NYUSteinhardt
Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development

Keeling & Associates
Change for Learning

Strategic Planning

Process Overview and Executive Summary of Data Findings

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Introduction

As part of NYU Steinhardt's strategic planning process, Keeling & Associates, LLC (K&A) executed an intentionally broadly inclusive, mixed-methods data collection process to gather information and inspire discussion in Spring 2012. Through a combination of 14 faculty and departmental meetings involving more than 100 members of the faculty; multiple and recurring leadership discussions with the deans of the School and the administration of NYU; three "Idea Walls" (over two days, in three locations); two town hall meetings with a total of more than 30 participants; three separate surveys for faculty, staff and students (with 38%, 36% and 10% response rates, respectively); and four student focus groups and two student government group meetings with a total of more than 40 participants, each member of the NYU Steinhardt community had multiple opportunities to voice their ideas about the strengths, weaknesses, big ideas, and obstacles that should be considered in planning for the next 5 to 10 years.

K&A was able not only to collect a large corpus of information from a diversity of sources, but also to work with members of the NYU Steinhardt faculty, staff, and student body to begin building a greater sense of community and shared purpose, which many believe has been lacking to date. In many meetings, students, faculty, and staff affirmed their notice of and appreciation for the openness and inclusiveness of the process. Throughout the phase of data collection and analysis, the consultants presented the Strategic Planning Steering Committee (SPSC) with a sequence of reports providing significant and noteworthy findings for their consideration and discussion. Thus, several of the items in this book will not be new to the Steering Committee; yet this is the first presentation of the

data as a complete entity and the collection served as the foundation for discussion during a half-day Steering Committee "data review" meeting in early Fall.

It is also important to note that the data collection, and NYU Steinhardt's strategic planning process as a whole, are not occurring in a vacuum; instead, they reflect, and are influenced by, the culture and relationships of the individuals and departments within the School, as well as between the School and University. Thus, the data provide insights into the complex and challenging administrative realities within which the School must operate in the present, and which must inevitably influence its plans for the future. NYU Steinhardt is both strong and growing; it also contributes to, and benefits or suffers from, the policies, plans, and practices of the University of which it is an important and meaningful part. An appreciation of the structure, dynamics, and interactions in this relationship, and consideration of what is required to achieve and maintain a reasonable balance of factors and forces within it, are necessary elements of the discussion and design of any aspirational and feasible plan for the future of NYU Steinhardt.

Data Collection Process

▸ The timeline of data collection activities was as follows:

- Faculty Meetings: ongoing, March through May (14 meetings, more than 100 faculty participated)
- Town Halls: April 24, 30 (11, 20+ participants, respectively)
- Idea Walls: April 23, 24 (3 sites, two days; Pless Hall most highly attended)
- Student Survey: Opened April 10 for three weeks; 10% response rate
- Student Focus Groups and Meetings: Week of April 30 (6 groups, 4-12 participants each for a total of more than 40 participants)
- Faculty Survey: Opened April 23 for three weeks; 38% response rate
- Staff Survey: Opened May 8 for four weeks; 36% response rate

▸ That timeline suggests factors to consider when reviewing the data, such as:

- At the start of this process, explaining the purpose and utility of the process itself was a necessary part of each exercise. Most individuals were not familiar with the process at its inception, and some were skeptical about the process due to a

history of what they remembered as dysfunctional planning processes at the School. Thus, for many, their level of engagement and willingness to share thoughts, opinions and ideas grew over time as they learned more about the process and had more contact with the consultants.

- As we continued through the Strategic Planning process, individuals not only built on their understanding of the process, but heard the concerns of their peers and community. These each contributed to a more complete and sophisticated articulation of concerns and priorities over time. By the end of the process, some individuals had taken the opportunity to participate through multiple avenues.

- Steering Committee members played a crucial role in enhancing understanding and buy-in among their faculty peers as the process evolved.

Data Book

K&A created a Strategic Planning Data Book as a comprehensive compilation of information of all kinds collected, reviewed, and analyzed as part of the data collection phase of the strategic planning process for NYU Steinhardt. The School will make printed copies of the complete book available for review by any member of the NYU Steinhardt community.

The Data Book contains several kinds of materials, including:

▸ Summary of faculty meetings held in small groups and regular departmental gatherings;
▸ Summary of the student focus groups and Student Government meetings;
▸ Discussion guide for student groups;
▸ Summary of the Idea Wall comments and recommendations collected over two days in three locations across campus;
▸ Summary of the two Town Hall meetings;
▸ Comparative summary of quantitative survey findings showing responses from faculty, staff and students on similar questions;
▸ Comparative summary of qualitative survey findings that juxtaposes narrative data from faculty, staff and students and presents key themes from each survey; and
▸ A question by question summary of quantitative and qualitative data from the three surveys (students, staff and faculty).

Executive Summary Data Findings

The following represent themes that repeatedly surfaced during the analysis of data collected through multiple methods of inquiry from diverse groups within the School's community. This list is not by any means exhaustive or final; the themes below represent a high-level overview of the most discussed priorities to date, as they emerged in the consultants' review of the comprehensive collection of the data. _You may interpret the data differently and believe that other themes should be prioritized as we move forward in the Strategic Planning process. We encourage you to bring those ideas forth during discussions and forums to come._

For each of the themes below, we provide some pertinent examples of evidence from the larger dataset; the evidence is presented by method by which it was collected, and the group from which it came is noted (if it is not clear from the methodology). When data could be broken down according to group, it was analyzed and is presented as such. Often, due to inadequate sample sizes, we were unable to segregate the data; for example, survey data could not be broken down by department because the number of respondents per department was not sufficient for meaningful analysis or comparison. _Again, the lists of examples are not exhaustive, but are meant to give the reader a sample of the data from which the themes emerged. For a complete roster of findings, please refer to the individual summaries found in the Data Book._

Themes from the Data Analysis

▸ **Several core values of the School have been praised by students, faculty and staff alike and should, in their view, be maintained as NYU Steinhardt looks to the future.**

These values translate into signature elements, present throughout the School, and include:

- Intimate departments with small class sizes;
- Hands-on learning experiences in the training of professionals, both in NYC and through the Global Network University;
- A focus on the connection between theory and practice;
- Opportunities and even more potential for cross-departmental work and study; and,
- The School's strong connections to NYC.

Examples of evidence for the need to continue and increase these signature elements of students' experiences include:

- Faculty Meetings: *Core values of the School*
  - Faculty want to improve the translational aspect of the School's work that "bridges the science side and clinical training programs." The idea of building a Lab School is one example of how this idea might be manifest.

- Student Focus Groups: *Core values of the School*
  - Students praised the caliber of their peers ("civic-minded") and faculty ("innovative," "entrepreneurial"). All students like that faculty are known for bridging theory and practice. Undergrads stressed that many teaching faculty are currently working in their fields, and Master's students noted that many are well known in NYC. Some expressed the need for greater diversity of both faculty and students.
  - The small size of most programs engenders close, strong cohorts.
  - Undergraduates see hands-on experiences working in NYC as fantastic preparation for careers, but doctoral students need more teaching opportunities.
  - Students additionally described experiences abroad as intense, hands-on and impactful learning experiences, which they believe have shaped them into future professionals. They would like to see the School continue to integrate such experiences with curricula.

- Idea Walls: *Core values of the School*
  - The connection to schools in NYC provides invaluable opportunities.
  - Many praise the "community feel" of the School, as well as the accessibility of faculty and administrators.

- Strengths of the School: support for innovation and entrepreneurship among faculty, as well as "individuality" among students; diversity of programs; preparation of students for diverse job possibilities; and high caliber, dedicated faculty.
- Global opportunities have provided students with cross-cultural perspectives, including "tolerance, understanding, breadth and depth of knowledge," that make graduates "more competitive in today's global market."

- Town Halls: *Core values of the School*
  - NYC attracts faculty, researchers and students with its many resources, but other NYC schools offer more financial aid, better housing and facilities—NYU Steinhardt needs to do more to compete.

- Surveys: *Core values of the School*
  - Greatest strengths of NYU Steinhardt listed by Faculty and Staff: connection of theory to practice (#2) and committed faculty (#3).
  - NYC is a top reason faculty and students would recommend the School to peers.

▶ There is a lack of consistency, clarity, and transparency around many administrative matters at NYU Steinhardt that should be addressed in the near future.

In particular, the School should make efforts towards:

- Standardizing policies and systems across departments;
- Increasing faculty voice and involvement in decision making; and,
- Maintaining appropriate staffing to serve the growing and changing needs of the School.

Examples of evidence for the need to increase consistency, clarity and transparency include:

- Faculty meetings: *Consistency, clarity and transparency*
    - Faculty discussed a lack of faculty voice, a lack of transparency around policies and procedures and a lack of involvement in decision-making. They acknowledged that these issues are pervasive throughout NYU as a whole.
    - Faculty encounter "surprises," feel that significant decisions are "handed down" to them (such as when the School shifted to fully-funding doctoral students), and experience a general lack of transparency around budgets and the distribution of resources (faculty feel "in the dark" about the budgetary process, which is a "very close kept secret").
    - Faculty spend too much time on administrative work, are demoralized by it and do not have time to do their "best work" because of it.

- Student Focus Groups: *Consistency, clarity and transparency*
    - Students have a sense that the School is operationally decentralized and lacks a necessary amount of infrastructure.
    - Students lack a clear source of accurate information and are forced to rely on exceptional, but rare, individuals who fill in the gaps.

- Idea Walls: *Consistency, clarity and transparency*
    - Administrative operations are less than ideal: there is a disconnect between offices, poor communication, lack of transparency, inconsistency around information regarding requirements and policies, and an overall sense of disorganization.
    - Staff numbers are too low and many current staff members are seen as not good enough at their jobs to support the work of the faculty or manage the resources of the School.
    - Some described a need for better customer service for students—"the success of students you have contributes to caliber of students that apply when we leave."

- Town Halls: *Consistency, clarity and transparency*
    - The School is experienced as decentralized (mirroring NYU as a whole).
    - Many feel as if they are always "problem-solving," and not able to be "proactive" regarding operations and planning.

- Students, faculty and staff must find their "go-to people" in each department to get things done.
- There is a need for better technology, and even closer physical proximity of offices.

- Surveys: *Consistency, clarity and transparency*
  - 71% of staff agree that NYU Steinhardt is more often reacting to problems than strategically thinking and planning.
  - Increase staffing levels, improve communications and improve administrative systems listed as top staff priorities for the next 5-10 years.
  - Poor infrastructure, inefficient and disorganized administrative systems were listed by faculty, staff and students as top weaknesses of the School.

▶ Though all agree that the School should improve its reputation and standing, tension exists among faculty, staff, and students about the nature of NYU Steinhardt's identity; the relationships among and opportunities or challenges created by the diverse departments that make up the community of the School; the challenge of developing a coherent School identity without imposing a top-down formulation of interdisciplinarity and collaboration; and the lack of satisfactory vision and leadership from the deans on these issues.

Specific issues related to identity and coherence include:

- Moving away from being known as a "School of Ed."
- Improving the status of the School within the University, which may entail greater alignment of the School with the University's agenda -- particularly a focus on research and greater involvement in the Global Network University.
- Creating a strong brand without forcing coherence among diverse departments.
- Strengthening the individual departments that constitute the highly valued diversity of the school, and
- Increasing the sense of community among the departments, fostering natural opportunities for collaboration, and a creating collegial atmosphere for faculty, staff and students alike (and providing the infrastructure to support that community).

Examples of evidence for the tension around identity and community at the School include:

- Faculty meetings: *Identity and community*
  - Faculty are disappointed that deans don't rally for resources and advocate their strengths enough with the University (no one is "shouting from the rooftops").
  - Faculty believe the School is treated as "cash cow," or an "ugly stepchild," and they feel as if they are treated as inferior to their colleagues in other schools. Students feel like "second class citizens" at NYU.
  - There is a lack of involvement with NYU initiatives (particularly global ones), even when there are some obvious matches, because the School is overlooked and underestimated by NYU. Faculty believe that the School is much more in line with the agenda of the R-1 University than is commonly perceived.
  - Faculty are enthusiastic about opportunities available to them and their students through the Global Network University -- especially the ability to prepare educators with global perspectives and competencies -- but want to see fewer barriers to participation.
  - Diverse departments have led to difficulty in branding (peripheral departments have difficulty fitting in, though "no one would tell CAS to find coherence"), and some

departments that are similar to those in other schools are overshadowed by them ("Our biggest competition is within NYU").
- Faculty expressed mixed feelings about being branded as a "School of Ed," but recognize the need to strengthen the image of the School with an increased focus on social sciences, assessment, and a connection to the city.
- Faculty want to "'hyphenate' when they need to or want to, not because of expectation" and need support for this -- they perceive barriers to effective, ongoing collaboration with partners both within and outside of NYU Steinhardt. There is currently a feeling that they must "dumb down" their work to appeal to a wider range of experts across diverse departments.
- Interdisciplinarity is more talk than action and the search for coherence and an overall mission has disempowered departments from marketing their programs effectively and diverted resources needed to create experts in their fields.
- Faculty feel over-managed and believe that the leadership of the School doesn't get the model of how collaboration works best.
- Some suggest cross-departmental courses for doctoral students to satisfy unmet needs and expose students to interdisciplinary work.

- Student Focus Groups: *Identity and community*
  - Students feel the School is not well understood, respected or known by others. Many take "Steinhardt" off of their resumes, and just leave NYU, because they feel it is not well known except for a small number of programs that are well connected in NYC. Students would like to see the School's identity improve, though recognize that it will be an upwards challenge.
  - Students do not have much exposure to interdisciplinary work (especially undergraduates who know very little about departments other than their own) and feel there is a need for additional infrastructure to support collaboration (such as facilities or School-wide events). Many students agree the School should not steal attention and resources away from the departments in doing so, yet there is a need for better balance.
  - Students feel there is a lack of community across the School, though it is much greater within departments. Students understand that the School needs additional infrastructure to support a more integrated community, including physical space, events and time dedicated to cross-School efforts.

- Idea Walls: *Identity and community*
  - "Allowing and promoting diversity" of students, faculty and programs is seen as a great strength of the School.
  - The School experiences a relatively low status within the University and beyond, partly because it is a "School of Ed."
  - There is a lack of communication and sense of community across departments, as well as a brand that everyone wants to be a part of.
  - Many feel they are competing with similar programs in other schools, and that the current form of diversity emphasizes difference rather than a positive culture of collaboration.

- Students need an improved sense of teamwork and opportunities to network between programs. To make the School less compartmentalized, there must be a change in policies to allow greater fluidity and flexibility across departments and programs.
- Collaboration—through centers and institutes as well as facilitated dialogue—should be used to solve problems and understand big issues.
- Positive aspects of global experiences are the opportunities for cross-cultural education and perspectives and preparation for the global market; negative aspects include highly expensive programs and limited options.

- Town Halls: *Identity and community*
  - Many don't appreciate or understand the need for a singular narrative for the School—it would be forced and not necessarily beneficial. Still, some want a common ideology articulated, though not an overarching identity to which departments must conform. This would help branding/marketing, seen as necessary because the School is not well known nationally, regionally, and at NYU.
  - There is a lack of awareness of what happens from department to department and many missed opportunities for optimal/shared use of limited resources.

- Surveys: *Identity and community*
  - 75% of faculty agree that NYU Steinhardt should provide scholarly leadership in assessing and responding to key problems in education.
  - Most students in all programs have been very satisfied with their global experiences (>70%), but 25% or less participate (doctoral = 25%, Master's = 21%, undergrad = 19%).
  - Faculty believe that refining the identity of the School is the second most important priority for next 5-10 years; staff named refining identity and promoting the brand as second as well.
  - Faculty listed top initiatives to enhance the reputation of the School including building high quality faculty, expanding the doctoral program, and improving and increasing space; staff named education and health related initiatives, building the brand and publicizing the work of the School, and improving financial and educational support for students.
  - Faculty, staff and students agree that within NYU, the School is overshadowed by other schools. It is seen as a "cash cow," the diversity of its academic departments and programs is not respected by others, and it is known as being easy academically. Outside of NYU, all agree that the reputation is better than within since it is known as part of NYU (though it is still often overshadowed by other schools).
  - 64% of faculty agree that the primary emphasis of strategic planning should be on strengthening the departments ("as School goals are developed they should be informed by departmental goals"), while 69% of staff agree that emphasis should be on improving collaboration and integration.
  - 61% of faculty agree that NYU Steinhardt should create more organizational structures that require and support collaboration (such as institutes and centers). 52% of faculty agree that the School should invest more in interdisciplinary work.
  - When asked how much they feel like part of the NYU Steinhardt community, 10% of undergraduates, 12% of Master's students, and 11% of doctoral students replied "very

much." When asked how much they feel like part of the NYU community, 12% of undergraduates, 16% of Master's students, and 21% of doctoral students replied "very much."

- Faculty ranked focusing on the departments in refining the School's identity as the second highest priority for next 5-10 years. Faculty, staff and students listed a lack of identity, coherence and community, respectively, as a top weakness.
- According to faculty and staff, the diversity of programs is seen as the #1 greatest strength of the School.

▶ As NYU Steinhardt continues to grow, the School should strive to continue to improve all-around quality; failure to maintain a focus on quality in students' education and experience could put the School at risk in the future.

Maintaining and improving quality entails the following:

• Recruiting and retaining innovative, entrepreneurial faculty and high caliber students;
• Supporting student success with rigorous curricula and exposure to practice-based learning experiences, high standards for teaching, mentoring and advising, adequate financial assistance, and an increased use of assessment to ensure all of the above; and,
• Providing adequate resources (including space and funding) for students and faculty to fulfill their degree requirements and their research and teaching responsibilities, respectively.

Examples of evidence for the importance of maintaining and improving all-around quality include:

• Faculty meetings: *Maintaining and improving quality*
   - Decisions are not seen as data driven, but are often made for personal and political reasons, and this stymies quality and potential. Faculty observed that the School and University have staunchly resisted a move in the direction of using data and assessment to drive decisions.
   - Growth is not seen as planned strategically and thus outpaces resources and lacks structural support (exemplified by the poorly planned undergraduate programs and lack of proper grant management resources). Programs are under continuous pressure to grow even though they are understaffed and "bursting."
   - Faculty think the School must determine which units are outstanding, which are mediocre, and how to allocate resources among them.
   - Space is a huge issue for all: faculty feel at risk for losing potential colleagues and students because of a severe shortage of space for research and teaching. One faculty member stated, "We bring in the money but we can't get a room to teach in."
   - Faculty want to see more full-time faculty and fewer adjuncts teaching.
   - There are too few doctoral students to run the programs and support faculty research. The decision to fully fund doctoral students has created consequences that have hurt the quality of the programs.

• Student Focus Groups: Maintaining and improving quality
   - Undergraduate and graduate students spoke of a lack of necessary space. Doctoral students specifically bemoaned a lack of adequate space for research.

- Undergraduate and graduate students believe there is a shortage of faculty for quality teaching and advising, as well as limited courses (particularly for doctoral students), access to global opportunities, and other resources and support (such as Smartboard training) that lead them to question the cost of their education.
- Advising is severely lacking for students in all programs except those in the doctoral programs. Advisors are constantly changing, unaware or uninformed about requirements/policies, or, when they are helpful and competent, overworked and stretched thin. Undergraduates need help from orientation onward: navigating programs, preparing for careers, taking advantage of global opportunities, finding scholarships and financial aid (Master's students in particular), and finding out about the many events and opportunities that exist on campus. Undergraduates and doctoral students expressed that they need to do a lot of legwork and be independent to be successful.

- Idea Walls: *Maintaining and improving quality*
  - There is a need to raise standards because a lack of rigor leaves graduates feeling unprepared.
  - Quality improvements include growing with purpose (not expanding too fast), investing in faculty, improving teaching (which was called "inconsistent," with professors who "can't teach") aligning resources with the mission, improving facilities (for example, rehearsal and performance spaces, classrooms with Smartboards, research space, possibly a Lab School), and increasing prestige of programs.
  - Faculty need more support "to meet expectations" and need to balance "what counts and what we actually do," the "quality of what we offer versus trying to be everything," and not always be "responding to trends instead of setting them."
  - Students need more access to full-time faculty and adequate mentoring.
  - The School needs to reduce the financial burden on students and attend to issues around student debt, including better advising (financial aid advising, in particular), career preparation and job placement. There are not enough fellowships/scholarships to compete with other graduate schools.
  - The costs and difficulties students experience integrating available programs within the parameters of their requirements and programs limit their ability to take full advantage of the Global Network University. Some suggested improving the curricula at the School so that the "flow of ideas should be facilitated" between campuses here and abroad.

- Town Halls: *Maintaining and improving quality*
  - The School should further strengthen programs that are already strong to improve its brand and recognition, as well as invest in high quality teaching and pedagogical innovation.
  - There is a need for a more student-centered approach.

- Surveys: *Maintaining and improving quality*
  - Faculty and students ranked quality of graduate/professional academic programs, quality of teaching, and access to full-time faculty as 3 of the 4 top factors contributing to the quality of education at NYU Steinhardt.

- Faculty, staff and students ranked mentoring by faculty members and internship/ practicum opportunities in the top 3 factors contributing to overall quality of students' experience at NYU Steinhardt.
- Faculty and staff listed successful graduates as the second attribute most associated with NYU Steinhardt. Faculty listed outstanding faculty as first; staff listed global learning experiences.
- Faculty listed continuing to improve the quality of faculty as their top strategic planning goal (92% agreement).
- Staff listed optimizing the use of technology to support teaching and learning as their top strategic planning goal (75% agreement).
- Faculty's top priority for the next 5-10 years is to increase support and resources for teaching, research and new hires.
- Students' top 3 priorities for the next 5-10 years were all about quality: improve academic rigor, refine curricula and increase the diversity of courses.
- Two-thirds of faculty and students are likely to recommend NYU Steinhardt to peers.
- The most common reason students would not recommend NYU Steinhardt to peers is cost; faculty noted the expense of living in NYC as a deterrent, as well. Additional reasons include (for students) lack of access to faculty and lack of student support (both faculty and students).
- Undergraduate and graduate students ranked preparation for career as one of the most important factors contributing to the quality of their education.
- Advising was ranked first by undergrads, second by Master's and third by doctoral students as a factor contributing positively or negatively to the overall quality of their experience.
- Faculty, staff and students all listed a lack of space for classes, research, rehearsals, performances and gathering as a community as a top weakness.