

Perceptions of USC Aiken's Image, Mission, and Values

Focus Group Research, 2005-2006

Methodology

- Seven focus groups were conducted with 69 students, 15 faculty and 22 staff at USC Aiken between November 2005 and January 2006 to determine their perceptions of the institution.
 - Focus groups lasted approximately one hour each.
 - Participants were selected to balance demographic characteristics, academic rank of faculty, duration of faculty or staff employment, organizational levels and areas, as well as student class level and major.

Focus Group Participants

#	Type	Group	Date	Men			Women				Total
				Black	Asian	White	Black	Asian	Hispanic	White	
1	Staff	Staff Group 1	10/19/2005			4	1			7	12
2	Faculty	Faculty Group 1	11/14/2005			4		1		4	9
3	Staff	Staff Group 2	11/21/2005	1		2	2			5	10
4	Faculty	Faculty Group 2	11/22/2005			3				3	6
5	Students	Organization	1/17/2006	3		5	3			10	21
6	Students	Freshman Arts & Science Class	1/20/2006	1		5	8		2	11	27
7	Students	300-level Prof School Class	1/24/2006	4	1	7	4			5	21
		Total		9	1	30	18	1	2	45	106

Faculty & Staff Focus Groups

□ Activities & Questions

- Activity #1: On a note card, respond to the following prompt: If you were in charge of USC Aiken tomorrow, 1) what would you keep, 2) what would you do away with, and 3) what would you change?
- Activity #2: On a note card, list four words or phrases that describe USC Aiken.
- Question #1: What makes USC Aiken unique?
- Question #2: When you talk to other people about USC Aiken, what do you say?
- Question #3: What does USC Aiken do really well?
- Question #4: What does USC Aiken need to do better at or improve?
- Activity #3: On a note card, respond to the following prompt: There are four USC Aiken values. List as many of them as you can.
- Question #5: To what extent do these values describe USC Aiken? Are there better words to describe USC Aiken?

Student Focus Groups

□ Activities & Questions

- Activity #1: On a note card, respond to the following prompt: If you were in charge of USC Aiken tomorrow, 1) what would you keep, 2) what would you do away with, and 3) what would you change?
- Activity #2: On a note card, list four words or phrases that describe USC Aiken.
- Question #1: When you talk to other people about USC Aiken, what do you say?
- Question #2: What is the difference between USC Aiken and other colleges/universities you know about?
- Question #3: What does USC Aiken do really well?
- Question #4: What does USC Aiken need to do better at?
- Activity #3: On a note card, respond to the following prompt: You are designing an ad targeted to high school seniors to get them to come to USC Aiken. What four words, phrases, images, or other things would you emphasize to try to get them to come here?



Five Major Sections

- Mission
- Academic Quality and Size
- Internal Community
- External Community Dynamics
- Values

Mission

- Faculty and staff at USC Aiken expressed commitment to a mission of teaching and serving students and serving the local community. However, there was some uncertainty about which students the institution is supposed to serve, and many faculty and staff observed either directly or indirectly that the vision for the University's future is not clearly delineated.



Academic Quality and Size

- Small class sizes, quality teaching, and individual attention were identified by all groups as hallmarks of USC Aiken's academic experience.



Internal Community

- Students, faculty, and staff commonly described USC Aiken as a “family.” Because of the institution’s size, its students, faculty, and staff are able to engage in personal relationships which they value greatly. Faculty and staff praised the cooperative nature of the work environment and the collaboration and support they felt as members of the USC Aiken community.



External Community Dynamics

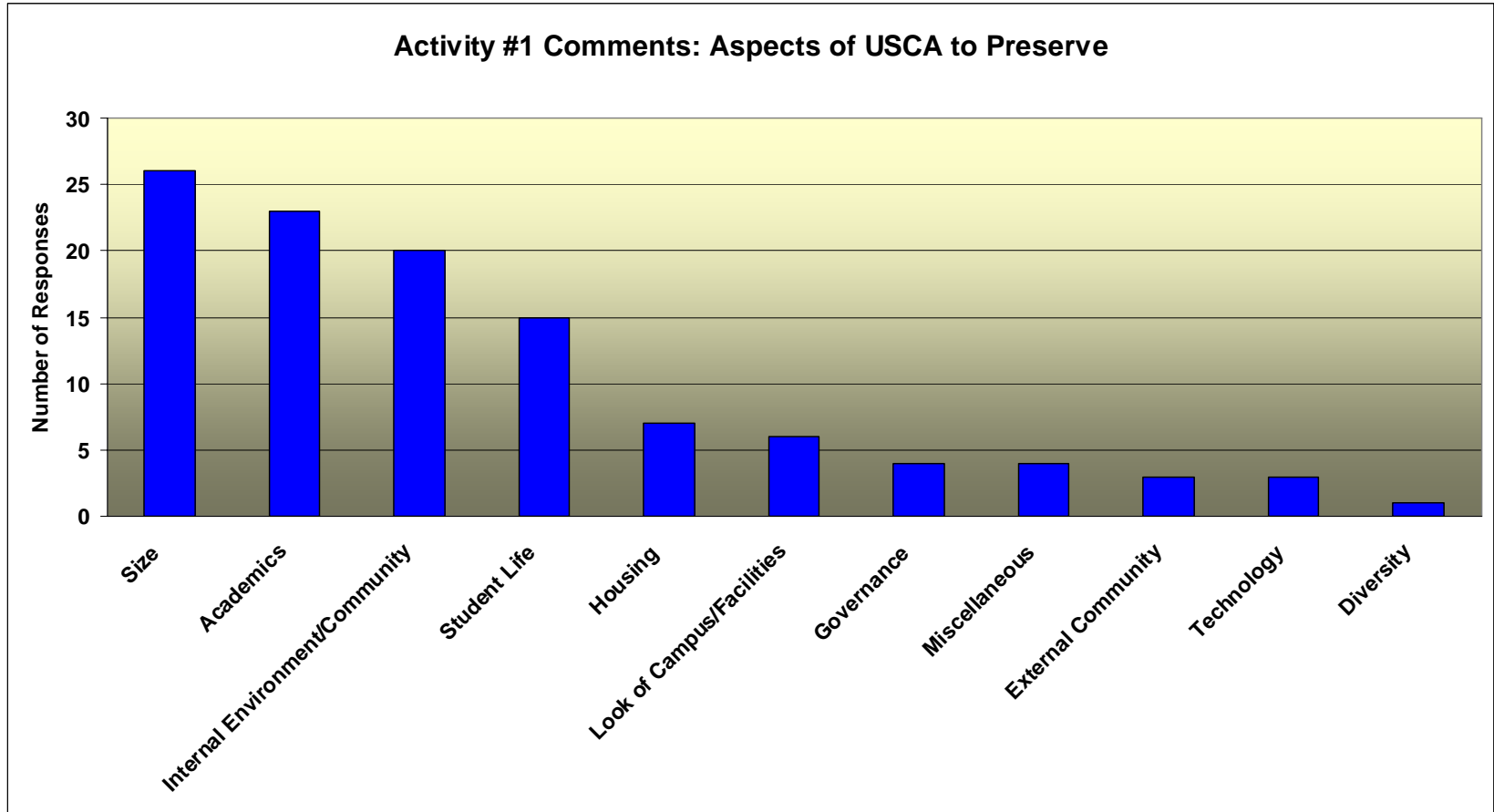
- While faculty and staff perceived the Aiken community as supportive of the institution and observed a strong commitment to give back to the community, students perceived that the community was neither friendly to college students nor adequately acknowledged the University as a central part of the community.



Values

- Students, faculty, and staff could not recall the University's values defined in the University's strategic plan nor did they report a connection to these values as they are expressed in campus culture.

Aspects to Preserve



How Participants Described USCA

