

## V. Cross Cutting Issues

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## A. Culture and Leadership

### Situation Analysis

Throughout the scan process, consistent messages emerged describing the culture at Upstate. Although culture was not originally one of the key categories being reviewed as a part of the scan, it became clear this topic needed to be presented in the report. Additionally, the issue of visionary and energetic leadership has been included because many times the discussions led to expressions of a need for cultural change at Upstate and a belief that leadership must be instrumental in directing the change. The topics mentioned below often consumed a significant amount of time during an interview. They were of great importance to a large number of the employees interviewed.

Although one may argue this and possibly find exceptions, an organization is only as good as the people who work within the organization. At Upstate, many exceptional staff are committed to the purposes Upstate serves. Several of the staff interviewed are long term employees and very pleased to be a part of Upstate. Their outlook is long term. A typical comment was that Upstate is a good place to work. This overarching outlook is vital to address other cultural issues that need modification because it will set a positive tone. Former leadership of Upstate should be proud to have been a part of helping nurture this setting and viewpoint.

The number one cultural related topic was, “Upstate is two, we are not one.” And that followed with a statement that, “we could be better if we viewed ourselves as and operated as *one*.” There is the hospital and then there is the campus. Many examples were given of this widely held perception. The word “chasm” was heard more than once indicating that this separation is not slight, but rather wide and deep. To find methods to close this gap is seen as an opportunity to improve as an employer, as a service provider, as an academic and research institution, and as a part of improving Upstate’s identity and its recognition in the community and the central New York area. This report should not leave the impression there are not instances where people reach across to others in a spirit of true collaboration and, in fact, examples were provided where such an effort has been successful.

Following as a close second is the statement “we are a collection of silos.” “We are small separate groups who are collectively named Upstate.” And, like the issue identified above, there is a belief “we would be better if we operated collectively rather than separately.”

“The nature of some functions within Upstate is to be reactive rather than proactive.” We only heard this specific diagnosis twice however our observations supported this is in fact the nature of many of Upstate’s support functions. It was common to hear an individual or

group state they want to have greater involvement in their areas or provide improved support to other functions. Yet they would follow this by stating “but no one includes us until too late in the process” or “we are not invited to the meeting.” We heard this type of comment often enough to include it in this section on culture. Upstate must encourage these critical support functions to proactively bring value to the table. To factor their ideas and suggested strategies into the decision-making process is an absolute necessity for the organization to develop and grow positively.

A guiding principle of high quality customer service becomes a part of the culture of an organization. There were many examples of good customer service. During our interviews, the ambassador program at the hospital was repeatedly singled out for praise. Contrary to that viewpoint however, a number of times the lack of good customer service in other settings was mentioned. Typically, examples included instances where appointments at multiple clinics are difficult to schedule, patients are not greeted cordially or quickly and there is an overall poor view of the waiting area. To paraphrase one respondent, our clinics are always full anyway, why worry about customer service? Some stated the apparent lack of good receptionists is due to being required to hire staff off a list without being able to include evidence of a positive customer service attitude in the hiring criteria. But good customer service affects an organization’s reputation, and reputation is what attracts staff, faculty, researchers, and service providers. The customer service issue is not limited to the clinics. Also repeatedly mentioned was the frequent occurrence of people being lost in telephone transfers and an unwillingness to help a caller who has a question or is seeking information.

There were a few comments regarding gender and ethnic diversity issues. None were indictments of the current environment, but rather concerns related to a desire for Upstate to improve in these areas.

The last cultural topic that became a theme during this process is that of civility. During the initial round of interviews it was mentioned a minimal number of times, but enough to require further review and validation. It was during the second visit that the issue of civility took on significant resonance and became a subject for further validation and testing. During the first round of interviews, there was mention of a few past and current instances of a physician being rude and berating other individuals, but these seemed to be more isolated instances rather than something endemic throughout the organization. We also learned that a work group had focused on this issue and the prior president of Upstate had issued at least two memos on the topic. Several people expressed their sentiment that these efforts had little or no effect on the matter and did not bring about improvement. It was also reported that these inappropriate acts of derogatory and unacceptable language occurred in more than the one setting cited above. In fact, it became clear the issue is more widespread

and occurs in peer-to-peer confrontations involving a number of health care professionals. Threatening and retaliatory statements were reportedly made by supervisory personnel and these situations were mentioned often enough to conclude they were indicative of a widespread problem. This type of offensive behavior prevents an organization from developing a true customer service culture and erodes employee job satisfaction. People become paranoid and paralyzed, their initiative is eroded and their efforts become focused on self preservation. More memos and committees by themselves are not the answer. Several of those interviewed indicated their belief that greater leadership is needed at all levels to curtail these unacceptable behaviors.

With very few exceptions, there were many positive comments made regarding the new leadership at Upstate. These comments clearly indicate there is hope and optimism for improvement and change. Staff indicate they are ready and even anxious for improvements at myriad levels. Change is not always easy or comfortable. It is easy to state a desire for improvement, but it is often more difficult to take action to change and improve. Many stated that strong leadership will be required to improve the culture. While accurate, the danger lurking in such a statement is the underlying assumption that leadership will do it for them. No doubt Upstate is the beneficiary of new well qualified and capable leaders. To change a culture will require their leadership and also leadership by all levels of the organization. This is one more instance where a culturally supported sense of personal responsibility can play a major role in eradicating unacceptable behavior.

Also expressed numerous times was the desire to see decisions made more quickly and in the light of day, which typically meant with explanation of the reasoning behind the decisions. These are broad statements that cannot apply in all situations and instances. However, it does indicate a desire and a need for management to assure that channels of communication are open and being used routinely.

#### Faculty and Staff Remarks

- “Are we a hospital with a university attached or a university with a hospital attached?”
- “We are not actively recruiting women”
- “We need to promote a culture of customer service, of way finding”
- “Us versus them attitude with hospital and campus”
- “Some hospital employees do not realize there is a campus attached”
- “Civility is an issue”
- “There is no cohesive feeling between the hospital and Weiskhatten – we are the largest employer in Syracuse, but we are not *one* (entity)”

- “We need some savvy supervisors and managers who know how to develop staff rather than punish people”
- “Lots of good long term staff here who have best interest of this place at heart”
- Good recent flattening of the organization
- There is a hunger to do good things
- We have a good leadership team
- “In the past, we have not seen a sense of urgency”

*Example of Topics to be Considered by Cross Functional Teams*

- Are there specific tools that could be utilized in the hiring process to prevent continuation of civility issues?
- Are there ongoing efforts that can be developed by existing staff to encourage peers to a higher level of performance?
- Are there methods that can be used to reach across to a larger part of the organization to create new programs, services or research opportunities?
- Consider the use of “mystery shoppers” to validate the environment within clinics and other service delivery areas.
- Examine methods to step up training for entry level reception staff to improve customer service.
- Consider ways and means to instill and reinforce a greater sense of personal responsibility at all levels of staff.

## **B. Marketing and Branding**

### *Situation Analysis*

The marketing staff of Upstate has a number of challenges in working to meet the needs of a diverse collection of clinical departments, academic programs, the research enterprise and hospital services. They are generally well regarded internally for their creativity and responsiveness to specific needs. They receive high marks for their work on recruitment materials for the admissions office. The larger picture that emerges from interviews and group discussions, however, is of a much more responsive than proactive marketing effort overall. It is difficult to discern whether this is a result of a lack of strategic thinking, lack of clear expectations and direction from leadership, insufficient numbers of staff, scarce resources, or simply a history of not being afforded sufficient importance within the Upstate hierarchy.

What is fairly clear is, generally speaking, the face of Upstate in the mind of the general public is the face of its hospital, and the university itself seems not to have any clear, distinguishable “brand”. Heretofore, Marketing has had sufficient resources to market the hospital and apparently much less to advance the public perceptions of the various colleges. In fact, more than once and only half in jest, we heard the comment that the public is not sure whether Upstate is a hospital with a medical college attached or a medical college with a hospital attached. If this reflects an actual lack of knowledge and understanding of the status and stature of the medical college at Upstate, it does not breed confidence that the other colleges are any better understood for their important roles and inherent value.

While to a large degree this is a disappointing state of affairs, the reverse side of the coin is that this perception creates both tremendous challenges and great opportunities for the Marketing and Branding effort at Upstate. It is evident there is a tremendous reservoir of pride within the Upstate “family.” That became clear from statements by individuals at all levels of the organization. They were able to recite a number of clearly valuable attributes and assets Upstate provides the city and the region. At the same time, some expressed wonder and more than a little disappointment at the lack of regard and appreciation in the larger community for what Upstate represents.

Clearly marketing staff at Upstate are creative and motivated, but they believe they are too often put in a reactive position because they are not customarily and routinely involved in the decision-making “loop.” In their view, it is usually after an operational decision is made that they are brought in and consulted about how best to “package and sell” that decision. They allege the absence of a clear, “living” marketing plan is a direct result of a lack of strategic focus regarding the university’s marketing objectives. Their role in

developing or at least illuminating such objectives is unclear. There is a general sense of discontent at what many believe to be a too “reactive” or even “passive” approach to marketing the academic enterprise. The lack of a clear university brand is also frequently cited, as is poor signage and way-finding. Many others cited the numerous name changes in recent years as being responsible for the erosion of name identity and adding to the public’s confusion about Upstate.

The issue of there being sufficient resources to accomplish a mission is often a matter of perspective. In the case of Marketing at Upstate, the issue is further clouded by the fact that there are myriad missions that are apparently resourced at widely varying levels. Marketing Upstate at one time meant marketing the hospital in a competitive environment. You either play aggressively in that arena or you lose market share. Now, however, there is widespread understanding that marketing and branding are essential in all areas of a university and if the efforts are successful it is not only the more business or “bottom-line” oriented components that benefit. The marketing objectives must by necessity be clearly delineated and resources allocated on the basis of those prioritized objectives. If a university brand is well established, based upon fact, and widely recognized and understood, benefits accrue at all levels of the institution.

#### Faculty and Staff Remarks

- “Creative people, just not enough of them”
- “Marketing for the hospital has made a positive difference”
- “We don’t market and leverage and brand nearly as much as we should”
- “We have a great product” but “we allow people in the community to disregard us”
- “More (Marketing) engagement needed in day-to-day operations”
- “Upstate needs higher marketing efforts in the local/regional area”
- “We only have 1.25 FTEs on campus side”
- “Not organized (to market) research”
- We “need an advertising agency, but need staff more”

*Possible Topics for Consideration by Cross Functional Teams*

- Examine reporting lines and determine if Marketing is appropriately situated within the organization.
- Review, compare and contrast the marketing operations of similarly situated health sciences universities.
- Develop metrics to gauge successful penetration of marketing efforts into the community/region.
- Examine the website and compare/contrast it with peer institutions as regards its impact on prospective students, researchers and faculty.
- Explore a formalized structure or method for Marketing to receive and share information with Upstate leadership.

## C. Information Management and Technology

### Situation Analysis

Like most if not all large public and private institutions, Upstate has for many years now understood and valued the importance of a robust Information Management and Technology (IMT) system. Given the complexities of Upstate's administrative functions and its core academic, clinical and research missions, it is to be expected that some areas would flourish in their use and applications of IMT faster than others. This is particularly true when bottom-line oriented business-driven endeavors are included in the mix as is the case with Upstate's hospital and clinic management structures.

As is mentioned elsewhere in this report, IMT, like Human Resources and perhaps other fundamental support issues, is viewed differently within the overall institution depending upon where one functions within the university. In a very general sense, one is likely to view IMT as helpful and responsive as experienced from the hospital and clinic management perspective. Conversely, IMT appears to be viewed as less responsive and progressive in its applications when viewed from the vantage points of the laboratory and classroom. In this sense then, Upstate is not all that unique. IMT can only flourish with appropriate application of resources and from this research it has become apparent that to this point in time the resources have flowed in a steadier stream from the more business oriented segments of Upstate.

It is clear from conversations with President Smith that he fully understands and appreciates the IMT needs of the academic and research endeavors and will do all possible to see they are well served. A case in point is that \$2 million was recently funneled to IMT in order that more robust applications can be developed for the campus.

One important IMT issue that bears close planning and attention, if not prompt intervention, is the status of the computer systems building. According to some, the building is at full capacity. There is reportedly no back-up power system in place and the critical cooling system is being stretched to its limits. If this is an accurate picture, immediate attention must be paid to this matter in order to avoid potentially costly losses to equipment and interruptions in service.

Finally, this analysis would not be complete without acknowledging that staff of IMT are almost universally considered to be helpful and supportive from top to bottom. While staff and faculty on the campus side are quick to talk about what they see as a lack of general attention to their needs for specific applications, they usually blame this more on a lack of

resources than they do to any lack of support from the actual IMT staff. From the hospital side, IMT receives almost unanimously high marks.

#### Faculty, Staff and Student Remarks

- “We are slow – we must move quicker” (the electronic medical record offered as an example)
- “IMT is great and very responsive”
- “IMT support and infrastructure and applications and programs are great”
- “Institution has (recently) put money in technology – recent KPMG did a head count audit and we showed well – recently a wireless audit (was completed) showed well”
- “Need more infrastructure here”
- “No system or process to prioritize (IMT needs)”
- “Great on hospital side, severely lacking on campus”
- “No modern technology on campus side – only one ‘smart’ classroom for entire campus”
- “Good hospital system, good e-mail system, but need EMR robust enough to link hospital and outpatient sites”
- “Good people (in IMT)”
- “No integrated system on the campus side to provide data and statistics on programs, students, research”
- “Equipment needs to be updated”
- “In past year, have created an online PhD application, an online course evaluation for students, and an online survey of students who rejected our offer of acceptance”

#### Examples of Topics for Consideration by Task Team

- Consider methods for allocating IMT staff and resources at the hospital and campus.
- Review priority setting in peer institutions.
- Consider ways in which large hospital hardware procurements can be leveraged by the colleges.
- Examine ways that advances on the clinical side can be migrated to the campus and vice versa.
- Examine the costs inherent in maintaining two operating systems (MACS and PCs). Consider in this the costs of procurement, staff maintenance and training in two distinct systems.
- Examine the website and how it might be a more robust marketing tool as well as the portal for prospective students, faculty, researchers and staff.

## **D. Facilities and Space Utilization**

### *Situation Analysis*

A discussion focused on space utilization arose in almost every interview. The need for increased space is typically recognized as a positive for a large organization because it is a clear indicator of growth and expansion.

There is a great pride in the fundraising, planning and recent ground breaking for the Golisano Children's Hospital and the vertical expansion for additional hospital facilities. All who participated in this activity should be pleased as it is a significant achievement involving multiple players, including many who in the past have not been directly involved in Upstate activities.

The Setnor Academic Building, scheduled for completion in 2007, is an excellent addition and will provide for many of the campus' current demands for additional space.

Staff within Administration and Finance maintain a data base of past, current and pending construction/renovation projects. Hospital and campus departments or programs typically utilize a committee within their area to define the project need and priority. The Group of Five (a more formal name was not given and this name was recognized in various settings) is composed of representatives from the hospital, campus and administrative area to view space needs on an institution-wide basis and is given high marks for its help in this area.

Administration and Finance has developed plans to obtain assistance in developing a facility master plan. For this to be a vital plan that is useful in the long term will require the University develop a strategic plan for education, research and related components. All such facility plans will require ongoing modification and adjustment based upon funding allocations and focus adjustments.

Short term needs are being evaluated and options considered for use in other existing non Upstate space or leased space.

Certainly there are detractors to the work performed by the Administration and Financial group responsible for facilities, and the detractors may have justifiable reasons. However, observations indicated a complex responsibility that is being addressed in a skilled manner.

Based on initial and follow-up interviews and observations, it is clear processes are in place to identify space needs and to the extent new construction can be provided, the needs will

be met. Some space reallocation occurs. There were a few comments in the interviews that “we are not strategic in space, we are reactive.”

Beyond the need for new space, the situations brought to our attention regarding space can be categorized into three areas: 1) highest and best utilization of space, 2) disconnected locations for staff, and 3) off-site space. Each of these issues is interconnected. There is a limited amount of current space on the main campus area and there is very little open space for future building. At least for the short term, functions will be required to occupy space distant from the main campus area. Some functions may need to be separated in order for certain of their staff who require proximity to remain on the main campus. Assuring best utilization of the on-site space can help to create the most efficient operations.

Other space related issues addressed negotiations with Crouse Hospital. Most of those interviewed believe it is not something that should consume considerable amount of time based upon past years of discussion. Others recommend seeking service areas within Crouse and Upstate where it makes sense to consolidate rather than attempting to force a complete consolidation. There is also concern in the campus that the size of the hospital must be expanded in order to meet the demands of a medical school and research facility.

#### Facility and Staff Remarks

- “Children’s Hospital is incredibly exciting. We waited a long time and now it is coming.”
- The new academic building is great.
- “Folks who maintain the physical plant are very dedicated and keep it together in good shape.”
- We are landlocked. We need new facilities such as an ambulatory care teaching center.
- “Don’t get distracted by the Crouse thing. If we are going to play with them, let’s play on our terms.”
- “We are just bubble gumming it.”
- Needs to be a culture change to have folks move to space that is not nearby.
- Example of physicians having too much power. Minimally invasive surgery built then not used.
- We do not follow the Master Facilities Plan. Paid a lot for it and never implemented.
- “Space is not an issue. Quality of space is the issue.”

*Examples of Topics to be Considered by Cross Functional Teams*

- Determine what process should be utilized to assure best use of space.
- Determine what process should be utilized to determine best use of off-site space.
- Determine if there are communication processes that could be implemented to assure off-site space occupants have connection to the main campus.
- Determine how master planning can be integrated at every step of the space allocation process.
- Consider ways to achieve greater alignment of the strategic mission and facility planning and utilization.

## **E. Institutional Advancement**

### *Situation Analysis*

The Institutional Advancement (IA) Office recently experienced a significant victory in securing a major gift that helped move the Upstate Children's Hospital from a dream to a reality. There is also evidence that incremental gains in fundraising have been made in each of the past several years. The staff is generally well thought of, but at the same time, there is a widespread sentiment that there is more to be accomplished in fundraising at Upstate and that the efforts to date are not as robust as they need to be.

The program seems to suffer from a generalized lack of focus. One former high-ranking official of Upstate noted this is at least partially the result of faculty being encouraged in the past to pursue their own fundraising goals independently, without regard to the larger priorities of the institution. On a related and most important note, it is not clear how many staff and faculty including Chairs and Deans actually view active fundraising as part of their overall portfolio of responsibilities.

With the exception of the large Golisano Children's Hospital gift, major gifts of that magnitude have been nearly non-existent at Upstate. This fact points to the possible need, mentioned by several staff and faculty, for the addition of at least one major gifts professional to the Development staff. Some of those interviewed believe that too many of the fundraising efforts have been directed inward, at faculty and staff, rather than outward to the community and region. It must be noted that of the nineteen staff in IA, only five (5) are dedicated to actual cultivation of donors and solicitation of gifts. Only one-fourth of one FTE is devoted to the vital area of prospect research.

It is noted that the Upstate Foundation is dedicated to the advancement of the University and is tangibly supportive. For whatever reasons, the Foundation and the Alumni Association of the College of Medicine are separate and distinct entities, despite having been joined together at least once during a former administration. This separation of two highly visible Upstate institutional advancement entities may cause donor confusion in some areas and, at the very least, it requires two administrative structures and staffing patterns and thus adds to overall fundraising costs. They do not even share a data base and coordination of effort is more anecdotal and personality-based than it is systemic. This duality of effort can lead to difficulty in prospect management which, in turn, has the potential to alienate prospective donors.

### Faculty and Staff Remarks

- IA is “94% self-supporting
- IA staffed by “well intentioned people without the knowledge or experience to make a real difference”
- “Great long-term staff at the Foundation”
- “Good energy and a drive to succeed” on behalf of Upstate
- “Not a lot of method and consistency”
- IA staff are “primarily event planners”
- “We’ve made progress over past years”
- “Successful Children’s Hospital campaign that exceeded expectations”
- “More aggressive development and alumni approaches should be explored”
- “Students, faculty, Deans need to be involved in Development”
- “We “need more staff in IA to effectively raise major gift dollars for research initiatives”

### Examples of Topics to be Considered by Cross Functional Teams

- Develop a systematic means of collaboration on fundraising between Foundation and Alumni Association.
- Explore possibility of routine fundraising training sessions for faculty, Chairs, Deans and senior administrative staff.
- Consider a method to establish fundraising priorities and ways in which those priorities can be published and widely adhered to.
- Examine staffing patterns in IA for ability to achieve focused fundraising objectives.
- Explore ways to align more closely the fundraising efforts to Upstate message and brand.

## F. Intergovernmental Relations

### *Situation Analysis*

From comments received during individual interviews and group discussions an at best hazy picture of the intergovernmental relations (IGR) effort at Upstate emerges. There is generally a high regard for the individuals who staff the operation, but at the same time, there is a surprising lack of knowledge of what it accomplishes. It almost seems as if the positive opinions stem more from internal interactions than external results. To be even more candid, it is not an exaggeration to say that for many in key leadership positions throughout Upstate, there is disappointment over what they see as a lack of return on the investment of resources dedicated to operating the IGR office.

To be fair, it must be noted that those who staff IGR offices at public higher education institutions are generally the “point persons” for what by necessity must be an institution-wide effort. With shrinking general state appropriations going to public colleges and universities, it has become increasingly essential to have a well developed IGR office to cultivate the attention of state and federal lawmakers. It is necessary to inform and educate them about the benefits that accrue to their state or district through adequately funded academic, clinical and research initiatives.

While IGR staff should not necessarily craft the institution’s legislative agenda, they should at least inform and illuminate it to assure understanding both internally and by elected officials. It is essential they be aware of the various state, federal and agency funds that might be available at any given time to fuel an institution’s initiatives. Those funding opportunities must be constantly and consistently conveyed to the administration and faculty so that the information can be factored into strategic decisions. In an ideal situation, faculty are made aware of the opportunities and in turn they seek the advice and support of IGR staff to help them make their cases to legislators and granting agencies. This does not appear to be happening routinely at Upstate at this time. Whether this is the result of diminished expectations or a lack of clarity about roles and expectations is unknown.

The great disparity between the comments (from “strong” and “great job” to “not sure what they’re doing for us” to “disappointing results” and “poor”) presents a picture of either an IGR office that has not found and filled its place within the institution or an institution that has not made proper use of the IGR office. It seems to add up to an ambiguous situation and this function within the institution is too critical to permit such ambiguity.

Much has been made about the current office's ability to "open doors" in Albany and in Washington, D.C. One can't help but wonder what happens once those doors are opened and who is there to step into the inner offices of legislators to present a crisp and achievable legislative agenda.

*Faculty and Staff Remarks*

- "Poor" effort overall – "\$700 million available throughout the SUNY System for capital projects and Upstate got \$0"
- "No locally elected champions"
- "Efforts are diluted by lack of focus within the institution"
- "Strong", "a great job"
- "Not sure what they're doing for us"
- "Government relations don't exist at Upstate"
- (The IGR office) "has not made it happen"
- They "have great connections and speak our mission clearly"
- IGR "much better" now
- "We have not fared well in this area ... compared to most SUNY schools"
- "Disappointing results in past two years"
- "Need more strategic and aggressive effort on multiple levels"

*Examples of Topics to be Considered by Cross-Functional Teams*

- Examine legislative priority setting process at Upstate.
- Consider whether all necessary stakeholders are at the table when priorities are considered and set.
- Explore the relationship of Marketing to IGR and consider whether that is the best alignment of resources.
- Examine IGR staffing for adequacy to accomplish mission.