

TASK FORCE ON UNIVERSITY STATUS, TOWN HALL MEETINGS (MARCH 4 and 5, 2013)

Please note, the Powerpoint which accompanied this Town Hall Meeting is also provided on the Task Force for University Status website. Cues for when slides appeared in the presentation appear below.

PPT #1: Cover Image

1. PROJECT OVERVIEW:

In March 2012, Stockton College successfully completed its Middle States re-accreditation. The Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools (MSA), established in 1887, is a nonprofit, non-governmental organization dedicated to educational improvement through evaluation. This is a process that our institution voluntarily undergoes every five years.

PPT #2: Middle States Highlights

As I'm sure many of you know, Stockton passed with flying colors. The full report is available on the college website, but in short reviewers thought that Stockton placed a commendable emphasis on teaching, demonstrated a commitment to student learning, and fostered creative, inter-disciplinary work. Moreover, they were impressed with our planning process, which they characterized as occurring "at all levels and broadly shared," as well as a strong correlation between institutional mission, goals and financial planning. In fact, the college's overall health and growth—at both the undergraduate and graduate levels—prompted Middle States evaluators to inquire during their on-campus meetings whether Stockton had considered re-classifying itself from a public liberal arts college to a comprehensive university.

PPT #3: Definition of a Comprehensive University

A clear definition of what it means to be a comprehensive university is essential, so let me offer it here. In New Jersey, an institution that offers graduate and undergraduate degrees in a variety of academic disciplines may apply to become a comprehensive university. Such institutions emphasize teaching. Please note that when the state grants university status it does so to recognize the level and diversity of programs that an applicant already offers; it does not authorize or require the creation of doctoral programs or other new degrees. If this is a decision we decide to pursue, in other words, it is because we think this is the institution we already are—rather than what we hope to become.

PPT #4: List of Current New Jersey Comprehensive Universities

The application process to become a comprehensive university was implemented in 1993. So far, ten institutions in New Jersey have done so. Montclair State University was the first, followed by Rider, Monmouth, Rowan, William Paterson, Kean, Georgian Court, Fairleigh Dickinson, and Jersey City Universities. St. Peters University was the most recent school to do so, completing the process in 2012.

To qualify as a comprehensive university, an institution must meet two sets of standards. It must meet national standards as a Master's college or university according to the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education (this is already our Carnegie rating), and it must demonstrate that it has met New Jersey's eligibility criteria for at least five years.

PPT #5: Criteria for a New Jersey Comprehensive University

These criteria are:

- a broad range of undergraduate degree programs as well as graduate studies leading to masters' degrees in at least three areas (Stockton currently has 14 graduate programs);
- graduate students who demonstrate superior achievement at the undergraduate level;
- faculty whose competence is known beyond the institution; and
- resources to support graduate education, including laboratory facilities, library support, and financial support for graduate student and faculty research.

New Jersey's route from college to comprehensive university differs from other states in some important respects. Some states legislatively conferred comprehensive university status to all qualified institutions at once (this is what happened, for example, when Pennsylvania state colleges became Pennsylvania State University campuses, and when the California state colleges became Cal State University campuses in the 1970s). But New Jersey chose a different path, opting instead for a rigorous review process that enables public and private colleges to apply individually for university status; not every institution that offers graduate programs has chosen to do so.

As important as understanding what a comprehensive university is, is understanding what a comprehensive university is not. Comprehensive university status does not enable an institution to expand its current mission or program offerings, and permission to offer doctoral degrees must be sought through a separate and equally rigorous process. As a result, changing to comprehensive university does not necessarily mean additional costs on students or taxpayers. The new designation simply permits an institution to change its name to reflect its

status more accurately and in a manner consistent with peer institutions in the state and around the nation.

PPT #6: Definition of a Comprehensive v. Research University

A comprehensive university is also not the same as a research university. Comprehensive universities, by definition, emphasize teaching at the undergraduate and Master's levels. Research universities place a heavier emphasis on basic and applied research and on Ph.D. programs.

PPT #7: New Jersey's Research Universities

New Jersey currently has six research universities, three private (Princeton University, Seton Hall University, and the Stevens Institute of Technology), and three public (the Rutgers University campuses, the New Jersey Institute of Technology, and the University of Medicine and Dentistry).

2. FACULTY AND STAFF ONLINE SURVEY RESULTS:

PPT #8: Task Force Timeline

In September 2012, Mike Frank, President of the Faculty Senate, brought the question posed by Middle States evaluators to the full Senate, which agreed to form a Task Force to collect and synthesize feedback from various college communities (faculty, staff, students, and alumni).

Nomination for Task Force members was campus-wide, and the Senate Executive Committee proposed a preliminary list, subsequently approved by the full Senate, that was intended to ensure representation from different college schools (to make sure there was input from a variety of academic disciplines), as well as participation by senior, mid-career, to more junior faculty members.

During the fall, the Task Force drafted a series of surveys to collect preliminary reactions. Final versions of the Faculty and Staff online surveys went live in late January and early February, and full reports are posted at the Task Force website. The Student survey was launched in February as well, but is still ongoing (I will just briefly touch on what this survey already suggests); an Alumni survey will go out later this month.

PPT #9: How many years have you been at Stockton (faculty and staff)

Fair warning—this is the graph heavy portion of the conversation.....and I do move through them quickly because the full reports are available online, but I'm happy to return to any slide during questions if you'd like.

The Faculty Survey received 248 responses. This is a robust number, considering there are 282 full-time faculty and over 270 part-time faculty. Moreover, as you can see from this chart, there was good representation in terms of years at the college. The Staff Survey response rate was smaller, 135 responses, but again, there was good representation in terms of years of employment. Nearly all respondents (94.1 per cent) were full-time staff members.

The next set of questions asked faculty and staff to consider the impact of becoming a comprehensive university on a variety of factors: 1) the institution's reputation; 2) student recruitment; 3) finances; 4) education and curriculum; and 5) research.

PPT #10: Impact on Reputation (faculty and staff)

Both faculty and staff's perceptions of the impact of a move to comprehensive university status on reputation were very positive (staff slightly higher than faculty). This asked respondents to consider whether they thought such a change would influence our standing throughout the state, relative to our sister colleges, our ability to recruit faculty, and the perception of current students, alumni, and community partners.

PPT #11: Impact on Student Recruitment (faculty and staff)

Because the impact on reputation was so strong, it not surprisingly that responses to questions about student recruitment were likewise somewhat to very positive on both surveys.

PPT #12: Impact on Finances (faculty and staff)

Perception was more divided on the question of funding. While most thought there might be positive benefits for fundraising outside the college (both for individual faculty and the institution as a whole), there was far more ambivalence (or confusion—many more “I don't know” responses) on the effect of such a change on funding from the state and on internal budget allocations (this last, in particular, I'm going to return to in just a couple of minutes).

PPT #13: Graduate v. Undergraduate Students

The faculty survey asked two additional sets of questions about how such an institutional change might shape undergraduate and graduate teaching, and here too there was a more varied response which I want to return to.

PPT #14: Impact on Research

Finally, faculty were asked what such a move might mean for research expectations. This was among the most surprising set of results. A significant number of respondents, indeed well over the majority, believed that becoming a comprehensive university would increase research expectations a bit (34.7%) or a lot (38.9%).

These three issues, 1) impact on teaching (both at the graduate and undergraduate level), 2) allocation of resources, and 3) impact on research, clearly call for more discussion but before I leave the numerical part of this evening, I wanted to give you the results of each survey's final question: "On a scale of 1 (completely against it) to 10 (completely for it), what is your opinion about transitioning from a college to a comprehensive university?"

PPT #15: Overall Support

There were some correlation between responses to this question and years of service, but overall results for faculty were 28% low support (ranking 1-4); 13% moderate support (ranking 5-6), 59% high support (ranking 7-10). Staff results were higher still: 9% low support (ranking 1-4); 21% moderate support (ranking 5-6), 70% high support (ranking 7-10). While analysis of

the student survey is not yet complete (in large part because it has only been running for a week when we compiled this presentation), 1,198 students have participated so far, and again, there was good diversity across classes—183 freshmen, 230 sophomores, 338 juniors, 332 seniors, and 113 graduate students. Nearly 60 percent of respondents were transfer students. On the same 1 to 10 scale ranking, their preliminary responses were: 13% low support (ranking 1-4); 12% moderate support (ranking 5-6), 75% high support (ranking 7-10).

3. PART 3: QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS

Both surveys gave participants the chance to comment or elaborate on their choices. The three largest areas of concern or confusion in these comments dovetailed almost exactly with the last three questions I described above: 1) impact on teaching; 2) allocation of resources, and 3) impact on research. More specifically, there were questions about whether such a move would impact undergraduate and graduate programs in the same way, or if it might require that the school to divide up resources differently.

Two of these questions—teaching and undergraduate v. graduate student programs—are closely linked. It is important to emphasize that becoming a comprehensive university would not change our Carnegie Classification, which is currently listed as a “Master's M: Master's Colleges and Universities (medium programs).” What does this mean?

A quick aside....Carnegie actually ranks each school according to six criteria. I am not going to go into all six at the moment (but if you want me to, I included a slide in the Powerpoint that I can bring up during discussion).

Some criteria relate to size, setting, number of Ph.D. programs, and the like, but the two most relevant factors are our basic classification and our enrollment profile. Our basic classification is as a Master's College and University, and there are three further distinctions beyond that—small, medium and large. Size is determined by how many graduate degrees you confer—between 50 and 99 is small; 100 to 199 is medium (that's us), and over 200 is large.

To some of you, understanding that we already have a Master's College and University ranking might not be reassuring, particularly if your concern is the importance of undergraduate teaching. So let's explore that second measure—"enrollment profile." Part of our current Carnegie ranking speaks specifically to this question of the balance between graduate and undergraduate programs. Stockton is considered a "Very High Undergraduate" campus (or VHU). This means that less than 10% of our full-time enrolled students are graduate students. When Stockton College launched its first graduate program in 1997, it did so with the understanding that it wanted to remain a "Very High Undergraduate" institution, and it still does. So how close are we to that 10% figure?

PPT #16: Graduate Percentage of Overall Student FTE

Our graduate programs have certainly expanded both size and number over the last fifteen years. In the fall of 1999 and 2000 all graduate programs combined represented 4% of our full-time student enrollment. By fall 2009 and 2010, that number had risen to 6%. As of this year, graduate programs represent 6.7% of our full-time student enrollment. We have, in other words, room to grow before we come close to that 10% mark.

PPT #17: Impact on Faculty Workload

Not only would becoming a comprehensive university not change our Carnegie Classification, but it also would not change faculty workloads. This is where some of the confusion between a comprehensive university and a research university seemed to come into play, and it was expressed in a variety of ways. Let me try to address those here:

- There would not be reduction in the number of classes taught, nor a decline or rise in class size.
- There would not be a reduction in the number of general studies courses taught.
- There would not be an effort to hire faculty solely for graduate teaching (there is one exception, our current doctoral program, but all Master's programs hire faculty for both graduate and undergraduate teaching).
- Graduate teaching would not become compulsory.
- There would be no additional anticipated accreditation required; external reviewers evaluating whether Stockton could be called a comprehensive university would do so on the basis of our existing programs—with all current accreditation processes in place.

In other words, the relative balance of teaching, research, and service required for tenure would remain the same. These, are negotiated in the Master Agreement signed with the state, and are determined by your programs, not by Stockton's classification as either a college or comprehensive university.

Before I open up to the floor, I wanted to offer the Task Force's considerations of two last questions: why change, and how much would it cost?

PPT #18: Why change—bullet points for possible reasons

The first—why change—is the most difficult, and perhaps most speculative, part of this presentation. It is hard to pinpoint what the material and other benefits of becoming a comprehensive university might be. Several have been suggested:

- One possible effect is an increase in applications. There is some evidence that other New Jersey colleges and the Penn State campuses temporarily saw enrollment spikes although these leveled off over time. Moreover, there are logistical constraints on how much larger Stockton can physically grow as a campus.
- Another possibility is an increase in the quality of applications, which would potentially have a more sustained impact, even after the number of applications leveled off.

PPT #19: Student Survey—impact on reputation and recruitment

- This seems to some extent borne out in the preliminary assessment of current students when asked what such a transition would mean for the college's reputation and ability to attract international, graduate and undergraduate students (and in faculty and staff surveys, for that matter). While this is far from hard data, it is an indication of how different groups believe a name change might influence public perception, particularly of the value of a Stockton degree.

PPT #20: RETURN TO: Why change—bullet points for possible reasons

- Likewise, the Task Force was struck by how many faculty members believed a university name change would influence both status and competitiveness in both faculty recruitment and external funding applications.
- The fourth possible impact is on international perception. More than one task force member noted that the word college has different connotations abroad, causing confusion when we try to build student exchange programs.

- Finally, the Task Force considered the impact such a move would have on external ranking of the institution. I've already noted that our basic Carnegie Classification (Master's College and University, medium) is unlikely to change any time soon.
- According to the *U.S. News and World Report* Stockton already ranks as a Regional University, not a liberal arts college (despite the fact that the logo leads with "Best Colleges" on our website), so that would not change at all.

PPT #21: 40th logo and slogan change

We have better information about cost. Stockton recently underwent three instances of re-branding, the commemoration of our 40th anniversary, the transition from "New Jersey's Green College" to "New Jersey's Distinctive Public College," and that mysterious and magical process known only to the U.S. Postal Service by which we were transported like Dorothy to Oz from Pomona to Galloway, New Jersey, necessitating an address change. All required significant reworking of promotional materials (printed and online), as well as more functional goods (such as letterhead, business cards).

We recognize that a change to comprehensive university status—if it moved forward—would be larger than any of these image adjustments. The Office of External Affairs and Institutional Research estimated at least \$150,000 to modify existing college materials (some of are updated or reprinted annually anyway), and at least \$250,000 for a state-wide marketing campaign. We also considered published accounts of name change expenses, which varied from \$500,000 to \$1 million, depending on the size and location of the school, and some reflected larger multi-campus transitions. The Task Force will continue to investigate this important parameter and bring a more heavily researched number to the table in the near future. But even these estimates, while not insignificant, are not insurmountable.

We appreciate that this is a complicated issue, and I want to emphasize that the Task Force was not assembled to recommend a plan of action—our mission is to gather information and report to the Faculty Senate this May about whether the discussion should continue. Moreover, we recognize that some participants may change their minds after these Town Hall sessions and we always intended to run a second round of surveys. It remains, in other words, very much an open ended discussion. I think I can speak for all of us when I say we've enjoyed learning as much as we can about the range of possibilities or potential problems such a choice might incur. We open the floor to that discussion now, and thank you in advance for attending this forum.

PPT #22: Task Force Composition and Web Address