Institutional Review
October, 2008

Keeling & Associates
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional Background</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Findings and Analysis</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary Analysis &amp; Recommendations</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

Keeling & Associates, LLC (K&A), a higher education consulting firm based in New York City, was retained by the University of Louisiana System of higher education to conduct a full institutional review of Southeastern Louisiana University (Southeastern) in Hammond, LA in the context of transition in the presidency of the institution. The immediate past president, Dr. Randy Moffett, departed the University earlier this year to assume the presidency of the System.¹

Context: Under the leadership of Presidents Sally Clausen (1995-2001) and Moffett (2001-2008), Southeastern was transformed from an open access institution with limited facilities, alumni support, and state investment to a leading university of choice. Since the mid-1990s, significant institutional change has occurred through the creation and application of admissions standards; strengthening and diversification of academic offerings, including a first doctoral program; improvements in buildings, facilities, and grounds; broadening and deepening of community relationships and realization of a greater regional economic impact; reinvigoration of intercollegiate athletics, including the restoration of varsity football and expansion and rejuvenation of the stadium; enhanced legislative confidence and support; and development of a stronger base of donors who has provided higher levels of philanthropic support.

The major challenge faced by Southeastern at this key inflection point in its history is sustainability; the University must ensure that its progress in academics, athletics, administration, physical plant, alumni and community relations, fund raising, and higher

¹ Many members of the University's faculty and staff pointed out that the current transitional phase embraces not just a new president, but a new Vice President for Advancement (the previous Vice President for Advancement recently retired - the position is currently filled on an interim basis by the Assistant Vice President for Advancement while a search is conducted for the permanent Vice President for Advancement) and an Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs (the incumbent left Southeastern to join President Moffett in the System office in Baton Rouge).
standards is not only stabilized, but in fact further developed. In the view of the consultants -- and of most members of the extended University community -- sustainability for Southeastern does not mean maintaining the status quo -- as impressive as the current status quo may be. Sustainability means continuing the University’s emergence as a leading Louisiana and regional institution of higher education through further progress in every area of endeavor. The incoming president has the opportunity to build upon the strong foundation left by Presidents Clausen and Moffett -- and the challenges of sustaining the University’s gains while continuing to improve quality and designing a distinctive presidency while maintaining the critical momentum developed over the last 10-15 years.

**Project Focus:** Our primary purpose as consultants has been to gather information, present findings, draw conclusions, and make recommendations that will provide a sound base of knowledge about Southeastern in the specific context of what we believe to be a critical inflection point in the University’s development, history, and direction: the current transition in the presidency. Accordingly, we have focused on institutional strengths, challenges, and aspirations with an emphasis on the University’s next steps under a new president. We hope our report will be of special usefulness for members of the search committee charged with choosing a new president for Southeastern -- as well as for the candidates themselves and the incoming president-elect.

**Method**

To conduct this review, K&A assembled a team of senior consultants, supported by project management staff, that has specific expertise and direct on-campus experience in academic affairs, student affairs, and institutional administration.
The team ² completed the following activities:

- Reviewed pertinent University documents, data, and other materials and resources regarding institutional mission, strategy, policies, academic programs, support services, infrastructure (including technology), fiscal management, budget, advancement and development, physical plant, accreditation (including self study and reports), and assessment and evaluation of both institutional and operational effectiveness and student outcomes.³

- Conducted standardized pre-visit telephone interviews with ten institutional and System leaders (see Appendix 1 for persons interviewed and question template), as designated by Southeastern and the System, to build our knowledge base about Southeastern and identify significant issues and concerns to be addressed in the review.

- Visited Southeastern for more than three full days (September 15-19, 2008). During the visit, K&A conducted more than 20 interviews and meetings with more than 75 faculty, students, staff, administrators, alumni, and community and business leaders (see Appendix 2 for interview schedule); the team was also able to have dinner discussions with Bradley S. O’Hara, Ph.D., Provost and Vice President for Academic and Student

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² Members of the team included:

- Richard H. Hersh, Ed.D., Senior Consultant (Dr. Hersh served as president of Hobart-William Smith Colleges and Trinity University [Hartford]; as provost of two universities, Drake and the University of New Hampshire; as Vice President for Research at the University of Oregon; and as an academic Dean before joining K&A).

- Hazel J. Scott, Ph.D., Senior Consultant (Dr. Scott served as vice president for student affairs at three universities, most recently Georgia State University, before assuming her current role with K&A).

- Richard P. Keeling, M.D., Principal and Senior Executive Consultant (Dr. Keeling founded K&A; he has been a consultant to more than 500 institutions, and previously was a tenured professor and senior administrator at both the University of Virginia and the University of Wisconsin-Madison).

- Kyle J. Hutchison, Chief of Staff and Senior Project Manager.

- Trey Avery, Consulting Associate and Project Coordinator.

Additional information about the project team is available at www.keelingassociates.com/about/team

³ K&A requested a list of documents and data for review (see Appendix 4). Southeastern provided all documents in electronic or printed form as requested.
Affairs of the System (September 15, 2008) and Randy Moffett, Ph.D., President of the System and recent President of Southeastern (September 16, 2008).

- Collated, merged, and analyzed data and derived key themes from meeting and interview notes taken by the senior consultants and professional staff.

- Developed this report based on all qualitative and quantitative data analyzed, interview and meeting themes, consultants’ findings and observations, and supplementary materials provided by Southeastern.

**Institutional Background**

**Academic programs and accreditation:** Southeastern is a moderately large public regional comprehensive institution located in Hammond, LA. The University consists of five colleges (Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences; Business; Education and Human Development; Nursing and Health Sciences; and Science and Technology) and one Division (Division of General Studies) with 26 academic departments and programs offering a total of 76 degree programs (4 associate degree programs, 52 baccalaureate degree programs, 19 graduate degree programs, and 1 doctoral program in Educational Leadership).

It is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Schools and Colleges.

In addition to the main campus in Hammond, Southeastern operates a Center in Baton Rouge that houses classrooms and offices for the School of Nursing, which is part of the College of Nursing and Health Sciences; a Center in Mandeville in St. Tammany Parish offering off-campus classes; the Livingston Parish Literacy and Technology Center in Walker; and the Turtle Cove Environmental Research Station in the Lake Pontchartrain ecosystem.
**Governance:** Southeastern is managed by the University of Louisiana System, which provides direction, control, supervision, management and assistance to all eight of its institutions in their pursuit to provide quality education. Coordination of Louisiana’s four systems of higher education is provided by the Board of Regents.

**Enrollment, retention, and student:faculty ratio:** Total enrollment has varied slightly between 15,000 and 16,200 in recent years, with about 13,250 undergraduates, 84% of whom receive financial aid. In Fall 2007, total enrollment was 14,757, with 13,253 undergraduates and 1,504 graduate and professional students. About 83% of students are full-time, and 62% are female. Seventy-six percent of students are White, non-Hispanic; 18% are Black, non-Hispanic, and 2% are Hispanic. The number of new freshmen enrolled has increased from 2,330 in 2005 to 2,888 in 2006, 2,908 in 2007, and 3,317 in 2008.\(^4\)

ACT Composite scores at the 25\(^{th}\) percentile are 19 and are 23 at the 75\(^{th}\) percentile. Overall, ACT composite scores have increased from 21 in 2004 and 2005 to 21.2 in 2006, 21.2 in 2007, and 21.3 in 2008.\(^6\) First year retention rates are 62% for full-time students and 49% for part-time students; overall graduation rate is 32%, and transfer out rate is 22%. Bachelor’s degree attainment rates are 10% at 4 years, 24% at 5 years, and 32% at 6 years (36% for women, 26% for men).\(^7\)

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\(^5\) Source: Southeastern Institutional Research.

\(^6\) Source: Southeastern Institutional Research.

\(^7\) Source: National Center for Education Statistics.
The University’s overall average student:faculty ratio in Fall 2007 was 25:1; in Fall 2006, when the overall ratio was 27:1, student:faculty ratios varied from 31:1 in Science and Technology to 14:1 in Nursing and Health Sciences.

**Faculty and staff:** In Fall 2006, the University employed 518 full-time and 181 part-time faculty, 232 graduate assistants, with a total of 1,317 full-time and 307 part-time employees (including faculty). Seventy-six faculty hold the rank of full professor; 105 are associate professors, 122 assistant professors, and 215 instructors. One hundred sixty seven are tenured; 119 are tenure track, and 232 are non-tenure track. There are 14 endowed chairs and professorships.

**Strategic plan:** The University’s current strategic plan, Vision 2010, specifies seven strategic priorities:

1. To provide competitive educational opportunities that attract diverse, well-prepared students who progress and graduate.

2. To provide relevant curricula and an intellectually stimulating environment.

3. To facilitate lifelong learning that meets the ever-changing educational and cultural needs of our community.

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13 Source: Southeastern Web site, posted at [http://www.selu.edu/about/overview/index.html](http://www.selu.edu/about/overview/index.html)
4. To recruit, retain, develop, and engage a diverse and well-qualified faculty and staff.

5. To increase, diversify, and manage funding effectively.

6. To promote the University's excellence clearly and accurately.

7. To enhance and effectively utilize a progressive technological infrastructure.

Findings and Analysis

Introduction: In this section we report our findings and observations. The form of this report is thematic; themes are clusters of closely related ideas, comments, issues, and concerns identified across the spectrum of interviews, meetings, informal conversations, and reviews of documents and data. We emphasize the themes about which we read and heard most often and most passionately. As noted earlier, the report is also contextual; we pay greatest attention to themes that are of particular pertinence at this point in the University’s organizational, institutional, and academic life, given the transition in the presidency. In the final part of the report, we offer our analysis of the challenges facing new presidential leadership.

Overview: Until recently, Southeastern has operated in truly austere financial circumstances; the limitations imposed by stringent financial restrictions were experienced in every plane and sphere of institutional life, including the physical plant and grounds. Despite living with such austerity (some members of the campus community likened it to a kind of organizational anorexia) -- or, perhaps, in part because of it -- there has been a singular focus on teaching and doing what is right for students, building and maintaining a

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14 One of the consultants had been on Southeastern's campus in early 2001, and therefore had first-hand experience of the quality of the University's physical plant and grounds nearly 8 years ago, as compared with today.
campus culture that creates a closely knit sense of family or community, and developing strong professional colleagueship among faculty, administrators, and staff.

The phrase “doing more with less” became an institutional brand during the period of Southeastern’s greatest stresses and has survived into its period of transformation -- but not in a bitter or disempowered way. “Doing more with less” became a source of both challenge and pride, and Southeastern has managed less into more across the spectrum of its academic, administrative, student services, and athletic programs. The combination of inspired presidential leadership, effective senior administrative management, commitment from both faculty and staff, and justified pride in the economical and prioritized use of very limited resources prepared Southeastern to raise and use new and additional funds in the highest and best ways. Those same factors fostered the transformation of the institution between 1995 and 2008. With the addition of the advantages created by strong population growth on the Northshore, it was also those strengths that allowed the University to quickly re-establish a pattern of growth after the initial implementation of admissions standards -- an event which, in many other (and lesser) institutions would have caused sustained declines in enrollment, drops in community and legislative confidence, institutional conflict, painful reductions in tuition revenue, and retrenchment of programs and services.15

The transformation of Southeastern required more than additional funding, but could not have been accomplished in its fullness without increasing the flow of financial support from the state and diversifying the sources of institutional revenues by enhancing development and fundraising. The relatively recent infusion of additional funding from both traditional state sources and donors has enabled Southeastern to improve the buildings and grounds of its physical campus in Hammond, open and maintain Centers in other parishes, restore the football program (accomplished entirely with funds raised from donors), increase the

15 It is important to note that Southeastern developed and applied admissions standards before the System required that it do so.
strength and widen the scope of its academic programs, and deepen its engagement with the communities on the Northshore and the I-12 corridor. These successes have in turn increased institutional pride, strengthened confidence in the University both on and off campus, and decreased the distance between Southeastern’s reach and its grasp -- making the University increasingly attractive to potential students, faculty, and candidates for the presidency. One respondent in our interviews summed it up this way: “We have gone from a sleepy default college to a place of choice, from ‘Slow Learner University’ to a proud Southeastern Louisiana University.”

The degree of transformation of the University is truly remarkable. Put simply, Southeastern is among the most impressive and positive institutions of its kind that the consultants have visited in more than twenty years of consulting practice and campus experience. Morale is almost universally high; there is an extraordinary level of affection for the University among all constituents, including representatives of the business, financial, social service, government, and educational sectors in the surrounding parishes. As one person nicely put it, “We are all stakeholders in what this place has become and will become.” There is an unusual sense of harmony; we encountered little of the usual we/them bickering commonly found among faculty, administration, and staff in other institutions. The volatile and often inflammatory rhetoric of disputes between faculty and administration or Academic Affairs and Student Affairs were notably absent from our meetings and were not even described as cultural phenomena. We repeatedly heard explicit praise and gratitude for the leadership exhibited not only by the two past presidents, but also the current interim president; similar appreciation was commonly expressed for the work of other senior administrators.

In fact, the only expressions of those traditional discontents referred to the potential that a new president would not lead the University further in its current direction; some faculty members who have been at Southeastern for many years recalled battles with
administrators almost two decades ago and suggested that those conflicts could arise again if a new president wanted to take the campus “off track.”

The administrative staff, including Student Affairs professionals, hold appropriate credentials for their respective institutional roles and feel respected and supported by the senior administration and faculty. Although there is no formal structure for staff input to institutional decision making (e.g., a staff council), they see themselves as full partners in the institution through their role on the University Planning Council, the University’s cross-divisional body for determining future direction.

Two groups of students with whom the consultants met reported being extraordinarily happy with their choice to attend Southeastern and spoke of the faculty and the University with warmth and appreciation; they talked glowingly, indeed passionately, about how the school feels like “family”—“this is my home”; “My professors know me and care about how well I am doing.”

We find at Southeastern an exceptionally strong faculty corps dedicated to teaching as job number one and appropriately engaged in pertinent scholarship, research, and service to the campus and the regional community. Most faculty members who were interviewed told the consultants they had come to Southeastern because it has a strong focus on teaching; that is, they found an institution that was aligned with their own interest in student learning. Academic leadership at the departmental head, dean, and senior administrative levels is, and has been, of excellent quality; department heads are respected by faculty members, and deans by department heads. We found virtually no evidence of the negative academic politics that foster divisiveness among the members of many other faculties. Similarly, we found no signs of dissonance and in-fighting among administrators; members of the cabinet each described a collegial decision-making process (“We can’t do much that we don’t decide to do as a team”).
As consultants, we were impressed by the many expressions of a shared sense of community and ubiquitous optimism for the future. It is not that students, faculty, staff, and administrators at Southeastern cannot see or refuse to acknowledge the existence of problems that require attention; they do -- but they have confidence that the University will, in time, address and solve those problems. This represents a very high level of broad-based institutional self-efficacy that can only have developed on the basis of a strong sense of shared purpose (universality).

There is a pervasive belief that what is needed in a new president is “more of the same” -- leadership that embraces the vision and continues the direction of the University without changing course. If there is anxiety, it is about the possibility of losing momentum, or having to pause to accommodate the learning curve of a new president who is a stranger to the region and the institution. The faculty and staff of Southeastern are very conscious of the University’s transformation; their concern about future leadership represents both a desire to continue the institution’s progress and an awareness of the need to ensure sustainability.

**Sustainability:** Candidates for the Southeastern presidency will necessarily need to consider how it will be possible to both follow in the proverbial footsteps of such admired prior presidents and help to sustain and improve such a positive state of institutional affairs. Indeed, when asked, our interviewees most often mentioned “sustainability” as the priority goal for the next president. But just what does sustainability mean for Southeastern today -- and in the specific context of this inflection point in its history?

In our meetings and interviews, we probed further to determine how participants understood sustainability for Southeastern: is it maintenance of the current state of affairs in steady state without further change, or continuing the current trajectory of growing strength and quality? Almost uniformly, participants responded with descriptions of rising expectations: the current excellent state of affairs is now the baseline for the next,
progressive stage of institutional development. The consensus view is that sustainability should mean “continuing implementation of an agenda of institutional improvement” -- which all acknowledge will necessarily require continuous change. Caution was expressed by some institutional leaders, at the same time; they advocated a period of consolidation of gains and refining of existing initiatives (not to exclude further progress in selected areas) in which Southeastern would make sure that its transformation is bolstered and buttressed through the intentional maturation of infrastructure, funding streams, and human resources. “Let’s make sure what we have built so quickly is solid,” one administrator said; “We have changed so much so fast that we need to take stock and make sure the foundation on which we’re taking the next steps is secure.” In this vein, a common formulation heard in our interviews was that further change at Southeastern should be “evolutionary, not revolutionary” -- and that change should be “organic” and should occur at a “reasonable, managed, and measured pace.” Regardless of their position on questions of pacing of further change, though, everyone with whom the consultants spoke agreed on one key point: there is no going back; Southeastern cannot reverse course, so sustainability is an essential concern.

Among the issues of sustainability most pertinent in the minds of members of the faculty, staff, and extended community of interest in the University are these:

- Maintaining and strengthening a strong academic orientation toward teaching and learning, including preservation of small classes, personal attention to students, and nurturing of a genuine, functional community of students and faculty. Faculty members and academic leaders spoke passionately of the need to ensure that Southeastern, in its movement toward higher academic and admissions standards (a direction that is nearly universally endorsed), does not lose track of its fundamental legacy and academic values as a teaching institution. Several faculty, in the context of good discussions about the importance of Southeastern’s centeredness on students, spoke articulately about the need to avoid losing those advantages in the process of strengthening research and scholarship; specifically, they emphasized the need to avoid adopting practices that create greater distance between faculty and students,
such as the use of graduate teaching assistants in the classroom. While faculty, deans, and academic leaders acknowledged the importance of diversity in faculty roles and portfolios -- some faculty members might devote more time to scholarship and research than others -- there was very clear consensus that academic sustainability for Southeastern means both finding ways to support scholarship and research that do not weaken the institution's focus on teaching and learning, and using scholarship and research in the service of the teaching mission. There is similar consensus that any attempt to push Southeastern toward research university status would be fundamentally wrongheaded.

- **Academic sustainability** -- again, meaning the sustainability of Southeastern’s continuing progress in raising academic standards, not resting on the current levels of academic quality -- requires progressive enhancements in the rigor of academic programs, the quality and preparedness of incoming students, and the rates of student persistence, academic achievement, retention, and graduation. In the assessments of both the consultants and Southeastern’s academic leaders, the two primary levels of academic leadership -- deans and department heads -- are populated with well-qualified, motivated, and effective individuals. But rates of first year retention and baccalaureate graduation in 4, 5, and 6 years (as cited earlier in this report) are far lower than Southeastern can eventually achieve; improving those rates will be essential to ensuring continued improvements in the institution’s academic and intellectual standing. It is possible that the combination of more stringent admissions standards (with consequent increases in average ACT scores for entering freshmen\(^\text{16}\)) and greater emphasis on academic quality will result in a smaller, rather than larger, student body (addressed in detail later in this report).

- **Quality improvement** is broadly regarded as essential to Southeastern’s sustainability. Strengthening quality in academic programs, faculty, students, and retention and graduation rates are, as discussed above, core features of academic sustainability. But respondents in our interviews also focused on other aspects of quality improvement for the University: further enhancements in buildings and grounds; better deployment of

\(^{16}\) Most faculty members who addressed the issue of “target” or aspirational ACT average composite scores for entering students believe that Southeastern can raise the average significantly from the current 21.3 to at least the mid-20s; some of their most optimistic colleagues felt the target should be as high as 30, though they recognized that the path to that goal would be long and difficult. Average composite scores have increased very slowly and incrementally over the past four years; increasing them further -- especially more quickly -- will demand a shift in strategies to accelerate the process.
cutting edge administrative and educational technologies; diversification and strengthening of Student Affairs programs and services; developing progressively more effective relationships and partnerships with regional businesses, health care organizations, not-for-profit agencies, and governments; and increasing the scope, reach, and productivity of fundraising. Of these, the areas most frequently identified as important to sustainability were students, retention and graduation, academic programs, faculty and staff, and community relationships. Addressing these issues will require inspirational leadership, the reinforcement of strong campus/community bonds, sound assessment designs implemented throughout the institution, and careful decision making about institutional strategy.

- **Renewal of institutional strategy**, and creation of a new strategic plan that more effectively addresses the University’s current challenges and opportunities, were frequently mentioned as keys to sustainability -- often in the context of solidifying or consolidating the impressive gains Southeastern has achieved. The importance of revisiting the strategic plan was a common theme in our meetings and interviews on campus.

- In parallel with improvements in academic and faculty quality, Southeastern will need to strengthen and deepen its **Student Affairs programs and services**. Currently, about half of the human resources in Student Affairs are members of the campus police force; other programming and service units are relatively small, in the fashion of schools that have primarily commuter populations. Southeastern’s aspirations to improve retention and strengthen on-campus student life will require not just bricks and mortar (residence halls), but also the experience and expertise of a diversity of student life professionals.

- Further improvements in the University’s **physical plant** will be needed to support overall institutional sustainability -- which means that Southeastern must, in the future, find ways to nurture and sustain the administrative effectiveness that has allowed it to blend fundraising, grant-seeking, and the highest and best use of limited state money to create sufficient financial support for new, expanded, and improved buildings, facilities, and grounds. Further enhancements in both academic facilities and on-campus housing stock (improvements in, replacements of, or construction of new residence halls) are needed; more living spaces are needed to expand Southeastern’s on-campus student population and support higher levels of retention. Recent work has added desperately needed parking adjacent to the stadium, but parking is, and will
remain, a problem -- especially for students; Southeastern may consider constructing new facilities that integrate parking with offices and service units (a development concept modeled, in some ways, by the new parking garage). Among facilities for sports and recreation, football, basketball, and baseball facilities are in good to excellent shape, but the University needs a new track facility and significant renovations to its tennis courts.¹⁷

› **Expansion and diversification of revenues** will be necessary to sustain Southeastern’s growth and further development. Currently, tuition at Southeastern is among the lowest of the four year institutions in the University of Louisiana System; given the complexity and difficulty of raising tuition (requires the approval of the legislature, with a ⅔ majority), Southeastern will need to align its priorities with emerging System funding policy (see further discussion below), continue to advocate effectively at the System and legislative levels, and expand its fundraising and development efforts.

**Students:** Having successfully moved from an open access admissions policy to one of moderate selectivity based on specific standards in recent years, Southeastern is, in the view of many faculty and administrators, now ready to expand its student recruiting base both regionally and nationally and compete for an increasingly well-qualified student population that meets higher admissions standards. Many faculty and academic leaders on campus are aware of educational research results showing that increased selectivity positively influences student persistence and retention. They also recognize potential challenges that Southeastern may face in using a strategy of greater selectivity to support retention:

› The number of high school graduates in Louisiana (and the Southeast) will decrease substantially in the coming three to five years; competition for students will increase among both public and private institutions.

› Not only other Louisiana colleges and universities, but also institutions of higher education from other states in the Southeast, are coming to the fast-growing

¹⁷ The reviewers understand that the current continuing capital outlay project (hopefully to be bid after the first of the year) includes a new track facility and renovations to the tennis courts.
Northshore to recruit well-qualified students. Increases in the population base of the Northshore will temper the effects of declining numbers of high school graduates but competition for the available graduates will, if anything, increase.

- The great majority of Southeastern’s students are commuters; only about 2,100-2,200 live on campus. Dependency on commuter students is a concern because of the costs of fuel, unmet demand for parking, and the fact that commuting students generally feel less attached to the campus. These factors could negatively affect retention unless Southeastern can develop distance and technology-based learning designs that reduce the need for students to drive to campus.

- Increasing the number of residential students could make Southeastern more attractive as a “destination” university and might increase retention, but would require substantial new investments in residence halls and expansion of Student Affairs programs and services.18

Discussions about students and selectivity in admissions moved inexorably in all of our meetings to the related question of ideal University enrollment. Would it be wise to increase total enrollment, particularly as a way to increase tuition revenue? Or might retention be more important, if the System moves toward performance-based funding models? Could greater retention make up for temporary losses in undergraduate enrollment that might occur (again) if admissions standards are raised? There is palpable concern on campus that enrollment increases beyond current levels could erode the sense of “smallness” that students and faculty now experience (the consultants were struck by the frequency with which students, especially, referred to Southeastern as a “small school” -- it isn’t!), that increased enrollment without significant increases in selectivity would erode quality, and that increased enrollment without strong support for student success and retention could lead to reduced revenues.

18 Note, however, the Southeastern was able to improve the number and quality of residence halls in the past decade through a public/private development partnership that accelerated the process of planning and construction.
In several groups, there was thoughtful discussion of a different enrollment strategy: not increasing the overall size of the student population, but, rather, decreasing it to levels consistent with higher quality and retention. In that scenario, admissions standards (and, therefore, selectivity and the quality of the entering class) would rise, the number of first-time-in-college and transfer students admitted would decrease, and revenue would be preserved because of higher levels of retention. Those discussions included acknowledgment of the need for Southeastern to continue to serve as the primary post-secondary resource for the Northshore (that is, not to become so selective that students in the surrounding parishes are systematically excluded) and of the role of the newly developed Louisiana community college system in providing educational access.\(^{19}\)

Since the mid-1990s, Southeastern has succeeded in increasing the diversity of its student body while raising admissions standards and selectivity. Fall 2007 enrollment includes about 22% non-White students (18% Black, 2% Hispanic, and 2% Native American, Asian and others). The percentage of Black students still falls far short of the percentage of Blacks in the population of Louisiana, but Southeastern’s gains in minority enrollment are nonetheless impressive.

**Retention and Graduation Rates:** Southeastern’s retention and graduation rates are the lowest in the State system, despite the University’s progress in other areas. In our meetings and interviews, the consultants learned that a particular set of institutional attributes may explain all or part of this problem:

- The dominance of a commuter student culture; most commuter students engage with the campus only for classes and required activities.

\(^{19}\) The assessment of most Southeastern administrators and faculty leaders is that the advent of the Louisiana Community and Technical College System has given new access to higher education to students who otherwise would not have attended college, rather than draining students away from the four-year institutions.
A small residential population.

Only modest admissions selectivity; many students are still admitted with marginal academic preparation and potential. The number of remedial courses taught has decreased, but significant academic effort is still expended on those courses.

Heavy dependence among most students on work to help pay college costs (as noted earlier, more than 80% of Southeastern’s students are on financial aid). Students who have to work more than a few hours per week have significantly reduced flexibility in their ability to allocate time to academic or co-curricular activities; their persistence in school is often relatively fragile and may be disrupted by unexpected financial exigencies. Many students are carrying significant debt burdens that require them to work.

Each of these attributes is known to negatively impact retention and graduation rates, and each was the subject of concerned discussion during our campus visit. Faculty and administrators who participated in the various meetings generated suggestions for strengthening retention, including:

- Increasing the selectivity of admissions to ensure that both first-time-in-college and transfer students are better prepared and more likely to succeed -- a realistic strategy assuming the challenges identified earlier are recognized and accounted for.

- Increasing the availability of student financial aid.

- Improving advising and counseling of all types: academic advising, career and occupational advising, personal counseling, and mentoring. There is much doubt on campus about the apparent value and utility of the Center for Student Excellence -- an experiment that seems, in the judgment of most faculty with whom the consultants spoke, not to have met its intended goals and objectives in its current incarnation. The idea of the Center resonates with most faculty, but the ways in which that idea have been implemented are questioned, and many faculty noted that the intended coordination of advising done in the Center with academic departments has not worked well. Academic advising is one of only three major areas (the others: parking and customer service; see below) in which students in our interview groups identified
significant needs for improvement at Southeastern.\textsuperscript{20} Better advising may be of particular importance to student athletes, whose academic performance at Southeastern has not recently been strong.\textsuperscript{21}

- Strengthening the first year experience and related transition programs; similarly, developing and implementing better sophomore year support programs designed to improve persistence into the major.

- Southeastern is currently working to improve student performance in first year mathematics (a course needed to satisfy General Education requirements) through curricular redesign.

- Strengthening Student Affairs programs and services, including leadership development, experiential learning, health services, and counseling programs.

- Increasing the number and diversity of activities and programs on campus, especially in the evenings and on weekends.

- Developing improved learner support programs to strengthen students' cognitive and academic skills.

- Increasing the availability of student housing -- including both a larger number of spaces and a greater diversity of housing types.

- Creating more friendly and student-centered support services (e.g., Registrar's office, Comptroller's office, and parking -- commuter students reported that it now can take up to 40 minutes to find a parking space, and complained about the quality of

\textsuperscript{20} Related in many ways to issues of academic advising and course selection is the University's undergraduate course add/drop policy, which students find frustrating and described as draconian. The extraordinarily short interval at the beginning of each term during which students can drop a course -- two days after classes begin -- without receiving a grade of "W" (withdrawn) on their transcripts elicited mixed reactions from faculty members but uniformly negative reviews from students.

\textsuperscript{21} One important area requiring attention in academic quality improvement is the level of achievement of student athletes; half of Southeastern's current varsity teams fall below required National College Athletic Association (NCAA) benchmark levels in academics, and members of one team are seriously below those benchmarks.
customer service in the Registrar’s office and the alacrity with which campus police ticket their cars).

There was considerable speculation, and some apprehension, about current Board of Regents discussions regarding new funding formulae that may well focus on retention and graduation rates. Such new funding mechanisms are understood to have a potentially profound impact on how Southeastern should best approach questions of admissions selectivity and enrollment management, curricular and pedagogical efficacy, support services, residential housing, and the related issues of student life. If State funding is tied to institutional performance on retention, Southeastern faces the challenge of significantly improving persistence and retention rates; on the other hand, a selectivity-based strategy may make it possible for the University to reduce enrollment to a moderate degree (10-20%) and increase retention. The Board’s emphasis on retention could, then, align closely with one formulation of Southeastern’s goals and aspirations.

But Southeastern is not an independent, autonomous entity; it is managed by the University of Louisiana System, which, in turn, is accountable to the Board of Regents. Southeastern does not have the authority to adjust its own admissions requirements, and the System and Board would need to assent to a strategy of “getting better without getting bigger.” So there are both policy (funding formula) and governance (System and Board approvals) questions in any debate about Southeastern’s ideal enrollment, selectivity, and focus on retention. Southeastern’s very positive recent history, current credibility in Baton Rouge, and responsible management of resources would provide strong support should it decide to take a case for “better but not bigger” going forward -- and the University would then be accountable for delivering on the promise of greater retention not only through greater selectivity but through stronger student academic and personal support systems and services as well.
**Faculty and Staff:** The faculty, at every level -- from relatively new assistant professors to established, tenured professors, department heads, and deans -- expressed very positive feelings about and much pride in their institution; as noted earlier, many described Southeastern as exactly the right place, or match, for them. They love their teaching, are happy to engage with students, support significant scholarly activities (as long as those activities do not take the focus off teaching), and feel great satisfaction in the positive developments that have taken place at Southeastern.

When asked, "What brought you here, or causes you to remain?" one faculty member poignantly responded, "I was drawn to this place by its heart-breaking potential," and then finished his remarks by describing in his own words the powerful positive changes that have taken place during the past two decades -- and the way in which those changes have nurtured his and his colleagues' strong commitment to Southeastern. It is a faculty of thoughtful, dedicated teachers who find inspiration in their daily work with students; it is a faculty that supports one another across traditional departmental, disciplinary, and divisional lines. Most notably, it is a faculty that trusts one another, respects its leaders, and has created an extraordinary sense of personal and academic community. These very positive qualities are recognized as precious; some in the faculty worry that the fundamental things that make membership in the faculty at Southeastern distinctive could be lost, or submerged, in a different presidential administration.

The fact that faculty members also identified areas in which Southeastern needs to improve does not detract from their general satisfaction with their employment, roles, and priorities. The problems they identified are, in many ways, important -- in fact pressing -- questions of faculty sustainability; there are certain conditions at Southeastern which, if continued without change, could impair the effectiveness of faculty members and reduce the probability of their success in improving academic quality. Some of these issues will become policy questions for a new president: teaching loads, support for scholarship and research, secretarial and other administrative support staff, and faculty governance.
Teaching loads at Southeastern are consistent with University of Louisiana System Board Rules as adjusted to meet discipline-specific accreditation standards. Faculty workloads are typical of the other institutions in the System.

Faculty members frequently alluded to Southeastern’s “small class sizes,” but, in recent years, the average class has had 25-27 students, which is arguably at the upper limit of “small.” Just as they perceive the institution as smaller than it actually is -- and perhaps for the same reasons -- students also believe that classes are generally small; it may be that the personal attention they receive from faculty members creates the impression of a smaller, more intimate institution -- and, therefore, of smaller classes -- than actually exist. Faculty rightfully wish to maintain (relatively) small class sizes but also want more time to work with students in and out of classroom time on writing, presentations, advising, and a level of personal mentoring that a teaching-oriented institution espouses. The key sustainability point may be the level of faculty engagement with students, rather than the simple measure of class sizes. But significant increases in the average class size would undoubtedly signal fundamental changes in the University’s intentions and learning models.

The issue of inadequate administrative and clerical support for faculty members at the departmental level was a source of concern for many faculty in our interviews. One secretary per 15 to 22 faculty members leaves members of the faculty unnecessarily burdened with bureaucratic paperwork. In and of itself, that level of administrative and clerical support is not sustainable, given Southeastern’s commitments to students and its expectations of faculty members. But the concern is more complex than that: faculty also reported discomfort with an increasing sense of control from central administrative offices (notably, purchasing and human resources); they emphasize that, in their perception, those offices are pushing more paperwork “down” to the department level, where, in the absence of sufficient administrative support, faculty members have to take care of it. In addition, we heard from many faculty that representatives of those central administrative offices too often treat faculty with disdain and demonstrate an extreme compliance mentality; one faculty member captured what others were saying when she lamented, “We are treated in ways that often make us

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22 An additional complexity is that retention of good staff in administrative assistant roles is difficult because of very low pay scales for those jobs.
feel as if we are working for them.” These administrative problems require solutions to avoid long-term negative effects on faculty morale, commitment, and productivity.

Southeastern has enjoyed a long history of comfortable and non-combative relations between faculty and administration; we heard in many meetings about the distinctive approach to avoiding conflict taken by the two most recent presidents (and continued by the interim president), who met regularly with the Senate Executive Committee to discuss and resolve potential problems before they developed into serious or visible conflicts.

Many faculty members with whom the consultants met did not have a clear understanding of the sphere of authority of the Senate, though the Senate’s role is defined in its Constitution and the Faculty Handbook. The Senate does not govern curriculum development; a University Curriculum Council, populated almost entirely by faculty, has that responsibility.

A few faculty members described times in the past when the faculty “rose up” to challenge administrative decisions or protest some aspect of leadership, but the consultants garnered a very clear impression that the Senate, as the primary faculty voice, generally consents. Resolutions from the Senate are voiced or transmitted to the Provost; almost all faculty members with whom we spoke felt satisfied with the manner and content of responses they receive. “You have happy faculty because people are listening to questions and concerns and at least making an effort to respond,” one long-term faculty member said.

A few faculty members reported that they felt that faculty, as a group, are not adequately consulted -- or listened to when consulted -- by senior administration. Others described the process of academic decision making as a “chain of command” with “strict controls” imposed by deans and the Provost’s office. Several faculty members noted that the use of the title “department head,” rather than “department chair,” aligns department leaders with reporting lines to the deans and on to the Provost and President. At the same time, most faculty members described the

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23 Several faculty members presented, as an example, the development of the faculty evaluation process, which, in their minds, should have been controlled by the faculty as a matter of governance but required administrative approval; other interviewees used the budget process as their example. “They could trust us more,” one professor said; “We’re no longer in crisis mode.”
Southeastern administration as responsive to their concerns and helpful. But as an issue of long-term academic and faculty sustainability, the processes and structures of academic governance will require the attention of the incoming president.

- One group of University employees -- buildings and grounds staff members -- raised concerns about their pay during the public forum conducted by the consultants. Arguing that they (and some other categories of non-academic staff members) are under-compensated, especially in comparison to pay offered outside the University, these workers felt at that time that they have been treated differently than faculty members and that senior administrators have not followed through on commitments to them. The work performed by these employees -- many of whom are long-serving, loyal staff members -- has become a source of pride for the University; improvements in the appearance and attractiveness of the campus and its grounds are a visible sign of the institution's transformation. These employees spoke warmly about Southeastern while respectfully asking for more equitable treatment.24

**Program Expansion and Improvement:** Three major changes in programs and activities on campus in recent years were often cited as exemplars of institutional change for the good.

- The creation and implementation of Southeastern's first doctoral program (in Educational Leadership) is seen as a great positive by faculty and administration and has increased the sense of academic pride on campus; it also inspired a renewed commitment to providing the highest levels of graduate education and reinforced the confidence of the regional business, government, health care, and educational communities that Southeastern will continue to develop programs that are relevant to their needs. Some academic deans are now interested in creating other doctoral

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24 The consultants have learned that this item has been resolved since the campus visit. The Southeastern administration met with a group of these employees just prior to Dr. Moffett's departure to hear their pay-related concerns. A new pay-plan was developed and submitted to the Civil Service Commission; this was recently approved by the Commission. Since the visit of the consultants, the administration has met with these employees to follow up on their issues and inform them of the new pay plan. The University indicates that they seemed to be generally satisfied with efforts to address their concerns.
programs in certain areas, such as nursing, that would respond to the regional demand for highly educated teachers and practitioners.25

- The renewal of the football program (football had been eliminated at Southeastern in the 1980s during a prolonged funding crisis), made possible by a successful fundraising campaign led by President Moffett in 2001/2002, was also a source of significant institutional pride. Most commonly, the consultants heard about the contributions of football to campus spirit; students, faculty, and staff spoke about how football brought the campus together.26 The restoration of football also helped catalyze the development of stronger campus/community relationships on the Northshore. In the current academic year, the University sold about 2,000 season tickets for football.

- Fundraising became a priority for Southeastern in the early 2000s. In addition to securing about $5,000,000 to support the restoration of the football program, the University raised $23,000,000 in a capital campaign between 1998 and 2002 and $3,000,000 to support the fine arts in 2003. While there is no current major development effort, Southeastern has created the administrative and attitudinal infrastructure required for future fundraising activities. The duties associated with the position of Vice President for Advancement are currently assigned to the Assistant Vice President for Advancement while the search for a Vice President is being conducted.

Since 2000, there have been major enhancements in Southeastern’s academic program -- not just the new doctorate in Educational Leadership. New graduate programs have begun in Integrated Science and Technology, Organizational Communication, Applied Sociology, and Teaching (Master of Arts); there are new undergraduate programs in Health Studies, Health Education and Promotion, Athletic Training, Occupational Safety/Health/Environment, Sport Management, Engineering Technology, and Supply Chain

25 In our meeting with academic deans, we learned that, in their opinion, the most likely candidates for new doctoral programs at Southeastern are 1) Doctor of Nursing Practice, 2) Ph.D. in counseling or educational counseling, and 3) Ph.D. in Environmental Sciences. There are not yet specific timelines for the development of these programs.

26 Thus far, faculty members generally seem not to have felt that the restoration of football competed with academic resources in a zero sum manner; in fact, many faculty members believe that restoring football, by increasing the University's visibility and credibility, has improved funding for the institution.
Management; there is a new clinical program in Radiologic Technology, and a Center of Excellence in Nursing Research in Education & Practice.

Other than the Center for Student Excellence (see discussion earlier), we learned of only one other initiative in the past several years that seems not to have gone smoothly or borne fruit: an online hiring system, which was not piloted and was deployed University-wide from the beginning, with poor results.

The following areas were most commonly identified as important next steps in program expansion and enhancement:

- Increasing the availability of master’s level degree options in the sciences -- notably in physics and chemistry.
- Expanding the number and diversity of interdisciplinary undergraduate majors.
- Enhancement of on-line instruction (with a concurrent research effort to determine its effectiveness compared to on-campus instruction).
- Greater deployment of technology in the management of day-to-day operations and processes. The debut of an advanced common information management system has enabled the University to become functionally paperless in financial administration, but the complete integration of information systems will require further work.
- More systematic assessment of student learning. Although each department has developed assessment plans for the majors, many of those plans emphasize questions of student satisfaction and experience, rather than learning outcomes. There are, as yet, no formal institutional student learning outcomes. Developing more robust and diversified assessment strategies, including student learning outcomes at institutional,  

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27 This program will supply graduates to respond to workforce needs for an emerging distribution industry on the Northshore.

28 One innovative interdisciplinary major under discussion would be in crisis management and response.
divisional, departmental, and course or activity levels, will be essential not only for re-accreditation, but also for continuous improvement of teaching and learning.

- Addition of more practical health sciences professions preparation programs designed to address regional needs for a larger health care workforce.

**Community Outreach:** Community and business leaders are strongly attached to the University in ways that were not true about a decade ago. In meetings with two groups of community and business leaders from parishes on the Northshore, it was clear to the consultants that Southeastern’s intentional efforts to strengthen community outreach over the past decade -- and especially, though not only, after Hurricane Katrina in 2005 -- have made a substantial difference. “Southeastern is on our dial now,” said one leader. Another pointed out that there is increasing community respect for the University: “People go to quality, and want to associate with a winner.” In the open community forum held on campus, several private citizens and business leaders spoke warmly of their advocacy for Southeastern and their appreciation for its accomplishments. One said, “We’re really rockin’ and rollin’ with Southeastern.” These overall positive comments were supplemented by many specific examples of effective community engagement by Southeastern faculty and students, especially from the Nursing, Education, Business, and Science and Technology programs. The Southeast Louisiana Business Center, developed by Southeastern in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce, was mentioned very often.

At the same time, the business, financial, health care, not-for-profit, and local government sectors on the Northshore have learned first-hand about the potential opportunities created by a thriving university, and they now ask for -- and expect -- an even greater level of involvement with and engagement from the University. They look to Southeastern to develop new community outreach programming, offer students opportunities for community-based experiential learning activities concurrent with their classes, and provide
intellectual and human capital to address regional needs and problems. In return, as it were, community leaders are willing to help the University achieve its advocacy goals with the legislature and governing boards.

In short, there is a revolution of rising expectations for Southeastern; across the parishes of the I-12 corridor, the University has developed and is now counted on for an even greater presence in the agenda of regional economic, social, and workforce development. This is reinforced by a 2003 independent study commissioned by the University that showed that Southeastern has an annual economic impact of more than $343 million on the 25-mile community surrounding the campus. “Southeastern has become the Northshore’s University,” one leader said. In both meetings with regional leaders, participants warned that the University has not done enough to communicate its strengths and accomplishments throughout the Northshore and I-12 corridor; especially, some participants strongly recommended that Southeastern document and publicize the economic impact of the University on the communities and parishes in the region.

There will be what we might call a “wishbone” effect for the new president because of such good community feeling and high expectations; the incoming president will have one leg pulled towards the larger regional community while University faculty, staff, and students will be pulling just as hard on the other. In the grand scope of its development, Southeastern has not yet amassed enough internal strength in academic programs, infrastructure, and administration to permit a new president to focus primarily on external relationships; on the other hand, a new president will not succeed absent a consistent and convincing presence in the community.
Summary Analysis & Recommendations

Summary analysis: Southeastern faces a variety of strategic choices that will require thoughtful planning, careful priority setting, and an approach that balances the consolidation of gains already made with innovation and advances in quality. Institutional sustainability, in all of its dimensions, must guide and drive all of the University’s strategic thinking.

The starting point is a position of real institutional strength. The degree of transformation experienced by Southeastern is such that the face and character of the University have radically changed; most notably, the University has leveraged its assets in extraordinary ways to overcome its weaknesses. But sustainability will not arise easily from simply doing more of the same. The needs of a mature regional undergraduate and graduate university differ from those of an institution trying to establish itself. The academic and administrative models that worked so well during the period of starkly limited resources may create unnecessary and counterproductive constraints as the University enters the next phase of its growth and development.

The needs and expectations of faculty in an institution that is increasing its academic depth and quality are different from those of professors who worked hard to establish educational programs and sharpen their focus on teaching. Academic governance, less a priority for the faculty during years of sharply limited resources, will emerge as a greater focus when stronger academic programs and higher rates of retention and graduation become central to institutional effectiveness and the maintenance of adequate funding. Differentiating what is fundamental to Southeastern’s academic character from the tactics that were necessary to make the institution viable will be an important challenge for the new presidential administration.
It is easy to understand why many students, staff members, faculty, alumni, and community supporters are convinced that this is not the time to change anything. A reasonable number of people in our interviews stated with firmness that there is not much that needs changing; as one person humorously put it, “This place don’t need fixin’.” As noted earlier, though, there is no turning back, and status quo does not mean stasis; sustainability for Southeastern means continued engagement with institutional renewal. What is at issue for the new president is the steepness and pacing of the pathway of change. The current sense of greater expectations on campus (and in the region) creates growth pressure; the University must both define what growth means and give it a timetable. From the consultants’ perspective, growth in quality is what matters now; increasing the raw numbers of students, or undergraduates, or entering freshmen is less important than improving the quality of students, faculty, and academic programs. Increasing quality will further increase the University’s influence on economic and workforce development on the Northshore as it strengthens the institution’s position among Louisiana’s universities. There is no inherent conflict between improving quality and responding to regional needs; Southeastern needs not reduce its commitment to the Northshore communities while it strengthens academic quality.

The challenge is to continue to improve Southeastern in ways that ensure long-term sustainability; this is not the time for the pressured development of multiple new initiatives at a feverish pace. On the other hand, it is also not the time for complacent or place-holding leadership; addressing the many factors identified in our report that must be considered in promoting long-term sustainability in the University’s academic, administrative, athletic, physical, and fiscal realms will require both enlightened and very practical leadership. The development of the right strategy for the future is the real opportunity for the new president; in this presidency, the University will set its course in ways that will determine its ability to meet the very high expectations its has created.
Key choices need to be made, and the advent of a new presidency is an excellent opportunity to revisit the University’s strategic plan; the process of doing so can meaningfully engage the whole campus community (in the broadest sense) in the success of the new president. Inspirational leadership was essential to Southeastern’s transformation -- but, as we note earlier in this report, the successes of that transformation belong to the whole University, not just to its recent presidents. The same will be true in the future. The legacy of the next president will be written in the record of growth in quality and sustainability that is achieved by the whole University under new leadership.

**Recommendations:** We submit the following recommendations for the University’s consideration as it reflects on its successes and prepares for new leadership.

1. Southeastern should use the opportunity of this presidential transition to revisit and renew its institutional strategy. The new president should bring the campus together to consider the important strategic decisions facing the University; this will enable the institution to answer fundamental questions about enrollment growth (or shrinkage), academic quality, the highest and best use of limited resources, processes for allocating those resources effectively, and priorities for institutional development. It also can help unite the campus community in support of the new president and provide an opportunity for members of the community to engage with the president’s vision, ideas, and aspirations. We believe this should be a top priority for the new president.

2. Southeastern is first and foremost a teaching institution. But with an increasingly regional and national academic presence and the strong desire to improve academic programs and standards, expectations for faculty engagement in scholarship and research will certainly increase. Too little research and scholarship will stunt the growth of the University’s academic reputation; too much emphasis -- and the development of excessive rewards for research and publishing -- will change the very nature of the institution. Southeastern can take on the challenge of designing academic models that
embrace scholarship and research in the context of supporting student learning. To be clear, we are not simply suggesting some bland version of “balancing teaching with scholarship”; we suggest, instead, that the University should intentionally create intersections between teaching and scholarship that result in stronger educational and student outcomes, while monitoring its own performance in both areas.

3. With nearly 14,000 undergraduates, the University is touching the uppermost limits of size for an institution that is primarily focused on teaching. As noted in this report, the effectiveness of faculty members in working closely with students has enabled Southeastern to appear to be smaller than it actually is and to have class sizes that are in reality a bit larger than students experience them as being. To enhance quality, Southeastern will inevitably need to raise admissions standards, focus on retention, and implement both academic and personal support programs that more effectively support student learning and success. These steps will likely result in a reduction in the numbers of undergraduates -- a consequence that may help preserve student:faculty ratios that are consistent with the University's focus on teaching.

4. We would argue for intentionally reducing undergraduate enrollment moderately (assuming the preservation of current levels of revenue by higher retention rates). Southeastern can better support academic and educational quality by further raising admissions standards, admitting fewer (but more qualified) first-time-in-college and transfer students, and allocating more resources to investments in the learning and success of those students. The resulting undergraduate student population will be smaller but more qualified, better prepared, and more capable of participating fully as members of the University's academic community. Preserving the enrollment of a higher percentage of students who matriculate should offset any losses in tuition revenue consequent to smaller class sizes -- and may advantage Southeastern should the System develop funding criteria that reward retention.
5. No longer an open-admissions institution, Southeastern has improved its academic quality and reputation. Yet, as a state institution, it has a commitment to making education accessible, especially to students and families on the Northshore, that at times can conflict with the quest for quality. As consultants, we believe the current level of selectivity is still quite minimal; the University’s standards are not stringent enough to support the kind of increases in educational and academic quality that Southeastern would like to achieve. It would behoove the institution to increase selectivity and recruit students more widely. Those steps will support concomitant increases in academic rigor and desired improvements in retention and graduation rates.

6. Improving retention is difficult and is not a goal that is amenable to any simple solution. Indeed, the best research points to the entire campus culture as the source of both problems and solutions in student persistence. It is the cumulative effect of increasing admissions selectivity, excellent teaching, appropriate and timely feedback to students within and across classes, authentic comprehensive advising and mentoring, appropriate first and second-year academic and non-academic programming support (e.g. tutoring, experiential learning activities, community service), accessible primary health care and personal counseling to remove barriers to learning, and a spectrum of campus activities that engage students’ interests that, all combined, results in measurable results in greater retention. Being a teaching institution is not, in and of itself, enough; faculty dedication to students is not alone enough. Retention is a whole campus commitment that arises from strategic intentions.

7. Southeastern’s faculty, academic leaders, and administrators are interested in creating new academic programs and expanding current programs. We encourage the University to think carefully and strategically about these possibilities. Important elements of academic infrastructure must be put in place -- including the factors discussed earlier in this report that will support faculty sustainability -- before Southeastern can create and ensure the viability of additional doctoral programs.
review and renewal of overall institutional academic strategy -- as part of a comprehensive strategic planning process -- will allow Southeastern to set priorities among the increasingly rich and robust possibilities the University could choose to pursue in interdisciplinary undergraduate studies, expanded master's offerings, and new doctoral programs. This moment in institutional history may also be an excellent opportunity for Southeastern to consider reducing or eliminating certain programs in favor of redistributing available resources and creating new flexibility for innovation; those decisions should also be made in the context of a renewed and transparent strategic planning process involving the entire campus.

8. There is now pressure for Southeastern to expand its community outreach to include the full East/West breadth of the I-12 corridor, with its rapidly expanding population, while maintaining close relationships on the North/South axis as well. Doing too much too quickly will outstrip institutional resources and cause defeated expectations, but the University cannot and should not avoid further engagement with a broader range of communities that can enrich the institution and its economic, educational, and workforce development partnerships. Once again, an approach solidly based in sound institutional strategy is preferable to an ad hoc and tactical decision-making process that simply responds to each opportunity in isolation.

9. A university of Southeastern's size usually has far more extensive and sophisticated fundraising and development infrastructure, experience, and capacity. Many of the University's fund-raising successes since 2001 speak more to the dedication, energy, and effectiveness of the past president than to the existence of a sustainable development program. While the development office has had some recent success, the potential for securing additional resources can be realized only if far greater investments are made in University advancement; we recommend that this be done shortly after a new president takes office.
10. When asked what they would expect in and from a new president, the single quality most frequently mentioned by participants in our meetings and interviews was “a bold, academic leader.” As one person phrased it, “The speed of the train is only as fast as that of the engine.” The campus is eager to have a president with vision, “people-orientation,” strong sensitivity to local and regional culture, willingness to trust institutional officers and faculty, excellent communications skills, the instincts and motives to raise money effectively, and a commitment to having a very visible presence on campus and in the community. The combination of these, of course, defines what most campuses wish in their president. We mention them simply to point out that expectations are high, perhaps beyond what any one candidate is likely to deliver; high expectations argue for a search process that creates an opportunity for the campus to engage with the candidates (and *vice versa*) in a far more meaningful way than is allowed by the usual one-day, “meet and greet” exercise common to most presidential searches completed today. We strongly encourage the System and the University to conduct the search process differently; at this juncture in Southeastern’s history, the decision about the next presidency deserves the institution’s most serious, deliberate, and careful consideration.
# Appendix

## 1. Pre-Visit Interviews

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<th>Role</th>
<th>Interviewer</th>
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<tr>
<td>VP of Advancement</td>
<td>Provost &amp; VP Academic Affairs - Interim</td>
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<td>VP of Student Affairs</td>
<td>Board Chair</td>
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<td>Faculty Senate President</td>
<td>VP Administration &amp; Finance</td>
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<tr>
<td>President (Interim)</td>
<td>Two Board Members</td>
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<tr>
<td>Athletic Director</td>
<td>System President (Moffett)</td>
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## 2. On-Campus Interviews

- **University of Louisiana System Leaders**: President Moffett, Provost O'Hara, Member of the Board of Supervisors
- **Senior Leadership individual interviews**: President, all Vice Presidents
- **2 Groups: Key Staff** - Assistant Vice President and Directors of key departments and programs
  - Group: Student Leaders
  - Group: Undergraduate/Graduate students selected by academic department
- **2 Groups: Business & Community Leaders**
  - Group: Dean's Council
  - Faculty Senate President
- **Group: Department Heads**
- **Alumni Leaders and Staff**
- **Athletics Leadership and Supporters**
- **Open Community Forum**
3. Post-Visit Interviews

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<th>Position</th>
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<tr>
<td>VP of Administration and General Counsel</td>
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<td>VP of Research and Performance Assessment</td>
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<td>VP for Business and Finance</td>
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<td>Director of Internal and External Audit</td>
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4. Documents Reviewed

K&A provided a list of documents and data for review, including the following; Southeastern provided all documents in electronic or printed form as requested.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Document</th>
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<tr>
<td>Annual reports x 3 years</td>
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<td>Annual budgets x 3 years</td>
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<td>Last accreditation self-study and reports from Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS)</td>
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<td>IPEDS data</td>
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<td>Major institutional surveys -- NSSE, CIRP, Senior Year Study, etc. -- completed in past 3 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>Faculty/staff satisfaction surveys</td>
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<td>Student satisfaction surveys</td>
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<td>University of Louisiana System reports on Southeastern</td>
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<td>Enrollment, retention, and graduation data for past 3 years</td>
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<td>Development and fund-raising results since 2000</td>
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<td>ACT scores for entering undergraduates for past 10 years</td>
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<td>Current institutional organization chart</td>
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<td>Institutional strategic plan</td>
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<td>Campus master plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>All major consultants' reports, including enrollment management reviews, in past 5 years</td>
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