

Faculty and administrators from across the University recently participated in “Opportunity Meetings” to discuss those characteristics, needs and opportunities unique to Emory which deserve our collective attention as we move forward. What follows is a synthesized account of the meeting chaired by Dean Robert Paul, Emory College. In attendance were Dean Paul, Jeffrey Busse (Business School), Wright Caughman (School of Medicine), Mike Kuhar (Yerkes), Clark Lemons (Oxford), Rey Martorell (School of Public Health), Robert McCauley (Emory College, Philosophy), Laura Namy (College, Psychology), Bonnie Speed (Carlos Museum), Nancy Thompson (School of Public Health).

The group first set its sights on what makes Emory University unique and then considered how we can best plan to build on these distinctive features. Comments, for the most part, clustered around five general themes: Emory’s urban setting, the quality of our faculty and programs, possibilities for collaboration between schools, community outreach, and our public standing.

Urban Setting

The group largely agreed that our Atlanta location provides Emory with a distinct advantage over peer institutions, such as Duke and Vanderbilt. Atlanta’s international reputation and appeal is something the city is proud of and works hard to promote. Emory and the city of Atlanta should work together to promote both the city and the University. We live in a great city, the hub of the South, and we should take better advantage of this.

The city also offers us the opportunity to work with a number of world-renowned agencies outside the University. CNN represents one neighborhood relationship that seems under-developed – especially if, as one member suggests, we want to get our name “out there” to a wider audience. Atlanta is also, in the words of one group member, “the public health capital of the world,” thanks to the work of the CDC, CARE International, Yerkes, American Cancer Society, etc. Stronger ties to these high profile institutions (or, at least, better promotion of our current connections) could bolster Emory’s reputation and resolve in national and international health communities.

Atlanta’s diverse population presents another plus. One group member, for instance, noted that “DeKalb County has more languages spoken in it than anywhere in the US outside of New York City.” Atlanta’s high concentration of colleges and universities – particularly historically black institutions – was deemed not only unique but also strategically important. Group members wanted to know if Emory has explored the possibility of more joint programs or dual hiring between Atlanta-based schools. Altogether, there was a reverberating sense that Emory could do a more effective job of integrating these local relationships and resources into our own scholarship and teaching.

Finally, there was a brief conversation about Atlanta simply being a nice place to live and learn. And, of course, our favorable weather was mentioned as a great recruiting factor for both students and faculty.

Quality of Faculty and Programs

Emory’s emphasis on hands-on teaching sets us apart as a leader in higher education. As one member remarked, “Emory makes a real effort to hire excellent teachers as well as excellent

researchers. This is not true among our peers.” There was agreement that Emory must do a better job publicizing our teacher-scholar emphasis and our innovative pedagogical programs, such as TATTO. At least in part because of TATTO, graduate students at Emory are well prepared to teach, and they often are among the best teachers in the institution. Graduate students are an asset here, and we should capitalize on this fact.

Our new vision statement describes Emory as a “destination university.” One problem with this focus is that it seems more attuned to recruiting excellent faculty rather than retaining them. Emory has had a long and successful history of “growing our own”; that is, we frequently hire young assistant professors with potential and encourage them to develop, rather than “raiding” other institutions for stars. Several members suggested that Emory must work harder to retain faculty, especially talented associate professors, who are often courted by other prominent institutions.

In addition, Emory’s preeminence in the study of theology and religion and its institutional commitment to ethics and civic engagement could be better promoted as strengths. The committee discussed for some time the way Emory’s Methodist heritage informs the institution, as demonstrated by our willingness to engage in scholarly and ethical conversation about the pressing issues of the day. Nonetheless, Methodism does not rule the conversation; that is, our work can be moral and ethical without advocating a particular religious tradition.

Finally, the group discussed Emory’s collegiality, demonstrated in part by meetings like this one. Everyone agreed that it is helpful for people from across the University to come together to discuss important decisions, especially because Emory does not have a social center where faculty can meet and talk. The discussion of collegiality led one participant to note that we have been criticized for being “too nice to be great,” that greatness often has a critical edge. Another responded that scholarly critique can be friendly and respectful rather than mean-spirited, a balance Emory achieves.

Collaboration between Schools

A number of the participants mentioned that the physical proximity between Emory’s schools is unique and important at least in part because it allows collaboration among schools that might not be possible if our locations were more separate. Several people mentioned that interdisciplinarity is one of Emory’s unique strengths, but they also noted that a number of institutional barriers make such work more difficult than it should be. This is particularly true when outside funding is involved and when the work crosses school lines.

While interdisciplinary research is relatively common at Emory, teaching that crosses school lines is extremely rare. One participant suggested we begin to integrate curricula, so that, for example, students who are pre-med majors in the College would take classes offered by medical school faculty. Another participant observed that many Emory students join the Peace Corps, often to work on issues of public health. If teaching were more integrated, those students who plan to join the Peace Corps could take preparatory courses in the School of Public Health. Because most public health faculty members are grant funded, however, there is no mechanism to allow these faculty to be compensated for undergraduate teaching. These kinds of barriers

must be removed if innovative programs like this one are to take place. Perhaps, as another participant noted, University Teaching Fund monies could be used to support such programs.

The group also discussed ways Emory could connect more closely to other area schools. For example, Georgia State and Georgia Tech offer programs that Emory does not offer. Although ARCHE allows us to do cross-registration, students seldom take advantage of this opportunity. We should make it easier for students to take courses at these institutions, thus filling gaps in their own curricula. We should also encourage more collaboration between faculty at area institutions; perhaps we could even consider joint hiring in particular areas.

Community Outreach

The group agreed that one of Emory's strongest assets is our work with the Atlanta community; however, everyone also agreed that this work is not well-known outside the campus. For instance, few Atlantans know that Emory students and faculty provide superb care for low-income and high-risk community members at Grady Hospital. Furthermore, the Carlos Museum, with its emphasis on accessible scholarship and community outreach as a city and a university museum, is another of Emory's best-kept secrets. The Museum consistently works with other Atlanta cultural institutions and even convenes a monthly lunch meeting with local museum directors to discuss collaborations. In addition, group members discussed that as Emory's arts programs (theater, music, dance, visual arts, etc.) continue to achieve greater levels of excellence, they raise the quality of the arts available locally. In all of these instances, the consensus was that Emory is doing great things in the local community but receiving little attention or acknowledgment.

On the other hand, the group felt that Emory is not taking full advantage of one avenue for community outreach—the Carter Center. The Carter Center provides Emory an enormous advantage—it is absolutely unique and helps us recruit students and faculty. Nonetheless, we do not use the Carter Center to its fullest. We should be connecting curriculum, research, programming, etc. to the Center, but we don't yet do so. We haven't fully integrated the Carter Center's resources into the University. Perhaps this lack of integration explains why the Carter Center is seldom connected to the University in the mind of the public. One participant mentioned the fact that President Carter is aging and suggested that the University needs to begin to think about our relationship to the Carter Center in a post-Carter era.

Public Standing

The fact that Emory enjoys a top-twenty national ranking yet lacks widespread name recognition (outside, that is, of regional areas and national pockets) is a liability. The group was reminded that Emory's ascension is a fairly recent achievement and our alumni are still relatively young, which no doubt relates to our issues of anonymity. But some members suggested that the problem starts much closer to home with local media coverage – or the lack thereof. One such group member noted that it is common for Emory headlines to appear in *The New York Times* or other national papers and not at all in *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. Some members advocated a better working relationship with the *AJC*; others suggested disseminating information through other local sources as well. As mentioned above, the group agreed that the

need to increase public knowledge of Emory locally could not be more pressing, since a prevailing assumption is that Emory does not do much in – or for – Atlanta.

Misperceptions on the local level persist on the national level, too. For example, Emory is virtually unknown in the Midwest, perhaps because of the strength of Midwest state institutions. We need to reach out to these areas for student recruitment. One way to do so is by better publicizing Emory’s assets. Emory’s athletic programs, for example, top the nation in their number of scholar-athletes, but few in the national community (much less in our campus community) are aware of these and other athletic achievements.

The lengthy discussion of public standing and misguided perceptions led one member to ask, “To what extent can we think about our PR infrastructure as a priority?” Others suggested that we need to strengthen our Office of Public Affairs and encourage public affairs officers to build better relationships with both local and national media.

**Opportunity Committee: Key Ideas
March 17, 2004**

The meeting was chaired by Robert A. Paul, Dean, Emory College, Faculty of the Arts and Sciences. In attendance were Jeffrey Busse (Business School), Wright Caughman (School of Medicine), Mike Kuhar (Yerkes), Clark Lemons (Oxford), Rey Martorell (School of Public Health), Robert McCauley (Emory College, Philosophy), Laura Namy (Emory College, Psychology), Bonnie Speed (Carlos Museum), Nancy Thompson (School of Public Health).

Key ideas at the meeting clustered around five major themes: Emory's urban setting, the quality of our faculty and programs, possibilities for collaboration between schools, community outreach and public standing.

Urban Setting

- Atlanta, as the hub of the South, provides real advantages to Emory.
- Atlanta is the "public health capital of the world" thanks to the presence of the CDC, CARE International, Yerkes, the American Cancer Society, etc.
- Atlanta's racial and ethnic diversity is a real plus.
- Emory must do a better job of integrating local relationships and resources into our own scholarship and teaching.

Quality of Faculty and Programs

- Emory's emphasis on hands-on teaching is unique among our peers.
- The TATTO program is an asset to Emory, not least because it provides us with graduate students who are well-prepared to teach our classes.
- Emory must increase efforts to retain our excellent faculty.
- Emory is especially strong in the study of religion and in attention to ethics across the University.
- Emory's arts programs (music, theater, dance, visual arts) are excellent, and we must better publicize these programs.
- Emory is a very collegial place, but we must be sure we don't allow collegiality to inhibit greatness.

Collaboration between Schools

- The physical proximity of Emory's schools encourages collaboration.
- The schools should engage in more integrative and collaborative curricular initiatives (i.e., between pre-med program and the medical school).
- Our relationship with ARCHE allows collaboration between area universities.
- Emory should work to remove barriers to interdisciplinary work in both teaching and research.

Community Outreach

- Although Emory does a lot of work within the Atlanta community, this work is not well known. We need to better publicize our outreach efforts.
- Emory partners with the Atlanta University Center in medical training.
- Emory's relationship with Grady Hospital should be made more well known.

Committee 5 Report

- The Carlos Museum provides many programs for Atlanta area schools and collaborates regularly with other community museums.
- The Carter Center is a huge asset. We should capitalize on our connection to the Carter Center and begin to plan for a relationship with the Center that extends beyond the life of President Carter.

Public Standing

- Emory is less well-known in general than our peer institutions.
- Emory's relationship with Atlanta-area media, especially the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, should be strengthened.
- Emory's outstanding athletic program, with more scholar-athletes than any other school in the country, should be better publicized.
- We must think about public relations as a priority.