Following is an executive summary of presentations from University and economic development partnership representatives and input provided by invited business leaders as part of the 2012 UNC System strategic planning process.

Top Regional Development Priorities
In the Hickory metro region, key sector priorities include: sustainable energy, data management facilities, furniture and home furnishings, cable and communications equipment and materials, entrepreneurship, automotive, and logistics support.

Top hard skills (degree programs/technical skills) needed from UNC campuses over the next five years
Chemical, ceramic, optical, BS in business and finance with entrepreneurial skills, IT – CRM, software, pathways for technical, BS/MS mechanical, electrical engineering, physics & optics, Chinese language skills, design engineers, rapid prototyping capacities, mechanical sensibilities and design aesthetics, controls engineers Siemens ability, internships & practicums to ensure applications ability and context, ROI capacity to apply to tech disciplines, appropriate entrance requirements, affordability and access, double major options - available across UNC entities

“There is high pressure to move AAS nurses to BSN nurses, but UNC campuses don’t have the capacity.”

“People don’t care as much about the ‘degree’ as about whether the person has the credentials to do the job. That’s a responsibility for both the community colleges and the universities.”

Top soft skills (global/creative/entrepreneurial) needed from UNC campuses over the next five years
Negotiation skills, ethics/integrity, leadership development, selling skills & sales mgmt., teambuilding, internships, co-ops, practicums – evidence of application is key in hiring, social skills and work environment skills, communication skills/techniques differences – ‘right now’ influence, written communication – skills have significantly deteriorated – enhance ability to capture essence of message (“Our students these days are thumb communicators; they are going to need a lot more than that as they get out into the workplace.”).

Perhaps more dedicated focus on soft skills rather than diffusion across disciplines, reaching this generation through joint problem solving e.g. Davidson grant reference

“A lot of times we have people coming out who are prima donnas. They shouldn’t be. There should be some sort of hard knocks class that shows them how things really work before they get out.”

How the University help you grow business and/or communicate about business needs and interests
EDCs can utilize universities to help in recruiting process – e.g. applied research, cluster and sector focus & educational support can be explored/enhanced –Kenan Flagler’s Home Furnishings initiative has been discontinued – explore model - University can offer quality and honest broker of services, Information exchanges –university departments can be facilitators and conveners, help to address ‘how to help US mfg.?’ Advanced mfg. principles are available within the university – are we getting the word out effectively? How can we extend focused resources beyond geographic boundaries? Development of biz intelligence and data mining

University Communication: Podcasts can be effective for instruction, industry info and offering announcements, The University must look for consistent and effective outreach messaging, Among the noise, personal phone call / contacts are powerful, University contact can be effective, funding is a constraint upon university marketing and info dissemination.

What is your “one great idea” on the best ways the university can help businesses be successful?
Blur the lines – community colleges ↔ University ↔ Business ↔ Community

“Academic neighborhood” – pushing out the resources, Celebrate the diversity – vocational education VS higher education – diversity and balance is key for community development. UNC needs to develop social media strategy to more effectively communicate with community. More flexibility in training and curriculum; predicting tomorrow’s education needs requires breaking some molds. Accreditation is a barrier to rapid change and flex in curriculum – university focus is on 18-22 yr. old – the university needs focus on serving all demographics.