

Stakeholder Engagement Feedback Summary

Creating a *university for the future*

May 2023



Executive summary

In December 2022, The University of Adelaide (UoA) and the University of South Australia (UniSA) signed a Statement of Cooperation with the State Government of South Australia and the Australian Government to explore the feasibility of creating a new *university for the future*.

This followed a policy commitment from the South Australian Government in March 2022 to explore how South Australia could best be served by its university sector. The Government's policy commitment has provided an opportunity to revisit the future of higher education in the state. Following decisions by their respective Councils, the two universities are conducting a detailed feasibility study about the opportunity to create a *university for the future*.

No decision to amalgamate has been made.

On 27 March 2023, the universities released A Vision Statement for a South Australian *university for the future* and invited feedback from their communities by 21 April 2023. The Vision Statement was distributed across the two universities to more than 285,000 people and approximately 2,350 people were directly engaged in public fora. People were invited to read it and respond to four main questions.

Feedback was sourced using an online form on each university's website, via email, or through one of the planned engagement activities. All feedback from the engagement activities and submissions were collated with consistent themes or topics of interest noted. The themes or topics of interest to different sections of the universities' communities were also identified.

Formal responses were received from around 800 stakeholders. This includes questions asked in staff town halls and discussion points in industry briefings.

Given the small number of respondents, (representing roughly 0.3% of the contacted cohort) **the data cannot be relied on to establish a statistically representative overall view**, however insights garnered through the feedback received can provide another input point while considering the various threshold decisions ahead.

The responses received mapped closely to the themes identified in the Vision Statement. These were:

- economic growth, research and community impact
- student equity, access and success
- curriculum, teaching and learning
- ranking and reputation.

This was tempered by concerns about culture and employment impacts.

Australia's new for-purpose university is a leading contemporary comprehensive university of global standing. We are dedicated to ensuring the prosperity, well-being and cohesion of society by addressing educational inequality through our actions and through the success and impact of our students, staff and alumni. Partnered with the communities we serve, we conduct outstanding future-making research of scale and focus.

Feedback methodology and overview

Members of the university and wider community were invited to read the Vision Statement and respond to four main questions:

- What should be the priorities for the combined university's mission?
- Where would you prioritise investment for greatest impact?
- What should success look like and what is required to deliver it?
- What challenges and risks do you envisage would need to be overcome?

Feedback was sourced using an online form on each university's website, via email to futureuni@adelaide.edu.au or futureuni@unisa.edu.au, or through one of the planned engagement activities.

Engagement activities

The two Vice-Chancellors recorded and distributed a joint video message, encouraging people to openly share their thoughts and help shape the aspirations and ambitions for a potential combined university.

The universities worked together to plan and align activities, ensuring a consistent approach to communication and engagement. Activities included:

- briefing senior leaders at each institution
- staff forums at each university campus and virtual forums
- student forums – for student representative leaders and all students, including the option of joining online
- briefings with senior industry representatives in South Australia
- alumni and donor events at each university
- tailored email communications to staff, students, alumni and industry partners.

The Vision Statement was published on dedicated websites and distributed to more than 285,000 stakeholders and around 2,350 people were directly engaged through activities across the two institutions, including 14 face-to-face engagements and two online sessions with Q&A.

Approximately 800 formal responses were received.

Figure 1

Respondent Profile: Combined, UoA and UniSA

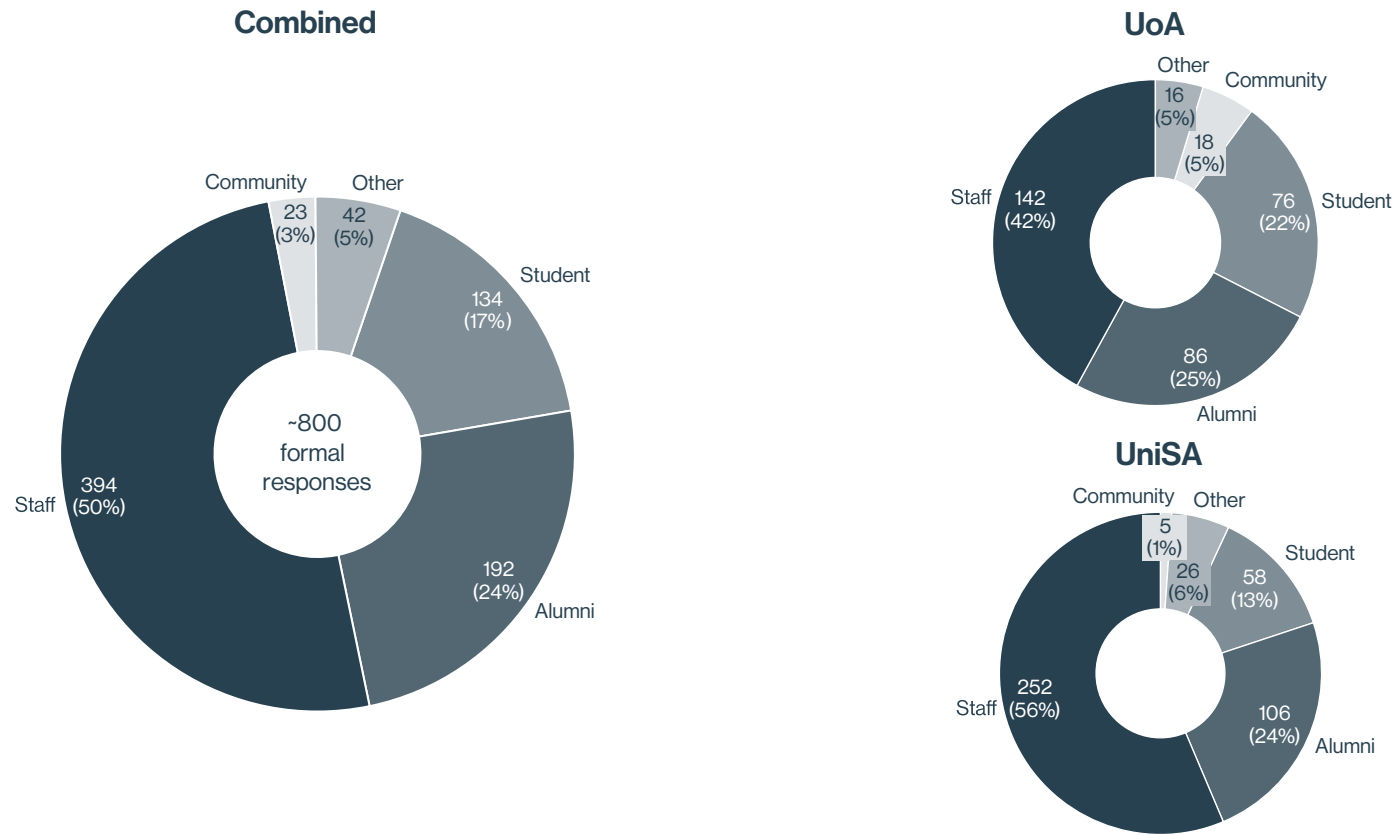
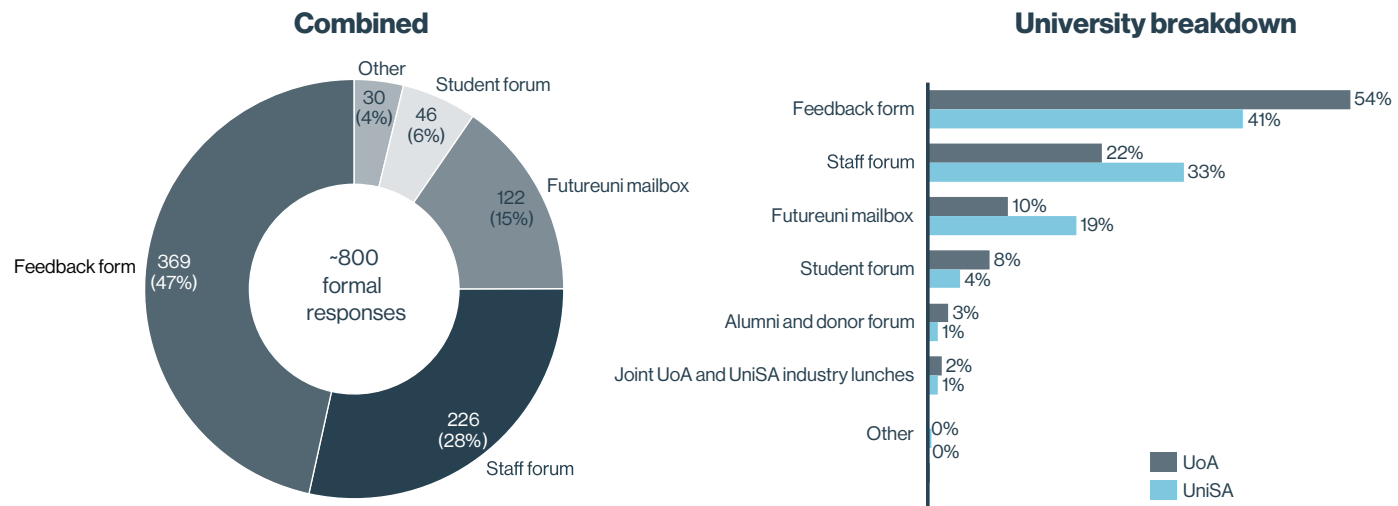


Figure 2

Channel for Feedback: Combined, UoA and UniSA



Note: Alumni and donor forum and joint UoA and UniSA industry lunches have been grouped together as 'Other' in the combined chart.

Figure 3

Theme Summary: Combined, UoA and UniSA

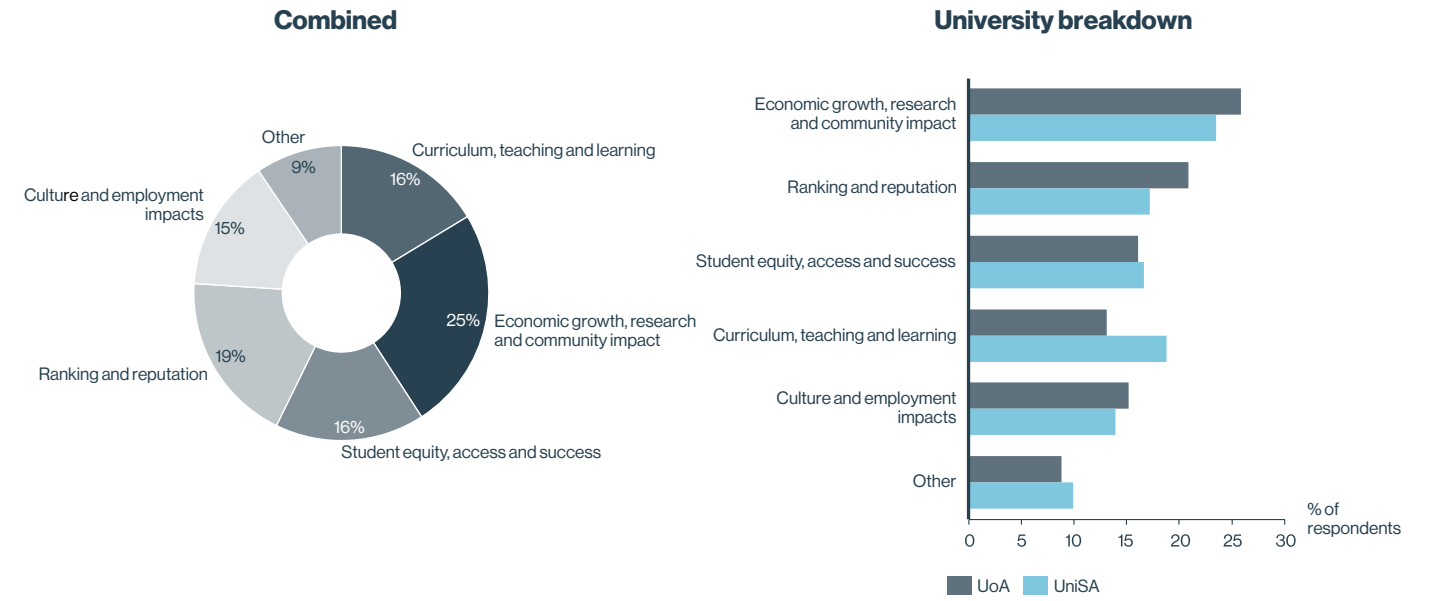
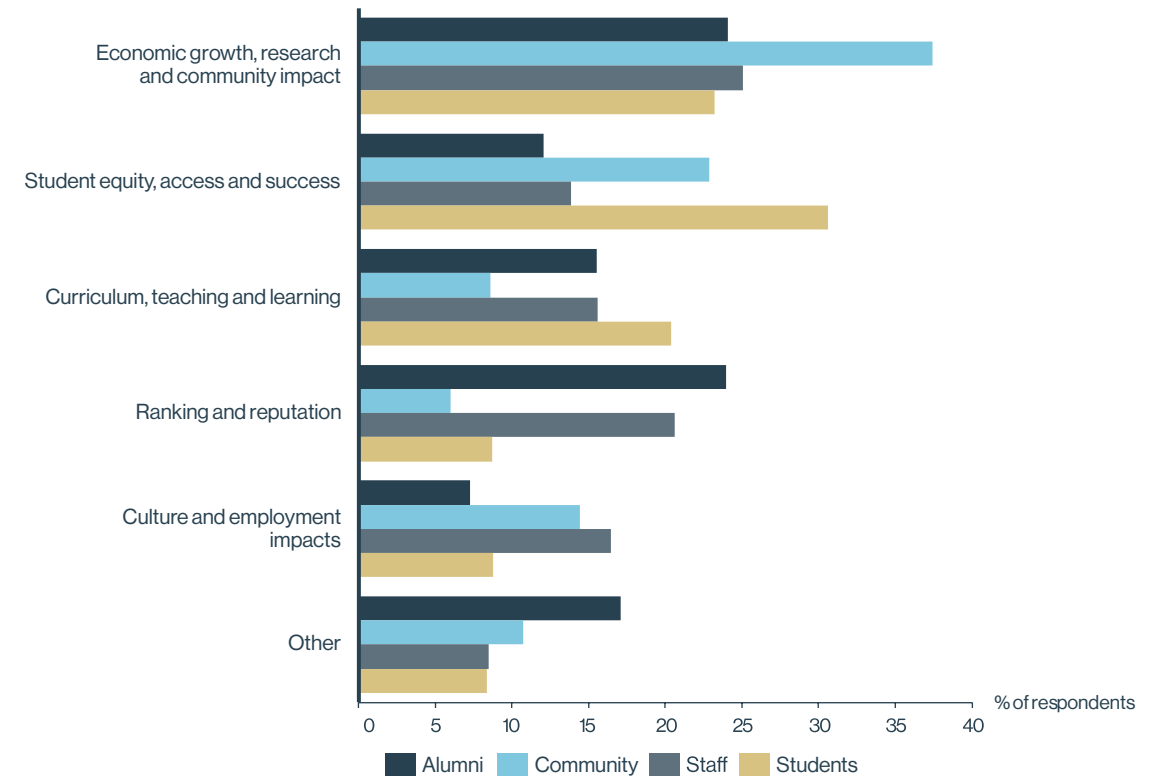


Figure 4

Theme Summary: Audience/Profile



Feedback question summaries

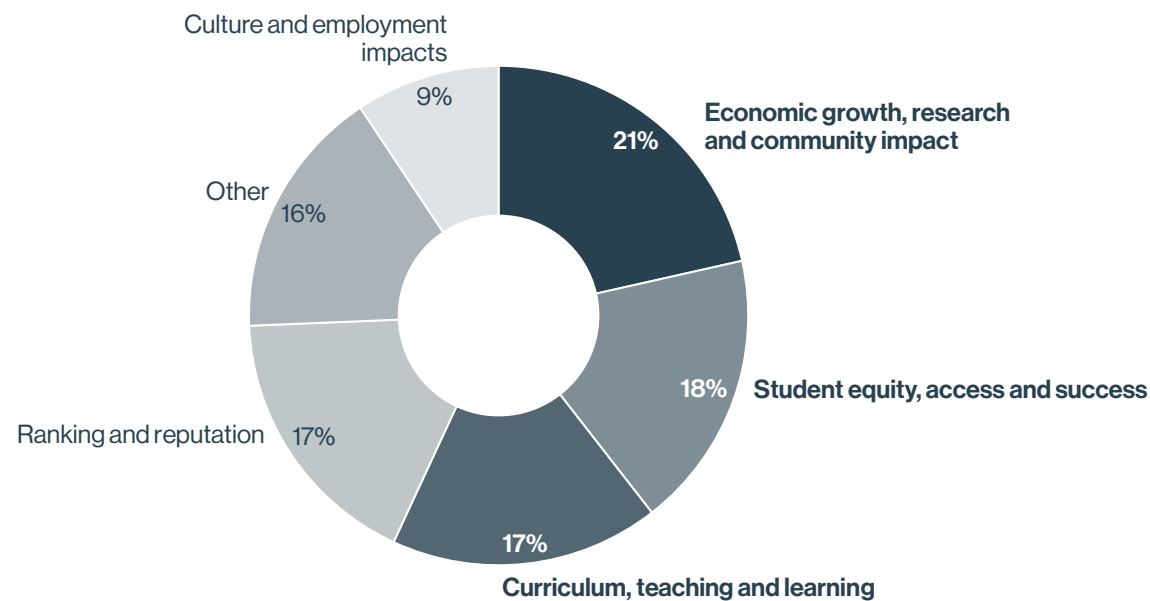
As part of the external stakeholder engagement phase, respondents were offered the opportunity to address four questions:

- What should be the priorities for the combined university’s mission?
- Where would you prioritise investment for greatest impact?
- What should success look like and what is required to deliver it?
- What challenges and risks do you envisage would need to be overcome?

What should be the priorities for the combined university’s mission?

Figure 5

Breakdown of responses to the question “What should be the priorities for the combined university’s mission?”



Note: ‘Other’ includes themes relating to general support (7%), general opposition (5%), governance (2%) and other (3%).

Economic growth, research and community impact

1. **Human capital development:** Focusing on developing the human capital of South Australia through flexible, generalist programs that develop flexibility, adaptability, and critical and analytic thinking in graduates.
2. **Interdisciplinarity:** Fostering cross-disciplinary research, education and thought leadership to build platforms for future engagement.
3. **Comprehensive research university:** Aspiring to be a leading comprehensive research university leading and shaping the intellectual, social and economic development of the state and its young people.
4. **Social and economic fabric:** Developing the social and economic fabric of the state by building the foundation of pure and applied research that will enable governments, NGOs and businesses to confidently make their investments in R&D and social development.

Student equity, access and success

1. **Student success:** Ensuring that all areas of best practice and diverse perspectives of student experience and equity concerns are carried forward into the potential combined university.
2. **Diversity and perspective:** Enable different opportunities for different members of society to access education opportunities.
3. **Equity and excellence:** Expanding programs that foster equity and excellence to counter generations of injustice, including becoming the university of choice for First Nations Peoples across Australia.

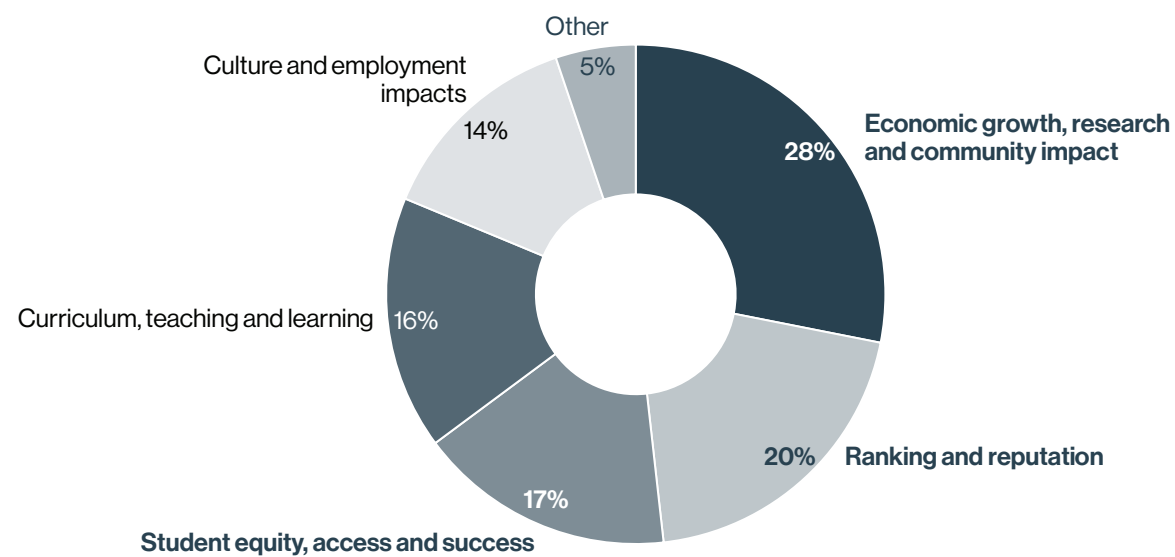
Curriculum, teaching and learning

1. **Quality education with career preparation:** Providing high-quality education to students with rigorous academic programs that prepare them for successful careers, research pathways, internships, and other learning opportunities.
2. **Broad, research-based course offerings:** Offering a broad, robust and research-based program of courses taught by qualified and experienced instructors with support for developing pedagogical practices suitable for tertiary education.

Where would you prioritise investment for greatest impact?

Figure 6

Breakdown of responses to the question “Where would you prioritise investment for greatest impact?”



Note: 'Other' includes themes relating to general support (1%), general opposition (1%) and other (3%).

Economic growth, research and community impact

- Research excellence:** Develop research excellence across diverse fields, including Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences, to establish a world-class reputation for the university.
- Economic alignment:** Align skills and intellectual property development with priorities to advance South Australia's economy.
- Industry integration:** Invest in projects that are closely related to industry best practices, sharing resources with leading industries to facilitate direct training, internship and employment opportunities for students, graduates, academic and professional staff.
- Broader real-world impact:** Invest in research, placements and mentorship across fields to make real-world impact now and into the future.

Ranking and reputation

- Global recognition:** Invest in learning and research activities that create a centre of excellence that is globally recognised and on par with other 'brand' universities outside of Australia.
- Support excellence:** Strengthen curriculum and research through investment.
- Broadening relationships:** Maintain a close relationship with overseas graduates who are leaders in industries and leading academics. This will require investment in programs and resources that support ongoing engagement and collaboration with these individuals.
- Collaboration and innovation:** Create an environment that makes the potential combined institution a destination for leading researchers, teachers, innovators and industry partners to collaborate and educate. Invest in infrastructure and resources that support collaboration and innovation, as well as a strong focus on attracting and retaining top talent.

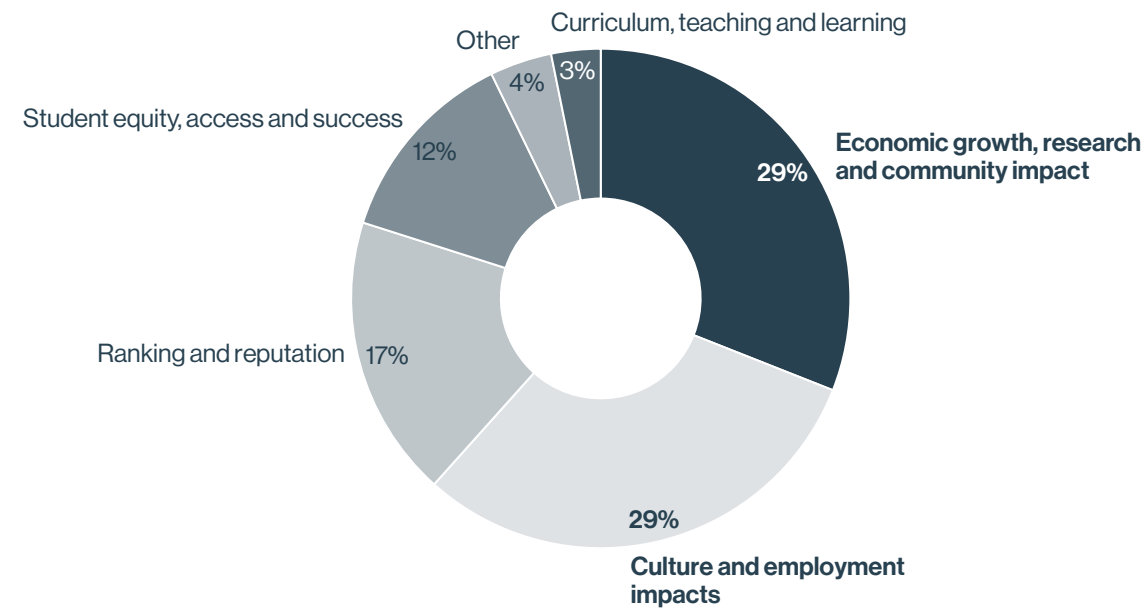
Student equity, access and success

- Student support:** Invest in student support services such as academic advising, tutoring and counselling that will help drive student success and retention.
- Quality online learning:** Invest in the quality of online learning experience offered. This needs to be of gold standard, engaging and effectively utilising digital technologies to attract global students and adapt to changing teaching and learning methods.
- Embrace digital:** Embrace digital technologies to help drive learning and teaching potential.

What should success look like and what is required to deliver it?

Figure 7

Breakdown of responses to the question “What should success look like and what is required to deliver it?”



Note: 'Other' includes themes relating to research and grants (1%) and general support (1%).

Economic growth, research and community impact

- Holistic metrics:** Success should not be based solely on metrics and rankings, rather it should be measured by various factors such as staff satisfaction, retention and attraction statistics, as well as student experience, graduate employment, employer satisfaction and contribution to the broader state agendas. Impact cannot simply be measured financially, and the university's purpose should not be to make money.
- External perception:** A positive external perception of the university is important for its success. This includes the university being a place where people want to come and study/work from all facets of life.
- Industry engagement:** Drive industry engagement by offering a clear industry engagement career pathway. Formalise and expand the individuals involved in industry relations to help bring this to fruition (both professional and academic).
- Fair distribution of resources:** Investment needs to spread throughout the university, with a focus on research and education across the institution.
- Focus on outputs:** Emphasis on the production of quality outputs such as papers, patents, products that can be commercialised, and social or economic impact of research and do not disproportionately focus on inputs.

Culture and employment impacts

- Staff culture:** Invest in the right people with the right capabilities, creating a culture of care where everyone feels they can contribute, and the institution better utilises older staff members to mentor and advocate for students and their peers.
- International recognition from overseas stakeholders:** The university should leverage the quality of teaching and learning to build a strong culture that will attract domestic and international students.
- Collaboration and quality:** The university should work together as one, with high levels of staff, student and researcher satisfaction. There should be a high proportion of quality graduates who are well received by the workplace, and investment should be made in applications to provide the best environment for students to learn and grow.

What challenges and risks do you envisage would need to be overcome?

Student equity, access and success

- **Student retention and equity:** Potential for loss of students who feel uncertain about their future, degree programs or the quality of education.

Economic growth, research and community impact

- **Financial sustainability:** Amalgamations have the potential to be quite expensive and require significant investments in infrastructure, technology and human resources. A potential combined university will need to ensure that it has a sustainable financial model that can support its priorities and goals.
- **Community engagement:** A potential combined university will need to continue to engage with the wider community if it wants to build trust and support for its goals.
- **Resource allocation:** Allocation of resources in a fair and equitable manner was raised as a risk.

Ranking and reputation

- **Impact on brand and identity:** There is a risk of both universities' brands and identities being lost – both are well-respected nationally and globally.

Curriculum, teaching and learning

- **Lowering in standards:** There is a risk that a combined university could have lower standards than the individual institutions.

Culture and employment impacts

- **Impact on staff:** Potential for a loss of skilled staff, the loss of autonomy in staff decision-making, and difficulty in integrating departments with different cultures and structures.



**University of
South Australia**

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