Executive summary
Strategic Planning

• Amongst both staff and student populations there is strong support for the continued relevance of the University’s Mission Statement (88% staff and 90% students)
  • Staff see it as appropriately broad and inclusive, and reflective of what a world class University should strive for, while student engagement in the mission is driven by the opportunity for educational excellence for all.

• Those staff who do not see the mission as relevant primarily cite that it is not an accurate reflection of the university, or that it is not inspiring. While low relevance for students is driven by a perception of failing education quality, perceived problems with management and administration and levels of inclusiveness
  • While these views are those of a minority they do at to highlight that opportunity exists for greater engagement with the mission exists by re framing it in a way that its is seen to be more aspirational and inclusive- yet achievable. More specifically core strategies need to be inclusive of the breadth and depth of all the University both is and desires to be, which in turn grounds the mission, and can inspire belief in it.

• Support for maintaining inclusion of the core strategies of Research and Education Excellence, and Cultural Diversity within the new Strategic Plan is universal across both staff and student groups.
Strategic Planning (continued)

• Additional specific strategies relevant for students include;
  • equipping them as global citizens – especially for postgraduates
  • enriching their university life – especially for undergraduates

• Building on an almost universal support for the mission, and consistency in core retained strategies, there is also a great appetite for continuing to drive further Strategic Growth with new initiatives.
  • for staff - a greater focus on both the areas of research and culture, and also in the area of employment/jobs
  • for students – a greater focus on both the areas of education and University experience
Culture and Organisation

• From a ‘values’ perspective the top values that students would like to see embedded within the strategic plan are accountability and transparency, equality, honesty and excellence in teaching. While for staff they are accountability, equality, support for staff / working conditions, excellence and diversity.
  • This high level of focus upon accountability and equality points to a strong need for clear and open communication and inclusive access to be at the heart of both the design and implementation of the plan.

• The attributes of leadership that are important to continuing success are seen to be most important are the ability to inspire others, and clear communication, with staff also highlighting the ability to enable, develop and coach others. The ability to deal with underperformance, and calling out unacceptable behaviour are seen to be the least important attributes.

• 29% of staff and 48% of students agree that the current university structure is serving the University well, with staff significantly less likely to agree (24% vs. 10%)
  • Key reasons for disagreement by students was that faculties are too broad and that interdepartmental communication is difficult. For staff key reasons were a belief there are too many faculties and resource inefficiencies.
Culture and Organisation (continued)

- 43% of staff and 27% of students feel that the structure of the faculties could be improved.
  - Among staff: higher agreement that the structure of the university could be improved was apparent among general staff professionals, and lower among staff from the Divisions of Architecture and Creative Arts and the Divisions of Engineering and Information Technology.
  - Among students: higher agreement that the structure of the university could be improved was apparent among postgraduates, students studying Medicine and Students in their fourth year.
  - For both staff and students key suggested improvements were a more simple, standardised structure and greater coordination among facilities.

- 13% of staff and 15% of students feel that they have a voice at the university, with staff being significantly less likely than students to agree that they have a voice.
  - For students who felt that they did not have a voice, the most common solution given was for the university to provide more opportunities to give feedback (41%), followed by the university listening and acting on feedback (14%).
  - For staff, the most common solutions provided were giving more opportunities to give feedback (29%) and the university seeking involvement in decision making (15%).
Culture and Organisation (continued)

- Over 4 in 10 (45%) staff and exactly 4 in 10 (40%) students felt that their contribution matters and is valued at the university, with staff significantly more likely than students to agree with this.
- Students who felt that their contribution was valued indicated that the most common way this was done was through the University asking for feedback (34%) and through the university providing support (15%). Students who didn’t feel that they were valued by the University or who were unsure suggested that a solution could be for the University to provide more opportunities to give feedback (21%) and to take action on their suggestions (13%).
- Staff indicated that the most common way that the University values their contribution is through providing rewards and feedback (both 19%), followed by the university asking for their feedback (14%). Staff suggested that the University could provide more supportive management (15%) and give greater opportunity to provide feedback (15%).

- 24% of students felt that the university values academic staff and professional/general staff equally, with staff being significantly less likely to indicate this compared to students (18%). 46% of staff felt that the University values academic staff more than professional/general staff, with staff significantly more likely to say this than students (46% vs. 20%).
Culture and Organisation (continued)

- The most common reason that students gave for their opinion of which employee group that the University values more was ‘my experience’ (36%), followed by teaching/research is a core part of the business (14%).

- For staff, the most common reasons given were that professional staff are undervalued (20%) and the university recognizes the interdependencies between academic staff and general/professional staff (16%).

- 54% of students were either somewhat satisfied or highly satisfied with the current organisational culture of the university, while 43% of staff were either somewhat satisfied or highly satisfied. Compared to students, staff were significantly less likely to be highly satisfied (6% vs. 13%).

- Support for proposed core strategies for the University’s strategic focus moving forward is highest among both staff and students for the ‘Fostering of teaching excellence’ and ‘Fostering of research excellence’.

- With regard to support (importance) versus performance of core strategies – the key areas where it was felt that action is needed (i.e. importance is high but current performance low) was for both student and staff the ‘Fostering of teaching excellence’. Staff also placed ‘Promotion of respect’ in this quadrant, while students indicated that ‘Promotion of optimal student experience’ as being in need of action.
Student experience

- When asked what it means to be a student at The University of Sydney just over 1 in 5 (21%) mentioned that they receive high quality education, a further 20% mentioned the University of Sydney’s strong reputation and prestige.

- However, almost 1 in 2 (48%) students at The University of Sydney agree that there are aspects of their experience at The University Sydney that make it difficult for them to achieve their educational goals.
  - Limited subjects and content (15%) as well as poor teaching (12%) are the most frequently mentioned barriers to achieving their educational goals

- The importance of the educational experience for students cannot be underestimated – it is the key meaning behind their University experience. Continued focus on the excellence of the University’s educational offer, and unlocking new ways to build community, will be critical to reinforce students’ pride in, and engagement with the University.

- Quality of teaching, and curriculum related issues will be key to ensuring an engaged, positive student population.
  - This high level of focus upon accountability and equality points to a strong need for clear and open communication and inclusive access to be at the heart of both the design and implementation of the plan.
Staff experience

- When asked what it means to be on staff at The University of Sydney, respect and pride were most frequently mentioned by staff members (18%). Similar to students, staff members also mentioned prestige, privilege and well-known (13%)

- 62% agree that there are aspects of their experience at The University Sydney that make it difficult for them to achieve their academic and / or professional goals.
  - Difficulty working with other staff (17%) and workload, limited resources & excessive responsibilities (15%) are the most frequently mentioned barriers to achieving their academic / professional goals.

- Moving forward, building a strong, supportive community amongst staff has the potential to be a powerful strategic lever to bring to life their pride in working for the University.