



**Executive Vice President and Provost Pam Benoit
Open Forum, Athens Staff and Faculty
August 14, 2009**

Notes of Comments Made During Forum*

<p>What is Valued about Ohio University and Athens?</p>	<p>OU is the type of university where it is easy to forge relationships and create networks. However, this aspect of the university is put at risk when we are asked to take on more responsibilities with fewer resources.</p>
	<p>Our history</p>
	<p>The innovative technology that exists in our classrooms and conference rooms. It allows faculty to do more in their courses and when we have visitors from outside the university who use our facilities they are impressed with the quality and functionality of our technology.</p>
	<p>Sense of comradery. When community says that its focused on students, it is true—not lip-service.</p>
	<p>It is easy on this campus to find people to help, as well as to create communities for individuals who need special assistance.</p>
	<p>Living where we live, there is a special population that we serve. But there is also a special community that exists to serve it.</p>
	<p>Existing across the university are webs of connection that help to make a large campus seem smaller.</p>
	<p>Peer mentoring on this campus is invaluable.</p>
	<p>Student Affairs has made a great effort to involve parents in the life of the campus. Parents know what is going on here.</p>
<p>There is a genuine sense of caring here. People are allowed to work together to find ways of working things through.</p>	

<p>What Makes People Stay at Ohio University and in Athens?</p>	<p>It is a beautiful place to live. You can have a nice, refreshing life here. There’s no traffic and it is a pleasant place to live.</p>
	<p>It is easy to live in Athens. There is a strong community that is very committed.</p>
	<p>Compared to other universities taught at, the students at OU are the best. We are big enough to attract good students. Their work ethic is 2nd to none.</p>
	<p>There is a high level of professionalism, but you are also part of a family. You have the chance to have a life outside of your job.</p>
	<p>Sustainability is something that people at OU and Athens care about. It is possible to do something here about sustainability issues.</p>
	<p>OU has unique programs that attract and keep people.</p>
	<p>Level of collegiality is exceptional. If you have an idea, the culture at OU can help it develop. It is important to have such a culture. Innovation, ideas, and strategies have won out in the past. Across the university, there are open doors that provide egress to innovation.</p>
	<p>The collegiality that exists at this institution helps with problem solving. You can do new things here. There is an open-mindedness and a “can do” attitude.</p>
	<p>Living in Athens you do have to make certain sacrifices when it comes to lifestyle. But Athens also teaches you what you are capable of doing.</p>

*Compiled by Ann Fidler, Interim Associate Provost for Strategic Initiatives

What Concerns Exist?

Mobility issues are a concern. Some improvements, but more need to be made.
Care of buildings and the university grounds are a concern. The standards of cleanliness, and the litter and weeds are harming one of our most important assets—the beauty and charm of the campus. How the campus looks is important to recruitment, alumni, and employee morale.
Would like to establish a program where student groups and offices could “adopt” a sidewalk and help to keep it clean.
How well is the university doing when it comes to looking after the Ridges?
Spousal hire program is important. Need to make sure that it can continue.
Have accountability and autonomy currently. This makes a difference in doing a job well. If one were missing, it would not be possible to perform at the same level. Not all employees have this and for those that do it could be easily lost.
Affordable housing in town for new faculty.
Times are scary now. We have to keep an open mind during difficult times. Need to keep a positive attitude. OU has become an academically challenging institution. We have to work together to preserve that. If we don’t, we will fall apart.
Before we rush to make Athens like everywhere else, let’s consider how important it is to preserve our unique local culture and to support our local businesses.
Budget pressures are serious. We need to have a sense of urgency about that. We need to keep looking to Vision Ohio for guidance.
Many employees at OU are underpaid. At the higher levels, people who have come in recently have been brought in at market value or above. There’s a serious inconsistency here.
There has been over the past few years a serious erosion of trust. There is little trust in decision makers and real skepticism as to whether they are interested in anyone’s opinion other than their own.
When making decisions. Let the community know what the options are. When a decision has been made, explain why the options weren’t pursued. Don’t just announce a decision.
There’s a lot of cynicism. But no one who works at the university is trying to mess things up. They are trying to do the best that they can with limited resources.
Explanation of decisions is essential. If you don’t explain the decisions, we will fill in the blank with our own interpretation.
We need to have voices at the table of all individuals who will be affected. There needs to be more diversity at the table as well.
Don’t confuse directive and policy. They are very different. Make sure that when a memo is sent out it is clear who wrote it.
Voicemail system at OU is problematic. It is difficult to erase messages and boxes always seem to be full. Makes communication very difficult.
Email quotas at OU are too small--particularly for teaching purposes where you do need to have the capacity to retain emails from students.
We need to do more that just cut. We need to be attentive to ways to bring in more funding to OU and to Athens.