integrate students into our support areas for childcare and mental health."

Qualitative Finding 4: Define student safety

Participants provided feedback about needing clarification regarding safety on campus for Key Action 3. Specifically, participants felt that UNC needs to better define this part of the Key Action, and ensure students are able to align with safety procedures on campus. Comments below highlight feedback regarding safety on campus.

"Safety on/off campus."

"Define what we mean by safe – define the behaviors and actions that support those goals. Safety is not the absence of discomfort."

"Student safety: don't assume all students understand fundamental safety methods (ex: don't keep keys in your car)."

"Is safety referring to the idea of safety or creating safe spaces for growth?"

Qualitative Finding 5: Measurements for Key Action 3

Some participants provided feedback about creating measurements for Key Action 3. Specifically, participants left varying suggestions about use of data, sharing measurement information, and using different methodology to capture growth for this Key Action. Comments below highlight feedback regarding different measurements that participants suggested.

"How do we measure success? What specific actions flow from statement? Language doesn't connect to how we are ACCOUNTABLE."

"Measurable goals for DEI in evaluations."

"Provide DEI training with measurable outcomes tailored to a unit's function and goals."

"Identify the obstacles to creating this culture of inclusivity (I.e., student

inclusivity create a plan to remove these obstacles).”

“Build priorities in evaluation. I.e., award collaboration, work that moves strategic plan forward.”

Qualitative responses suggest that participants would like create tactics that aim to elevate Unite trainings, invest in student organizations, prioritize mental health, clarify campus safety, and measure goals for Key Action 3 for phase 2.

Objective 4: Key Action 4 Feedback

Participants were asked to provide feedback on Key Action 4 proposed for phase 2 of the strategic plan:

- " Invest in and implement measures that strengthen and strategically position the university to excel in meeting and exceeding the expectations and potential identified in its mission and vision."

Main findings that emerged from the data for Key Action 4 include participants feedback about narrowing focus, strategizing for better infrastructure, defining metrics, and focusing on capturing and telling stories of success. Additionally, many participants provided suggestions of best ways to implement Key Action 4, helping provide a way for tangible tactics. Further information for these findings are provided below in the qualitative subsections.

Qualitative Finding 1: Narrow Key Action 4 focus

In the open-ended response section for Key Action 4, many participants provided feedback about narrowing the focus to help create a more solidified strategy. Some comments request changing the wording of the Key Action while others felt like the Key Action is not narrow enough in scope. The comments below highlight participants feedback specifically about narrowing Key Action 4.

"Vague and confusing (focusing on the future)."

"Language is too broad – should be clear."

"Pretty general language. What are the strategic priorities? Facilities, furnishings. Support and renovation to create instructional lecture recording studio. Invest in personnel to maintain campus grounds and facilities. Reduce barriers to course registration. Invest in support staff in Bear central. Reduce run around."

"The wording is unclear to our group. We are unsure of the specific outcomes."

"Statement is too broad – needs to be more specific on what UNC is striving for."

Qualitative Finding 2: Invest in infrastructure

Participants noted during the open forum to invest in current infrastructure for Key Action 4. The comments below highlight many participants feedback and suggestions for tactics about ensuring better utilization of current infrastructure.

"Invest in physical infrastructure of existing buildings."

"Invest in buildings that serve students."

"Infrastructure is student first. Upgrading amenities/dorms to have students live on campus more than one year."

Qualitative Finding 3: Focus on UNC stories

Some feedback from participants specifically suggested prioritizing stories of success for Key Action 4. Specifically, participants noted that focusing on campus success, big or small, is not

only marketable, but beneficial for campus morale. Comments below highlight this finding.

"•More personal stories and connections. I.e., 'give back'."

"Focus on stories. Celebrate small wins. Where does money go? Stories of impact & usage."

"Marketing about what you can do with a degree (specific to admissions level)."

"Better explain our successes."

Qualitative Finding 4: Define metrics

One of the most prevalent findings from feedback regarding Key Action 4 was defining a way to measure Key Actions and develop metrics to share with the campus community. Specifically, participants felt that UNC needs to develop a metrics system for the strategic planning that is visible to everyone on campus. Comments below highlight this finding.

"Missing strategic metrics – what are we working toward? What will we look like in 2030 if we're successful? Everything is vague."

"Set measurable goals that relate to concrete priorities. #4 seems to be a catch-all list of items."

"Develop literacy of the campus around data, foundations. Clarify whose expectations we are trying to meet."

"Support for gathering data, more accessibility, better response rates and usage and sharing of that information (applicable for each key action)."

For Key Action 4, participants would like to see a more narrowed focus in language and strategies, a clear plan for improving infrastructure, a focus on campus stories and successes, and defined metrics to measure goals for phase 2 of the strategic planning.