

RUTGERS

Strategic Marketing and
Communications Committee

Final Report

to Dean Piyushimita Thakuriah

September 11, 2020

Edward J. Bloustein School
of Planning and Public Policy

Summary

In the spring of 2019, a committee of 19 faculty, staff, alumni, and ex-officio members were tasked with developing a vision and mission for the school, identifying near term priority goals, considering the name of the school, and offering suggestions regarding the 30th year celebration of the Bloustein School. The Committee's efforts were greatly enhanced by working cooperatively with The Melior Group, which conducted surveys of faculty, staff, alumni, current and prospective students, as well as interviews of key university and outside stakeholders. Representatives of the committee also met frequently with The Melior Group to identify challenges, especially related to the impact of COVID-19 on the schedule of the work.

This summary highlights note key findings from the committee report:

- A mission and vision were written and tested by an in-house and Melior surveys. Between 75% and 90% of respondents supported the proposed mission, “The mission of the Bloustein School is to create just, socially inclusive, environmentally sustainable and healthy local, national and global communities”
- The committee identified the following five near term goals for the school:
 - Build social and environmental justice as a school-wide thread through a strategic hire(s), which would aid in tying key components of the school together.
 - Attract and retain high quality faculty and students, while recognizing the school's key advantages and disadvantages in the current changing academic environment,
 - Continue to become a global leader in key challenges that are consistent with the school's mission and vision,
 - Build a stronger alumni presence in the school, and
 - Become more financially self-sustaining.

- In regard to the name of the school and 30th anniversary, the committee recommends the following name:

“The Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning, Policy and Health”

- The 30th year anniversary is a time to celebrate what we have accomplished as well as an opportunity to press forward with an aggressive effort to publicize the school. The COVID-19 events should not be allowed to derail these efforts.

The Committee recognizes that this report is a first step in a strategic action planning and implementation process. by the Bloustein School. We also recognize that not every stakeholder is going to read every sentence of the The Melior Group report or of this report. Hence, we highlight some key ideas and threads in the final section of this report that we call unfinished business.

Background

In April 2019, Dean Thakuriah created an advisory body responsible for advising the Bloustein School Dean on strategies to implement a new Mission and Vision for the school that would reflect future aspirations. It would also make recommendations on the branding, communications, and marketing strategies of the school's offerings and accomplishments. The membership of the committee consists of 19 faculty and staff members as well as several school administrators as ex-officio members, and external members from the Dean's Advisory Board.

The first meeting of the Strategic Marketing and Communications Committee (SMACC) was in April 2019, and it met as a whole or in smaller groups several times to address specific parts of the charge. The first meeting was critical because the Dean provided a clear picture of objectives. A lively discussion ensued during which the committee agreed that it would be working on this project for at least a year.

During the first meeting, it was agreed that while a consultant would complete part of the work, the committee would gather information about students, grants, service, and other school assets that would save time and be informed by our collective experience. SMACC also conducted an informal poll of faculty, staff, students, and alumni about alternative Missions and Visions in October 2019. All of this information was later made available to the consultant, who used the information to inform its work. The text below summarizes the committee's response to the Dean's three-part, 13-item charge.

Due to the interruption of normal activities because of COVID-19, the working timeline for completion of the project by the consultant was delayed. On July 14, 2020, preliminary reports were received from the consultant. Karyn Olsen and Michael Greenberg meet with The Melior Group on August 20 to discuss their reports, and on August 27, The Melior Group gave a presentation of their Final Report and Recommendations. Following that presentation, SMACC convened a final online meeting for further discussion among the committee and finalized this report.

Report of Responses to the Charge

Part I: Working with External Firm

- **Hiring a consultant(s):** Members of the SMACC committee were involved in writing and contributing to the Request for Proposal (RFP), examining five (5) candidate vendor responses to the RFP, sitting in on interviews of the final two candidate vendors, and advising the Dean on the preferred vendor of choice. This early involvement helped the group establish rapport with the consultant, The Melior Group (Melior), as we moved through the data collection process.
- **Data Collection and Branding:** The original intent was to hire a single consultant who would start with data gathering and end with branding and associated actions. After discussions with members of the Rutgers University Office of Communications and Marketing, we were advised to focus on this as two separate, distinct activities, which would occur in phases. The RFP was crafted with a focus on gathering data (Phase 1) that would serve as the basis for informing options and branding (Phase 2). Melior was chosen as the vendor for Phase 1 as data collection is its strength; a second RFP will be written for Phase 2 in order to select a vendor specializing in strategic marketing branding.

After their selection was finalized, Melior’s leadership team came to campus to speak with the Dean, members of the SMACC, and other stakeholders, to consider other school brands and to craft questions that elicit information about branding from surveys. Toward that end, the committee provided them with data about other major peer schools and the committee’s views to inform their surveys and interviews.

- **Preliminary ideas for a mission & vision:** Discussion of a Vision, Mission, and Goals were a critical component of the process as it would feed into later tasks. SMACC members were asked to share their individual views verbally and in writing, which were then reviewed by a

smaller committee. This smaller committee converted these submissions into three Mission and Vision statements, which were provided to the Dean for additional input and review.

Once the Mission and Vision statements were drafted, the Dean's Office circulated them in a survey, to faculty, staff, students, and select alumni. 87 responses were received by October 22, 2019.

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeCRPav3PTGBF6H7mw7LSN1iWCWh5EQuty72L5QXr7QaW6YoQ/viewform>.

Based on the responses received from this survey, SMACC drafted working Mission and Vision statements (**see Part 2: Vision, Mission and Goals**)

Once the Working Mission and Vision statements were drafted, the final product was provided to Melior. Melior used this information for the interviews of stakeholders, and used the statements to develop the formal survey questions.

- **Strategic Marketing Plan for the school's educational, research, and service programs, and processes to implement the plans:** A Strategic Marketing Plan depends upon the Mission, Vision, and Goals and Priorities assigned to each. Below we provide the Working Mission and Vision statements, and articulated multiple near-term goals. These will need further discussion with our various stakeholders.

Once the priorities are set, a Strategic Marketing Plan can be built from the portfolio of the school's success stories and linked to expectations for the near-term future. The Strategic Marketing Plan needs to be flexible enough to respond to opportunities associated with funds, changes in society's preferences, new faculty and staff ideas, and continuous scanning of the environment. The Strategic Marketing Plan should not lock the school into commitments that prevent the Dean from taking advantage of new opportunities.

- **Website development and social media:** The Melior Group was hired for its expertise in data collection in building a new website. This will be included in Phase 2 when we begin seeking a vendor for strategic marketing. Several committee members and school staff are highly qualified to participate in this process.

As for social media, the SMACC chair read a recent paper that compared academic papers that were accompanied by tweets and those that were not. The tweeted papers were four times as likely to be cited. In other words, we need to invest in social media. The questions we need to answer are “How much should we invest?” and “How should we go about doing so?” Melior’s data should help answer those questions. Furthermore, we must have an agreed upon prioritized Vision, Mission and set of near-term Goals before we begin a social media campaign. We recommend convening a special committee to oversee this process, including deciding whether to outsource this work.

- **Input from faculty, staff, students, and alumni of the school:** Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, SMACC was working with Melior to interview key university officials, deans, faculty, staff, alumni, and students. These meetings and interviews were held from mid-November 2019 through early March 2020. Based on these interviews (a summary of which can be found at https://drive.google.com/file/d/1vJLqS2_VeFZ0hexcAp_H4KyFWwwC0Mh9/view?usp=sharing), as well as the information gathered by SMACC at the start of this process about students, grants, service, other school assets, and peer schools, Melior began compiling questions for the online surveys. Melior worked with a smaller cohort of SMACC, as well as the Dean, to write these questions. The questions were approved in late May and Melior created the individual survey instruments for five distinct groups:
 - faculty/instructors/PTLs;
 - staff/research staff;
 - current students (graduate and undergraduate);
 - alumni; and

- prospective college students. The latter group sought to obtain 350 total responses, 50 of which would be from an international cohort.

The surveys were sent to all groups beginning in mid-June 2020 (June 16 for alumni, June 17 for faculty, staff, and students). The prospective college student survey reached its goal of 350 students (including 50 international). We were aiming for a 30% response rate from faculty and staff and 15% from others, the actual response rates were as follows:

Group	Sent	Completes	Response rate, %
Alumni*	6,053	418	6.9
Faculty	170	67	39.4
Staff	114	59	51.8
Current students*	1,761	203	11.5
Prospective students	--	350	--
Internal groups**	--	38	--

*Includes addition of 653 graduates in 2020 that were added to alumni survey.

**Interviews with selected faculty, senior staff, university leaders, members of the Dean’s Advisory Board and selected alumni.

- **Present Melior’s findings to the Dean and Bloustein School community along with a committee perspective on those recommendations.** Part 2 of this report is the committee’s

observations and recommendations. The Melior reports consist of an overall summary of findings and recommendations and separate documents (average 30 pages) about the groups they studied: faculty, staff, alumni, current and prospective students, and internal groups. Each report is on file for review. For purposes of this report, we pulled data from the documents that is reported in text boxes and several tables. We also met with the Melior group and discussed its findings and observations, which is reflected in the report. We found The Melior Group to be enthusiastic, responsive, and helpful.

SUMMARY OF PART 1:

Overall, in regard to part 1 of the charge, the SMACC worked closely with the Dean to develop an RFP, review prospective vendor applications, and interview the finalists. Of great value to the SMACC was that three members have been involved in marketing for decades. SMACC worked with the Dean to provide a list of senior university administrators, key alumni, government officials, and others for personal interviews, as well as a medium-sized sample of faculty, staff, alumni, and current students for small focus groups. Two SMACC committee members discussed the final versions of the faculty, staff, alumni, current and prospective student questions. At every stage of this process, at least two members of SMACC, including the chair, met with the consultant to work on framing the questions, writing the questions, developing delivery mechanisms, etc.

Part 2: Vision, Mission, and Goals

Committee members drafted three potential Mission statements (Options A, B, C below), which were vetted in our internal survey that concluded on October 22, 2019.

Overall, respondents preferred a short statement, which led to the committee reworking the three statements to develop Option D. Option D became the Working Mission Statement, which was included in the Melior surveys. The Dean significantly contributed to this process.

- **Mission statements** (*This should focus on what we do, for whom, and how*)
 1. **OPTION A:** The Edward J. Bloustein School is dedicated to creating inclusive, just, and sustainable local, national, and international communities, through outstanding interdisciplinary teaching, research, and service programs in planning, policy, health, and data management.
 2. **OPTION B:** The Edward J. Bloustein School is a leader in innovative research, teaching, and service that address the grand challenges facing the world through planning, public policies, management strategies, design, and technology that benefit people with inclusive, healthy, and sustainable urban communities and society, both within the United States and across the world.
 3. **OPTION C:** The Edward J. Bloustein School is dedicated to excellence in research, teaching and service innovations through plans, public policy, management strategies, design, and technology, towards inclusive, healthy, and sustainable local and global communities and urban areas.

After reviewing our Fall October poll results we developed **Option D**, which was included in the consultant's survey. This became the **Working Mission Statement**.

4. **OPTION D: /Working Mission Statement:** The mission of the Bloustein School is *to create just, socially inclusive, environmentally sustainable and healthy local, national and global communities.*

- **Vision statement** (*This needs to show the school's future direction*)

The Bloustein School seeks to expand innovating teaching, research, and service for public good to local, national and global contexts.

Text Box 1: The survey data found strong support among all respondent groups. For example, 55% of current student's personal resonance assessment was "very well" and another 31% rated it "somewhat well." Among faculty respondents, the numbers were 46% and 33%, respectively. With regard to staff, these percentages were 56% and 33%. The numbers for alumni were 54% and 34%. Prospective students, many not familiar with Bloustein, responded at 38% and 38%, respectively."

The single highest positive response was 71% among PhD alums who rated the statement "very well" and 23% who responded "somewhat well." There are interesting variations within groups that need to be reviewed. However, at this time the current statement is supported by the vast majority of respondents to our survey.

The Committee believes that the Bloustein School represents a highly skilled and creative group who in the words of the Melior report are "do-gooders," a label to be proud of.

- **Near-term goals** (*Specific near-term priorities*)

A Mission and Vision are necessary, but not sufficient. We use this opportunity to articulate bottom-line issues that are not new, but are important to the future of the school.

1. BUILDING SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AS A SCHOOL-WIDE THREAD

Before the Bloustein School formally existed, faculty and students in our disciplines at Rutgers University were highly motivated by justice-related issues. To date, this interest has intensified because of current events and our location. Given the school's history and interest, the committee recommends a hire(s) in social and environmental justice that will tie together current interests within the school and establish new ones (see 2021-2022 30th Anniversary Celebration below). Such a hire(s) would make a clear statement about who we are and where we are heading, and provide a direct link to our namesake, Edward J. Bloustein (see also pages 21 and 22).

Text Box 2: Livingston College developed this focus in the 1970s in response to a national focus on civil rights that carried over to environmental justice a decade later. With the personal assistance of President Bloustein, faculty were recruited with this focus by the then Dean of Livingston College, Ernest Lynton. The interest remains strong among current faculty. When asked what is important to them, 90% of faculty respondents indicated a culture that values diversity and inclusion. Yet, the faculty identified a large gap between importance and current performance. The same level of importance was identified by 95% of staff, with only 54% indicating that this important objective was realized by performance. Among the alumni, the younger alumni were slightly more focused on this issues than the older graduates, but every group strongly supported this objective. Along with helping students find good postgraduate opportunities, this goal clearly is one of the most consistently important by all respondent groups.

It is imperative that we be in touch with students regarding this issue. Melior reported that 94% of current student respondents said the ability to place students was the highest priority. However, 94% also wanted an education that was focused on urban living and public health, and 90% looked for a school culture that values diversity and inclusion. Looking at prospective students, Melior reported that “high school seniors seem more idealistic and are significantly more likely to select the vision of a school that is creating an inclusive, just and sustainable local, national and international communities.”

2. ATTRACTING AND RETAINING HIGH QUALITY FACULTY AND STUDENTS.

The Bloustein School has been extraordinarily successful in attracting top faculty, which partly explains our high competitive ratings. Given the quality of our programs, and our location, we have every expectation that we will continue to attract the best.

In 2017, we created a Teaching, Evaluation, and Mentoring (TEAM) Committee charged with building on the school’s long-standing high quality teaching, with special emphasis on assisting new faculty. We were the first school in New Brunswick to take this step. This committee has served as a model for our campus, as it works to integrate new faculty into the school, focusing primarily, but not exclusively, on teaching.

FACULTY: At the same time, the school has been at a competitive economic disadvantage in retaining faculty relative to the heavily-endowed private universities in the Boston to Washington, D.C. megalopolis. Several promising young Bloustein faculty members were lost to other universities that were able to offer extraordinarily generous packages that we could not match with our own funds. The university did not assist in our efforts to retain these young faculty, and instead viewed the recruitment of these young scholars by elite private institutions as a demonstration of the quality of our school. The

school needs to think about a development strategy to increase our chances of retaining our young faculty.

STUDENTS: Top graduate students want to matriculate in our programs. Rutgers University is one of the best bargains in the U.S. and the state – a top-tier school at a fraction of the cost of our private competitors. Our doctoral students have been among the best for decades. We have an exemplary cohort of foreign students who are extremely motivated and contribute to every class. The school has the faculty quality to attract the best, but we need to generate resources to recruit and help fund these students. We have lost students to our competitor peer schools who have more attractive and comprehensive funding packages.

Our undergraduate programs are also very popular and continue to grow steadily each year. Given the current global climate, we anticipate that our undergraduate majors will generate even more interest with incoming students. The undergraduate program director has a major responsibility and the committee urges faculty from every program to cooperate with our director to continue to grow our undergraduate program and maintain its quality.

COVID-19-related events and restrictions placed on our international students are challenges that we need to face and account for in our planning. They won't be the last. The deans and program directors routinely work together to discuss school-wide strategies. In addition, it may be prudent to create a small strategic planning committee of deans, faculty, staff and alumni that aims to stay ahead of events in our fields and higher education in general and advise the Dean about opportunities and challenges in recruiting and retaining students.

Text Box 3: The survey by The Melior Group collected a good deal of valuable information about different categories of stakeholders in the school, and these data should be examined. Here, we emphasize two findings about faculty and students. Both agree that successfully placing students and graduates is the most important objective followed by the schools need to be responsive to and develop new programs that are responsive to events, focus on improving urban living public health, and building a culture that values diversity and inclusion. The faculty and current students were asked 11 questions. The Spearman rank correlation between their rankings was $r_s = 0.88$, a strong relationship with no obvious major deviations. In other words, faculty and current students appear to want to head in the same direction.

The added question for each group also provided important results. Current students were asked about the importance of “offer[ing] scholarships for grad students.” The importance that they attached to it was 85 (rank nine of 12). Note, however, that the performance number was 46, a gap of 39, which was the largest gap between importance and performance in current student questionnaire results.

With regard to faculty, the importance of being attractive to funders was the unique question. The importance score was 82 (six of 12). The performance score was 40, a gap of 42, the largest gap in the faculty results.

While neither group rank these near the top of the most important attributes, both responses relate to dollars. Financial resources have been discussed by our deans, program directors, faculty administrative staff and students when the oldest member of this committee (with fifty-year service) arrived. The pressure on budgets and dollars is not new, however, we believe has markedly intensified. While we acknowledge differences among the different groups about how to deploy available resources, the reality is that the current level of pressure on resources makes it difficult to address the issues that we have noted in this report. (See goal number five below.)

3. BECOME A GLOBAL LEADER.

The Bloustein School has quietly been a global leader for decades, despite being a state school. What we teach attracts foreign students and our faculty research is cited by scholars all over the world. Many of our faculty conduct research, teach, and advise in other countries. Some have a primary focus outside the United States. But being a global leader does not imply giving up our connections to our state and regional megalopolis.

Prior to COVID-19, our region faced environmental degradation, social inequality, economic distress, transportation congestion, health disparities, and data vulnerability. These problems are part of every major megacity (now over 30) of 10 million or more. Along with Tokyo, New York City and the adjacent northern/central New Jersey were the world's first two megacities. Megacities require multi-disciplinary solutions; we train our students to work in megacity environments. Many of us are asked to work and teach about issues in these environments. One of our graduates who read this text said that these intense urban challenges are “our sweet spot.”

The Bloustein School is a state school and we have immense credibility within the state, region, and nation. That will not change. We have been applying our excellence in research, teaching, and service, along with our multi-disciplinary skill set, to issues we face here as well as those outside the United States. We have to be both a global school and a state and local school because increasing our presence in global issues raises the standard and prestige of the entire school and opens up opportunities for scholarship, service and teaching.

Melior interviewed 38 internal stakeholders, and these interviews produced results that are consistent with what is described throughout this report, that is, the school's key role with the state, region and local governments. We note that this group, like others, did not call for a primary focus on the school becoming a global leader. However, the report does

raise the issue.

Text Box 4: “Bloustein is well-known among the leadership of New Jersey state government – and while it is known, there should be more opportunities to leverage the reputation within New Jersey into one that is more nationally (and maybe internationally) focused. Not surprising, Bloustein’s reputation is formed through its work at the state level, with few internal stakeholders aware of what has been – or could be -- done nationally. There are many stakeholders who want to see Bloustein become more than a “state” school – but there are also some who are comfortable with its current role and strength.”

Following this meeting, two of those interviewed called the committee chair and made a much stronger statement in favor of larger global role, which they feel is already occurring but not being acknowledged.

4. BUILD A STRONGER ALUMNI PRESENCE FOR THE SCHOOL

Our programs have graduated students that have gone on to have important and interesting careers. When asked, they typically will work to help the school. However, school has underperformed in developing a program to reach out to alumni. We did not have a formal dean’s advisory council until 2017. We can and should increase our outreach to alumni. If we can increase the proportion of alumni who participate in the school, we will have more support for students who need internships, leads for jobs, advice on skills needed in the marketplace, on-the-ground ambassadors, and in some cases financial support. Overall we will have a stronger group of advocates for the school.

Text Box 5: The Melior survey only had a 7% alumni response rate, despite an extended period for responses for this group. Arguably, alumni should have a relatively low response rate because they have formally disengaged from the school. However, the committee believes that we can increase the proportion of more involved alumni. Notably the survey also found that many alumni are not aware of the school's ratings, its accomplishments, new programs, and its relationships with funders. Recognizing that the response rate was low, those who replied shared many of the same priorities the faculty, students, and staff. For example, the Spearman rank correlation between the faculty rankings of important priorities and alumni was $r_s=.0.93$.

5. BECOME MORE FINANCIALLY SELF-SUSTAINING

It was not so long ago that the state paid a large share of the university budget and the school received a predictable amount of revenue from the university. As a result of state financial costs related to COVID-19, the university and school received major reductions in state funding. In the longer term, we are assuming the Bloustein School, will be entirely self-supporting, with no state funding allocation. Because the Bloustein School had a large number of federal and state grants, we did not prioritize building an endowment and adding new teaching programs. Therefore, our ability to fulfill our Vision and Mission and address the above three goals and others nearly entirely depends on our ability to raise the necessary resources. In recent years we have worked hard to grow our student body, and this effort has been extremely successful. In addition, the Educational Priorities Committee (EPC), working in parallel to SMACC, has identified several short-term as well as long-term opportunities that will bring additional revenue to the school. We support pursuit of these opportunities.

The EPC also noted that Bloustein is *significantly* behind on delivery of on-line course offering. On-line courses provide an opportunity to extend our teaching to a much broader audience, including domestic and international students seeking degrees, certificate programs, executive education, and life-long learning programs. This option needs to be on the table for every program.

There are two challenges to this option. First, many of our current faculty have little or no experience with on-line teaching, except for part of Spring 2020 and now Fall 2020. COVID-19 has forced us to engage in this teaching method in recent months, and while classroom teaching is preferred, our faculty have successfully risen to the occasion. The second challenge is to find the resources to invest in on-line programs, specifically additional training for faculty, hiring skilled staff for course and curriculum development, and in marketing.

In addition to new teaching programs and consideration, it is clear that we need to continue to work hard to support our work with grants and other types of foundation support. Prior to COVID-19, the school had approximately \$16M in grant funding in 2019-20. The future of many of these grants is uncertain due to the global pandemic, but we are confident that new opportunities will be found. The school has also been lacking in major gifts. The 2017 creation of the Dean's Advisory Board has not only provided valuable suggestions to the Dean to address this issue but also is providing working capital to begin funding some of the Advisory Board's early suggestions.

While we can continue to hope that Rutgers' new President could return the university to a kinder and gentler budgeting process, we have to assume that it will not, at least in the near-term. Therefore, we need to focus on what we can do as a collective to make the school more economically independent.

Part 3. School name and 30th anniversary

School Name

As part of the early information gathering process, SMACC reviewed the names of schools and colleges that we consider to be peers. Many are named after a donor, with two to three key disciplines also included in the title.

We propose that the school keep the name Edward J. Bloustein School, however, we suggest adding *health* along with *planning* and *policy* to become:

The Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning, Policy, and Health

Why keep the Bloustein name? Our school reflects the life of Edward J. Bloustein, the 17th President of Rutgers University, who was a constitutional scholar and active advocate for social justice. Within Rutgers, President Bloustein advocated for high-quality, scholarly programs that touched communities and their residents and improved the common good. Outside of Rutgers, Dr. Bloustein participated in activism opposing apartheid and other social injustices. However, if someone offered the school a significant amount of money to change the school name, we would be obligated to listen. This is a possibility, however remote, that we must take into account.

Given President Bloustein's legacy, it is not an accident that the Bloustein School has attracted faculty, built academic programs, and offered services that have led to the urban planning, public policy, and undergraduate programs being rated among the top 10 in their disciplines in the United States.

Although several other schools offer elements of planning, policy and health, the Bloustein School is the only school in the U.S. that offers this specific portfolio of major academic disciplines, which are consistent with the needs of the region's communities and diverse populations.

New Jersey is the most densely populated state in the United States, the only one with more than 1,000 people per square mile. In addition, New Jersey has been one of the most affluent states in the United States for many decades. The third major attribute of our state is diversity. The portion of the population that considers itself to be Afro-American, Latino-American, and Asian-American makes New Jersey among the most diverse in the United States. Middlesex County in particular, where our school is situated, is among the most diverse *counties* within the state.

The Bloustein School is a place to conduct research, provide service, and teach about issues in order to gain insights that can be used to improve quality of life, promote sustainability and diffuse lessons learned to other parts of the country and other parts of the world. Part of our message to the outside world is, when you interact with the Bloustein School, you are working in an environment that is challenged by the need to find creative policy solutions that must be able to adjust to scrutiny by a diverse set of interest groups. The cluster hire(s) we suggest above and below would tie us even closer to Ed Bloustein and our faculty, staff and students.

- **Feedback regarding school name**

The school has made a major commitment to undergraduate public health and health administration. The internal October 2019 survey provided some input, which we used in developing this recommendation. The committee discussed the name change, and the result was the members verbally supported a change that reflects the reality that the school's health-related programs are important to the school and community. The undergraduate public programs are decades old and have grown to be among the largest in the United States. The health administration programs are younger, and offered their first degrees in 2018/2019. In 2016/17, the undergraduate public health degree accounted for 67% of the school degrees. In 2019/20 including an MHA degree, the two Bloustein health programs accounted for 78% of the degrees awarded.

Adjusting the name of the school to the name, in short, reflects current enrollments, the fact that the programs cooperate in teaching, service and research, and the idea that in a

densely packed urban state within the Northeast megalopolis that needs access to such programs in school with a multi-disciplinary capability suggests to the committee that the school was ahead of the curve when these programs were added and will continue to be as they mature and interact. In this regard, our new informatics programs cut across every program in the school and are consistent with the growing development and use of big data in planning, policy and health.

- **Milestones and Themes for 30th anniversary**

We cannot afford to miss the opportunity to promote our accomplishments, and articulate our mission and vision, even though celebrating the 30th year milestone will entail some up-front costs during an economically stressful period. A single event may be useful at the start and/or as the culmination.

1. We suggest a senior hire in a common theme that bridges every research and teaching program (Goal #1 above). Specifically, we recommend an **individual or individuals involved in social and environmental justice who are comfortable with planning, policy and health**. This theme has been with us from the days of Edward Bloustein (see above), and will remain a challenge for the foreseeable future. (see Text Box 2)
2. An **academic year-long set of activities** should be developed to focus around the school's core research and teaching areas. We can imagine a series of monthly events featuring external or internal speakers, alumni, an exhibit, student projects, and other demonstrations of our accomplishments around particular themes including transportation, workforce and labor development, social and environmental equity, community development, health policy, environmental health and so on. Each major research area could develop a program and work with the Dean's staff to develop an event.

Text Box 6: The survey provides two important findings about the 30th anniversary. First a clear majority favor workshops and lectures to highlight the school's accomplishments (about 80%), and slightly lower proportion would like to see that accompanied by increased marketing (about 70%), whereas much less than half strongly support the idea of a gala. The comments accompanying this section of the survey are filled with interesting suggestions about who to engage, who to feature and how to feature them. Here are a few:

(1) "Highlight success stories of our alumni who make a difference and reflect the values of our school."

(2) "Feature random alumni (not just leaders) on social media ... as part of a build up for the official 30-year recognition of the school. Just quick little blurbs to connect past to present (and future)."

(3) "Develop speaking events/lecture series that involve Bloustein alumni, current and retired faculty, addressing relevant issues"

(4) Discussions about #BlackLivesMatter and the coronavirus reshaping urbanism and equity considerations in American cities with alums and current faculty/students."

(5) "Involving students in social media campaigns, celebrating the diversity of faculty and students, connecting research of the faculty to current events in recent years or in the history of the school."

(6) "Take out a cable TV add highlighting the school's contributions to society."

"Create a temporary Bloustein School "Hero's Page" on the main website which showcases a few distinguished professors from the past 30 years and their accomplishments."

(7) Develop special communications (e.g., 30th anniversary film, social media campaign, print anthology of contributions to real world problems, podcasts, etc.) to focus on Bloustein contributions and successes.

3. The school's **social media** needs to be fully engaged for these programs. Social media engagement is more than just the Bloustein School sending out messages via institutional accounts. Our faculty and research staff need to be versed in not just the importance of sharing their accomplishments with the Dean's office, but also personally being active participants in social media. We receive weekly messages from programs that extract every bit of good news out of what they have accomplished. Several members of our committee have strong backgrounds in the marketing world. As noted above, we suggest that the school create a committee of school staff, alumni and faculty who can prepare a plan for the Dean that would allow us to more effectively compete in marketing the accomplishments of the school, faculty, staff, and students.

The school is already planning on enhancing communications including social media, podcasts, advertising. There is no denying the reality in this century. What is in question is where to invest. To find out, Melior was asked to survey each group.

The table below shows that no single social media channel is among each group's three favorite, albeit Facebook misses the fewest groups. Of course, these results could change in the not too distant future.

Top Social Media Channels Used by Respondent Groups, %

Media channel	Alumni	Current students	Faculty	Prospective students	Staff
Facebook	52	51	49	60	73
Instagram	52	73	27	64	36
LinkedIn	64	45	73	17	57
Twitter	34	30	35	32	21
Snapchat	4	18	--	33	4
You Tube	24	24	33	52	30

The lingering concern about the COVID-19 pandemic can easily dampen enthusiasm for future celebrations. Yet we must optimistically assume that a new vaccine will be developed and in use in the near future. Hopefully, our world will be less impacted by COVID-19 by academic year 2021-2022. Even if people prefer participating via on-line events and celebrations, we should be able to prepare an excellent program that provides, at a minimum, social media options. Many national professional organizations are already preparing for large meetings and conferences scheduled for late 2020 and early 2021. They are working on scenarios that may include regular or partial in-person attendance, as well as partial to fully on-line events. We must not allow COVID-19 to dampen enthusiasm for planning upcoming events because, even if the virus problem lingers, a good program can be developed using remote engagement.

For years, we have talked about adding new in-person technologies and reconfiguring or otherwise improving the quality of our space. However, the more pressing near-term priorities may be improving school and individual technologies and increasing training in these technologies to raise the on-line profile and reach of the Bloustein School.

Text Box 7: Before sending out the survey, we designed several questions to determine how students feel about the pandemic and what, if anything, the school could do to reduce their concerns. The responses were interesting. Less than 40% more worried about the availability of technology to do their coursework online to connect with instructors. Greater concern was expressed by undergraduate respondents. Slightly more than half of current student respondents expressed concern for their own health and approximately 6 of 10 expressed concern for the health of their family. The biggest concern, expressed by 77% of student respondents, was that they will worried about finding a job or internship after completing their education. On the other hand, 78% indicated that they believe that there's studies at Bloustein will be more relevant than ever after the crisis. While the focus of the survey was on current students, we note the faculty indicated a need for more support for training faculty for remote teaching, were willing to work on contingency plans for remote teaching, and providing support for student recruitment. They also suggested a variety of approaches for strategies that the school could consider, many of which included more support for online teaching, but others included involving alumni and program creation internship opportunities and providing more support for research grant writing and research fundraising, as well as ideas for non-degree programs, workshops and presentations, and mental health check ins for students, staff and faculty. The detailed comments are currently worth examining. An important observation is that two-thirds of part-time faculty were significantly worried about the stability of their positions, as were staff.

Unfinished Business

The Melior Group

Much of what The Melior Group found is extremely positive and those who follow-up will find key information in text boxes in the Committee report, but here is a digested version for quick reference:

Major Findings

1. Strengths

- a. School “provides a bridge between health, community, employment, transportation, and the environment.” Trans-disciplinary is strength. This includes “training students to work in mega-city environments.” Intense urban challenges are “our sweet spot.”
- b. Faculty and research centers drive school’s reputation for “applied” not “theoretical” research and programs
- c. The inclusion of “health” into school is unique in our portfolio but several other schools do offer policy, planning and health.
- d. School’s Mission and Vision are both resonant and credible to stakeholders.
- e. Faculty, staff, alumni, and students were most closely aligned about the IMPORTANCE of two school characteristics:
 - (1) Successfully placing students and graduates in fields of choice and
 - (2) is selective/hard to get into.This same group was also closely aligned on these three characteristics:
 - (1) Is responsive and develops programs that are relevant to current events and issues,
 - (2) Has a culture that values diversity and inclusion, and
 - (3) Focuses education on improving urban living, public health and opportunities

- f. Despite the small-size of the alumni sample, the biggest disconnect between the value of the characteristic and its ACHIEVEMENT/PERFORMANCE was found in the first characteristic, above: Successfully placing students and graduates in fields of choice. The second largest inconsistency between perceived value and achievement was with the second most important characteristic: is responsive and develops programs that are relevant to current events and issues. These observations require additional discussion and strategic thinking.

2. Opportunities

- a. Paradoxically, Covid-19 presents an opportunity for alumni and faculty to “re-imagine and re-build for the future.”
- b. The Dean needs to be visible and tell the School’s going-forward story, especially within the university.
- c. The 30th anniversary provides a way for the school to build its reputation.
- d. Public health is insufficiently integrated into school. Some within the university are unable to distinguish it from the Rutgers School of Public Health, despite the university program existing before the School of Public Health.
- e. Individual programs in the school are known. Yet the Bloustein School, as a whole, is much less known. How do we address that challenge?
- f. The School needs to balance the “push-pull” between national/international aspirations versus satisfying local/state needs and do it without undermining the strengths of our researchers and centers. In other words, both are essential.

3. Recommended Actions

- a. Initiate a “strong, intentional, outward-facing marketing effort
- b. Fit all the school’s “buckets” together, especially health. “Health in all policies”

Strategic Marketing and Communications Committee (SMACC)

SMACC Recommendations and Discussion Points

1. Mission/Vision: Create more just, inclusive, sustainable and healthy communities
The Committee struggled with the Mission and Vision, writing multiple versions (see report). While it seems that the statement resonated with stakeholders, some members remain uncomfortable with its brevity. The risk of having one is that it doesn't say enough and/or it does not provide needed school differentiation. Some would like to add "by (or through) outstanding interdisciplinary teaching, research, and service" following "Create more just, inclusive, sustainable and healthy communities..." Another option is to work on each program's mission/vision and directly tie them to the school's.

a. **Executing the Mission and Vision:** Successfully delivering the mission and vision requires a *transdisciplinary* approach. Students, faculty, research centers working *together and across* their respective planning, policy, health, and now public informatics disciplines. The School is uniquely qualified to deliver on that promise with the needed domains under one roof. This needs to be prominent in our marketing.

Seize the nexus of opportunity. The compelling desire to change and improve our communities coupled with the School's dire fiscal position creates the "burning platform for change." Leverage this through:

More fully integrate (i.e. "blow up or at least shrink the silos") amongst Planning, Policy and Health, through:

i. For students:

1. Further expand opportunities for interdisciplinary classes and studios
2. Creation of additional signature courses

ii. For faculty:

1. Encourage additional joint interdisciplinary teaching classes and studios
2. Expand research clusters
3. Recruit additional diverse faculty to better reflect NJ and the nation

b. Better control our own destiny by becoming more financially self-sustaining.

- i. Develop a marketing plan/calendar from now through the 30th Anniversary to aggressively market and promote the School. The plan should cross all conventional and social media channels and address all internal and external stakeholders.
- ii. Faculty and research staff must be active participants in the use of social media. A marketing plan must be developed, implemented, and routinely reviewed and updated.
- iii. The Melior Group identifies important/resonant messages to each of the stakeholders. Each one needs to be addressed separately. However, there are overarching, unifying positioning that defines the School of Planning, Policy and Health and needs to be marketed:
 1. Contributes to solving issues that impact society
 2. Produces graduates prepared to tackle today's issues and tomorrow's challenges
 3. Has leading faculty with real world experience
 4. Produces research that is applied
- iv. While endowment and research needs to grow, the school needs to think of itself as a "business," and grow another vital source of revenue—enrollment. The Educational Priorities Committee (EPC) identified several immediate and intermediate opportunities. In developing the EPC findings, relative to peers, the school is *significantly* behind on its on-line presence. There is an untapped revenue opportunity to extend the school's excellence on-line to students for degree and certificate programs as well

as professionals through certificates, executive education and life-long earning programs.

- v. More fully engage with alumni as spokespeople and mentors, distinct from fundraising resources
- vi. Invest more fully in career placement across the School.

- c. School Name:** The Melior Group’s research demonstrates that Bloustein does not have great recognition or brand equity, but Rutgers does. On the other hand, when the media or people (inside or outside the school), refer to any school or program, names become inevitably SHORTENED or abbreviated into letters no one remembers -- MCRP, MPP, PH -- or can’t remember which noun came first – was it planning or perhaps health? The benefits of keeping a proper name include
- i. Ease of speech and support of memory.
 - ii. Use or searching of the “Rutgers” name will pull up a vast university, not the School of Planning, Policy and Health.
 - iii. Not only was Dr. Bloustein a constitutional scholar and NOT a donor – he was a social activist. This trait and quality are core to the re-need branding the Bloustein school seeks.

The Bloustein name has legacy and relevance to the years in which it was formed – 60s? 70s?, but it turns out, happily for us, that the activism and social justice focus of those years seems to be resurging now and is consistent with Melior’s suggested “change the world” school vision/mission/branding. Finally, an important part of the discussion of school name change is to include health.

The Committee recommended a name for the School. However, a marketing view of options should consider at least, these suggested name options:

- i. The School of Planning, Policy and Health at Rutgers
- ii. The Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning, Policy and Health at Rutgers

- iii. The Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning, Policy and Health
(Committee recommended)
- iv. The Bloustein School of Planning, Policy and Health at Rutgers
- v. The Bloustein School of Planning, Policy and Health

2. Measuring Success: When the plan is implemented, will it drive the results you need?

Key outcomes should *not* be a laundry list rather several actionable, achievable, timely and measurable steps, when successfully implemented, move the needle. Moving the needle means the School becomes:

- a. Financially self-sustaining (need to dimension the \$'s need/gap)
 - i. Increased enrollment
 - ii. Increased grants
 - iii. Increased endowment
 - iv. Increased Rutgers support
 - v. Others?
- b. Highly attractive to students
 - i. Top rankings
 - ii. More highly qualified applications and acceptances
 - iii. Greater diversity
 - iv. More financial aid
 - v. Others?
- c. Highly attractive to professors (tenured, non-tenured and PTL's)
 - i. Top rankings
 - ii. Publication and grant capabilities
 - iii. Social media presence/following
 - iv. Strong start-up packages
 - v. Others?
- d. Nationally and internationally recognized
 - i. Top rankings from peers

- ii. Number times quoted
- iii. Service on important international, national and state committees
- iv. Testimony before government bodies
- v. Key notes
- vi. Others?

Whatever the key outcomes are, the work plan emanates directly from them.

3. **Plan Implementation:** The heavy thinking is in developing the plan; the heavy lifting is in developing the implementation. While is *not* in the scope of the SMACC, it is the SMACC's recommendation that "cross-functional" implementation team be created having the ownership and accountability to recommend to the Dean an implementation plan that is within budget and timeframe.

Appendix 1: Members of the SMACC

Committee members:

Faculty:

Juan Ayala

Michael Greenberg, chair

Ann-Marie Hill

Vincent Joseph

Frank Popper

Julia Rubin

Mike Smart

Carl Van Horn

Ex Officio:

Stuart Shapiro

Ray Caprio

External:

Nike Bach

Larry Burrows

Larry Downes

Chris Foglio

Nick Masucci

Robert Sommer

Staff:

Thea Berkhout

Karyn Olsen

Jennifer Senick