

ALCORN STATE UNIVERSITY

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# LAYING THE GROUNDWORK FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING: SWOT-C EXERCISE RESPONSES

Abbreviated Version

**SMITHGROUP**



**Alcorn**  
State University

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# STRENGTHS:

## WHAT DOES ALCORN STATE UNIVERSITY DO WELL?

### SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH FUNDRAISING/RESOURCE ALLOCATION

- Raising funds for scholarship & alumni
- Running Ag research programs with federal funds (4)
- Fundraising
- Do a lot with limited resources
- Running smoothly with limited resources (1)
- Alcorn State University does an excellent job of doing more with less, considering its underfunded status

### ENHANCED STUDENT ACCESS & OPPORTUNITY

- Low tuition compared to peer institutions (2)
- High-Quality Nursing Program
- Strong tradition of student support, family atmosphere is real
- Affordable (1)
- High graduation rate compared to sister institutions
- Helping students to achieve their academic goal
- Provide Strong education foundation & Promote student learning
- Cost of Attendance is low compared to Peer Institutions
- Create educational opportunities for underserved students
- Education to black students in S.W. Mississippi
- Strong Agriculture Program
- Protect students from racial discrimination

### STUDENT SUCCESS/STRONG STUDENT SUPPORT

- Graduation Rate
- Small class sizes

- Serving students from all cultural and areas, making sure they are successful in whatever degree plan that they choose
- Personal attention to students
- Intimate classroom settings. This allows students to feel less like a number (3rd)
- Dedication to Student Learning & Outcomes
- It serves an underprivileged population (1)
- Provide a safe haven for Black students
- Allow at risk students an educational opportunity
- Small class sizes (prior to COVID-19); providing more individualized instruction

### ABILITY FOR ADAPTATION/TRANSFORMATION

- Effective...open new administration
- President is vested in the University
- Innovation with what we have
- Collaboration meetings within academic units (2)
- Legacy as the oldest HBCU
- Quality Leadership
- Leadership Visibility
- Strong and experienced leadership
- Administrative commitment to improving and growing institution
- Collaborate well w/other institutions

### ESTABLISHED ATHLETICS/SPORTS

- Recruit great athletes
- National name recognition, largely from athletics
- Alcorn State University does an excellent job of creating an unmatched SWAC football experience

- Athletics – 6x & SWAC Champions
- Powerful and Dominant Football Program
- Strong football program – most people love to attend schools who have records of winning

#### **SUCCESS WITH RECRUITING**

- Recruit Students (1)
- Recruit students in close proximity of main campus
- Recruiting the local students
- Recruit African American Students locally
- Recruiting: Alcorn has programs that are catered to attracting prospective students (2)

#### **ENGAGED WITH COMMUNITY/PARTNERSHIPS/ALUMNI**

- Alumni relations
- Culture – Outreach to communities
- Offer employment opportunities to alumni (1)
- Engage with local neighboring communities
- Communication about partnerships & successes
- Alcorn State University does an excellent job of producing passionate alumni

#### **GOOD LOCATION/BEAUTIFUL CAMPUS SETTING**

- Location (better learning environment)
- Location of institution on a learning environment
- Historical setting (2)
- Location & space & university physical appearance
- Campus is visibly beautiful all the time
- Keeps Campus Pristine in Appearance

#### **WELCOMING CAMPUS CULTURE/FAMILY ENVIRONMENT**

- Family atmosphere
- Open, embracing community that welcomes new people

- Heritage and history
- Welcoming Campus Environment
- Provide nurturing environment for students
- Legacy

#### **STRONG ACADEMIC PROGRAMS & REPUTATION**

- Very strong academic programs in the sciences
- Quality academic programs
- Allow flexibility of course offerings
- Academic Department/Dedicated faculty First generation college students (1)
- Ability to affect employees for students in the STEAM field
- Health Science programs

#### **DEDICATED FACULTY/STAFF/EMPLOYEES**

- The faculty works hard to help the students succeed
- Offer generous benefits to employees
- Produce committed faculty & staff
- Staff & faculty care for their student
- Values it employees
- Recognizes faculty and staff achievements

#### **EFFECTIVE MARKETING/BRAND RECOGNITION**

- History & Tradition
- Brand and Reputation
- Top 20 Ranking among HBCUs in many publications
- Strong history/Loyalty
- Land Grant Identity/Mission
- Promote: Alcorn is promoted in a positive light (1)

# WEAKNESSES:

## IN WHAT AREAS DOES ALCORN STATE UNIVERSITY NEED TO IMPROVE?

### NEED FOR BETTER STUDENT HOUSING/TRANSPORTATION

- Housing and Room & Board for International Students During Breaks (2)
- Some of the worst Campus Housing Conditions
- Public Transportation for Students (3)
- Public Transportation for Students
- No viable Lodging
- Transportation

### MORE FOCUS ON STUDENT ACTIVITIES AND DINING

- Social outlets/activities/facilities for students
- More activities on campus for the out-of-state students
- Activities for Students
- Building Campus Life – activities lack
- Dining options (4)
- Have social activities on campus for undergraduate students

### DECLINING STUDENT ENROLLMENT/RETENTION/ CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS

- Retaining students (2)
- Increase cultural Diversity Among Students
- Student enrollment numbers [down arrow]
- Student Enrollment
- Increase male population
- Student retention (keeping students beyond Freshmen year) (1)

### MORE FOCUS ON RECRUITING

- Recruitment of non-traditional students
- Recruiters for Graduate Students

- Weak Recruitment Strategies
- More emphasis on recruiting students with strong academic capabilities
- Recruiting students from other states other than (MS, LA & TX)
- Recruiting students from a larger geographic area

### POOR LOCATION/CAMPUS SETTING/ACCESS

- Development of footprint/Building outside existing area (5)
- Location is not in a metro area
- Limited access to restaurants, banks, doctors etc. (3)
- Location (Very little sources social life sports on campus)
- Rural area – Rural area
- Placemaking: lack of amenities outside the gates (1)

### GREATER E-LEARNING/ONLINE PROGRAM OFFERINGS

- Distance education (online classes not offered)
- Not enough online programs
- Distance education
- Online learning (7)
- Online degrees (completely) (6)
- Lack of online programs

### ENHANCE MARKETING/BRAND RECOGNITION/ADVERTISING

- Does not use its historical significance well
- Marketing in local areas and State (2)
- Social media president very lackluster
- Packaging itself to it's market share, not media or slogan savvy

- Misses opportunities to market itself with celebrity or politically
- Lack of a comprehensive marketing strategy to highlight the strengths of the university

#### UPDATE ACADEMIC PROGRAMS/CURRICULUM

- Lack of high demand academic programs on undergraduate, graduate and professional levels such as engineering, pharmacy and physical therapy
- STEM disciplines: Lack/obsolete equipment (4)
- Increase academic programs based on growing job market
- Improve the enrollment in school of agriculture, especially in Plant and Soil Sciences (1)
- Connecting institution and curriculum to world of work & industry
- Establishing Academic Program for future job market

#### GREATER STUDENT PREPARATION/STUDENT SUPPORT

- Connecting students to what they need to know vs what they want to know
- Driving processes that directs the student to what they need to be doing while at Alcorn to prepare them for their future
- Keeping them on track to graduate/advisement
- Advising Students so they can graduate on-time
- Focusing on Student's Ethical Responsibilities
- Setting Expectations for Career

#### EXPAND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT/PARTNERSHIPS

- Alcorn State University needs to improve its political presence on a state and federal level

- Creating partnerships with similar HBCUs with historical significance
- Alcorn fails to compete with other HBCUs because administration fails to follow through with the sign off of major projects. For example, SOD was to participate in the 2021 inauguration however, administration failed to sign off on and submit the documents
- Lack of collaborations with different school districts
- Targeting high poverty communities
- Engage community partners more

#### LACK OF INTERNAL COMMUNICATION/TRANSPARENCY

- Transparency and accountability
- Timely and effective communication (3)
- Communication between Staff & Administration (1)
- Get feedback from those persons who are directly communicating with students to find out the areas that need addressing
- Advise of changes in one office that affects others in another department (3)
- No real ability to express concerns — those who can make changes (1)

#### BETTER CUSTOMER SERVICE/OPENNESS TO NEW IDEAS

- Improve customer service & work ethics (4)
- Be open to new ideas
- Outdated teaching models
- Modernization (paperless system) and latest technology (equipment)
- Enforce Rules and regulations
- New Ideas (Forget Old Ways)

- Business office Customer Services

#### OUTDATED INTERNAL PROCESSES/ABILITY TO CHANGE

- Hesitance to embrace change
- Outdated or missing internal/business practices
- Administrative decisions are often taking long time
- Very slow in processing paperwork (1)
- Standing behind the faculty when there are instructor/student issues
- Establishing and following a chain of cmd

#### LACK OF SUSTAINABILITY/FUNDING/FINANCES/RESOURCES

- Inadequate Resources
- Less Revenue to run the institution
- Prioritize spending
- Allocation of funds to needed areas (i.e. student housing, etc.) (2)
- Prioritize funding
- Project funding through Research

#### IMPROVED FACILITIES/TECHNOLOGY & INFRASTRUCTURE

- Infrastructure and Facilities (Technology) (2)
- Poor maintenance – building/Equipment
- Supporting technology/infrastructure (1)
- Lack of adequate facilities to properly engage students
- Provide more technology to be active with time (4)
- Not providing a campus wide shuttle system to alleviate the parking problems
- Modern amenities
- Housing and living conditions

- Modernized buildings (3)
- Digital divide: technology (2)
- Improve technology access on campus (wifi) (4)
- Technological Infrastructure

#### COMPENSATION/ADVANCEMENT/BEHAVIOR/MORAL CONCERNS BY FACULTY/STAFF

- Trust & integrity among employees
- Low morale
- Keeping quality talent
- Not attractive to young up and coming professionals
- Faculty Housing
- Trainings for staff and faculty (2)
- Low salaries
- Professional development
- Lack of faculty housing
- Retaining Faculty with very good credentials
- Recruiting faculty highly qualified for certain programs
- Complacency among some faculty and staff



# OPPORTUNITIES:

## ARE THE CIRCUMSTANCES IN THE ENVIRONMENT WHERE ALCORN STATE UNIVERSITY COULD BENEFIT OR TAKE ADVANTAGE OF?

### EXPAND DEGREE PROGRAMS & COURSE OFFERINGS

- Global agricultural innovation/technology (2)
- Degree tailored to job market (4)
- Expand workforce possibilities
- Ph.D. Doctoral programs
- Create programs that address healthcare needs (3)
- Accelerated bachelor programs

### DEVELOP CAPACITY FOR TRANSFORMATION/REORGANIZATION

- Improve process – everything takes too long (5)
- Being HBCU and majority of students being minority, eligible for grants
- Being small institute: Personal attention to student, better and impact
- Being only IHL institute in the southwest MS.
- Environment sustainability expert for the region of the state (1)
- Shared Governance

### GREATER STUDENT ACCESS/OPPORTUNITY

- Attract international students
- Scholarship available for students
- Scholarships for graduates and undergraduates (2)
- Diversify the student's population – expose students to more experiential learning opportunities (3)
- Strengthen enrollments/Recruitment pipeline with community colleges
- Give more scholarships to bright international students

### BOOST ATHLETICS

- Use attention garnered from athletic success to promote academic success.
- SWAC Championship funds given to athletic programs
- Bowl games in 3 of the last six years
- championship seasons in the last 6 years

### TAKE ADVANTAGE OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT/PARTNERSHIPS & COLLABORATIONS

- Community partnerships (local hospitals, nuclear station)
- Feasible studies for economic development and growth within the area
- Host events for local high schools – increase enrollment
- Be more involved in regional's state workforce development
- Be a better partner in economic development in region and state
- Partnerships with failing k-12 in the region (would increase enrollment and graduation rates)
- Partner with related businesses consultations
- Collaborations with other major schools (1)
- Community outreach (agricultural partnering with farmers)
- Improve or develop better strategic plans with the surrounding communities
- Agritourism
- Develop a transition relationship with local community colleges

### EXPAND RECRUITING EFFORTS

- Better student recruitment efforts (2)
- Expanding recruiting locations
- A great place for black females to succeed.
- International outreach
- Recruiting adult students/citizens for career advancement (1)
- Expand out-of-state enrollment due to no out-of-state tuition; Develop a comprehensive plan to recruit students from the Sunbelt (from Texas to Florida)

### USE LOCATION/CAMPUS SETTING AS AN ADVANTAGE

- Take advantage of rural location to obtain grant funding (1)
- Using the land for more agriculture production
- Plenty of space for expansion
- The location could provide opportunities to expand agriculture
- Rural location
- Alcorn State University needs to better utilize its naturally rustic setting with campus beautification and designation such as becoming an arboretum

### LEVERAGE ALUMNI RELATIONSHIPS

- Engagement with Alumni
- Building strategic relationships for alumni and partner donations
- Develop More Alumni Association.
- Alumni engagement
- Listen to alumni concerns

### REFOCUS MARKETING AND REBRANDING

- Improve marketing, brand, and website
- Alcorn State University need to brand itself as the educational, historical, cultural, and social center of SW Mississippi
- Use of Hiram Revels, Alex Haley on campus
- Branding – we need to redo our brand we have no mascot not any recognizable feature
- Alcorn State University needs to capitalize on its national and state history, particularly researching Hiram Revels' historic presidency
- Alcorn State University needs to leverage use its HBCU status in this social justice era

### EXPANDED OPPORTUNITIES FOR FACULTY/STAFF

- More professional development training
- Talent in the area – hire faculty (non-PhD)
- Proper pay scale for staff and faculty – increase morale and production (5)
- Utilize faculty and staff resources to expand operations and engagement.(2)
- Using faculty to develop and retain competitive graduate programs (2)
- More experienced faculty

### BUILD & EXPAND E-LEARNING/ONLINE PROGRAMS

- Increase online programs
- International online educations and hybrid class offerings
- Alcorn benefit astronomically by implementing numerous online bachelor degree programs which will attract scholars from around the world

- Opportunities to reach online student with cutting-edge programs of study
- We need online programming so that we can teach other states. I feel we should offer more graduate/doctoral programs to suit today's needs
- Develop a comprehensive plan for the university's online programs, certificate programs and Natchez and Vicksburg campuses

#### TAKE ADVANTAGE OF OPPORTUNITIES TO ENSURE FISCAL SUSTAINABILITY

- Utilizing the natural resources (forestry) to create additional means
- Professional relationships for student practicums and internships
- Grants written by faculty to provide funds to assist department, students, and school
- Improve grant funding
- Identification of funding streams/  
Growth of endowments
- Secure more federal funding for academic and scientific research outside of agricultural research

#### FACILITIES/TECHNOLOGY & INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS

- Having more digital (technology) presence on the website (1)
- Develop campus transit system (students want this)
- Expand housing for ASU community (3)
- Infrastructure (2): (1) Build more around campus; (2) Appealing to students; and (3) Offer more jobs
- Campus growth due to unused land available
- Expanding housing opportunities for students and staff

#### CAPITALIZE ON OPPORTUNITIES IN R&D

- Increase of research dollars for the university
- Research opportunities
- Research (1)
- Participate in research geared towards medical herbs (AG based) (3)
- Students opportunities for research (1)
- Build up a comprehensive agri-bio-medicine research center to perform outstanding research to develop therapeutic research

# THREATS:

## WHAT EXTERNAL FACTORS ARE STANDING IN THE WAY OR BLOCKING ALCORN STATE UNIVERSITY FROM MAKING FORWARD PROGRESS?

### GROWING INTENSITY OF COMPETITION

- Junior/Community college offering more classes to students
- Competition from other universities
- Online degree programs
- Predominantly white institutions (PWI's) (3)
- Other HBCU's (2)
- Other universities are doing more recruiting in out dominant areas (1)
- Other universities are offering more online degree offering that may slowly impact out enrollment (2)
- Competition from Mississippi State University and University of Southern Mississippi in recruiting in-state students
- Fewer traditional high school students

### MAINTAINING TALENT AND HUMAN RESOURCES

- Keeping quality talent
- Offering competitive salary/wages
- Retention of students and employees (1)
- Aging Faculty
- Not differentiating faculty strengths and placing them in areas of strength.
- Annual Professional development
- Low morale
- Retaining qualified faculty

### PERCEPTIONS OF LOCATION AND VALUE OF MISSION

- Rural Location (1)
- Location and the overall impression of Mississippi from non-Mississippi

- Lack community support/involvement (1)
- Disruptions in K-12 education (5)
- Poor school systems/limits ability to attract faculty and staff
- Creating partnerships with local high schools and community colleges (3)

### STUDENT'S PREPARATION FOR COLLEGE

- Public school system is not preparing students well, ends up a burden on ASU faculty
- Applicants are poorly prepared for college (1)
- New programs of study (1)
- Course accommodations and availability (2)
- Reduction of financial aid
- Decrease of retention rates

### CHANGES IN OCCUPATIONS AND SKILLS NEEDED FOR EMPLOYMENT

- Trending degree programs
- Lack of programs and losing students to other institutions in same areas (2)
- New programs for students
- Students do not show interest in Agriculture (4)
- Strict academic requirements
- Alcorn does not offer adult learning certifications or labor skills certification. Four year degrees are not for everyone, make sure you're competing with excellence on every level

### IMPACT OF RECESSION AND DECLINING FISCAL RESOURCES

- Decrease in funding (state appropriation, etc)
- IHL (Budgets constraints) (2)
- Federal funding allocation for research (1)

- No endowment (2)
- The need to expand funding from corporations and foundations for academic programs, scholarships, facilities, equipment
- Resources to support learning and research

#### **INCREASED GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS AND PROCESSES**

- Purchasing requirements and restrictions. (2)
- Leadership (2)
- Administration academic – with expertise
- Too dependent on people and not progress (2)
- Instability in leadership
- High turnover rate
- Internal regulations and delays in admin. Process
- Unwillingness to change
- Lack of authoritative leadership and leadership accountability
- Racism/Anti-Blackness, particularly impact of state government history

#### **RAPID ADVANCES IN TECHNOLOGY AND STUDENT PREFERENCES**

- Outdated facilities/union/residence halls
- “student” family housing and support
- Transportation
- Lack of internet access
- Infrastructure not sustainable
- Inability to utilize technology (1)
- Lack of student housing
- Technology
- Living conditions (dorms)

#### **CHANGES IN CONSUMER TECHNOLOGY AND STUDENT COMMUNICATION PREFERENCES**

- More alumni support.
- The negative image of the State of Mississippi as a place to attend college or pursue job opportunities
- Brand erosion by not engaging with alumni and having them become firm advocates for the mission of Alcorn
- Lack of national recruitment of traditional student
- Retaining current students (5)
- Lack of recruitment strategy

#### **CHANGING ECONOMIC & STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS**

- Economic development job opportunities
- Local/state policies/economy (2)
- Declining populations of potential students (4)
- Lack of jobs in the region (2)
- Education level of surrounding counties
- Urban centers are too far away (3)
- Neighboring cities without adequate resources
- Complacency of residents in surrounding area
- High poverty and unemployment
- Communities not supportive
- Surrounding counties have limited resources
- Socioeconomic declines in Claiborne & Jefferson counties

# GREATEST CHALLENGE:

## WHAT IS THE GREATEST SINGLE CHALLENGE FACING ALCORN STATE UNIVERSITY MOVING FORWARD?

### INTERNAL CHALLENGES

- Faculty turnover
- Retaining students
- Funding
- Low enrollment
- Retention
- Rural Setting
- Recruitment of students and well-credentialed faculty
- COVID-19
- People driven – Not process driven
- Outdated facilities and technology
- Inconsistently in the reliability of the internet, especially wifi and power
- Lack of marketing
- Recruitment of students and how to keep them here at Alcorn State University
- Resistant to change
- We are people driven and not process driven.
- Employee morale
- Lack of funds to give assistantships to M.S. Students with full tuition waiver
- Funding to keep up with technology and advancements
- Hiring of top professionals, instructors, faculty, and staff. All which influence student recruitment and retention

### EXTERNAL CHALLENGES

- Competition with “elite” HBCU’s with white land grant students
- COVID-19
- Location
- Funding
- Economic development
- Online colleges
- Changing demographics and perceptions about the benefits of a college education



# Design a Better Future

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