Results: Enhancing CSUN Pride, Spirit and Reputation

Several weeks ago, we introduced a new topic on this forum for your consideration:

The recently launched ‘CSUN Shine’ identity campaign is an exciting new vehicle for telling the CSUN story in a more compelling manner and to a larger audience. Using ‘CSUN Shine’ as a springboard, what can we do to grow pride and school spirit and further enhance the university’s reputation?

True to form, the CSUN community provided thoughtful and thought provoking input. Thank you for taking the time to share your opinions and ideas. The comments received covered a broad array of subjects; every response has been reviewed and comments/suggestions have been shared with the appropriate administrators as food for thought and inspiration for future planning/programming. To a considerable extent, the input was a confirmation of projects planned or underway. The feedback is also clearly reflected in the recently released CSUN Shines for the Next Decade: Planning and Priorities as an Engaged Institution which lays out CSUN planning priorities to guide university efforts at all levels. Below is an overview of input, organized into general areas, with some information on related university projects.

Academics:

Some suggestions focused on academic quality and maintaining high academic standards; these have been shared with Academic Affairs. CSUN Shines for the Next Decade states: “an unrelenting focus on student success will be the university’s continued top priority. Academic excellence and student engagement for retention, persistence, and graduation are paramount…”

There continues to be concern regarding the availability of classes. The university continues its efforts to address the issue, from increasing the number of classes to using wait lists to limiting the number of units for which a student can register. My Plan to Graduate, an interactive planning tool to be introduced, will provide undergraduates a tool to produce an academic roadmap. It suggests a term-by-term sequence of courses, to help track progress, plan for future semesters, and determine the classes needed to fulfill requirements to graduate in a timely manner.

Support for student research, creative and scholarly work was urged, further supporting CSUN’s renewed emphasis on research. See Priority 5 in CSUN Shines for the Next Decade – increase research activity and sponsored programs – which includes the following: “Applied research is an essential part of the university’s mission. It engages the expertise of the faculty to address compelling challenges and address problems facing our region, state, and world. When involving students, it provides for the highest form of educational experience and mentoring.”
Greater focus on international programs was suggested as a means of enhancing the CSUN profile. To that end, the university is reorganizing International Exchange and Student Programs, to include a new position focused on international student transition and support.

It was suggested that more awards and recognition for students would be helpful. The university currently has a number of vehicles for recognizing students for academic, service and athletic activities, including the annual honors convocation, academic department and college recognitions, other department-based awards (such as through the National Center on Deafness, Disabilities Resources and Educational Services, and the Veterans’ Center), clubs and organizations honors, and student-athlete honors. The establishment of four new scholarship programs – Sheila Gold, CAM Foundation, Harrison Leadership Award Endowment, and Edison Scholars – will yield new opportunities for students.

Athletics:

Many suggestions related to CSUN athletics, including such specific suggestions as increasing promotion of athletics events, improving facilities, more pep rallies (including tied to university-wide events), and encouraging students, faculty and staff to wear Matador colors. These ideas are supportive of university priority #7 - using athletics as a tool for engagement - included in CSUN Shines for the Next Decade. Specific suggestions are being considered for incorporation into new and expanding efforts whenever possible.

CSUN Apparel, Gifts, Discounts:

The CSUN community wants to wear their Matador colors! There was a clear call to help make that possible for more students through discounts or giveaways tied to campus-wide activities, spirit rallies, and philanthropic efforts. There is also a desire to see more support of CSUN from area businesses through discounts geared to students. These ideas have been shared with Student Affairs, The University Corporation, and the Matador Bookstore so that they may be incorporated into programming.

Outreach:

There were suggestions regarding better outreach into the community and sponsorships from local and regional business. Such linkages will likely improve and multiply as the athletics profile grows. The university acknowledges that athletics has been underutilized as a tool for engagement and is working to change that. One suggestion related to getting CSUN merchandise into area stores. This echoes a recommendation of the Ad Hoc Committee on Athletics Engagement and is being pursued.

Other suggestions related to making the community more aware of events on campus, so that CSUN will be known as a place offering interesting things to do every day of the week. Departments and units offering programming open to the public are asked to
provide information to University Advancement for inclusion on the University Events Calendar on the CSUN webpage.

There were also suggestions focused on community service activities. The university's 'Unified We Serve' volunteer program for students, faculty and staff offers opportunities throughout the year for involvement in service to local communities and agencies. These are included in the university calendar on the CSUN website. Additionally, the Bridge, an online database hosted by Unified We Serve, provides information on volunteer opportunities including listings from community organizations.

Faculty/Staff:

It was suggested that the university do a better job publicizing the cutting edge research of its faculty. To that end, individual faculty members are asked to share information about their work with their department chairs, deans, and with University Advancement’s Department of Marketing and Communications, for possible inclusion in university publications and in CSUN Today on the CSUN website.

These suggestions are reflected in university priority #5 - increase research activity and sponsored programs, #2 - focus on employees for success, and #3 - visibility and reputation of the university. They will be considered as part of the overall efforts in these areas.

Campus Life:

It is clear that the campus community wants to engage with one another from the suggestions seeking more opportunities for social engagement on campus. These range from suggestions related to performances of interest to CSUN employees and students; more information and promotion about intramural sports and access to recreational fields; and the desire for social gatherings, celebrations, and town hall discussions. Specific suggestions have been shared with appropriate departments. Publicize your event to the CSUN community!

Healthy Campus:

There were requests to promote a healthier campus and provide more food options for those with allergies, celiac disease and other dietary restrictions. This input has been shared with The University Corporation; the division responsible for campus dining. The recently drafted CSUN Sustainability Plan addresses some of these items and includes the following goals: 1) increase campus food sources that are sustainable; and 2) increase the availability of fresh, healthy vegetarian/vegan options on campus.

Campus Environment:

The significance of the campus environment was reflected in suggestions focused on sustainability and environmental responsibility, technology, and modern work spaces,
confirming the relevance of projects recently accomplished or underway, such as those described below.

There are approximately 20 campus sites on a self-guided sustainability tour, all with interpretive plaques describing sustainable attributes with a QR code linked to the Institute for Sustainability website, where one can find a downloadable tour brochure. The Southern California Eco-region Garden, recently installed north of University Hall, is one of the sites.

Increasingly classrooms and labs are being equipped with flexible furniture that supports modern learning modes. One example is the new math lab in Live Oak Hall. The Oviatt Library Learning Commons, to be completed this summer, will include innovative group study furnishings equipped with flat screens that allow students to collaborate electronically with multiple devices. Built-in corridor benches with power and USB connections have been installed in several locations thanks to the campus quality fee program. The program is ongoing as funding becomes available.

Suggestions were also made toward becoming a non-smoking campus. President Harrison has asked that an implementation task force be formed to study issues and make recommendations associated with a smoke free campus, including logistical implementation and time frame.

Alumni:

Some responses related to alumni – better recognizing alumni accomplishments, better engaging alumni in campus activities, and recognizing CSUN staff who are CSUN alumni. These ideas have been shared with the Alumni Association and University Advancement for their related efforts. Some new programs will be introduced this year. The annual Alumni Relations Award will be launched at this year’s Staff Service and Recognition of Excellence Awards program, to be presented to the staff member, faculty member, or administrator whose efforts bring alumni closer to their alma mater. The May 7 ‘Home Grown Faculty and Staff Event’ at University House will be an opportunity for alumni who work on campus to connect with one another.

Communications:

Pride of place was evident in the numerous suggestions related to better identifying the campus, including the use of banners, signs, and electronic marquees. These ideas have been shared with the Office of Facilities Planning. Steps to be taken this summer include: 1) installation of a soccer field entry sign bearing the Matador Athletics logo, designed for major impact and setting the standard for future projects at other athletic venues; 2) incorporating Matador colors into the Redwood Hall east lobby; and 3) the first installation of the new pedestrian walkway standard (which incorporates campus brick within paving to help unify the campus) on the south side of Plummer between Darby and Etiwanda. Additional suggestions range from media campaigns to
spotlighting student, faculty, and staff accomplishments. These have been shared with CSUN Public Relations for consideration.