**NDSU COB SWOT Survey Results**

To make a strategic plan, an important first step we took was to conduct a survey to identify how all major stakeholders of the college look at the internal strengths and weakness of the college as well as the external opportunities and threats to the college. This report provides a preliminary summary of the results of the SWOT survey conducted during April and May 2017.

**Methods**

The survey was developed by starting with items identified as strength, weakness, opportunities, and threats. The Strategic Planning Committee members proposed these items and then asked the entire business faculty to rank them via a mini online survey.

Four lists (strength, weakness, opportunities, and threats) of those items were incorporated into an online survey and each item was rated by respondents on a Likert scale. Respondents were asked to rate whether they “strongly disagree,” “disagree,” “neutral,” “agree,” or “strongly agree” with each item. A “no opinion” option was provided to respondents for each item in case they do not have enough knowledge to rate that item. After each of the four lists, respondents were also asked to comment on any item or add new items that did not appear in the survey. All of the items on the survey are listed in Table 1-4.

**Respondent Demographics**

278 individuals completed the entire or part of the online survey. Based on their relationship to the college, 167 of them were undergraduate students, 32 graduate students, 29 faculty members at the college, 8 college alumni, 4 college staff members, 3 university administrators, and 4 community members (31 respondents did not answer this question). Obviously, there are no enough respondents from the subgroups of alumni, university administrators, and community members, which is one of the limitations of this survey. Gender distribution was 129 males and 112 females (31 did not answer). As to where the respondents live, 214 were from the Fargo-Moorhead area, 19 from Minnesota (outside the F-M area), 5 from North Dakota (outside the F-M area), 4 from other U.S. states, and 2 from other countries (34 did not answer). The respondents’ age distribution was “less than 20 years old” (37 people), “20-25 years old” (140), “26-30” (13), “31-40” (19), “41-50” (12), “51-60” (10), and “60+” (5) (42 did not answer).

**Results**

The results of the quantitative portion of the survey are reported in Tables 1-4. For each item in the survey, a “strongly disagree” response was coded as a “1,” a “disagree” as a “2,” a “neutral” as “3,” an “agree” as a “4,” and a “strongly agree” as a “5.” Thus, a higher average in each of the tables indicates that respondents were more likely to agree that a particular item was a strength, weakness, opportunity, or threat to the college.

The total number of respondents follows each item in the tables, followed by the average ratings for all respondents. It should be noted that many respondents did not respond to all items, and the “no opinion” option was coded as a missing value and was not included in the calculation of the average values. The averages for undergraduates, graduate students, faculty members, staff members, alumni, administrators, and community members follow in subsequent columns of the tables. The items in each table are listed in the order of the highest total average to the lowest total average. In many cases, the average ratings of specific subgroups were different from that of the total average, and the high-scored ratings for these subgroups were highlighted in bold font.

*Strengths*

The main strengths identified in the quantitative rankings from the survey include (1) Barry Hall’s location in Downtown Fargo and its state-of-the-art facilities, (2) the College’s successful undergraduate programs, (3) the College’s professional programs such as the Sales Center and the Bison Fund, and (4) diverse faculty on age, gender, and ethnicity. Faculty, staff, and alumni respondents reported that the college’s offering of business minors and the university’s affordability are also potential strengths.

*Weaknesses*

The major weaknesses identified in the quantitative rankings from the survey include (1) limited online offerings of classes, (2) the college’s lack of alumni and community engagement, and (3) the program’s lack uniqueness and limited offering of specializations, concentrations, and tracks. Faculty respondents also reported that the university lacks recognition at national level and the college lacks adequate resources for quality teaching and research.

*Opportunities*

The most important opportunities identified in the quantitative rankings from the survey include (1) ever-changing technological environment that increases demand for lifetime learning and training, (2) offering of more specialized MBA programs such as MBA with health, agribusiness, or engineering concentration, (3) increasing demand for online business education, (4) strong demand for American business education in international markets, (5) the college's location that could facilitate active community engagement, and (6) opportunities to attract donations to the college (e.g., naming rights to the college and centers).

*Threats*

The most serious threats identified in the quantitative rankings from the survey include (1) rising monetary and opportunity costs of getting a degree, (2) declining resources from the state, (3) limited financial support for students, which leads to students working heavily to stay in school, (4) rapidly changing technological environment that threatens traditional education formats, and (5) competitive local market for MBA programs.

Besides responding to the Likert-scale rating questions, many respondents wrote down useful comments about how to improve the college:

1. The college should offer more study spaces in Barry Hall and improve downtown parking, maybe a student parking lot.
2. The college should offer more unique majors/minors/classes such as entrepreneurship, social entrepreneur, civic, community and business leadership, quantitative finance, and natural resource management.
3. The college need to offer more unique graduate and professional programs such as agri-business MBA and Master of Finance.
4. The college of business should be more student focused – offer more classes in each semester so students do not have to wait on long waitlists for some classes. MBA students need more assistance when enrolling in classes.
5. The college should offer more business classes to freshman/sophomore to keep their interest.
6. The college should offer more career help for students, maybe a career center only for business students.
7. The college and the faculty need to reach out more often to local businesses and start a conversation about internship programs. Faculty can engage more in the business community by serving on boards, advising startups, consulting for companies, etc.
8. The college needs to work across disciplines with other departments to create unique focus areas and be competitive in the region.
9. There should be a minimum level of professional experience required to be in the MBA program.
10. The college should promote stronger leadership by female faculty and as a result, our female students are more likely to see themselves in those leadership roles.
11. The classes should be more challenging and offer more hands-on learning experiences, which could include visiting businesses and observing their operation in real time.
12. There is definitely a need for more online classes that are more flexible to students’ work schedule and lifestyles, especially for MBA students.
13. The college should encourage faculty to use open educational resources and technologies such as Blackboard to reduce student costs and evolve with changing technology.

**Table 1: Ranking of Strengths**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Rank** | **Potential Strengths** | **N** | **Total Ave** | **Ugrad** | **Grad** | **Faculty**  | **Staff** | **Alumni** | **Admin** | **Community** |
| 1 | Barry Hall is located in Downtown Fargo and has state-of-the-art facilities. | 275 | 4.38 | **4.40** | **4.38** | 4.25 | **4.75** | **4.75** | **4.67** | **4.75** |
| 2 | The College has successful undergraduate programs. | 273 | 4.25 | **4.22** | **4.28** | **4.38** | **4.75** | 4.25 | 4.33 | 4.25 |
| 3 | The College offers professional programs such as the Sales Center and the Bison Fund. | 254 | 4.24 | **4.23** | **4.16** | **4.29** | **5.00** | 4.29 | **5.00** | 4.25 |
| 4 | The faculty are diverse on age, gender, ethnicity, etc. | 269 | 4.19 | **4.20** | **4.16** | 4.24 | **4.75** | 4.00 | 3.33 | 3.67 |
| 5 | The College services many non-business students with business minors. | 240 | 4.10 | 4.06 | 3.86 | **4.37** | **5.00** | **4.33** | 4.00 | 4.00 |
| 6 | The College graduates are viewed positively by employers. | 250 | 4.10 | **4.15** | 3.77 | 4.22 | 4.67 | 4.25 | 4.00 | 4.25 |
| 7 | The education at NDSU is affordable | 278 | 4.05 | 3.96 | 3.97 | **4.66** | **4.75** | **4.50** | **5.00** | 4.25 |
| 8 | The College has a focus on student success. | 275 | 3.99 | 3.97 | 3.56 | 4.24 | **5.00** | 4.25 | 4.00 | 4.25 |
| 9 | Most classes are taught by quality professors with PhD degrees. | 274 | 3.91 | 3.78 | 4.06 | **4.48** | 4.25 | 4.00 | **4.67** | 3.50 |
| 10 | The College has new leadership and a clear direction. | 252 | 3.85 | 3.74 | 3.65 | 4.03 | 4.25 | **4.86** | 4.33 | **4.75** |
| 11 | The students are diverse on age, gender, ethnicity, etc. | 269 | 3.83 | 3.93 | **4.28** | 2.83 | 3.75 | 3.50 | 3.00 | 3.75 |
| 12 | There is active collaboration among faculty in research and teaching. | 242 | 3.79 | 3.81 | 3.79 | 3.61 | 4.00 | 3.83 | 3.50 | 4.00 |
| 13 | The College has successful graduate programs. | 223 | 3.74 | 3.87 | 3.74 | 3.17 | 4.00 | 3.50 | 3.00 | 3.25 |
| 14 | Most students show strong work ethic. | 271 | 3.62 | 3.53 | 3.75 | 3.72 | 4.25 | 4.00 |   | 3.67 |
| 15 | Most professors have rich industry experiences. | 265 | 3.51 | 3.58 | 3.72 | 3.11 | 3.50 | 3.20 | 4.00 | 2.50 |

\*: numbers in bold are high-scored ones by each group of respondents.

**Table 2: Ranking of Weaknesses**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Rank** | **Potential Weaknesses** | **N** | **Total Ave** | **Ugrad** | **Grad** | **Faculty**  | **Staff** | **Alumni** | **Admin** | **Community** |
| 1 | The online offerings are limited. | 236 | 3.52 | **3.42** | **3.80** | **3.81** | **4.50** | 3.17 | **5.00** | **3.00** |
| 2 | The College lacks alumni engagement. | 228 | 3.24 | **2.93** | **3.57** | **4.24** | **4.00** | **3.63** | **3.50** | 2.50 |
| 3 | The College lacks community engagement. | 245 | 2.99 | **2.71** | **3.33** | **3.76** | **3.75** | **3.71** | 3.00 | **3.75** |
| 4 | The College's programs lack uniqueness and do not offer enough specializations, concentrations, and tracks. | 252 | 2.89 | **2.70** | **3.32** | 3.34 | 3.25 | 3.29 | **4.00** | 2.67 |
| 5 | The University lacks recognition at national level. | 239 | 2.76 | 2.51 | 2.82 | **3.83** | 3.25 | 3.17 | **3.33** | 2.67 |
| 6 | The College does not engage students enough. | 250 | 2.73 | 2.59 | 3.13 | 3.10 | 3.50 | 2.60 | 2.00 | 2.50 |
| 7 | The College lacks adequate resources for quality teaching and research. | 247 | 2.62 | 2.41 | 2.38 | **4.00** | 3.25 | 2.71 | 1.50 | **3.50** |
| 8 | The curriculum is not well integrated and coordinated. | 247 | 2.59 | 2.42 | 2.94 | 3.10 | 3.50 | 2.33 | 2.00 | **3.00** |
| 9 | The programs are not challenging enough to students. | 249 | 2.52 | 2.35 | 2.75 | 3.10 | 3.25 | 2.40 | 2.00 | 2.00 |
| 10 | The College does not adequately leverage the diversity of the faculty and students. | 230 | 2.52 | 2.30 | 2.67 | 3.52 | 3.50 | 3.00 | 2.50 | 2.00 |
| 11 | The College lacks a strong mission, vision, and identity. | 249 | 2.51 | 2.21 | 2.89 | 3.59 | 2.75 | 3.29 | 2.67 | 2.75 |
| 12 | The College does not provide adequate professional services to students (e.g., advising, student organizations, career services). | 245 | 2.31 | 2.19 | 2.88 | 2.32 | 1.50 | 3.00 | 1.00 | 2.00 |
| 13 | The College lacks adequate facilities. | 256 | 1.97 | 1.96 | 1.84 | 2.46 | 2.00 | 1.88 | 1.00 | 1.75 |

**Table 3: Ranking of Opportunities**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Rank** | **Potential Opportunities** | **N** | **Total Ave** | **Ugrad** | **Grad** | **Faculty**  | **Staff** | **Alumni** | **Admin** | **Community** |
| 1 | Ever-changing technological environment increases demand for lifetime learning and training. | 247 | 4.19 | **4.13** | **4.34** | **4.25** | 4.50 | **4.38** | **4.67** | **4.50** |
| 2 | The College could offer more specialized MBA programs (e.g., MBA with health, agribusiness, or engineering concentration). | 222 | 4.01 | **3.87** | **4.34** | 4.15 | 4.50 | 4.13 | **4.67** | 4.00 |
| 3 | There is increasing demand for online business education. | 229 | 3.99 | **3.89** | **4.28** | 3.88 | **4.75** | **4.50** | **5.00** | 4.25 |
| 4 | There is strong demand for American business education in international markets. | 209 | 3.97 | **3.91** | 4.09 | **4.27** | 3.75 | 4.17 | 3.00 | 4.00 |
| 5 | The College's location provides opportunities for active community engagement. | 247 | 3.95 | 3.84 | 4.00 | **4.21** | 4.50 | **4.38** | **4.67** | **4.75** |
| 6 | There are opportunities to attract donations to the College (e.g., naming rights to the College and centers). | 206 | 3.91 | 3.82 | 3.68 | **4.21** | **4.75** | 4.29 | 4.33 | 3.75 |
| 7 | There is a good quality high school student pool in the region. | 222 | 3.83 | 3.85 | 3.54 | 3.69 | 4.25 | **4.43** | **4.67** | **4.50** |
| 8 | There are opportunities for collaborative endeavors across colleges at NDSU. | 233 | 3.83 | 3.78 | 3.61 | 4.00 | **5.00** | 4.29 | **4.67** | 4.25 |
| 9 | The faculty with international background provides opportunities for global outreach and expansion. | 231 | 3.76 | 3.76 | 3.41 | 4.07 | **4.75** | 3.80 | 4.33 | 3.00 |
| 10 | The demand for short courses and certificate programs is high in the region. | 204 | 3.68 | 3.68 | 3.78 | 3.48 | 4.00 | 4.00 | 4.50 | 3.25 |
| 11 | The demand for MBA education is high in the region. | 205 | 3.55 | 3.51 | 3.79 | 3.40 | 4.00 | 3.50 | 4.33 | 3.00 |

**Table 4: Ranking of Threats**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Rank** | **Potential Threats** | **N** | **Total Ave** | **Ugrad** | **Grad** | **Faculty**  | **Staff** | **Alumni** | **Admin** | **Community** |
| 1 | The monetary and opportunity costs of getting a degree are rising. | 245 | 3.98 | **4.08** | **4.00** | 3.50 | **4.00** | **4.25** | **3.67** | 3.00 |
| 2 | Resources from the state are declining. | 231 | 3.98 | **3.73** | **4.32** | **4.66** | **5.00** | **4.50** | 3.00 | **4.50** |
| 3 | The financial support for students is limited, which leads to students working heavily to stay in school. | 234 | 3.76 | **3.80** | **3.90** | 3.42 | **4.00** | 3.71 | **4.00** | 2.75 |
| 4 | Rapidly changing technological environment threatens traditional education formats. | 240 | 3.54 | 3.50 | **3.81** | 3.31 | 3.75 | **4.00** | 2.67 | **4.25** |
| 5 | The local market for MBA programs is competitive. | 206 | 3.49 | 3.48 | 3.31 | **3.67** | 3.50 | **4.00** | **4.00** | 2.50 |
| 6 | Fargo's reputation as an extremely cold place restricts the College's ability to recruit and retain some faculty. | 231 | 3.38 | 3.37 | 3.43 | **3.64** | 2.75 | 3.43 | 3.00 | 3.00 |
| 7 | Demographic trends (e.g., declining high school enrollment) threaten higher education enrollment. | 231 | 3.18 | 3.11 | 3.14 | 3.50 | 3.50 | 3.86 | 3.33 | 2.75 |
| 8 | There are not enough high paying jobs available in local market. | 233 | 3.12 | 3.04 | 3.65 | 3.16 | 2.50 | 3.13 | 3.00 | 2.00 |
| 9 |  Public perception of the value of higher education is declining. | 244 | 2.84 | 2.71 | 2.81 | 3.24 | 3.75 | 3.25 | **3.67** | 2.75 |