

# Campus and Community Listening Report



Dear Sea Gulls,

In my first six-months here at Salisbury University, I have witnessed the remarkable spirit and passion you share for our community. Your clear desire to see Salisbury University thrive is why I turned to you – to listen and learn from the people who help define our University.

I have been intentional about creating spaces and opportunities for you to share with me your hopes and challenges. I met with hundreds of faculty, staff, students, and members of our community to learn about how I can best serve our incredible University. You discussed with me the things that need changing, but also the things that need preserving.

Within this report, I outline some of what I heard from you across seven themes that emerged. The information here explores the positive, the practical, and the potential of those themes.

What you see here is only the beginning; more opportunities will be made available for you to speak and share openly. As President, I assure you that your voice will always be heard, and I am committed to working with you as we dream and build our future together.

Sincerely,

Dr. Carolyn Lepre  
President

## People | Our people are everything

*Time and again, I heard that what makes our University special is how deeply we care about one another.*

**Positive:** Faculty, staff, and students alike spoke to the collaborative, hardworking nature of our community. People know they can depend on one another, and the people here are genuine and compassionate. Service to others, personal relationships, and a commitment to our shared success are characteristics of our people and emphatically demonstrate they are the heartbeat of this campus.

**Practical:** Employees stressed insufficient career pathways and advancement opportunities and asked for greater support, improved compensation, professional development, and appreciation. Recovery from the pandemic has been difficult and people still feel stretched thin.

**Potential:** Our people, you, are a top priority. More focus will be placed on acknowledging our people and creating a sense of belonging. We will explore innovative recruitment, retention, and engagement programs.

## Purpose | Desire to determine and own our distinctive identity

*Your feedback is a mosaic of stories showing SU represents many different things to many different people. The unique experiences we possess are pieces of a larger shared vision that will guide our University forward.*

**Positive:** SU is built on a successful foundation with a student-centered approach that has shaped and educated thousands of students. We have faculty and staff who are creating transformative experiences for students. Our teams, offices, and departments have strong cultures and cohesive identities.

**Practical:** While our individual teams have strong cultures, there is a feeling of disconnection from the larger University culture. There are differing opinions about who we should be as a University and what we should do more and less of.

**Potential:** Transparency and open and honest communication are key to creating a shared vision for SU – one that we all know, support, and work toward. We have the opportunity to both celebrate our history and forge our future, so long as we row in the same direction.

## The Approach

Engaging the campus and greater community to build on our success

15

listening sessions scheduled with faculty, staff, and students to be reflective of our campus

90+

gatherings and events attended with members of the campus and the community

1,000+

ideas shared and discussed

30+

campus offices and departments represented

6

schools and colleges represented

Stay tuned for more information on “Chats with the President” during the spring 2023 semester.

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## Promote | Celebrating and supporting academic excellence

*You want us to share our story, write our narrative, and promote the extraordinary work we are doing.*

**Positive:** We have so much to celebrate! SU has a track record of excellence among national rankings and we are among the nation's top producers of Fulbright students.

**Practical:** You've said we are a "hidden gem" – but we don't want to be hidden any longer. You feel SU needs and deserves greater visibility and recognition for the multitude of remarkable things our people accomplish.

**Potential:** We are expanding our brand to be representative of who we are and who we want to be, and we are investing in telling our stories in an engaging and thoughtful way.

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## Pride | Focusing on Student Success

*You share pride in our experiential learning and acknowledge retention is critically important. You want our students to be here, and to graduate, and to be successful in their lives.*

**Positive:** Student success is at the core of what we do. There is a collective pride in our philosophy of experiential learning and providing new opportunities for our students.

**Practical:** Our students expressed struggles with engaging in the classroom and feelings of isolation coming out of the pandemic. Some wrestle to understand the return on investment of a college degree, and others seek additional guidance and advising.

**Potential:** With new scholarship and financial aid opportunities, we will tackle the barriers of cost. We also are placing a renewed emphasis on study abroad and international education opportunities.

“*Thank you for all you have done, and all you will do. As we embark on our next chapter, I am proud to serve as your president. I am committed to working with you as we dream and build our future together.*”

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## Promise | Finding inclusive excellence and cultivating a sense of belonging

*If we are not inclusive, we cannot be excellent.*

**Positive:** We are a family of students, faculty, and staff from varying backgrounds, enriching our home with our culture and traditions. The diversity of our campus is one of our greatest assets.

**Practical:** It is not enough for us to say we value diversity and inclusivity – we have to take action to address diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).

**Potential:** We are adding a Vice President for Belonging, Diversity, and Inclusion to our campus, working on cluster hires to diversify faculty and advance research related to DEI, and creating a University-wide DEI plan.

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## Place | Leveraging our location for deeper community engagement

*You love our beautiful campus and the Eastern Shore. You shared with me that you want to deepen this connection, capitalize on it, and assure that we are truly meeting the needs of our community.*

**Positive:** Our campus is inviting and supports many great cultural events. Countless faculty, staff, and students are deeply engaged in supporting the community on an individual level.

**Practical:** We need to improve the way we communicate our value and impact, and we need to build more visibility in support of the great things many of you are already doing.

**Potential:** We will create more opportunities and outcomes for SU and the region to flourish. We will develop a strategy to engage with the city and the people of Salisbury, aligning programs to the needs of the region and state.

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## Process | Navigating processes and procedural complexities

*You shared some frustrations with me about wanting to assure that our campus processes allow us to do the great work we care about so much.*

**Positive:** Students shared our admissions and orientation processes are second-to-none, and we make every resource and tool available for them, and even their families, to thrive at SU.

**Practical:** Our student-centered focus has left our own internal processes and procedures lacking. Employees face difficulty in areas of communication, automation, and navigation.

**Potential:** Greater efforts will be placed on modernizing and automating processes, and we will work to make key information, policies, and resources more accessible for everyone.



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