



The Compass: A Mission-Based Plan for the College

Washington and Lee University

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In the 2003-04 academic year, the 135 faculty members of the College engaged in discussions with their Dean that resulted in the creation of the first mission statement for the University's largest academic division, as well as the articulation of four broad goals that would define the remainder of the unit's planning efforts. In May, 2004, the Dean of the College presented the faculty with the results of the group's extensive work to date, referred to widely as "the Compass." The 2004-05 academic year has been devoted to initiative development in coordination with the University's other academic units. Emerging College initiatives emphasize areas that are within the College faculty's or Dean's sphere of control and all are consistent with the College's stated mission.

Mission Statement

The College nurtures a culture of learning at Washington and Lee by providing an education steered by the liberal arts tradition. Exceptionally dedicated faculty members guide undergraduates through a wide range of scholarly methodologies and their practical applications. Students learn to examine knowledge from a variety of perspectives, while developing deep expertise in their chosen field(s) of study.

College teachers challenge students to hone their critical thinking skills and approach questions creatively. Undergraduates and faculty collaborate to generate a fertile environment for scholarship and research, focusing not only on the assimilation of information, but also on the clear communication of knowledge to members of a global society. Our joint endeavors inspire students to further discoveries beyond the classroom and across disciplinary boundaries.

In striving to meet the educational needs of our increasingly diverse student body, we emphasize sensitivity to different modes of learning and living, as well as respect for other cultures.

The hallmarks of a person who is educated in the College include:

- a clear sense of personal responsibility,
- a talent for independent thinking,
- the capacity to evaluate information critically and to convey it eloquently,
- competence in many methods of approaching and solving problems,
- a lively curiosity about and mature respect for varied cultures and intellectual perspectives,
- a lifelong engagement with the values of honor and civility.

Planning Process (Fall, 2003 to Winter, 2005)

*The information that follows highlights the dynamic and complex nature of the University's largest academic unit. Strategic planning for the College must be approached in a manner that is respectful of the College faculty's diversity of experience and work styles. The turnover in College leadership over the past decade is also a feature that adds to the unit's complexity. It will take tremendous effort to help College faculty feel confident about the planning process as it unfolds over the coming year. (August, 2003) A **timeline** for the development of the College's plan appears at the end of this document.*

S.W.O.T. Analysis - At the outset of the College planning process, the Dean and faculty identified the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats that could impact the College's planning effort. The Dean's communications with faculty members during the planning process emphasized the potential energy stored in the strengths associated with the largest academic division of the University, as well as the other opportunities before us. Weaknesses and threats were acknowledged and woven into the discussion where appropriate.

Strengths:

1. A rich pool of professional staff: 135 permanent faculty in the College
2. ~40 adjunct/visiting faculty per year
3. 21 academic departments
4. 10 interdisciplinary programs directed by College faculty and departments (9 with program directors who are College faculty)
5. 80% of the permanent undergraduate faculty at W&L are in the College.
6. A majority of W&L students are enrolled in College courses at any given time during the academic year.
7. High quality facilities for the Science departments and Journalism, and an Arts facility under construction
8. A University mission statement that clearly emphasizes the liberal arts and sciences as the core of the University's entire curriculum.

Weaknesses:

1. Poor quality of spaces for offices, research, and teaching for over half of the College faculty, and no room to expand.
2. Limited or inadequate technology resources in College teaching spaces.
3. Limited staffing to assist in gathering/interpreting College-related data.
4. Frustration among College faculty over inequities in resource availability across the three academic divisions.

Opportunities:

1. The planned hiring of 25 new undergraduate faculty members, with 20 of those slated for the College's academic programs.
2. The President's charge to enhance the rigor and creative content of spring term offerings.
3. A renewed University-wide emphasis on the development of interdisciplinary curricular opportunities, which are highly valued by a majority of College faculty.
4. The University-wide planning effort, and the community's coordinated emphasis on the future of Washington & Lee University.

Threats:

1. Lack of strategic planning expertise within the College - no funding for a consultant.
2. The teaching load shift (from 7 courses to 6 per year) leaving many departments unable to maintain adequate curricular coverage or to meet student demand.
3. Limited time for faculty to devote to a planning process – research expectations are high (especially on the part of the faculty themselves) and the current teaching load of 6.5 courses, combined with a hefty existing committee load for many of our strongest discussion participants, leaves little free time for extra projects.
4. Frustration among the half of the College faculty who work and teach in spaces that require upgrading for reasons of safety and function.
5. Perceived underinvestment in the core humanities.
6. Widespread cynicism about strategic planning among the College faculty.
7. A two-year window for achieving goals under the interim Dean's oversight and the risk of administrative turnover in the final phases of planning.

In the initial phase of the planning process in the fall of 2003, the Dean divided the faculty into four groups, so that each would be small enough (35 or fewer) to permit functional discussions about the College's goals and priorities. To some extent, departments were grouped so that members of a discussion group would be likely to see others in the room who use common pedagogies or common research methodologies. Issues were raised and comments gathered related to the College faculty's past and current experience at Washington & Lee University. These issues were later summarized and used to initiate a second round of discussions in December, 2003.

In the December meetings, the faculty were divided into two groups and invited to participate in the development of a mission statement for the College, as well as a list of areas for further review. That list became the basis for the development of the Compass goals mentioned above. For all phases of the planning effort, faculty members were invited to send comments to the Dean via email instead of, or in addition to, sharing comments at discussion meetings. There was extensive involvement of College faculty from a wide range of disciplines in the development of the mission statement text during the winter months in 2004. A presentation of the College's mission and goals (the "Compass") was made to the full College faculty in May, 2004.

Compass Vision and Goals (May, 2004)

These are the preliminary goals that guided the faculty's discussions related to the development of strategic initiatives for the College and the Academic Task Force of the University-wide planning effort. The Compass Report Card presented to the College faculty in January, 2005 (and represented in the accompanying *Compass II* handout), refers to our progress in addressing specific aspects of these goals (e.g. 1B, 2C, etc.) Taken together, these goals are consistent with **our vision for the College:**

To have all members of Washington & Lee's extended community

- embrace and enhance the University's identity as a liberal arts college,
- value the College as the heart of the liberal arts at Washington and Lee,
- vocally champion the value of a College education in preparing critical thinkers who respect intellectual diversity, and
- articulate the College's role in developing the skills and intellect of successful leaders.

#1 Re-center the College's role as steward of a 4-year educational experience that is grounded in the liberal arts tradition, and define that experience.

- a) Impress upon students, parents, colleagues and others the applicability of a liberal arts education to professional life; increase our rapport with College alumni.
- b) Challenge ourselves to match curricular objectives of each major or non-major program to the outcomes we desire to be associated with a college education; articulate our well-reasoned requests for the physical resources we need.
- c) Collaborate with others (e.g. Admissions, Development, Communications, Student Life, Career Services) to develop messages regarding practical benefits of a College education, the successes of our alumni, and the excellence of our students and faculty.

#2 Foster a vibrant intellectual life at Washington and Lee for our students and ourselves.

- a) Reward and inspire academic rigor.
- b) Design classes and co-curricular experiences to support this goal; match class sizes to pedagogical needs; motivate students to carry on conversations and debates beyond class meetings.
- c) Inspire all students to consider the college experience in the context of life goals; help them see the College years as a phase of personal and intellectual development.
- d) Create co-curricular opportunities for College students that are as noteworthy and sought-after as any on our campus.

#3 Create a work environment that inspires excellence in teaching and scholarship, and that nurtures the development of leaders in the College.

- a) Create reward systems to acknowledge achievement in work domains we value.
- b) Define, support and reward effective leadership.
- c) Bring equity to teaching assignments, build flexibility into departmental curricular offerings and structure to offer all faculty opportunities to develop unique or interdisciplinary or team-taught course offerings on a regular interval.
- d) Clarify the College's expectations for professional achievement at each career stage; offer appropriate support for professional development (broadly defined).
- e) Find ways to nurture the College community.

#4 Create a comprehensive and sustainable approach to diversifying our faculty, our student body, our curriculum, and our co-curricular enhancements.

- a) Entice students to explore intellectual and real-world areas that are outside of their comfort zones; develop pedagogical approaches that teach students to seek connections across traditional boundaries (e.g. interdisciplinary education).
- b) Create local and international curricular and co-curricular opportunities for multicultural exploration; increase interaction between domestic/international students and majority/minority students.
- c) Seek understanding of features of our work environment and our learning environment that are less welcoming or jarring to people of diverse cultural or socioeconomic backgrounds.
- d) Apply practices that recognize diversity of thought as the cornerstone of an open and welcoming community.

Tactical Initiatives (February, 2005)

In order for the College planning process to move forward, several tactical (or near-term) initiatives must be developed as an essential foundation to the College's longer-term strategic initiatives. These needs were identified during the goal-setting discussions, early in the planning process. The tactical initiatives are being developed by the Dean. The College's strategic initiatives will be developed by action committees which will be chaired by the Dean and chaired by College faculty.

1. Personnel Issues & Staffing - For the 2003-04 academic year, the Dean set a goal of creating an administrative structure that would foster improved student, faculty and programmatic support, and enhanced communication and information-sharing so that the College's strategic goals could be identified and articulated.

This goal has been advanced by the work of the newly created Associate Dean of the College for Faculty and Program Support, who provides extensive support to department heads in areas of personnel support and facilities maintenance, among other areas.

During planning discussions, the College faculty charged the Dean with developing practices for clearly communicating the value of various types of faculty activity and achievement.

The Dean's office has submitted a grant proposal to the ACS Technology center (Feb, 2005) to provide for the development of an intuitive web interface combined with a searchable database for gathering and retrieving faculty activities reports annually. This tool will facilitate information-sharing with the Dean and feedback for faculty within the College.

To advance this goal, a "Heart of the Liberal Arts" celebration is planned this spring for the College faculty to hear about and celebrate recent, notable achievements of their colleagues in the areas of pedagogy, scholarship, and service. If successful, we hope to make this informal gathering an annual event.

The College departments currently have uneven and often inadequate administrative assistant support. Consistent, appropriately skilled staff should be available to all departments to support increasing levels of scholarly activity, coordination of off-campus and inter-departmental programming, advertisement of College programming and co-curricular activities, etc. Achieving this goal will require pooling of support staff across departments in each building, improved professional development opportunities for support staff, salary increases for this category of employee (commensurate with our expectations for professionalism and efficiency) and a dramatic restructuring of the way we currently do business.

This goal has been advanced by the newly created Performance Planning and Review (PPR) process initiated by W&L's personnel office. The Dean has provided extensive support to department and program heads, to ensure consistent and effective implementation of the PPR procedures.

As approximately 20 new faculty positions are allocated within the College, mission-based criteria must be employed in determining where staffing increases will occur and how positions will be described. Every hire must maximize the College's ability to provide complete, high quality coverage of the liberal arts and sciences.

This goal has been advanced by the Dean's use of consistent standards for initial allocations of new teaching staff, based on evidence of unmet student demand, and documented inability to

provide adequate coverage of curriculum at a 6 course load (e.g. where areas of shortfall cannot be covered by adjuncts.)

2. Facilities to meet the present and future needs of the College – The Colonnade spaces that are occupied by nearly 2/3 of the College faculty are unsafe, outdated, inadequate, and in dire need of extensive renovation. We will be challenged to maintain academic communities within the humanities as we expand the faculty in the coming years. We will not be able to contemplate further reductions in teaching load without further expansion of the smaller humanities departments, and we will require centrally-located spaces to provide the academic center provided by the humanists in the College.

We propose that a new, larger facility be constructed on the Dupont Hall site to accommodate several humanities departments and possibly a wing that connects to the science center and provides some expansion of that facility to accommodate up to five new hires in the sciences in the coming years.

We request that a clear commitment be made to renovate the Colonnade spaces, with space made available to College faculty in the short term via renovation of the Co-Op building. Ultimately, the Co-Op space should be made available to the Williams School for their exclusive use, once additional facilities are provided for the College's departments.

We further propose that the Graham-Lees dormitory be emptied as soon as additional residences can be made available, and that the site be converted for use as an academic facility to serve the needs of the College. This option has the benefit of potentially developing the Colonnade to serve a variety of academic goals (e.g. housing some College departments, providing office space for distinguished visiting professors, providing expanded meeting space, etc.).

Teaching spaces within the Colonnade must receive upgrades in the near term. Students are discouraged by unattractive, uncomfortable, outdated furnishings and surroundings in the teaching spaces that are used by 2/3 of the College faculty who reside in the Colonnade spaces. Fewer than 50% of the Colonnade teaching spaces are equipped with basic teaching technology. We cannot achieve our mission if this situation is not remedied.

These issues have been brought to the Vice President for Administration, and it is hoped that this set of goals will be advanced when a campus master plan is developed in the coming academic year.

3. Funding is needed to provide the College dean with the discretion to develop smaller planning-related and pilot projects within the College. The Dean's coffers contain a fraction of the support available to faculty (on a per-capita basis) as compared to the other two academic divisions. Current and future planning efforts are threatened as long as College faculty have reason to fear that their ideas will not be successfully launched due to lack of available funds. *Progress in this area has been made recently through the Dean's creation of a CAPS (College Account for Program Support) fund, which is structured in a way that permits the Development office or the Dean to accept smaller cash gifts (those too small to permit creation of an endowment fund) on behalf of the College.*

4. Curriculum – The undergraduate curriculum must be assessable so that we can verify that we are meeting our faculty’s goals for rigor and quality of experience. The Dean’s office is making extensive use of administrative resources to support College department heads as we move toward developing a culture of assessment, and to apply principles of assessment to the review of our undergraduate curriculum.

Processes are being developed that guide individual departments in maintaining Curricular Assessment Files, and that connect External Departmental and Program Reviews to the Courses and Degrees Committee, so that major and program curricula will all be held to similar standards of quality, regardless of when they were initiated.

5. International study opportunities – increase accessibility of existing overseas learning opportunities for the College’s students and programs.

The Dean is actively exploring international study opportunities that may hold promise for areas of the College that have not traditionally been connected with international education.

6. Advancement – The College faculty recognize that our mission and message must be disseminated beyond our campus, and we must improve our connections and collaborations with College alumni if we are to be successful. The Dean is committed to developing effective relationships with all aspects of the University’s Advancement team.

Over the past year, we have increased the College’s contact with alumni (meeting with visitors to campus, phone conversations with potential donors, travel to alumni chapters, planning with development officers, follow-up with College faculty about the role of Advancement in supporting our work, etc.).

Strategic Initiatives (February, 2005)

The accompanying Powerpoint handout (*Compass II: A Progress Report, enclosed*) provides an overview of the report to the College faculty presented by the Dean on January 26, 2005. The Academic Task Force report and the College’s four planning initiatives are presented along with a Report Card that relates each emerging idea to the Compass’s goals.

The College faculty will be asked to join faculty-chaired action committees which will be charged by the Dean to develop implementation plans for the College’s initiatives. Those committees will also be charged to

- identify faculty development needs that will have an impact on the initiative’s success
- identify desired outcomes as well as appropriate measures of success
- identify faculty activities that could support our goals and initiatives, and clarify the types of activities that we would value as part of the faculty member’s portfolio of service to the institution.

A brief description of each strategic initiative appears below.

1. Enhance intellectual life.

The Dean will charge the action committee for Intellectual Life with exploring the following issues, and with drafting an appropriate implementation plan:

- Recruit intellectually curious students by developing a competitive independent work major program for our best in-coming freshmen – devise a 4-year College experience in close consultation with College faculty advisors.

- Define the College's Spring Term experience for freshmen and sophomores by challenging College departments and programs to provide opportunities to create beyond-classroom experiences that enhance the conversation and collaboration between faculty and small groups of students.
- Identify the barriers to our progress toward an improved intellectual life.

2. Expand the conversation about diversity.

The Dean will charge the action committee for Diversity with exploring the following issues, and with drafting an appropriate implementation plan:

- Emphasize the relevance of cultural studies and immersion experiences for liberally educated students and incorporate into the curriculum a broad-based perspective on other cultures.
- Identify the areas of the W&L community that are less welcoming or jarring to people of diverse cultural or socioeconomic backgrounds.
- Recognize the equalizing influence of rigorous academic experiences for students of different backgrounds and exploit curricular opportunities to engage diverse groups around a seminar table or in other academic settings.
- Consider Washington, DC and other regional sites that provide resources for provoking discussions about cross-cultural exposure.

3. Re-conceptualize the student-faculty relationship (including the Advising relationship).

The Dean will charge the action committee for Student-Faculty Interaction with exploring the following issues, and with drafting an appropriate implementation plan:

- Develop advising relationships based on a discussion about the value of a liberal education.
- Participate in development of the information commons and other features of a culture of learning that emphasize student responsibility for information gathering and requirement-tracking, so that we may free ourselves of logistical issues that overshadow relationship-development in our advising interactions.
- Preserve small classes throughout the College curriculum – what policies and tradeoffs will be necessary to ensure equity in teaching and grading loads so that student-faculty relationships can flourish.
- Consider the ways in which we might creatively develop teaching technologies and applications that preserve or enhance time for in-class discussion.

4. Advance the College (by developing and disseminating our about the value of a College education).

The Dean will charge the action committee for College Advancement with exploring the following issues, and with drafting an appropriate implementation plan:

- Cultivate College alumni and prospective supporters of our programs using a clear and consistent mission-based message about the value of a College education.
- Develop high-quality print and web materials that reflect the value of College programs.
- Create visible signs of collaboration across departments, e.g. sharing of ideas and best practices for supporting our faculty, our curriculum and our students.
- Engage in University planning efforts to represent College mission and goals.

- Develop a program for evaluating the effectiveness of the College curriculum and resources so that we can clearly articulate and justify our needs, as well as demonstrate achievement in areas of the College that are well supported (i.e. show that we are a good investment).

Please see the attached document, *Compass II: A Progress Report* for a report card that places the College's strategic initiatives and the preliminary ideas generated by the Academic Task Force in the context of the Compass goals.

Strategic Planning Timeline for the College, 2003-05

Planning Team – J. Stewart, G. Bent, E. Mayock, A. Goetz and College faculty representatives to University planning Task Forces (with special assistance from Chris Connors, Marcia France, Pam Luecke, and Jim Warren) *(No professional consultant)*

Step 1 – *October, 2003* – establishing rapport & framing the issues

Faculty were divided into four groups

They were invited to submit concerns/ideas prior to first discussion

We reviewed the University's draft Mission Statement & ideas they submitted

We listed the faculty's priorities in five categories: teaching, scholarship, space, student-faculty interaction, inter-departmental collaboration

The Dean collapsed priorities into single list - used to initiate December discussions

Step 2 – *December, 2003* – a mission statement for the College

Faculty were divided into two groups

They reviewed/critiqued a sample College mission statement

Faculty members drafted and developed working models for a College statement

Step 3 – *December, 2003* – preliminary discussion of potential mission-based initiatives
(Conducted at same meeting as Step 2)

Working from October's priority list – faculty discussed potential initiatives that would be General (broad & lasting), Achievable (based on College faculty's potential), and Measurable (in their implementation) as well as Mission-based

Step 4 – *January through May, 2004* – the Compass

The Dean and faculty developed a College mission & strategies for supporting key goals

They developed a framework for the College plan

The Dean presented the Compass to the full College faculty in May, 2004

The faculty applauded at the conclusion of the presentation.

Step 5 – *Summer and Fall, 2004* – Coordination with Academic Task Force

The Deans and faculty representatives from the 3 schools identified common areas of interest for potential initiative development

Step 6 – *Fall, 2004* – Compass II meetings

The College faculty met in October to review areas of potential initiative development that emerged from their earlier planning discussions.

A planning retreat was held during undergraduate fall reading days to develop potential initiatives consistent with the College's mission to feed the work of the Academic Task Force and the College planning process.

Step 7 – *January, 2005* – Compass II Progress Report to College faculty

The Dean presented a summary of the 4 Academic Task Force ideas and 4 College planning initiatives, in the context of the Compass goals.

Step 8 – February, 2005 – Preliminary reporting

Board input sought on the Academic Task Force ideas

The Compass: A Mission-Based Plan for the College submitted to the President and Provost

Future Steps: Setting the Course

- We must embark on the next phase of our planning process, in which we will engage in discussions to further develop initiatives and their corresponding measures of success.
 - Action committees comprised of College faculty will work in concert with representatives of the Dean’s office to explore ideas and generate recommendations for advancing the initiatives.
 - The College faculty will be charged to develop implementation plans for the College’s initiatives.
 - The Dean will create a Compass web site to facilitate use of the College’s plan by all faculty and other supporters of the College.
- The College faculty have embraced the planning process thus far, and they are poised to begin the next phase that will involve:
 - Envisioning our Goals,
 - Implementing our ideas,
 - Evaluating our successes,
 - Re-Envisioning our Goals.