Advancing the Distinctive Character of a Washington College Education

A Strategic Plan for Washington College

Washington College
300 Washington Avenue
Chestertown, Maryland
(Revised May 12, 2016)
For more than two centuries a Washington College education has served as a model for liberal learning that prepares citizen-leaders to lead lives of purpose and passion. It combines and applies theoretical knowledge, investigative skills, and creative expression in ways that address complex problems and creative challenges. Washington College is a place where students learn to engage in processes of genuine creativity and discovery. In doing so, they develop the habits of liberal inquiry and effective civic engagement necessary to become leaders both locally and globally.

We seek to build on and enhance the distinctive quality and character of a Washington College education by strengthening the connections among classroom-based learning, our social and natural environment, and our history and culture. Our proximity to the Chester River and Chesapeake Bay, historical setting in and relationship with the Chestertown community, and connections to major centers of public and commercial life afford abundant and distinctive opportunities for teaching and learning. They are critical aspects of our distinctive approach to liberal education and thus represent key priorities for further development.

Students expect Washington College faculty and staff to challenge them to acquire the habits of analytical thought, clear communication, and civic responsibility. With an enhanced focus on our unique environment and cultural-historical context, students will find throughout their curricular and co-curricular experiences opportunities to develop the aesthetic insight, ethical sensitivity, and moral courage necessary to move the world.

To realize this vision more fully, Washington College commits to the following goals:

**GOAL 1: Reaffirm the College’s core mission of providing a superior liberal arts education to prepare our students for the challenges of the 21st century.**

A liberal arts education develops in students skills that are timeless and universally applicable. It prepares them for the multiple career opportunities that will arise over their lifetimes. We reaffirm our commitment to these principles, convinced that the surest guarantee of student success is a residential environment that combines the best of pedagogical innovation and new technologies with our tested traditions of liberal arts learning, small classes, and co-curricular enrichment. We will continue to help our students grow as independent, creative, and critical thinkers, effective communicators, and citizen leaders in an atmosphere of unhurried conversations with faculty mentors across the disciplines.

**Objective A:** Develop a college-wide curriculum that re-commits to a liberal education vision appropriate for 21st century challenges and opportunities.

**Objective B:** Enhance the mission of developing citizen leaders by focusing on the values of integrity, determination, curiosity, civility, leadership, and moral courage throughout the curriculum and as guiding principles in the co-curricular experience.

**Objective C:** Support existing majors, minors, and programs, and expand opportunities for interdisciplinary study, in ways that meet emerging student interests and position the College to compete more effectively for the most academically talented prospective students.

**Objective D:** Provide a learning environment that is supported by innovative educational technology, information resources, and academic spaces that facilitate engaged learning within and beyond the classroom.
Objective E: Develop meaningful and sustainable assessment practices to ensure that Washington College is effectively pursuing its core mission of providing a superior liberal arts education in a manner consistent with our core values.

GOAL 2: Expand teaching and learning opportunities within and beyond the Washington College classroom that are distinctive and take advantage of the College's unique setting.

Washington College and its surrounding community are endowed with a combination of historical and environmental richness that affords our students unparalleled learning opportunities. We will promote discipline-based learning while fostering strong connections across disciplinary boundaries. Our curriculum will combine liberal arts breadth with focused, practical application in contexts where answers are not pre-ordained. We will provide teachers and learners with the resources to build on this foundation and to advance the investigative skills and creative practice needed by a global society.

Objective A: Develop a wide variety of disciplinary and interdisciplinary connections between social, historical, and cultural context and the Washington College curriculum.

Objective B: Expand and support faculty-student and peer-to-peer collaborative teaching and learning opportunities.

Objective C: Promote the Senior Capstone Experience as a distinctive feature of the College's approach to liberal learning.

Objective D: Develop curricular opportunities for engaged learning in a local, regional, national, and global context.

GOAL 3: Position the College as a leader in the multidisciplinary study of the environment.

The effects of human interaction with the natural world have acquired greater relevance than ever. Climate change, pollution, biodiversity, and sustainable economic development are but a few of the most pressing concerns of our age. Making use of our unique location amid the estuarine system of the Chesapeake Bay and proximity to three major metropolitan areas, Washington College will emerge as a leading institution for the study of the environment in all of its facets, whether in the arts and humanities, social sciences, or the natural sciences.

Objective A: Expand our existing Environmental Studies program through the development of an Environmental Science major.

Objective B: Develop a wide variety of disciplinary and interdisciplinary connections between the natural environment and the Washington College curriculum.

Objective C: Transform the Washington College campus into an environmental laboratory as faculty, staff, and students work together to maximize the use of environmentally sustainable technology in the classroom, employ green energy sources and technology where possible, and reduce campus waste flow.
GOAL 4: Attract, enroll, and retain outstanding students.

Washington College will seek out and enroll a diverse pool of U.S. and international students whose accomplishments, aspirations, talents, and interests are well suited to the distinctive educational mission, offerings, and location of the College. The College will provide resources that enable students to succeed in and out of the classroom and to reap the full benefits and distinctions of a Washington College education. To foster student success throughout their undergraduate careers and after graduation, the College will provide students with activities, programs, and experiences designed to enhance our graduates’ competitiveness for nationally recognized graduate programs, job opportunities, volunteer activities, and other highly regarded post-baccalaureate options.

Objective A: Develop and implement an integrated marketing, advertising, and public relations plan that expands awareness of the College both within and beyond its traditional admissions markets, contributes to improved new student recruitment, builds institutional pride, and increases alumni and donor engagement.

Objective B: Achieve and maintain a first-to-second-year retention rate of ninety percent or better and a six-year graduation rate, averaged over five years, of eighty-five percent or better.

Objective C: Evaluate the costs and benefits of enrolling a larger student body while simultaneously strengthening both the quality of applicants and their yield.

Objective D: Increase the racial, ethnic, religious, sexual orientation, national origin, and socio-economic diversity of the student body.

Objective E: Promote a merit and need-based financial aid strategy that improves access and opportunity for students while optimizing the relationship among students’ actual and perceived financial need, the College’s financial resources, and national economic trends.

Objective F: Enroll students across all current disciplinary areas of the College while also proposing new areas of academic study that speak to the interests of today’s college-bound populations.

Objective G: Expand outreach and support services for students to compete for nationally competitive undergraduate and graduate-level scholarships and awards.

GOAL 5: Support and recruit excellent teacher-scholars and staff committed to the distinctive character of a Washington College education.

As the College increases its engagement with the surrounding community and environment as a part its regular curriculum, it will attract and support outstanding and diverse faculty and staff who value teaching and research innovation that connects the College’s physical, historical, and/or cultural context to the liberal education of our students.

Objective A: Actively promote pedagogical excellence and innovation.

Objective B: Ensure sufficient staffing levels in order to keep pace with the current and anticipated needs of students and the College as a whole.
Objective C: Increase the racial, ethnic, and gender diversity of faculty and staff.

Objective D: Support and encourage the professional development of faculty and staff to ensure educational and workplace excellence.

Objective E: Provide a compensation package that will attain or exceed established salary benchmarks (rank-by-rank averages for II-B private, independent institutions for faculty and midpoint of assigned position levels for staff) and provide a competitive blend of benefits.

GOAL 6: Continue to strengthen mutually beneficial partnerships with the community that advance the mission of the College.

Engagement with the Town of Chestertown and the wider region is both a method to foster a civic-minded campus culture and a means to contribute to the health and vitality of the region. Chestertown is Washington College’s home, to which students, faculty, staff, and alumni give enthusiastically of their time and talents; this volunteerism is an essential part of the Washington College experience. Washington College will be a major contributor to the economic and educational development of Chestertown and Kent County. The College’s signature Centers (the Rose O’Neill Literary House, the C.V. Starr Center for the Study of the American Experience, and the Center for the Environment & Society) will mark Washington College as a beacon for literary, artistic, civic, and environmental engagement, stewardship, and innovation.

Objective A: Encourage students, faculty, staff, and alumni to give time and talents to service learning and civic engagement throughout the local region.

Objective B: Serve as an important engine for the economic growth and vitality of Chestertown and Kent County.

Objective C: Extend and strengthen our commitment to be an active partner to improve the Kent County public schools.

Objective D: Partner with local and regional business, non-profit, civic, and governmental entities to generate student opportunities for active learning through credit-bearing and non-credit bearing experiences.

GOAL 7: Provide a well-designed, distinctive, and robust co-curricular program.

Washington College will provide meaningful and high quality co-curricular activities that support and complement a student’s academic experience and take advantage of the College’s location and environment. The co-curricular program will promote each student’s active engagement and offer plentiful opportunities for intellectual and social development grounded in the mission, vision, and enduring values of the College. We will ensure abundant co-curricular opportunities and resources, including a wide array of athletic and recreation activities, that enable students to consider, explore, and develop emerging interests, talents, and passions.
Objective A: Increase student engagement and satisfaction with campus life in areas known to support student success and retention as well as those considered integral to the College’s unique educational mission and its distinctive location and environment.

Objective B: Offer student-athletes the opportunity to compete on a national level in Division III athletics, best-in-class athletic facilities, exceptional programming for club, intramural, and recreational athletics, and appropriate staff and budgetary resources to achieve these aims.

Objective C: Design and implement a comprehensive leadership program that will increase demonstrated knowledge and practice associated with effective and ethical leadership.

Objective D: Develop and promote the co-curricular program, along with the responsibility shared with students to craft it, so that the expectation of high levels of student engagement in intellectual and social activities becomes a distinguishing and well-accepted feature of the student experience.

GOAL 8: Generate resources sufficient for the realization of Washington College’s mission and the enactment of this Strategic Plan.

A new operating plan will ensure that Washington College continues a history of strong fiscal health as we manage costs, explore traditional and non-traditional methods to increase revenue, seek positive returns on investments, and continue to deliver on our academic mission. A comprehensive campaign will play a key role in achieving current and future aspirations. The effectiveness and efficiency with which current institutional resources are utilized will receive attention equal to that applied to the development of new resources. The primary filter for all budgetary initiatives will be to assure that they align with and support the mission of the College and implementation of the strategic plan.

Objective A: Implement a multi-year fiscal plan that explores opportunities for savings, expands revenue sources beyond student payments and private philanthropy, and aligns the operating and capital expenditures of the College with the goals and objectives of this strategic plan.

Objective B: Create a long-term student revenue strategy that strikes an appropriate balance between the need to grow institutional resources and our students’ ability to pay.

Objective C: Develop a comprehensive campaign to generate the resources necessary to achieve the goals and objectives of the strategic plan.