

ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN HIGHLIGHTS

Environmental Scan Objectives

The first key activity in the planning process was to conduct a comprehensive environmental scan. The objective of the environmental scan activities was to solicit input from a broad spectrum of community constituents related to a variety of strategic trends and issues. The information gathered during the scan provided Spelman's leadership with critical information about the vision and strategic priorities for the 2015 strategic plan.

Matthews Consulting Group, LLC gathered feedback from both internal and external constituents of Spelman College and employed a variety of quantitative and qualitative information-gathering techniques, including one-on-one interviews, focus groups (up to 15 participants), workshops (15 or more participants), an electronic survey, and a mail survey. In total, over 900 individuals participated in the environmental scan activities.

Mission

Overwhelmingly, all constituents felt that the current mission is relevant and directionally correct. However, participants also shared that the statement is seen by some as generic and uninspiring, and it does not state that the Spelman woman is already excellent. Additionally, most indicated that the statement lacks a "unique hallmark" and should more effectively differentiate and/or articulate Spelman's uniqueness. Many participants also expressed concern that the language of the mission statement is passive in voice. During the strategic planning process, additional input was solicited about the wording of the mission statement. With input from a variety of constituent groups (faculty, students, staff, alumnae, and trustees), several draft statements were developed. The faculty will continue to discuss revisions to the current mission statement in the upcoming semester.

SWOT Analysis

An analysis of internal strengths and weaknesses and external opportunities and threats (SWOT) was conducted to identify what to sustain or improve within the College and what external factors influence organizational success.

Strengths

Participants identified Spelman's longstanding tradition for academic excellence as its greatest strength, along with the top-notch, culturally diverse faculty who are instrumental in preparing students for graduation and post-graduation. Spelman is also recognized for its legacy in developing and empowering Black women and this not only promotes admiration from the College's alumnae and friends but it confirms for many that attending Spelman College is a unique opportunity to develop academically and personally. Finally, those who participated in the environmental scan process also expressed a strong sense of connectedness and loyalty for the College.

Weaknesses

Overwhelmingly, constituents identified the lack of financial resources (as compared to other liberal arts and/or women colleges) as the key weakness of the College. Although it was acknowledged that Spelman is fiscally sound and its endowment is the highest of any HBCU, many were quick to make comparisons to similar institutions of Spelman's academic caliber. The need for financial resources to attract and retain highly qualified faculty, to enhance facilities and the campus environment, and to provide support to the academic program (e.g., labs and technology) were the concerns most often expressed.

Several key areas identified for improvement also included streamlining and improving the efficiency of administrative processes and systems, improving internal communication, focusing on evaluation and assessment to support decision-making and process improvement, as well as strengthening both faculty and staff governance. It was also acknowledged that there is a need to create a culture of greater accountability to support the creation of high-quality experiences and meaningful engagement for all constituents. Creating consistent opportunities for meaningful engagement and signature experiences will ensure that key constituencies stay connected and supportive of the College today and in the future.

Opportunities

Spelman has not undergone a comprehensive curriculum review for at least seventeen years; however, there have been significant revisions to the curriculum to prepare students to meet the changing demands of careers and graduate and professional schools. Currently, Academic Affairs is going through a comprehensive curriculum transformation that provides the opportunity to rethink and recast student-learning outcomes, realign and restructure the general core curriculum with those outcomes, and thereby provide an education unique to

Spelman and complementary to its legacy and mission as a historically Black women's liberal arts college.

With a transformed curriculum as a strong base, Spelman can continue to position itself for new and innovative partnerships with other academic institutions, corporate entities and community organizations. Additionally, the upcoming capital campaign provides tremendous opportunities to strengthen Spelman's financial resources and engage parents, alumnae, and friends of the College in new and meaningful ways

Threats

One of the biggest threats identified is the fact that competition for bright, well-rounded students continues to intensify among colleges and universities and Spelman must stay focused on increasing its competitiveness. The issue of competitiveness is often linked to (1) the escalating cost of a college education, (2) Spelman's ability to provide financial support to students at a rate comparable to other schools, and (3) the expectations of potential parents and students related to security, amenities, and the surrounding community.

Other threats to be considered include overcoming the common misconceptions associated with the value of the educational experience one receives at liberal arts colleges, historically Black colleges, and/or a women's college.