



PRELIMINARY STRATEGIC LISTENING SESSIONS THEMATIC SUMMARY

APRIL 2024

What are some of NKU's greatest strengths that you believe we should strive to bolster and highlight?

1. Academic Excellence and Faculty: NKU offers high-quality education comparable to R1 institutions, with strong faculty-student connections and interdisciplinary curriculum.
 - 1.1. Quality faculty and staff
 - 1.2. Faculty connections and class size
 - 1.3. First-year connections to faculty
 - 1.4. Education provided is just as strong as R1's
 - 1.5. Interdisciplinary curriculum
2. Student-Centered Approach: NKU provides a supportive environment that fosters student growth, both academically and personally.
 - 2.1. Our students, employers say NKU students possess grit
 - 2.2. Student support services available
 - 2.3. Soft skill development
 - 2.4. "Both and" experience versus "either or"
3. Location and Regional Connections: NKU's strategic location offers unique opportunities for student engagement and career development.
 - 3.1. Location: proximity to Cincinnati and regional connections
 - 3.2. Opportunities to connect with employers
 - 3.3. Alumni connections
4. Affordability and Accessibility: NKU is committed to providing accessible, high-value education to a diverse student population.
 - 4.1. Affordability and value
 - 4.2. Promoting access
5. Campus Environment: NKU offers a safe and welcoming campus atmosphere conducive to learning and personal growth.
 - 5.1. Safe campus

In terms of student success, where do you feel we have the greatest opportunities to make an impact?

1. Career Readiness and Experiential Learning: Enhancing career preparation and real-world learning experiences can significantly improve student success.
 - 1.1. Career connections and recruitment
 - 1.2. Career coaching in FYSSH
 - 1.3. Scaffolding career education and baking in experiential learning for all students
 - 1.4. Increase skill development of our students
 - 1.5. Helping students to better understand job market and equipping with language for the future
 - 1.6. Experiential learning specifically for online students

2. Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility: Focusing on diverse student populations and removing barriers can expand NKU's impact on student success.
 - 2.1. Non-traditional student population
 - 2.2. International student enrollment
 - 2.3. Remove entry barriers and improve transfer process
 - 2.4. Invest in ATC and transfer student destination
 - 2.5. Increase URM faculty
 - 2.6. Re-evaluate and strengthen existing programs like River City Schools, Upward Bound, Rural communities

3. Student Engagement and Support: Strengthening support systems and engagement opportunities can enhance the overall student experience.
 - 3.1. Campus vibrancy and online engagement
 - 3.2. Lack of affinity and support for online students
 - 3.3. Mentorship connections between students and staff
 - 3.4. Academic Advising: grow and invest
 - 3.5. Connect with students outside of SGA
 - 3.6. Utilization of students for university projects

4. Strategic Identity and Program Development: Clarifying NKU's identity and leveraging its strengths can create more impactful student success initiatives.
 - 4.1. Connecting our efforts with our strengths
 - 4.2. Identifying and promoting pockets of success: how can we scale what works
 - 4.3. Need to define our identity: are we online-focused, truly hybrid?
 - 4.4. Highlight unique programs offered and alumni

5. Infrastructure and Resource Optimization: Improving facilities, services, and resource allocation can create a more conducive environment for student success.
 - 5.1. Invest in facilities and grounds: consider addition of signature landmark (statue, letters)
 - 5.2. Evaluate constraints and better align class schedule offerings
 - 5.3. Improve customer service
 - 5.4. Resolve HR issues and improve service: serving our own
 - 5.5. Providing resources and tools to promote employee wellness and belonging

6. Community and Civic Engagement: Strengthening connections with the broader community can enhance student success and institutional impact.
 - 6.1. Increased civic engagement
 - 6.2. Continue to build on bus tours initiative

What do you feel are the greatest challenges NKU is facing over the next few years?

1. Identity and Public Perception: NKU needs to clarify and strengthen its public image and positioning in the higher education landscape.
 - 1.1. Public image, need to go beyond class size, how can we define NKU in the community
 - 1.2. Cohesive and proactive message regarding political headwinds
 - 1.3. Need to focus on outcomes and public good
2. Evolving Educational Landscape: Adapting to changing educational paradigms and student expectations is crucial for NKU's future success.
 - 2.1. Paradigm shifters in the higher ed landscape (e.g., 90 credit degrees)
 - 2.2. Student expectations, especially online courses/programs
 - 2.3. Incorporation of AI
 - 2.4. Adult learners and second chance students want online programs
 - 2.5. Availability of evening in-person classes (4:30 classes are not evening)
3. Enrollment and Student Success: NKU faces challenges in growing enrollment while maintaining and improving student success metrics.
 - 3.1. Growing enrollment challenges
 - 3.2. How can we sustain positive student success metrics with less people and money
 - 3.3. URM retention, faculty, staff and student
 - 3.4. High school preparedness: blurred lines of dual credit and burden on faculty
 - 3.5. Preparedness, including technology
4. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: Addressing DEI challenges is critical for NKU's growth and inclusivity.
 - 4.1. Continued assault on DEI
 - 4.2. Lack of faculty diversity
 - 4.3. URM retention, faculty, staff and student
 - 4.4. Faculty education and resources for neurodivergent students
 - 4.5. Equity in workload
5. Resource Management and Operational Efficiency: Optimizing resource allocation and improving operational efficiency are key challenges for NKU.
 - 5.1. Staff salaries and staff ladders
 - 5.2. HR practices for hiring and promotion
 - 5.3. Knowledge loss due to lack of documentation and successive planning
 - 5.4. Staff turnover: issues of salary, remote flexibility, development and ladder
 - 5.5. Money to build but not operate
 - 5.6. Budget transparency and clear checks and balances
 - 5.7. Outsourcing of services (e.g. printing)
6. Institutional Coherence and Communication: Improving internal communication and collaboration is essential for NKU's effectiveness.
 - 6.1. Starting but not finishing initiatives (e.g. advising ladder)
 - 6.2. Collegiality across divisions
 - 6.3. Balance between collaboration and competitiveness
 - 6.4. Lack of unit communication causing duplication of work
 - 6.5. Students access to administrators
7. Academic Alignment and Flexibility: Aligning academic practices with NKU's mission and adapting to new educational needs is an ongoing challenge.
 - 7.1. RPT alignment with teaching mission
 - 7.2. Capacity and balance in improving campus vibrancy with online needs

What differentiates NKU from our competitors?

1. Strategic Positioning: NKU needs to clarify its competitive landscape and unique value proposition.
 - 1.1. Need to better define our competitors (UC/UK or EKU, WKY?)
 - 1.2. Consider surveying students about other college options to better understand
2. Community Engagement and Regional Impact: NKU's strong community ties and regional contributions set it apart.
 - 2.1. Reputation as a community contributor
 - 2.2. Gateway partnerships, also an opportunity to strengthen
 - 2.3. Location (EKU, WKU without a metro area)
3. Academic Excellence and Unique Offerings: NKU offers distinctive programs and learning experiences that differentiate it from competitors.
 - 3.1. Unique programs and resources like simulation center
 - 3.2. Small class size across all programs
 - 3.3. Direct admit (if we get it right)
4. Student-Centered Approach: NKU's focus on student safety, flexibility, and affordability creates a competitive advantage.
 - 4.1. Campus safety
 - 4.2. Hybrid flexibility
 - 4.3. Cost of attendance

If you had a magic wand, what is one thing you would do to improve NKU?

1. Strategic Planning and Identity: NKU needs to focus on long-term planning and solidifying its identity.
 - 1.1. Intentionality and long-term planning
 - 1.2. Fix university identity crisis
 - 1.3. Consistent, strong marketing in the community
 - 1.4. Change narrative of college = career
2. Resource Allocation and Investment: Increased investment in human capital and infrastructure is crucial for NKU's improvement.
 - 2.1. Stop continued need to do more with less
 - 2.2. Investment in human capital which would allow us to be proactive
 - 2.3. Facilities that reflect the quality of NKU
 - 2.4. Technology improvements (e.g. replace SAP)
3. Organizational Culture and Communication: Improving internal communication and feedback mechanisms can enhance NKU's effectiveness.
 - 3.1. Free flow of communication
 - 3.2. Course evaluation feedback: incorporation and closed loop for students
 - 3.3. 360° staff evaluations (report to alternative VP)
4. Campus Environment and Branding: Enhancing the campus experience and updating NKU's brand could improve its appeal.
 - 4.1. New mascot/name (Vikings?)
 - 4.2. Improve and increase near campus amenities

Interestingly, many of these "magic wand" improvements align with challenges and opportunities identified in previous questions.