

Introduction

Oklahoma State University is in the process of developing a strategic plan for the university system. A critical component of the planning process is to invite feedback from stakeholders. The Coordinating Committee is utilizing several methods to source feedback from faculty, staff, students and other community members.

The university invited EAB to facilitate a series of focus groups for faculty and staff aimed at sourcing input specific to a set of emerging topic areas. These eight topic areas capture a broad array of potential priorities that would support the university's growth over the next five years.

Feedback from these sessions will be used by the Coordinating Committee as well as the eight Working Teams to guide their work in formulating the priorities and goals for the strategic plan.

*The *Coordinating Committee* is a cross-system team charged with facilitating the planning process.

*The *Working Teams* include a broad array of subject matter experts from across the university system with interest and responsibilities aligned to the various topic areas.

Key Insights from Participants

Participants were invited to share feedback via a variety of methods including live sharing, response through polling exercises and using the chat feature to type their opinions and ideas.

These general themes were shared by participants across the six sessions via the chat feature



Alt text: A grid of six numbered boxes summarizing themes from participant chat feedback. The boxes read: (1) "Alignment, Clarity, and Measurability: Participants want clearer alignment between themes, topic areas, and existing campaigns. There is strong interest in defined goals, baseline metrics, realistic milestones, and understanding how working group input will shape the final plan." (2) "Interdependence of Priorities: many participants emphasized that the pillars are interconnected rather than standalone. For example – Financial sustainability enables everything else, and people and culture underpin successful execution." (3) "People, Culture, and Retention: Staff support, inclusivity, and retention. Were repeatedly framed as foundational to institutional successes. Culture was seen as directly tied to reputation, financial sustainability, and long term visibility." (4) "Financial Sustainability and Resource Realism: Participants frequently prioritized financial sustainability as a prerequisite for progress. There was emphasis on balancing aspiration with achievable outcomes and resource capacity." (5) "Land Grant Mission and Public Impact: Research, Extension, and statewide reach were consistently highlighted as core differentiators. Extension's presence in all 77 counties reinforces OSU's unique land grant identity." and (6) "Communication, Transparency, and Inclusion: Requests for anonymous feedback, broader input sharing, clearer timelines, and stakeholder engagement reflect a need for transparency and trust building."

In response to the question: **What do you think about Oklahoma State University five years from now? What must be true for you to say this strategic plan was successful?** Participants indicated:

	<p>Employee Experience Tangible improvements in the experiences of faculty and staff</p>		<p>Commitment to the Mission Success is defined as who OSU serves and how we serve them</p>
	<p>Growth in Research, Extension, and Impact Growing influence without abandoning its identity</p>		<p>Reputation with Substance Doing the right things well, not focusing on prestige for prestige's sake</p>
	<p>Emphasis on Process Not just what will be achieved with this plan, but how it will be achieved is important</p>		<p>Stability and Coherence There is a bit of fatigue with constant change. Follow through and consistency will be key</p>

Alt text: Six large outlined numbers (1–6) paired with short labeled statements describing what must be true for the strategic plan to be successful. The labels are: (1) Employee Experience: Tangible improvement in the experiences of faculty and staff (2) Commitment to the Mission: Success is defined as who OSU serves and how we serve them (3) Growth in Research, Extension, and Impact: Growing influence without abandoning its identity (4) Reputation with Substance: Doing the right things well, not focusing on prestige for prestige’s sake (5) Emphasis on Process: Not just what will be achieved with this plan, but how it will be achieved is important and (6) Stability and Coherence: There is a bit of fatigue with constant change. Follow through and consistency will be key.

In response to the question: **Assuming OSU cannot do everything at once, which topic areas should be deprioritized (choose up to 2)?** Participants said:



1
System-level vision and **"big picture"** work is **most often deprioritized** across groups

2
Technology and innovation are seen as **"optional"** or at least **delayable**

3
Core mission areas are **protected** from being deprioritized

Alt text: A dark-blue panel with three circular icon callouts indicating what topic areas participants said should be deprioritized. The callouts suggest: system-level “big picture” work is most often deprioritized across groups; technology and innovation are seen as “optional” or at least delayable; and core mission areas are protected from being deprioritized.

*In response to the question: **What is one piece of advice you would give the planning team as they refine topic areas and define strategic priorities for the University?** Participants said:*



Alt text: Four vertical panels with icons and headings summarizing advice to the planning team: “Trust: Success depends on how decisions are made, not just on what decisions are reached,” “Clarity: Stay focused, specific, and honest about tradeoffs,” “Communication: Engagement cannot be one and done. Ongoing communication leads to partnership,” and “Culture: Centering people, culture, and core academic values will be key.”

Breakout Feedback

Participants were invited to select one of the eight topic areas that most interested them and discuss the potential impact of that topic area as an emerging strategic priority. The results of those discussions across the six forums are highlighted in this section.

Topic Areas

Academic Programs, Workforce Alignment, and Graduate and Professional Programs

Bold Ideas and Strategic Opportunities

Defining the Future of the OSU System

Financial Sustainability and Operational Effectiveness

Leveraging Technology, Innovation, Cybersecurity, AI, Data Analytics, and more

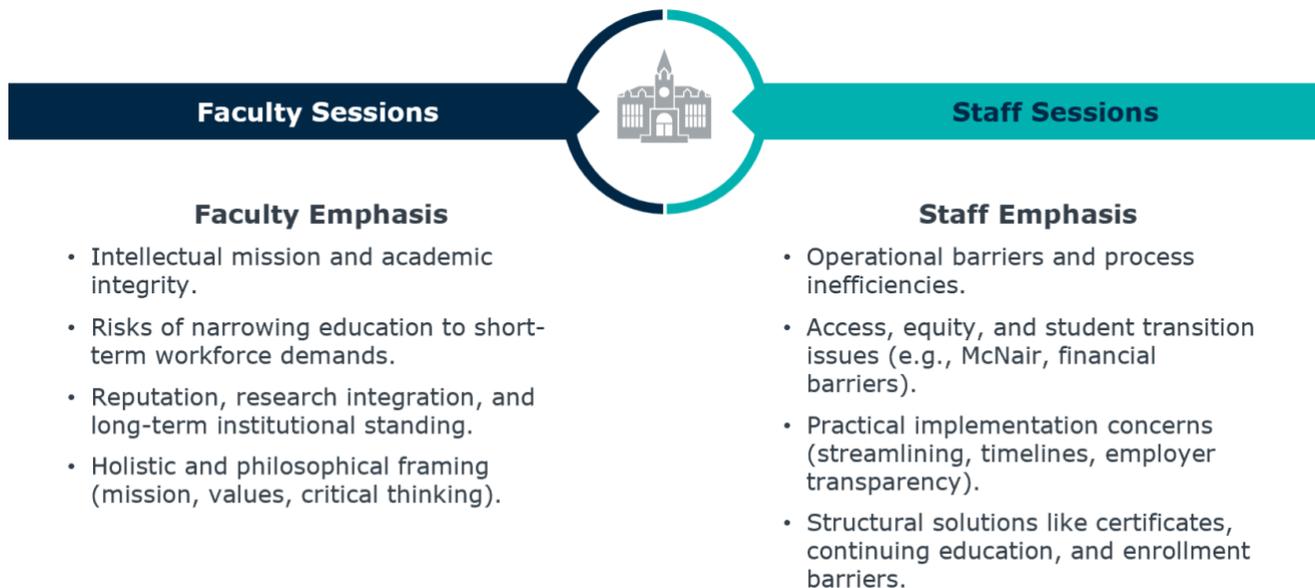
People, Culture, and Reputation

Research, Extension, and Public Impact

Student Access, Student Success, and Student Experience

Academic Programs, Workforce Alignment, and Graduate and Professional Programs

Across both faculty and staff, there is strong support for academic programs and workforce alignment as a strategic priority. The **shared priority** is balance — aligning with workforce needs while preserving intellectual depth, institutional mission, and equitable access. The **primary tension** is not whether to invest, but how to do so without losing breadth, overextending resources, or creating bureaucratic inertia.



Alt text: A split comparison graphic with a central circular campus icon and two horizontal bars labeled “Faculty Sessions” (left) and “Staff Sessions” (right). Under each side, bullet points summarize emphasis areas: Faculty Emphasis reads: “Intellectual mission and academic integrity; risks of narrowing education to short-term workforce demands; reputation, research integration, and long-term institutional standing; holistic and philosophical framing (mission, values, critical thinking).” The Staff Emphasis reads: “Operational barriers and process inefficiencies; access, equity, and student transition issues (e.g., McNair, financial barriers); practical implementation concerns (streamlining, timelines, employer transparency); structural solutions like certificates, continuing education, and enrollment barriers.”

What is Compelling?

The topic is compelling because it sits at the intersection of mission, student success, workforce relevance, affordability, and institutional reputation. Participants consistently see academic programming and workforce alignment as foundational to OSU’s identity and future.

- ❖ **Academic programs are central to the university’s mission**
- ❖ **Student outcomes and workforce readiness matter deeply** including their concerns about debt, ROI, and post-graduation success
- ❖ **Balancing workforce preparation with broad education**
 - Strong emphasis on not losing GenEd, critical thinking, and well-rounded development while aligning to workforce needs

- ❖ **Relevance is multifaceted** including technical skills, transferable skills, applied experiences, and connections
- ❖ **Graduate and professional pathways matter** especially for first-generation and McNair students transitioning to doctoral programs
- ❖ **Innovative and flexible pathways** — interest in alternative credentials, certificates, and flexible degree structures (e.g., 90-hour degrees debate)

How would this investment position the University for the future?

Investment would strengthen OSU's reputation, workforce relevance, public impact, alumni engagement, and graduate pipelines—positioning the university as responsive, connected, and future-focused while reinforcing its academic core.

- ❖ **Stronger student recruitment and reputation** through successful graduate outcomes
- ❖ **Demonstrated public impact by** meeting local, regional, and national workforce needs
- ❖ **Stronger pipelines into industry and government** and placement of leaders in professional sectors
- ❖ **Better alignment with employers** and more transparent workforce partnerships
- ❖ **Expanded continuing education and certificate programs** to serve alumni and working professionals
- ❖ **Holistic system coordination across OSU entities** to better serve diverse student populations

What are the risks?

The biggest risk is losing balance—either by chasing workforce trends at the expense of academic breadth, or by overextending resources without structural reform. Process inefficiencies and equity barriers were also significant concerns.

- ❖ **Overcorrecting toward short-term workforce trends**
 - “Chasing fads” and preparing students for jobs that may not exist
 - Losing broader intellectual foundations or GenEd strengths
 - Aligning too tightly with industry at the expense of broader academic mission
- ❖ **Resource strain and burnout**
 - Faculty and staff burnout from overextension
 - Insufficient resources to support expanded programming
 - Risk of trying to be “all things to all people”
- ❖ **Implementation and structural barriers**
 - Slow processes that make changes obsolete before implementation
 - Barriers to graduate progression, especially financial and cultural barriers for McNair students
 - Overreliance on narrow or universal outcome metrics

What does success look like in 3 – 5 years?

Success means high-demand graduates, engaged faculty, streamlined processes, stronger graduate pipelines, diversified pathways, and programs that are both academically rigorous and workforce-relevant.

- ❖ **Strong reputation and employer demand for OSU graduates**
- ❖ **Greater engagement and investment in program success**
- ❖ **More consistent and supportive graduate pathways across departments**
- ❖ **Streamlined program changes and reduced administrative barriers**
- ❖ **Expanded experiential and non-course based opportunities**
- ❖ **Thriving programs with clarity about what they'll do well, and focus on those strengths**
- ❖ **Multiple clear pathways for different types of students** (career focused, exploratory, returning professionals)

Clarifying questions for the Planning Team

Participants want clarity on scope (jobs vs. careers), baseline performance, governance/process reform, and how decisions were made. There is a strong interest in transparency and meaningful faculty/staff input.

- ❖ **How were these pillars selected? Who was consulted?**
- ❖ **Is the focus on job pipelines or broader career preparation and critical thinking?**
- ❖ **Do we need transformation or refinement?**
- ❖ **How will delays in the program be addressed?**

Bold Ideas and Strategic Opportunities

Faculty and staff share strong enthusiasm for bold ideas that clearly differentiate OSU and unify the system around its land-grant mission and institutional strengths. Across groups, there is agreement that innovation must be focused and strategically prioritized to avoid diluting impact. The common message is to think big, but pair ambition with the funding, coordination, and execution capacity needed to deliver measurable results.



Alt text: The same split comparison layout (faculty left, staff right) with a central campus icon. Faculty emphasis highlights long-term institutional identity/differentiation and avoiding overcorrection or chasing branding shifts; staff emphasis highlights operational excellence/infrastructure, scaling and coordinating existing successful programs, responsiveness to industry, and reducing bureaucratic bottlenecks.

What is Compelling?

A rare opportunity to think big, unify the system, and sharpen OSU's identity

- ❖ **Opportunity to differentiate OSU with a clear, unifying vision**
- ❖ **Leveraging the land-grant mission as a defining strength**
- ❖ **Scaling programs that already work (e.g., RISE, McNair)**
- ❖ **Using system-wide diversity (trade to graduate programs) as a strategic advantage**
- ❖ **Strengthening cross-campus collaboration and unity**

How would investment position the University for the future?

It would position OSU as innovative, mission-driven, and industry-connected

- ❖ **Stronger brand and market differentiation**
- ❖ **First-choice industry partnerships**
- ❖ **Expanded scholarships and graduate development**
- ❖ **Greater agility and administrative capacity to execute ideas**

What are the risks?

Overreach without focus, and not being bold enough

- ❖ **Insufficient funds and execution capacity**
- ❖ **Too many initiatives diluting focus**
- ❖ **Faculty/staff resistance to change**
- ❖ **Overemphasis on one area at the expense of balance**

What does success look like in 3 – 5 years?

Overreach without focus, and not being bold enough

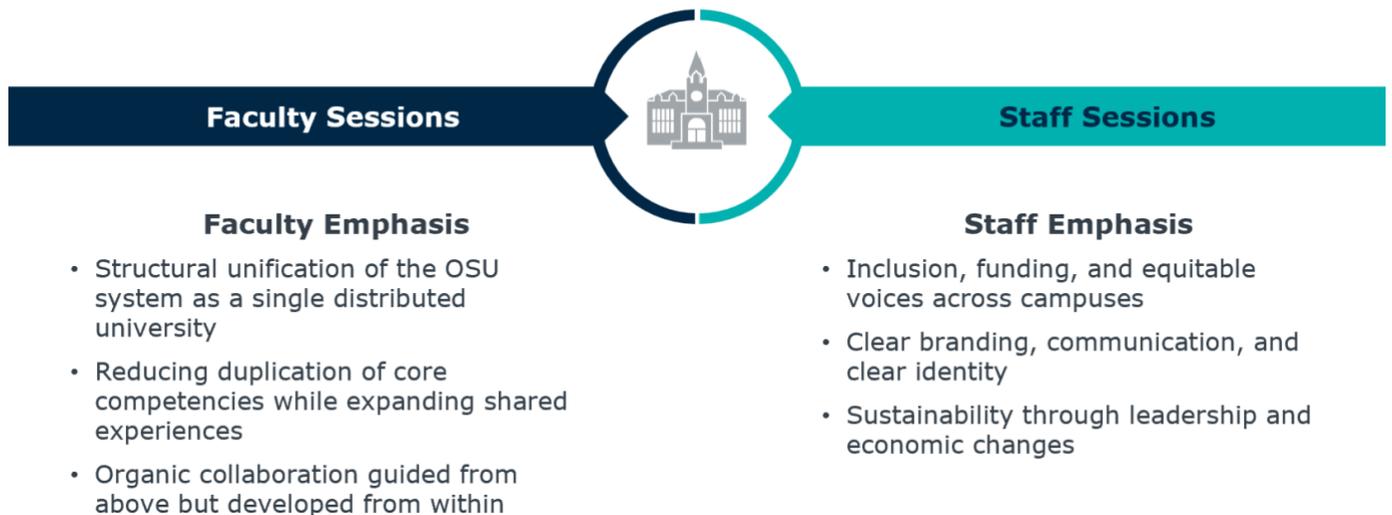
- ❖ **Clear, differentiated institutional identity**
- ❖ **Strong industry reputation and partnerships**
- ❖ **Increased scholarship and high impact program participation**
- ❖ **Streamlined, nimble institutional processes**

Clarifying questions for the Planning Team

- ❖ **What specific areas should bold ideas focus on?**
- ❖ **How will execution be funded and staffed?**
- ❖ **Why shift branding if the current reputation is strong?**

Defining the Future of the OSU System

Both faculty and staff emphasize unity, reduced fragmentation, and stronger system-wide collaboration. There is broad agreement that defining the future of the OSU System requires integration that strengthens—rather than diminishes—individual campuses, and that long-term sustainability and buy-in are essential.



Alt text: Split comparison graphic with “Faculty Sessions” on the left and “Staff Sessions” on the right around a central campus icon. Faculty emphasis references structural unification of the OSU system, reducing duplication while expanding shared experiences, and collaboration guided from above but developed from within. Staff emphasis references inclusion/funding/equitable voices across campuses, clear branding/communication/identity, and sustainability through leadership and economic changes.

What is Compelling?

Strong interest in unity, integration, and a clearly identified system that elevates all campuses

- ❖ **Opportunity to operate as a single, unified, multi-campus system**, while preserving each campus’ strengths.
- ❖ **Leveraging talent, technology, and expertise** across campuses for greater statewide impact
- ❖ **Desire for clearer system identity, integration, and shared vision**
- ❖ **Inclusion of all campuses** for funding, branding and planning

How would investment position the University for the future?

Positions OSU as an integrated, efficient, statewide, system with shared strengths and clearer market presence

- ❖ **Opportunity to operate as a single, unified, multi-campus system**, while preserving each campus’ strengths.
- ❖ **Leveraging talent, technology, and expertise** across campuses for greater statewide impact

- ❖ **Desire for clearer system identity, integration, and shared vision**
- ❖ **Inclusion of all campuses** for funding, branding and planning

What are the risks?

Fragmentation creating inefficiencies and weakening individual campuses

- ❖ **Consolidation harming individual campuses financially**
- ❖ **Fragmentation and inefficiency if initiatives fail**
- ❖ **Initiatives lacking sustainability through leadership or economic changes**
- ❖ **Top-down implementation without organic buy-in**

What does success look like in 3 – 5 years?

A unified and collaborative system that is stable and adaptable

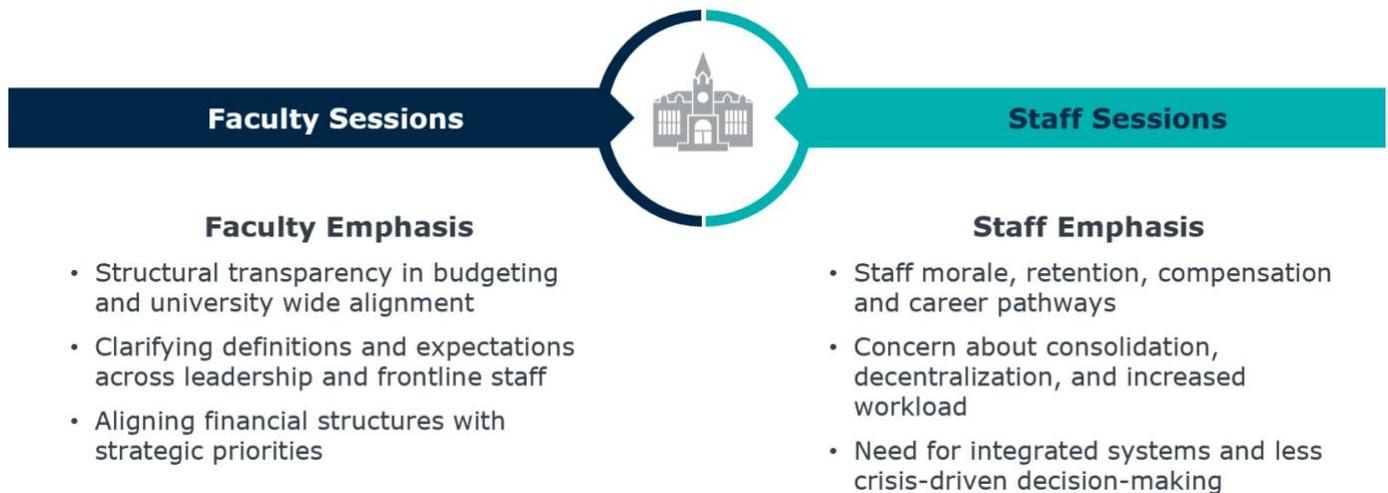
- ❖ **Seamless collaboration across campuses** including teaching, research, and student access
- ❖ **Strong communication across all campuses**
- ❖ **Sustainable progress** that survives leadership transitions
- ❖ **Reduced duplication**

Clarifying questions for the Planning Team

- ❖ **How will branding and communication be unified and executed effectively?**
- ❖ **How will consolidation decisions ensure meaningful campus representation?**

Financial Sustainability and Operational Effectiveness

Both groups emphasize transparency, sustainable long-term planning, and alignment between commitments and resources. There is broad concern that without clarity, communication, and investment in people and systems, financial strategy could erode trust and institutional effectiveness.



Alt text: Split comparison graphic with “Faculty Sessions” on the left and “Staff Sessions” on the right, centered on a campus icon. Faculty emphasis includes transparency in budgeting, clarifying definitions/expectations across leadership and frontline staff, and aligning financial structures with strategic priorities. Staff emphasis includes morale/retention/compensation/career pathways, concerns about consolidation/decentralization/increased workload, and a need for integrated systems and less crisis-driven decision-making.

What is Compelling?

Financial clarity and stability are seen as prerequisites for trust, morale, and long-term success

- ❖ **Academic priorities cannot thrive without financial sustainability**, it is foundational to the university’s mission
- ❖ **Staff morale, retention, and adequate resources are deeply tied to financial sustainability and clarity**

How would investment position the University for the future?

Retaining talent and aligning commitments with sustainable revenue

- ❖ **Greater agility to reallocate resources and fund initiatives**
- ❖ **Clearer long-term planning aligned with realistic revenue projections**

What are the risks?

Misalignment, loss of trust, and destabilizing cuts that weaken operations and morale

- ❖ **Unstable external funding** including reduced state operations that may lead to increasing burdens on faculty/staff

- ❖ **Change “for the sake of change”** and poor prioritization
- ❖ **Lack of communication and buy-in** which undermines trust

What does success look like in 3 – 5 years?

A financially stable, transparent, well-integrated system where staff feel supported and long-term commitments and match resources

- ❖ **Financial transparency and shared understanding of resource decisions**
- ❖ **Sustainable budgeting aligned with long-term revenue, not short term optimism**
- ❖ **Integrated campus systems that communicate effectively**
- ❖ **Focuses on staff that include** clear pathways for promotion, compensation, and improved retention of staff
- ❖ **Reduced duplication and a unified “one OSU” culture**

Clarifying questions for the Planning Team

- ❖ **Clarity on the terms “financial sustainability” and “operational effectiveness” at OSU**
- ❖ **How do state and regent support factor into sustainability planning**

Leveraging Technology, Innovation, Cybersecurity, AI, Data Analytics and More

Across staff groups, technology is viewed as foundational to the university's competitiveness and operational effectiveness. There is strong interest in better integration of systems, actionable use of data, and ongoing AI training for all campus stakeholders. At the same time, concerns about security, cost, unclear scope, and workforce anxiety highlight the need for clear governance, communication, and sustained investment rather than piecemeal adoption.

Note: The only breakout group notes received on this topic area were from the Staff Forums, thus, a comparison of faculty and staff perceptions is not included.

What is Compelling?

Technology is central to operations and competitiveness, but current systems and knowledge gaps limit effectiveness.

- ❖ **Technology and data underpin everything the university does**
- ❖ **Data can help make actionable informed decisions**
- ❖ **AI is rapidly transforming industries and higher education**

How would investment position the University for the future?

Positions OSU as agile, data-informed, technologically current, and better integrated institutionally.

- ❖ **Improving efficiency and streamlining processes across units**
- ❖ **Competitive edge** for both students and the institutional as a whole
- ❖ **Developing subject-matter experts in emerging technologies**

What are the risks?

Risks center on security, workforce anxiety, cost, and lack of clarity around scope and governance.

- ❖ **Data security and confidentiality**
- ❖ **Unrealistic expectations of AI use and potential misuse**
- ❖ **Employee fear of displacement**
- ❖ **Cost and unclear ROI**

What does success look like in 3 – 5 years?

Well-trained campus community using secure, integrated systems to make informed, efficient decisions.

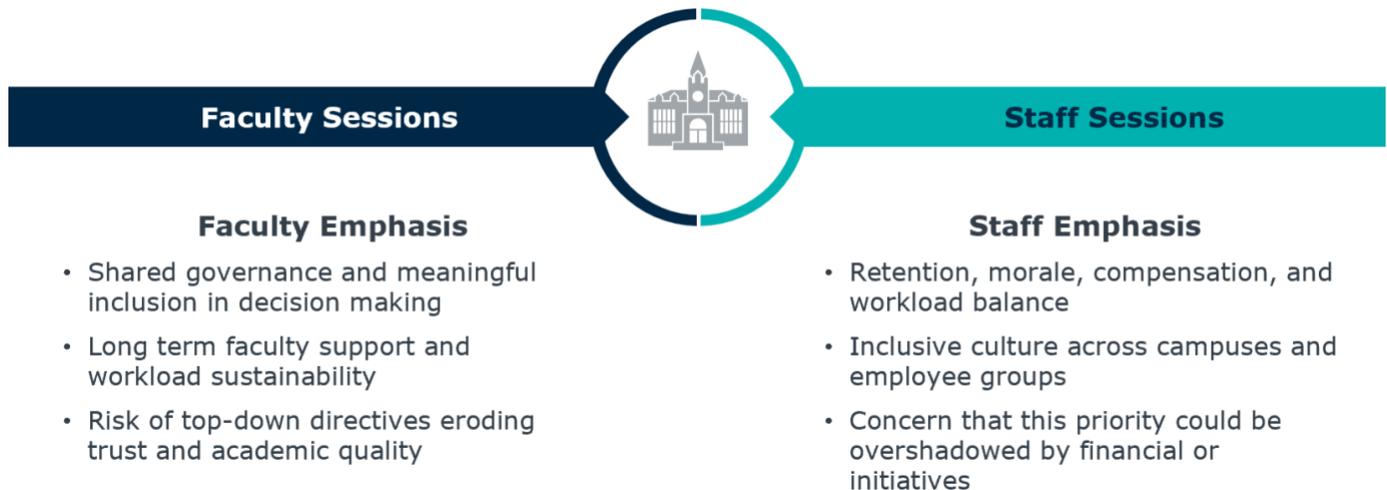
- ❖ **Easier access** to reliable, integrated data and tools
- ❖ **On going training** for faculty, staff, and students
- ❖ **Clear evidence of data informed decision making**
- ❖ **Better communication** and fewer disconnected systems between campuses

Clarifying questions for the Planning Team

- ❖ **How will the scope be defined? This topic feels very broad and unclear.**
- ❖ **How will the university ensure ongoing training equitably across all campuses?**

People, Culture, and Reputation

Both faculty and staff view people and culture as foundational to institutional success. There is strong agreement that retention, trust, inclusion, and clear communication are essential, and that without sustained visible commitment, culture initiatives risk being perceived as symbolic rather than transformative.



Alt text: Split comparison graphic with faculty emphasis on shared governance and meaningful inclusion in decision-making, long-term faculty support/workload sustainability, and concern about top-down directives eroding trust/academic quality. Staff emphasis focuses on retention/morale/compensation/workload balance, inclusive culture across campuses and employee groups, and concern that culture could be overshadowed by financial or other initiatives.

What is compelling?

People and culture are viewed as the engine behind every other strategic priority and central to OSU's long-term stability and brand. Culture shapes university identity and external perception.

How would investment position the University for the future?

This would position OSU as a stable, trusted, and attractive institution that is internally strong and externally respected.

- ❖ **Strengthening governance, trust, and alignment in decision making**
- ❖ **Improving retention and recruitment of faculty and staff** by establishing OSU as a destination workplace for top talent
- ❖ **Reinforcing a unified system-wide identity**

What are the risks?

Failing to act intentionally and inclusively which can lead to disengagement, attrition, and weakened institutional culture.

- ❖ **Continued turnover, morale decline, and erosion of trust**

- ❖ **Perceived equity between campuses or employee groups**
- ❖ **Loss of momentum if this initiative is deprioritized**

What does success look like in 3 – 5 years?

A stable, engaged workforce with measurable improvements in retention, morale, and institutional cohesion.

- ❖ **Improved retention and shorter time to fill vacancies**
- ❖ **Stronger shared governance and reduced administrative burden**
- ❖ **Higher employment engagement and sense of belonging**
- ❖ **Clear narrative positioning people and culture as institutional strengths**

Clarifying questions for the Planning Team

- ❖ **How will faculty be meaningfully included in the decision making?**
- ❖ **How will communication be clear, inclusive, and sustained?**
- ❖ **How will this remain a priority and not be overshadowed?**

Research, Extension, and Public Impact

Both faculty and staff strongly center the land grant mission and statewide reach as OSU's defining strength. There is broad agreement that investment must prioritize people, infrastructure, coordination, and clear communication of impact to maintain relevance, trust, and competitiveness.



Alt text: Split comparison graphic with faculty emphasis on research competitiveness/infrastructure/faculty recruitment, industry-sponsored research and diversified revenue streams, and strategic tracking/communication of impact. Staff emphasis highlights extension staff workloads/compensation/retention, coverage and service equity across all 77 counties, and marketing/visibility of Extension's statewide role.

What is compelling?

This area represents OSU's identity, statewide reach, and public value more clearly than any other pillar.

- ❖ **This pillar most visibly embodies the land-grant mission** through the integration of research, teaching, and service.
- ❖ **Extension serves as the front door to OSU** reaching all 77 counties and spanning all ages
- ❖ **Research and extension directly improve health, agriculture, workforce readiness, and community vitality**
- ❖ **Strong connection to students through experiential learning and graduate engagement**

How would investment position the University for the future?

This area represents OSU's identity, statewide reach, and public value more clearly than any other pillar.

- ❖ **Strengthening research infrastructure, faculty recruitment, and competitiveness, for federal and industry funding**
- ❖ **Expanding industry partnerships and sponsored research**, increasing flexibility and revenue
- ❖ **Increasing extension capacity, deepening community trust, and building future student pipelines**

- ❖ **Improving tracking and communication of statewide impact to stakeholders**

What are the risks?

The greatest risk is stagnation leading to reputational decline, weakened community presence, and loss of talent.

- ❖ **Loss of relevance, public trust, and constituent support if investment and communication lacks**
- ❖ **Continued staff attrition in Extension if workload concerns persist**

What does success look like in 3 – 5 years?

A well-funded, coordinated, and highly visible system that demonstrates measurable statewide impact while strengthening student and faculty engagement.

- ❖ **Increased funding** for research, Extension staff, and faculty salaries
- ❖ **Improved retention of faculty, Extension staff, and clientele**
- ❖ **Stronger industry engagement and cross college collaboration**
- ❖ **Measurable public impact**

Clarifying questions for the Planning Team

- ❖ **How will working groups be integrated into the final plan?**
- ❖ **How will big goals be funded beyond tuition increases?**
- ❖ **How can planning teams and staff partner effectively throughout implementation?**

Student Access, Student Success, and Student Experience

Both faculty and staff center students as the primary reason for the university's existence. There is broad agreement that belonging, advising, communication, and coordinated support structures are essential. Investment must be sustainable and system wide to avoid fragmentation while improving measurable student outcomes and long-term institutional reputation.



Alt text: Split comparison graphic with faculty emphasis on advising capacity, small class sizes and early connection to programs, academic belonging and inclusive campus culture, and defining student success beyond retention. Staff emphasis highlights full student lifecycle and systemwide coordination, career development/workforce preparation/alumni engagement, and communication gaps/silos/scalability challenges.

What is compelling?

Student success is viewed as the central organizing priority that connects to every other strategic area.

- ❖ **Strong need for belonging, advising support, mentoring, and inclusive campus culture**

How would investment position the University for the future?

Investment strengthens institutional reputation, financial stability, alumni engagement, and workforce competitiveness.

- ❖ **Improving retention, graduation, and job placement outcomes**
- ❖ **Building a stronger sense of belonging and systemwide identity**

What are the risks?

The primary risks are fragmentation, scalability challenges, and resource strain that undermine trust and effectiveness.

- ❖ **Insufficient funding and overpromising beyond capacity**

- ❖ **Siloed efforts and inconsistent implementation across campus**
- ❖ **Failure to keep pace in an increasingly competitive higher education landscape**

What does success look like in 3 – 5 years?

A coordinated system where students feel supported, connected, and prepared for career and life

- ❖ **Increased retention, graduation, and employment rates**
- ❖ **Measurable improvement in student sense of belonging and engagement**
- ❖ **Improved advising capacity**
- ❖ **Stronger mental health support and student resource allocation**

Clarifying questions for the Planning Team

- ❖ **What does student success mean beyond retention?**
- ❖ **How much control and flexibility will units have in implementation?**