An important first step in a strategic planning process is to identify the internal strengths and weaknesses of an institution and the opportunities and threats that exist external to the institution. This report provides a preliminary summary of the results of SWOT survey of the UMD campus conducted during December, 2010 and January and February, 2011, ending on February 4. The report includes a brief description of the methods used in the survey, a description of the respondents, the results, and some initial conclusions.

**Methods**

The survey was developed by starting with items identified as strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in previous university planning activities. The Strategic Planning Executive Team and some additional members of the Steering Committee identified the items most appropriate for use in a SWOT questionnaire for UMD.

The online process referred to as UM Survey was used in asking respondents to review the list of potential strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats and to rate on a Likert-type scale the degree to which each item was characteristic of UMD and its situation. Survey respondents were asked to rate whether they “strongly disagree,” “disagree,” were “neutral,” “agree,” or “strongly agree” with each item on the four lists. Respondents were also asked to comment on any items in each list if they wanted to do so and to add strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats related to UMD if they did not appear on the original lists. All of the items that appeared on the questionnaire appear in Tables 1-4 (attached).

**Respondent Demographics**

Over 1100 individuals (1112) associated with UMD completed the SWOT questionnaire, mostly in response to email messages from Chancellor Black encouraging them to complete the survey. Included in the survey were 546 undergraduate students, 82 graduate students, 301 current staff members, 212 faculty members, 41 administrators, 63 community members, 100 alumni, and smaller numbers of additional groups. Some respondents fit into more than one category. Gender distribution was 650 females (62%) and 397 males (38%). Of those respondents who indicated their race/ethnicity, about 90% were white/Caucasian and about 10% were respondents of color. [more specific demographics will be provided in subsequent reports.]

**Results**

The results of the quantitative portion of the questionnaire are reported in Tables 1-4 (attached). For each item in the survey, a “strongly disagree” response was coded as a “1,” a “disagree” was coded as a “2,” a “neutral” was coded “3,” “agree” was coded “4,” and a “strongly agree” was coded “5.” Thus, a higher average in each of the tables indicates that respondents were more likely to strongly agree that that a particular item was a strength, weakness, opportunity, or threat for UMD.
The total number of respondents follows each item in the table, followed by the average ratings for all respondents. It should be noted that many respondents did not respond to all items, and the default option of “no response” is not included. The averages for undergraduate students (Ugrad), graduate students (Grad), faculty (Fac), staff, administrators (Admin), alumni (Alum), and community members (Com) follow in subsequent columns of the table. The items in each table are listed in the order of the highest total average to the lowest total average.

In many cases the average ratings of specific subgroups were different from that of the other respondents at a statistically significant level (p<.05). When the average rating for a subgroup was higher than for other groups, the average rating is in **bold** font. For example, undergraduate students are significantly more likely to agree that “UMD’s campus is friendly and safe” than other groups. When the average rating for a subgroup is lower at a statistically significant level than for other groups, the average rating is in *italics*. For example, faculty are less likely to agree that “UMD’s campus is friendly and safe” than other groups. Because of the large number of respondents and the numerous t-tests that were run, some relatively small absolute differences in averages between groups are reported as statistically significant.

**Strengths** identified in the quantitative rankings from UM Survey include 1) enriching academic and co-curricular activities, 2) many accredited programs, 3) a friendly and safe campus, and 4) UMD’s significant impact on the regional community, and 5) new and well-maintained facilities and attractive buildings and grounds. Over 700 respondents agreed to the statement that “UMD has particularly strong academic programs in:”, with the opportunity to fill in a blank to identify the specific program. Programs from across the campus were identified, with science and engineering, education, business, the fine arts, and the liberal arts and specific CLA programs being mentioned frequently.

Preliminary qualitative results from the open-ended responses include strengths such as 1) UMD is an excellent employer, 2) caring and competent faculty and staff, 3) the Duluth community and the beautiful geographic location, 4) quality athletics, 5) the Tweed Museum and fine arts programs, and 6) cooperative research among students and faculty.

**Weaknesses** identified in the quantitative rankings from UM Survey include 1) the need to enhance diversity among students and faculty, 2) the work and family commitments of students that limit the time and energy they have for their academic activities, 3) inconsistent advising structures and expectations across and within college units, and 4) the need to strengthen dispersal of information by administration.

Preliminary qualitative results from the open-ended responses on weaknesses include 1) large class sizes the first two years, 2) limited funding, 3) limited diversity on campus, 4) inadequate advising, 5) parking problems, 6) not attracting as many top students, and 7) lack of healthful food.

**Opportunities** identified in the quantitative rankings from UM Survey include 1) Duluth’s natural environment are an important draw, 2) more conversations with local employers, and 3) the potential to develop programs that take advantage of UMD’s location. A number of additional opportunities were rated closely behind these top three.
Preliminary qualitative results from the open-ended responses related to opportunities include 1) increasing the number of non-traditional students such as veterans, 2) attracting a more diverse student body, 3) improving sustainability on campus, and 4) developing more online and hybrid courses.

**Threats** identified in the quantitative rankings from UM Survey include 1) declining resources from the state and increasing dependence on tuition revenue and 2) declining financial support for students. These two items were rated considerably higher than other possible threats to UMD. Preliminary qualitative results from the open-ended responses supported these two threats with budget cuts and higher tuition mentioned frequently, along with growth of administration and needing to attract students that may not be as well prepared for college.

**Tentative Conclusions**

A number of tentative conclusions can be drawn from the results reported above and observed in Tables 1-4. First, all respondents identified a number of notable strengths for UMD, with eight items averaging 4.0 (agree) or above. Conversely, none of the potential weaknesses averaged over 3.73 for all respondents. These notable strengths included enriching academic and co-curricular activities, strong, accredited academic programs, and a friendly and attractive campus. UMD can build on these and other strengths.

Several relative weaknesses were also noted. Lack of diversity, student commitments that limit time and energy for academic activities, advising, and communication from the administration were more often identified as weaknesses. In focusing on addressing these and other identified weaknesses, UMD can be enhanced as an educational institution.

A number of opportunities and threats were also identified. Highly ranked opportunities included the draw of Duluth’s natural environment, learning from local employers about what they are seeking in graduates, and attracting a more diverse student body. UMD can take advantage of these opportunities and others mentioned in the results above. At the same time, the campus needs to address the perceived likelihood of threats such as declining resources from the state and increased dependence on tuition revenue and declining financial support for students.

Some differences between the responses of various groups can also be noted. Faculty members were less likely to agree with campus strengths and more likely to identify weaknesses. Students were more likely to see UMD as friendly and safe and more likely to agree that work and family commitments interfered with their academics. UMD employees were more likely to agree that diversity needs to be enhanced than were students. Faculty members were far less likely to see the use of performance assessment as an opportunity and were more likely to see the positive potential in raising admissions standards. Administrators were more likely to agree that potential opportunities and threats, particularly those external to UMD, were important.

These tentative conclusions must be examined in light of several limitations of this study, including a possibility of biased sample and the relatively small differences in absolute responses between groups. Future versions of this report will report more intensive qualitative analysis, will more closely examine the results for possible conclusions, and will further specify limitations of the study.