

I have just read the strategic planning strategies and here are a few comments.

1. Offer full rides to most meritorious students.

I like the idea of increasing merit-based financial aid. It has the advantage of helping those people who don't show demonstrable financial need, but still can't pay for college (at least, not without working too much for their academics or their health). I am a fan of merit-based aid—I receive some myself. However, I do think that the requirements for receiving need-based aid should be re-examined—there are a lot of people on campus working 3 or 4 jobs because they don't get enough financial aid.

I also like the idea of helping more international students to attend Grinnell, and I agree that merit-based aid would do this. I think this would be beneficial to diversity on campus.

However, I don't really like the way this might change curriculum. I suppose I am biased in favor of the humanities, but I'm not sure I like the idea of skewing the balance of studies towards computer science and economics. These are worthwhile, and fairly popular, but I am wary that too much emphasis on "practical" studies that are seen as being helpful in business would detract from the idea of a liberal arts school.

I am also wary that the goal of attracting "the best students" might cause factors beyond grades and academic ability to be overlooked during admissions. As long as the criteria for giving out aid would look beyond SAT scores and GPAs, then it would probably be all right.

2. Tuition Free Grinnell

This is a cool idea, if it worked. I agree that it would probably increase applications, creating a more diverse pool. It would also be something unique, which is a plus for a school in the middle of the Midwest, and I agree that it would help to dispel the view of Grinnell as either hoarding all its money or spending it in all the wrong places (ugly buildings!)

3. Connection to Iowa

I frankly do not see why this is necessary. Part of the appeal of Grinnell is that it is surprisingly diverse while still being in the middle of Iowa. I have no objection to trying to spread our reputation through the state or to trying to raise the quality of the Iowans who apply to Grinnell; however, I think it is completely unnecessary to set a quota of Iowans to admit, or extra scholarships for them. Grinnell is plenty Midwestern as it is (we get all the kids from Minnesota who thought Carleton was too close to home).

I do think that an increased connection to Iowa as a place might be nice, but this could be accomplished by increasing relations with the town and providing transportation to get to places like Iowa City, or even Newton! (This would be a good idea in general for improving mental health on campus. Sometimes it is good to get out.)

4. Enhancing the student experience.

I liked this one a lot, probably because I could relate to it the most as a student. I agree with all of the elements stated. Reducing financial burden would allow people to study/relax/build community instead of working all the time. It would also probably increase economic and ethnic diversity. Fewer temporary faculty would also be good—it is nice when professors are closer to the community (on and off campus). I also agree that the level of quality of temporary instructors is hit and miss sometimes. Increased faculty-student interaction is also good—it was one of the major selling points of Grinnell when I was deciding to come here. Increasing diversity of all kinds is important in order to make Grinnell a better community as well as enhancing the learning experience here. Funding for mental health care is also important, whether this involves hiring on campus counselors, giving more intensive training to student staff and student affairs, or providing more study breaks and activities.

The only things I did not like about this plan were the possible increased class sizes and decreased course options. I feel that increased class sizes would go counter to increased faculty-student interaction, as well as making for less engaging classes. Also, at a small school like Grinnell, decreasing course offerings further would be disappointing.

5. Focusing on Big-Name Faculty

I didn't really like this one very much. I may just have an automatic distaste for anything that smacks of seeking prestige for its own sake, but I also think there are some elements of this strategy that would not be as effective as you might think. I am thinking in particular of hiring "big names." I am not sure whom these "big names" are meant to impress. Students? Because if so, I am sorry to say that most students do not know one professor from another before they get to college. Other prospective faculty? I can see some validity to this, but I would hope that faculty would want to come here because of the over all community, mission of the college, and the opportunity to share their knowledge with eager students (idealistic, I know☺). Graduate Schools? I can also see the validity of this argument, but it seems as if the quality of students leaving an institution should speak for the quality of the faculty rather than the other way around, and after experience with a few stellar Grinnellians, the graduate schools would get the idea.

This said, I am not opposed to making it attractive for excellent faculty to remain at Grinnell. In particular, making it feasible and appealing to live in Iowa is a good idea. In addition to helping partners find employment, it might be a good idea to advertise/create cultural resources in the area. I also do not object to giving faculty time for their own scholarship. However, I am wary of drifting too far away from teaching being most important here, and I dislike the idea of increased class sizes or decreased course offerings.

6. Building on the College's Strengths

I liked this one pretty well. I think it most successfully combines what I liked in the other strategies. The only thing I did not like was the increase of tuition. Grinnell is hard enough to pay for as it is, and making it harder would only put more stress on students, decrease Grinnell's accessibility, and lower diversity. In general, however, I think this is probably the best over-all plan.

Some background:

In case you are wondering what point of view these comments are coming from—I am a senior []. I am a National Merit Scholar and receive merit-based financial aid. I have worked in the dining hall since freshman year, got my own computer only last year, and buy used books whenever possible. I do not own a car. I chose Grinnell over several higher-ranked institutions (including Williams and Amherst) for the financial aid, the art facilities, and the quality of the people. My over-riding impression as a prospie was that Grinnell was an open, tolerant, liberal community with many opportunities for personal, artistic, and academic growth, inhabited by real, down to earth

people with a genuine interest in both learning and the world around them. In general, I have been satisfied with Grinnell, which may be why I like the “build on Grinnell’s strengths” strategy.

Some other concerns:

I think that many students feel that there is a disconnect (real or perceived) between the administration and the student body. Specifically, there seems to be a lack of respect for students and their opinions, a lack of student involvement in policy issues (particularly the recent changes to the computer use policy), a lack of accommodation for student needs and desires, and a tendency towards putting prestige/image above the needs of actual current students.

Some examples could be reducing the number of computer labs and decreasing 24 hour access to computers, decreasing off campus housing, building ostentatious new buildings that don’t match the rest of campus while raising tuition beyond the rate of inflation, and arbitrarily disconnecting PLANS, all over student protest. These things make people feel that the administration does not listen to them or care what they are thinking/experiencing. Now, you may say that the administration does not respond to students because students don’t talk to them, but I would suggest that after a few instances of the administration not responding, students assume that there is no point in trying. You might further say that many students don’t act like mature, reasonable adults, but in some ways this may be an example of people living up (or down) to what is expected of them. I guess the larger issue is that there needs to be more/better communication between administration and students.

I also think there is a common view that the administration is trying to take over anything student run/created and to control it, which brings me to the point of Self Governance. I hope that any final strategic plan will include the importance of Self Governance. It was one of the most attractive things about Grinnell’s student life when I first came here, and I hope that it can be reinvigorated. I also wonder about the possibility of instituting an Academic Honor Code here at Grinnell. I know that many other schools have them, and it would seem to be in keeping with Grinnell’s values that we would have one too (this is one case where I think comparing ourselves to our “peer” institutions might be valid, although I dislike the practice in general).

Thank you for reading through all of this,

Tuition-free Grinnell is an excellent proposal. As a senior, I’m leaving here convinced that the college is getting away from its roots and is becoming a place I would rather not associate myself with. I feel like we’re recruiting students unlike those of the past, and I’m still upset by our new OCS policy and the decision to rethink need-blind admissions. A move toward tuition-free Grinnell would rely on alumni and other donations, and as such an institution is one I and other alumni would almost certainly readily support, not only would our selectivity go up, but alumni contributions would increase dramatically, giving the college yet another boost in the ratings.

Recruiting faculty to enhance Grinnell’s reputation is a great idea, but not in the proposed way, exactly. From my experience with the Russian dept., it seems that faculty get bogged down with their duties as advisors, committee members, etc. and are unable to concentrate on research and teaching (see building the college’s strengths). Maybe simply decreasing the extracurricular duties would help professors feel more relaxed. Increased commitment to partner employment, of course, remains an important issue and should certainly be addressed. I agree that the 2-yr. positions are generally not filled by ideal professors, and we should somehow address this, but I think that increasing class size and decreasing available courses is not the way to help students feel comfortable with their professors. It is important to note that having, for example, a famous history teacher will mean nothing to the history major that goes through four years unable to get in to a course with that professor.

As for improving the school overall, I think there need to be more trips to places other than Des Moines and Iowa City, there should be more effort to put freshmen with similar interests onto the same floors, and there should be a few floors with allowances for pets. I think that more co-op options would also benefit; perhaps decreasing off-campus housing by adding apartment-style dwellings with private mini-kitchens and communal kitchens large enough for vegan co-op, department events, etc. Bringing students together in the dorms for activities other than parties would definitely add to the college.

I don't think adding more students from Iowa sounds all that great; I had a ten-person course where everyone had blond hair and I was one of the odd ones out because my eyes weren't blue. Most of those students were from the Midwest, and at least 2 were from Iowa. I would love to see more diversity; I realize there are international students, but the programs that introduce international students and new students to the college also seem excellent at segregating those groups from the rest of the student body.

Of course, I'm graduating, so whatever is implemented will only affect the value of my degree.

(I also think that there should be no rules preventing students who are of age from drinking with professors; responsible drinking with adults is an important skill to learn before graduating college and would definitely enhance student-faculty relations.)

Hope this helps, but I think it's important to note that I think my opinions differ from those of the majority because I've lived in OCCO housing for 3 years and was sick of dorm life before I got here.

The proposal with the strongest appeal is a "Tuition Free Grinnell". It is, however, also the proposal about which I have the most reservations. First, the good: -Eliminating tuition would make Grinnell unique among its peer-institutions and, as far as I know, among all other institutions of higher education in this country. This, far more than any of the other proposals, would make us stand out and garner nationwide attention. -If tuition were eliminated, Grinnell would be open to a wider variety of students, and would significantly improve the experiences of those students who are under significant financial stress because of attending -Admissions would likely become much more competitive. This would lead to an improvement in the (academic) quality of the student body. While these benefits have already been stated in the plan, I feel that they are very significant and bear emphasizing. However, I do have some concerns: -If the loss of tuition revenue were to be replaced by revenue from an expanded endowment, what would happen if, due to some sort of severe economic downturn, the endowment began to shrink significantly? It seems to me that the college would have to reinstate tuition in such a situation, which would be, at best, and extremely difficult and unpopular action. -How would the character of the student body be changed by the likely increase in competitiveness? I'm not so naive as to think that the mentality of the student body must never change, but an influx of potentially hyper-competitive people would, in my opinion, change things for the worse. -Would the absence of tuition cause students to take their education for granted? This seems unlikely, but there is the possibility that, without the financial spectre hanging over their heads, some students might "forget why they're here." The first concern is really the most significant. I don't think that the last is really worth worrying about, but it at least bears mentioning.

Concerning the other proposals:

"Enhancing the student experience" I support all the elements of this strategy, but not all of the proposed means of reaching them. If increasing student-faculty interaction would mean enlarging classes and reducing course offerings, I would oppose it. The same goes for reducing reliance on temporary faculty.

"Enhancing our connection to Iowa" I don't really see how this is necessary. There are already fairly strong connections between the college and Iowa. Although I'm not an Iowan, I know of several scholarships available to students from different Iowa communities. As far as I know, such geographically-restricted scholarships don't exist for other states. As to some of the points of this proposal, Grinnell *is* a liberal school. I feel that there is a diverse range of opinions here, but those who are not liberals are a distinct minority and, while generally treated amiably, on rare occasions there is hostility directed against those who have significantly different views. I think it would be best to be honest with prospective students in this regard.

"Recruiting faculty..." I don't really approve of this strategy. Students don't come to Grinnell because they want access to *scholars*. They come to Grinnell because they want access to *teachers*. I'm opposed to measures that would increase reliance on temporary faculty and class size and reduce course offerings.

I'm sure you're already aware of most of these concerns, but I thought I'd weigh in anyways.

What truly surprised me is that there isn't a strategy which explicitly affirms the intellectual purpose of the college, a statement of what values shape the core of Grinnell's mission. In my student days, President Howard Bowen was a consistent and tireless voice articulating what the college was all about for the individual student. What sort of development of the student does the college anticipate...and to what ends?

I agree that these matters are woven in and out of the six strategies described, but it strikes me that without a "philosophical" expression of why the college exists, what you have, it might be argued, is something more like an advanced operational plan.

By contrast, I would wish for a distinction that, for instance, values the intellectual over the academic, that affirms personal development over social assimilation, that puts into perspective the practical aspects of a college that administrators--but, one hopes, not students--worry about.

Perhaps the group working on the strategies might have a look at the college archives to review some of the principles Dr. Bowen articulated so well in a time when the country was emerging from the mind-numbing public discourse of the 50s--and in wise anticipation of the powerful cultural challenges that would emerge in the next decade. Perhaps the most visible evidence of the leadership he offered was a convocation held in the fall of 1957, featuring leading thinkers from an impressive spectrum of fields. Awesome, as I reflect on it nearly a half century later.

Finally, lest this seem like a rant, I want to applaud the college's effort in bringing forward a strategy to guide it toward the future. From just what I hear thus far, I know that Max has made a wise choice in his decision to attend Grinnell--for him an extraordinary educational opportunity available to a very few young people anywhere in the world.

I'm writing in response to the article in the last S&B. I have only one short thing to comment on. The idea of offering a full ride to the most "meritorious students" is a decent idea. However, relying on the National Merit Scholarship committee to determine who is and who is not the most "meritorious" among Grinnell's applicants is a potential problem. This suggests automatically that any applicant who is not a national merit scholar is not worthy of a full ride. There could easily be an instance where an applicant deserving Grinnell's warmest welcome would be given the cold

shoulder in favor of a national merit scholar. I don't believe that just because somebody has the distinction of being a national merit scholar that they are guaranteed to be a better candidate than every other applicant.

"People who live near stones shouldn't throw glass houses at them."

I am writing to you because I strongly support the long-term strategies for Grinnell outlined in the Planning Steering Committee report. In particular, I would like to extend my support for the first strategy, which mentions "offering a full ride to the most meritorious students." If this strategy was implemented tomorrow, I would benefit personally and so would many other international and domestic students.

My parents are well-educated, but unlike many other families from India, they cannot pay anything towards my US college education. Last year, my first year in college, I was faced with a major dilemma: I had a perfect 4.0 GPA after a semester, but I could not afford to pay for my college education. In the end, my financial aid package was augmented partially, with help from Mr. [name], Mr. [name] and Ms. [name] (my adviser), and I decided to stay on at Grinnell for another three years. Grinnell's excellent professors and friendly campus environment made me stay in Grinnell, although I received equally good, if not better financial aid packages from Haverford and Middlebury. However, the harsh reality is that when I graduate from Grinnell, I will have a debt burden in excess of \$50,000! This amount is large for any college student, but for an international student, the burden seems far heavier, given the present state of the US economy. My academic goals include pursuing graduate studies in economics. My decision to stay in Grinnell has made these goal seem almost unattainable, given my financial circumstances.

Individually, I will benefit immensely if Strategy #1 was implemented. I am also confident that present and future international and domestic students will gain from this "free ride" policy. I also feel that such a policy would increase students' loyalties towards Grinnell College, in the form of increased alumni giving. Personally, if I were in a position to give something back to the college for the excellent education it is providing me, I would definitely make a substantial financial contribution.

A recent email asks members of the Grinnell College community to comment on the six "long-term strategies" presented by the Planning Steering Committee. We are asked to comment on two questions, "Of the 6 strategies identified, which are the most attractive? Why?" and "If these strategies were implemented tomorrow, how would this affect you (individually or as a group)?" I find it difficult to answer these two questions. The first question is not essential because it has been said that the strategies may be combined in various ways, so there is really no need to choose one over the other. In addition, it seems to me that several of the six scenarios fall short of being strategies at all. They are plans for programs, but they fail to address the sort of issues that a broad strategy should address. I feel that only one scenario ("Building on the College's strengths") is in fact broad enough to be called a strategy. The second question seems self-serving and could be read as "What's in it for me?"

Rather than answer the two questions as posed, I believe it might be useful to ask other questions about the six scenarios. These questions include

1. What current issues in higher education are not addressed by the six scenarios?

The six scenarios share an egocentric feature: They do not address topics that dominate national conversations on higher education. There is little or no mention of the role of technology (with implications for local versus distance education), collaboration between institutions (either peer colleges or the private business sector), the outsourcing of essential services, or the rising number of adult-aged students in American higher education. I hope that as a community preference for one or the other plan forms, the committee will take on the task of addressing these issues.

2. When we will be provided with an environmental analysis to accompany our internal scenarios?

Each scenario makes predictions about expenditures and fund raising. How are these predictions affected by downturns in the economy? How are they affected by changes in benchmark expenditures by peer institutions? When the scenarios touch on hiring or retaining faculty, are these plans accompanied by a forecast of national demographic trends for new Ph.D.s? For retirements? The six scenarios do not acknowledge that their fate is partially in the hands of a turbulent environment. Put another way, this second question is “Which of these scenarios is the most adaptive”?

3. Why are the students treated as input variables?

A distressing feature of the scenarios is that students are treated as inputs rather than the eventual beneficiaries of their Grinnell education. Our reputation as a college is portrayed as dependent upon the students’ personal features, including race, sex, and country (or state) of origin, supplemented by their admission credentials (e.g., SAT scores). Curiously, very little is said about what happens after the student is admitted. The scenarios that rely on increased student credentials, (e.g., “median SATs of 1400 instead of 1350”) fall prey to the accusation that Grinnell’s reputation relies on a “talent in, talent out” hypothesis rather than on teaching excellence. These scenarios should be challenged in the following way: “If we discard the students’ SAT scores and substitute assessment of student learning while the student is at Grinnell, which scenario promises the most gain between freshman and senior year”?

4. Is Grinnell evolving into a private foundation?

All six scenarios are accompanied by cost estimates, as well they should be. Reading the six together, I am struck by how easily the dollar estimates are bandied about, as if to substitute for the hard work of maintaining an excellent teaching and learning institution. We have become a community that thinks like a private foundation. We are aware that we have a great deal of money. Like a private foundation, we wish to put the money toward doing good. There is a danger here. We should be concerned that, like any “funder” we will become accustomed to trading money for control. Suppose, for example, that we increase student financial aid to truly impressive levels. At most institutions where the student (or parents) pay for the education, they have at least the power to counteract the institution’s control by saying “We are paying for this...”. What if they don’t pay? Then the control shifts to the institution. The institution can impose demands on the student (one thinks of inroads into student self-governance and into the open curriculum) by reminding the student that “We are paying for this...” As for the students and their families, with their financial investment in the college reduced, it may follow that their emotional investment is reduced as well. Students in a tuition-free environment may react to even minor difficulties by walking away. They have nothing to lose. Paradoxically, an impressive increase in financial aid may lead to a decreased retention rate. We should ask, “How are the funds expended in this scenario to translate into the thoughts and actions of students, faculty, and administrators who will do the work of making Grinnell College an excellent institution”?

I was already in one of the focus groups for the planning process, so I will not burden you here with a full accounting of my comments. I want rather to discuss one aspect of the process itself.

As you may remember, I have tried to participate in this process from the early brainstorming sessions to the committee meeting on the faculty-centered strategy to last week's focus group. I was impressed by the aims and methods of the process from the start, and I had faith in its ability to account for the views of the many stakeholders in strategic planning. Only at this latest stage have I developed serious reservations about the way the process is being used.

I am thinking primarily of the strategy now called "Focus on Recruiting Faculty Who Will Enhance the College's Academic Reputation." When another person and I were asked to contribute to this strategy on behalf of untenured faculty as part of the planning process in the spring, I was told that the provisional name of the strategy was "Faculty Heaven." I find the change of names disturbing, and not because I can settle for nothing short of heaven. The reason is simple: whereas the old name implied a strategy that responded to the desires of the faculty of the College, the new name (for the only faculty-centered strategy) explicitly marks the strategy as aiming to please faculty who are not here--a hypothetical "Enhance[d]" faculty of the College waiting to be "Recruit[ed]." Though I recognize that other strategies talk about recruiting students, that discourse develops alongside a strategy called "Enhancing the Student Experience," which now has no analog for faculty. "Enhancing the Faculty Experience," I think you'll agree, implies different priorities than does "Focus on Recruiting Faculty Who Will Enhance the College's Academic Reputation."

So what's in a name? A lot, I think, in this case. To be sure, the faculty are concerned about partner employment, salaries, and workload, all of which the "Recruiting" strategy addresses. But "Faculty Heaven" would have a day-care center, I think, and a more aggressive program for enhancing quality of life in downtown Grinnell, a more diverse faculty, and above all simply more faculty to handle the teaching and service loads of the college. (It seems to me that the possibility of increasing the size of the faculty significantly--and especially the non-science faculty--is carefully excluded from this document, although such an increase clearly dovetails with a large number of other faculty and student priorities.) Let me emphasize that I'm not arguing for the implementation of the ideas I'm listing here; I do understand that they are expensive, that they compete with other priorities, and so forth. However, my understanding was that such considerations of expense and competing priorities were to be the result, not the precondition, of this stage in the process. Since I was involved in the previous stage that involved consideration of the faculty-centered strategy, I know that all of these other issues were raised clearly, and most were discussed at some length. But they have now disappeared, and the leading questions addressed to the focus groups and now to the campus community clear no path for reviving them, calling as they do only for commentary on the strategies as a whole.

In my focus group, I talked about the many things in these strategies that I find attractive, including some elements of the "Recruiting Faculty." I am not repeating those details here, as they would be redundant, but I want to mention them by way of saying that my reactions to the strategies are far from reflexively negative. My purpose here is to make a procedural point rather than to compare elements of the strategies: in my view, the incipient strategy that could have been called "Faculty Heaven"--or, more soberly, "Enhancing the Faculty Experience"--has disappeared in name and in spirit from the present list of strategies. That disappearance has taken a lot of important issues off the table in the last and most important stages of the planning process.

Even though I was in a focus group I feel the need to speak again. It would be difficult for me to answer either of the questions below when I cannot "see" where we (staff) fit into any of the strategies. I find it strange when you say in the last sentence of the first paragraph that "Developing meaningful plan will require that the community members relate aspects of each strategy..." when we (staff at all levels) are clearly missing from the entire document. I would be happy to speak with both of you on this subject if you wish.

Thank you,

I am a first year here at Grinnell. I just wanted to send a quick note to say that I would love to see the college focus on the goals of the "Enhancing Student Experience" strategy. I particularly believe in the need of hiring less temporary teachers. I have a new teacher and a temporary teacher this year and I have been quite disappointed in the quality of teaching. These professors aren't terrible but I was expecting much better.

First, Hats of you to you gentlemen for opening this up to the campus community. I think this is all really important, and I'm glad I get some input on it.

>1. Of the 6 strategies identified, which are most attractive? Why?

I've been thinking about this, and there are four that are clearly better than the other two. Full ride to the most meritorious students, tuition free Grinnell College, Enhancing student experience, and recruiting faculty are all clearly superior proposals to the Iowa proposal and the status quo proposal. I'll tell you why I really like each of those four, and in the order that I think they are good.

First, a tuition free Grinnell College. My only question about this is a matter of feasibility, but let's face it, no matter how much of a positive spin we like to put on it, Grinnell does NOT meet the financial aid requirements of all its students. In fact, approximately half of the students (in my estimation, of course) are wealthy and need no financial assistance--the others are given burdensome work-study programs that interfere with studying and loans that interfere with post-graduate success. Work study is not really "financial assistance"--it's assistance with helping to find a job, which is an absolute necessity in a rural environment like Grinnell. The only real financial "assistance" that you get from Grinnell College from work-study are the inflated student wages, which are admittedly a little nice. As for loans, I do think that loans hamstring post-graduate success. It restricts access of Grinnellians to graduate school, and forces them to abandon altruistic ideals in order to make a couple extra grand a year to make sure they can actually pay off the loans. These are not the experiences of every Grinnellian on financial assistance (and I'm only on some small merit-based assistance, so this is entirely observations of my friends who are students and alums on heavy need-based assistance). No matter how you slice it, Grinnell is a far superior institution if you don't need that extra money. Granted, Grinnell is better than most private schools, but the fact that we're not the best is SHAMEFUL. We have the most money! Why aren't we the best? Which is exactly the point that is alluded to in this area. No matter what proposal is undertaken, Grinnell needs to actually put its money where its mouth is when it says "money is no object to coming here" because right now it is an object. My only concern, as mentioned before, is feasibility. I think a good move would be to establish a "fund to reduce tuition" which could be funneled both by interest on the endowment and by annual gifts. As the fund increased, so would the interest, and correspondingly you could reduce tuition. I have no statistics to back this up, but I think within ten years we could have a tuition free Grinnell. Not only that, it's hard to take pride in Grinnell being "the fifteenth best college in US News and World Report", or the "second hardest studiers in the nation"--we do need something very tangible to string our pride up. Correspondingly, our quality of student body (which is already pretty good) would become one of the top few in the nation, and problems of socioeconomic diversity and racial diversity would be reduced dramatically.

Secondly, I'd like to address the "enhancing the student experience". Two of the problems in that proposal, financial concern and fewer temporary faculty, are big problems here. The second biggest problem on this campus aside from need based aid is the ridiculous turnover of faculty here. There needs to be more continuity in course offerings and more continuity in faculty. The third biggest problem, mental health, is also addressed in this proposal. There needs to be a real enhancement of the mental health resources on this campus. This is a stressful place that attracts a lot of easily stressed out people. To be honest, I'm surprised what happened last year hadn't happened earlier. The other two bullet points, Faculty/Student interaction and Social Diversity are also truly worthy goals. The only problem with this proposal that I see is that it doesn't address the biggest concern (financial aid) in a truly meaningful way like the first one does.

Next, I'd like to talk about the "faculty heaven" one. Like I was mentioning earlier, "faculty heaven" would definitely help this out. But if we reduce the class load (something I'm not opposed to) and giving more sabbaticals (which I am, due to concerns about faculty continuity) we would need to hire more

professors to keep the student/faculty ratio low, which might dilute the quality of our faculty anyway--thus negating the entire solution to this project. Similarly, hiring "big names" doesn't mean anything for the students--we want good teachers more than we want good scholars (although the latter would be nice too). And of course, it totally ignores students non-academic concerns. I'm skeptical about how this plan would be carried out, and I could see it actually reducing the quality of the faculty rather than increasing it if it was done poorly. But if carried out successfully, it would be an excellent thing for the college--albeit not as good as the first two proposals.

Finally, the Meritorious Student thing--I'm all for giving the brightest students a good reason to come here, and I'm all for giving more money to students, but I think that the college's priority should be on increasing need-based financial aid rather than merit-based. Plus, I'm a little worried about how the general college populace would view this group of "super students". However, the proposal is still better than the "enhancing connection to Iowa" and the "status quo" proposal, which I don't think would have much of a benefit for the campus community.

>2. If these strategies were implemented tomorrow, how would this affect you (individually or as a group)?

Honestly, for me the best one would be the "enhancing the student experience". It would be far more enriching for me to be in a less stressful environment, and one with more socioeconomic diversity and student/prof interaction. But a close second would be the tuition-free one. If I didn't have to worry about the tremendous financial stress this college was putting on my parent's pocketbooks, I would feel a lot better about choosing this school over UW-Madison. The faculty one would certainly help me to become a better scholar, which is of course the primary reason I came to college in the first place. The other ones would have no effect on me whatsoever, and I'm not sure what effect they would have on anybody--except of course, the status quo one, which says that we should increase net tuition, which would probably push my family over the brink and they would ask me to transfer. In fact, that's the only one that I think would actually be bad for the college.

thanks for reading. I hope that you get many responses.

I have spent a good deal of time going over the various strategies offered.

As I write this I feel in the position of a faculty Member at [name] University who was addressing us in an important faculty meeting just after a young member had made the statement: "S and anyone who does not read academic journals regularly is intellectually dead!" He started his contribution by " I speak to you from the graves"

From the grave I feel that I offer the suggestion that any long-term strategy we adopt should address what we consider to be the major problems we face at the present time and not diminish our major strengths. Let me first list what I see as our major strengths.

1) The quality of our faculty. I think that we have by far the best group of faculty members I have seen in my 48 years here. They are by and large brilliant, dedicated to teaching and scholarly.

2) Our small size. Our school is small enough that it is at least possible for people to know most of the people on campus in four years time. It would better even smaller.

- 3) Our tightly knit physical location and building organization. The small central campus, the close proximity of all classrooms and dormitories makes physical contact among the members of the campus community not only easy but also likely.
- 4) The absence of natural close by places of interest. This results in the fact that people coming to Grinnell are more likely: A) to be interested primarily in the education it offers than the nearby attractions and B) more likely to be involved with each other and campus activities in recreation.
- 5) The high caliber of our students.
- 6) The quality of the physical assets available for instruction. This is particularly true of the sciences and is relatively recent.
- 7) the unusually strong interaction between students and faculty.

Now to what I see as our major problems.

- 1) Student morale. I think that while students never been satisfied, increasingly they feel that the school is more interested in hardware than the people making up the college community. They mostly feel considerable pressure about the financial strain of attending Grinnell. I also think they feel that their views are ignored by the administration. I have no way of knowing how justified they are in this and while the last two have been a long-term concerns of students (since the 80's at least) the former is new.
- 2) Faculty pressure. I find it ironic that when teaching loads are about half what they were when I first got here and what we used to call " fringe benefits" - i.e. the necessity of attending student events regularly where two faculty couples were required as chaperones at each event involving both sexes and each hall required two faculty advisors, the faculty member seem to have less free time than ever.
- 3) The loss of a sense of community or Polis. With abolition of all campus requirements, the increase in departmental size and increasing emphasis on professionalism the college has become more and more a collection of departments housed on the same campus than a college community.
- 4) Weakening of what has been the core rationale of the college since its founding- i.e. a commitment to the betterment of mankind and equal opportunity and social reform for Americans.
- 5) An increasing trend for faculty to live out of town. This has done much to reduce our sense of community.

The above makes this whole document long winded and can be eliminated if you think it desirable.

Analysis of the long-range strategies.

1 Offering a full ride to most meritorious students.

This has been tried to some extent before (The old Baker Scholar program) . I do not think it will have any beneficial effect on the campus and risks diminishing what sense of Polis still exist.

2) A tuition - free Grinnell College.

This is an exciting prospect. It should go a long way towards re-enforcing our core rationale and should improve student morale and increase our sense of Polis. Unfortunately I believe there is no free lunch. If the cost of getting an increased giving stream is so great that there is a demand on faculty time for fund raising this could aggravate faculty pressure which would be very unfortunate. If this were seriously contemplated somebody should contact Rice University to find out what problems they had with their tuition free program.

3) Enhancing our connection to Iowa.

This has been tried several times and has had no effect upon our community or academic program so far as I have ever seen. As I see it we are about as connected to Iowa now as we have ever been in the last 48 years.

4) Enhancing Student experience

I fail to see how any save the first option offered would achieve this. Fewer temporary faculties require better retention of permanent and I see no acceptable plans to achieve this. The various options offered under: What might we do differently- 2 Rely on fewer temporary Faculty range from impossible a) to potentially disastrous b) c) and d).

5) Focus on recruiting faculty who will enhance the College' reputation.

I trust this will not be seriously entertained. I would address none of the problems I see in the community and aggravate many. An effort to make us truly a mini-university?

6) Building on the college's strengths.

A great sounding idea but I fail to see how this would happen. The points:

1) Reemphasize the Liberal Arts. You mean to say we are not doing this to the best of our abilities now?

2) Strengthen the International Character-. What would be sacrificed in order to do this and why would we want to become an international college?

3) Better anchor the college in the Midwestern prairie. We are better anchored now than ever. Are you suggesting we teach German at CERA?

4) Improve and develop student life experiences.

Has anybody asked the students about the various options offered here?

5) Improve faculty experience.

Over the years I have never known a time when any department did not see the solution to their woes to be more faculty. This has been achieved. The student body has increased ~ 35% since then while the faculty plus immediate support staff has about doubled. The result has been an apparent lessening of faculty free time.

Reducing extra faculty burdens would be great but I would like to see how this miracle would be achieved. I once participated in such an exercise and after laboring three years to reduce committee loads we reduced them by 20% only to discover that four years later they had increased well beyond what we started from.

6) Strengthen fiscal stability.

Are you joking???

7) Improve Culture of Responsibility.

A great idea but the ways suggested for doing this strike me as realistic as saying: abolish poverty, war and injustice.

In summary option 2 exciting and potentially great; however, it is fraught with problems and if started should have a fixed life span. Perhaps a 5 Year trial?

Of the remaining ideas the ones I think most likely to deal with any of our problems is the 20% reduction on student financial burdens and offering assistance for partner employment but only if this is within easy commuting distance of Grinnell. The other ideas I find very good are somehow reducing the burden on faculty and improving the culture of responsibility. Unfortunately I see no way offered to do these nor can I think of any.

Just a quick comment:

The most interesting plan, I feel, is that of a tuition-free Grinnell. Grinnell works so hard to maintain a diverse student body and I think it would be great to have more economic diversity here. After watching an engaging, musically and academically talented member of the class of '05 leave Grinnell because he could not afford it, it seems to me that a zero-tuition policy would help to create a truly dynamic student body. My family can afford to send me to Grinnell, but I have several friends who are not in that situation and must use precious studying hours working to be able to afford their educations. It seems to me that not only would more economic diversity result from a

reduction in tuition, but those students who are less wealthy would have an easier time being academically and socially successful in the Grinnell environment. For the record I'd rather have that student back than have a new campus center.

If I had anything to say about the long-term vision of Grinnell College, I would do my best to implement some form of free tuition. It would help suspend the feeling that this college is more devoted to its bottom line than it is to providing a quality education. This would also be a feature that would set Grinnell apart from its peer institutions and attract a higher caliber of student.

I would like to add my little bit to the pile. I don't think that any of the suggested improvements would really be improving anything at all. In fact, I think that they might make things worse in many ways. For instance, I don't believe that getting rid of tuition costs at Grinnell would be either feasible or practical. An enormous amount of money would need to come from outside sources in order to cover costs. Not only that, but the ghosts of tuition fees would manifest themselves as fees for other things, such as room and board. I also do not like the idea of giving free rides to certain categories of students. I think that for the college to give preferential treatment to students of color would lead to inequality, not equality. I think that it is fine for students to qualify for merit aid, but do they have to be National Merit Scholars or "minority" scholars? I don't think that giving full rides to students that have been labeled as most deserving of merit would be the right thing to do. I think that if merit aid is to be given, which is something that I am in favor of, it should be done so based on the academic performance of each individual student, and not on whether or not a mere label made a student most deserving of aid. Strong academic performance is extremely important when considering who should get merit aid, and I think that restricting academic evaluation to academic processes that EVERY student had to go through would more accurately reflect who should get how much aid.

In terms of faculty, I believe that eliminating temporary faculty would be ill-advised. Often enough, once certain professors have been granted tenure, they feel that the quality of their teaching can fluctuate and they will not suffer any consequences. There are some professors about whom I have heard many complaints (absolutely nothing positive to say about them), but because they have gotten tenure, students feel that there is nothing that can be done. Temporary faculty are more likely to stay on their toes, so to speak, because there is no guarantee of how long they will be around. I think it may be more beneficial to eliminate tenure altogether. More attention should be paid to student evaluations of professors. Students should not have to be concerned that their comments mean nothing if they have a tenured professor whose teaching quality is very poor. I don't think this would eliminate problems, but I think it would help. Quality professors should be rewarded, and those professors who have been repeatedly evaluated negatively should be subject to further evaluation by the college. Simply put, teachers, like students, should have to face consequences for their actions.

As for the suggestion that Grinnell try to get more "big-name" faculty members, I frankly do not see what that would accomplish. I would much prefer a good-quality "unknown" professor to someone who may have a more recognizable name but no real skills as a teacher. I feel that students would get more individual attention from a "regular" professor than someone who is famous something other than teaching ability.

Finally, I would like to submit my own suggestion. I would like to suggest that the curriculum at Grinnell College be expanded. I know that this is a small college, but as a liberal arts school, I feel that there should be more classes offered at Grinnell. I think that more classes in established areas of study would be good, but I also believe that new areas of study could be created. If Grinnell truly wants to be competitive in the college world, I think that a larger and more diverse curriculum would certainly help. Compared to other colleges, Grinnell still has a relatively small curriculum. I know many students who feel as I do about this issue. Thank you for allowing me to give my input.

I found this document really interesting, and I hope I have time to study it further and make more comments.

But initially:

Most attractive: 1. tuition free 2. enhance student experience / full ride to most meritorious students 3. build on Grinnell's strengths.

I have a strongly negative reaction to the strategy of focusing on recruiting publishing superstars.

In fact, given my own reasons for not pursuing an academic career, here's an idea.

Let each department distribute teaching / publishing duties amongst themselves. Instead of each person having 3 points teaching, 2 points publishing, 1 point service (or however you do it here), let them trade points - so that, say one person can have 5 points teaching responsibilities and 0 points publishing responsibilities, provided that someone else adjusts accordingly and the department totals remain the same.

As I work in development it seems obvious that we would have a lot more work to do if certain of these strategies are implemented. It's easy for other offices to be optimistic about what we can accomplish, but I for one would be happy to try for the sake of something bold and really worthwhile.

With Tuition increasing to the point that many returning students must decline attendance, Grinnell should make it part of their long term strategy to get rid of tuition.

Personally, I have found it very difficult to work the amount of hours that I do at my in-town job to be able to keep paying tuition. The money from this work is, of course, on top of my loans. I feel cheated that I need to work so much, and cant even afford to get a new pair of shoes. (My current pair have holes in the bottom, are missing shoe strings, and in general falling apart). If Tuition were deleted, I could concentrate more on my studies and attend more scholarly talks that go on at Grinnell.

Here are some of my thoughts on the College's planning strategy.

BUILDING ON THE COLLEGE'S STRENGTHS

I have a couple of issues with this section:

1. I believe that it is an enormous mistake to state that self-governance and/or social commitment are "secondary things." Most Grinnellians believe that these elements are core to the Grinnell experience.
2. I believe that the one real advantage that a research university has over Grinnell is in the area of on-campus recruiting and career placement. As Grinnell becomes more expensive, I believe that parents are going to be more interested in what the employment opportunities are for a Grinnell graduate.

OFFERING A FULL RIDE TO THE MOST MERITORIOUS STUDENTS / TUITION FREE GRINNELL COLLEGE

Of course, this is a great idea. The only potential issue I see is that I believe that there is a correlation between the value that one places on her education and the cost, either in terms of dollars or opportunity, of that education. Would some students not value their education as much if there was no cost? I am not sure, but it's a question worth pondering.

Also, the proposal notes that an increase in marketing and recruitment and fund raising would be required in order to "spread the word." How does the College plan on addressing the lack of core competency in this area?

Finally, I would take out the sentence in the "Rationale for the strategy" section where you talk about education as the key to social status, power, etc... It does not add any value and may distract some sensitive Grinnellians.

Strategies	Rationale	Do Differently?	Change in curriculum?	Student body and experience?	Change the faculty?	Influence college revenues?	Influence college expenditures?	How much?	Library staff comments about overall strategy:
Full Ride to Most Meritorious			#2 and #3 The 3/2 and 4/2 options distract from res. life and liberal arts						Fewer meritorious students willing to work on-campus jobs.
Tuition-free Grinnell				If students invest no \$, would they be less motivated to stay/do well?			No work-study? Fewer workers my change operation of library, dining services, etc.		Dramatic and exciting, but too expensive? Nice for parents What criteria though to weed out applicants?
Enhancing connection to Iowa									Why? Yes, why? Would be nice to see Grinnell as destination for Iowa's top scholars

									listed in the DM Register
Enhancing student experience			#2 Bad - how does restricting course offerings enhance the student experience?						Best option
Focus on Recruiting and Retaining Top Faculty				Larger classes, more temporary faculty, fewer courses and less access to faculty are all bad.	#1 More emphasis on scholarship for faculty, not students				Good for faculty at expense of students
Building on Strengths	Aren't we an excellent, international liberal arts college in a Midwestern prairie environment			Increase in class size would be bad.				Meaning? Why do these only apply to strategy 8?	
Library staff comment on overall category:	For comparison, what do we do now?	For comparison, what do we do now?							
Important: Don't implement an expensive new initiative unless absolutely sure we can manage it without sacrificing funding for academic programs and basic operations of the college, which should be adequately supported.									

“Tuition Free” Strategy

The "tuition free" strategy is the one I find most exciting. It is also the one with the most unknowns and, consequently, the most risk. With this understanding however, I would strongly recommend that this strategy be studied further.

Specifically, I think the first step in pursuing a tuition free strategy is to commission a broad feasibility study that would gauge the effects of such a change. Without approaching these strategies in a scientific manner there is no way that we can make rational decisions. Thus, if we try and tabulate the cost and benefits (financial and otherwise) we will be in a better position to then decide on this strategy.

There are a number of reasons to consider a study. First off all, the College's large endowment size now allows us to begin to consider what few other colleges can consider. This puts Grinnell in a unique position among its peers. This alone makes a tuition free study more reasonable.

Secondly, reasoning articulated within the report supports the value of such a study. A change to tuition free would have enormous impacts on many facets of the College. As noted in the report, such a strategy would affect not only student recruitment, but also faculty recruitment, College reputation, diversity, alumni giving, morale, and more. Such broad-ranging effects lead this strategy to overlap with many of the others mentioned. By addressing many of the goals of the other strategies the tuition free strategy because a more comprehensive (albeit riskier) way to pursue the varying goals put forward by the Planning Committee. Some examples of how the tuition free strategy overlaps with the other strategies are below:

1) Relation to "Offering a Full Ride to the Most Meritorious Students"

The primary aims of this strategy are to expand the applicant pool and increase alumni giving. By going completely tuition free we would almost certainly achieve the same goals. Obviously there would be a higher cost in the tuition free scenario. Without a comprehensive study of the benefits and costs however I don't think we should dismiss taking a riskier step that could possibly accomplish the same goal.

2) Relation to "Enhancing our Connection to Iowa"

I would assume that a tuition free strategy would certainly make Grinnell more attractive to Iowans (along with the rest of the country/world). In addition, any additional increase in student applicants would presumably include an increase in Iowa applicants. This would then allow the college to pursue both the "Enhancing our Connection to Iowa" strategy as well as the tuition free strategy. They are theoretically fully compatible with each other.

3) Relation to "Enhancing the Student Experience"

Certainly a tuition free Grinnell would not automatically enhance the student experience at the College. However, certain "strategic elements" in this strategy have overlap with the tuition free strategy. The most obvious is that there would be a reduction in the student financial burden. In addition, the presumption is that with an increased applicant pool the college could create a more diverse student body. In both the reduced financial burden and the opportunity for increasing diversity there is overlap between the two strategies.

4) Relation to "Focus on Recruiting Faculty Who Will Enhance the College's Academic Reputation"

The aims of tuition free may or may not intersect with the aims of this strategy. There is no assurance that a tuition free strategy would lead to a better ability to attract better faculty. However, given that there is a high likelihood that this would be the case, this would be an interesting question to pose in any study regarding the tuition free strategy.

5) Relation to "Building on the College's Strengths"

The overlap with this strategy is the most complex. There are many elements in this last strategy that are relatively disconnected with the tuition free strategy (e.g. curricular changes). However there is overlap.

The strategic element of achieving increased international student enrollment could be achieved through a tuition free strategy. The attempt to recruit more Iowa students could be similarly addressed. The desire to improve faculty recruitment has also been discussed in comments above.

There is a strong disconnect however between these two strategies. Another strategic element is "strengthening the fiscal stability of the college". The supporting points to this element include increasing net tuition and aiming to reduce a dependency on the endowment. This would be a completely different strategy than a tuition free strategy and I would be remiss not to point this out. Again, I would like to stress that I understand (or at least understand as best I can at this point) the importance of fiscal stability for the College. A recommendation for going tuition free is seemingly contrary to notions of fiscal responsibility. However, I truly believe that given our strong endowment we now have the luxury of being able to consider what few other educational institutions can at this time -- and because of this luxurious opportunity we should fully study the tuition free strategy. Until we are better informed as to the costs and benefits, it would be premature in my opinion to reject the tuition free strategy on fiscal stability grounds.

In short, I strongly believe the College has a unique opportunity to explore the exciting option of a tuition free strategy. Consequently, a feasibility study is a reasonable next step.

I know of two institutions that have a tuition free policy: Berea College and Cooper Union. There are strong differences between Grinnell and these schools, but if we were to explore a tuition free strategy their example could prove valuable.

Berea: <http://www.berea.edu/development/endowment/endow.htm> Cooper Union: <http://www.cooper.edu/administration/admissions/faqs.html>

Other comments:

The effects of recruiting better faculty, listed on page 15, give me pause. In my three semesters at Grinnell I have felt that the caliber of education I have received from my professors has been excellent. I also have appreciated the student/professor interaction that my professors have tried to foster with me. While I appreciate the research my professors have conducted and their expertise in their respective subjects, I do not place much value on my professors' scholarly reputations. Honestly, I have very little idea what the reputations of my professors are outside of how students view their teaching styles. To me, whether a professor can teach well trumps whether they are a top name in their field. Thus, any strategy that might decrease the amount of emphasis placed either on professor/student interaction or teaching ability disturbs me. The first four effects listed ("students may face larger classes", "more temporary faculty teaching classes", "fewer courses" and "potentially less access to faculty") especially concern me. While effects numbered 5-7 aren't negative at all, I certainly don't feel that these effects outweigh the costs to the strategy. In short, I am quite pleased with the faculty at Grinnell, and while I appreciate endeavors to continue to recruit similarly good faculty, I would fear the costs to such an approach would lead to making Grinnell

less like what it is today -- that is an excellent liberal arts college that offers good interaction between professors and students -- even if the professors aren't the biggest names.

Finally, I would like to strongly recommend that the College incorporate a strategy that will begin to examine the College within its environmental context. The recommendation most similar to this is on page 18 under the heading "Better Anchor the College in its Midwestern Prairie Setting." A strategy such as this would include examining both the curriculum of the College as well as its operations. Having just returned from a conference at Ball State University entitled "Greening the Campus," I have seen the amazing results that come from colleges that engage in examining their environmental context. As noted on pg. 18, using "our locale as a laboratory for learning across the curriculum" is part of this strategy. A new focus which looks at Grinnell not just as a place in which information is learned but as an institution within an ecosystem from which we can learn much about our interactions with the environment would open many new doors. The College could begin to enlarge its prairie and environmental studies offering. A focus on the role of the college within an ecosystem would also lead to a continuous learning process in which student, faculty, and administrators could apply lessons learned to the physical campus itself. The potential here is great and other colleges are beginning to take notice. Grinnell should follow suit.

As a student I am interested in your strategic planning. I would support the option described as "A Tuition-Free Grinnell College." By eliminating tuition for all students you would be able to enhance the overall quality of students. This would allow the college to encourage applicants with superior academic backgrounds as well as allow for other diverse students that can bring specific talents to the school in the area of arts or athletics. I also support the promotion of Grinnell College and the connection to Iowa. I feel that Grinnell is a valuable part of Iowa and the Iowa experience can be promoted nationally as well as internationally. This particular strength of Grinnell can also aid the school in other ways such as promoting mental health and improving the character of the Grinnell experience. Thank you for your consideration.

Offering a full-ride to the Most Meritorious Students:

In general, I agree with this; it's an interesting option for the college to look at as a long-term goal. My one concern relates to point 5 (increasing support for career placement). While this is an important consideration in general (and one that probably needs to be addressed at Grinnell in any case), I do not see how this is integral to the goal of providing full scholarships to meritorious students. Rather, along with proposed increases in Economics, Computer Science (including a 3/2 program for CS), and Engineering, the fifth point seems to push the proposal down a track that focuses more on post-Grinnell career success than on the provision of a liberal arts education. Surely that should not be part of our long-term vision for Grinnell.

If we can attract stronger students without straying from the liberal arts basis of Grinnell, I'm all for it.

One more point: I for one was saddened when Grinnell was dropped from Loren Pope's "Colleges that Change Lives: 40 Schools You Should Know About Even If You're Not a Straight-A Student" in 2000 (saddened because my college of choice was all of a sudden no longer present in a book that had had quite an impact on my college search process). I think I'm right in assuming that Grinnell got dropped not because it stopped changing lives, but because it got too selective. Now the proposal notes that we might see everyone in the incoming class coming in the top 10% of their high school graduating class. Do we really want to become this selective in our admissions? Shouldn't there be room at Grinnell for people who show academic promise but who did not excel in high school. My feeling is that Grinnell ought to maintain high standards for its students and could probably benefit from academically stronger incoming classes. It ought not, however, pursue this course to the exclusion of those bright high schoolers who did not excel in high school but who could still contribute to life at the college. That, it seems to me, would change the character of the student body for the worse.

*

Tuition-free Grinnell College:

Not surprisingly, I agree with this proposal most of all. Grinnell is getting too expensive -- there is no way around this fact. True, the price is increasing in line with higher education costs across the country (and its peer group), but since I object to the trend as a whole this is a poor excuse for Grinnell's price-tag. And while our financial aid is excellent, many prospective students probably wouldn't bother to read about the financial aid when they see the initial sticker-price -- they'd simply dismiss Grinnell as too expensive. The benefits we could reap in terms of a more talented, varied, and desirable student body are obvious.

I would love to see the trustees consider this proposal. It has obvious costs to it, but the potential benefits are intriguing. I think that my progressive predecessors at this school would love to see Grinnell bucking the trend of absurdly expensive education, setting an example for other institutions (although I suppose few others would have the endowment necessary to support such an endeavor).

At the very least, trustees ought to test the waters a little -- examine universities where this sort of proposal has worked (Berea, I believe, is a good example, although it focuses on particular group for its student body) and what the college might expect to reap in increased donations.

*

Enhancing our connection to Iowa:

This is largely unobjectionable, although I question the suggestion that institutions are strengthened by a sense of place. I might also note that the low percentage of Iowans was a big plus for me when I was comparing Grinnell to other small liberal arts colleges as a high-school senior; while I have nothing against Iowans, I regarded a large percentage of in-state students at any college as indicative of a lack of cosmopolitan atmosphere. Having said this, the 20% goal suggested in the proposal would probably have been fine with my high-school self.

A bigger problem: point 3. Does the proposal really mean, as the bolded text suggests, that we need to become more ideologically diverse, or is the problem actually, as the text below it suggests, with the college's image? I would agree that we have an image problem, and that more Iowans should be told about the true variety of ideas at Grinnell as well as of the practical value of a liberal arts education. To suggest that we need to actually change the views of students is another proposal altogether, and one that I would object to.

Lastly, before really being comfortable with this proposal I would have to be certain that we were really trying to sell Iowans on the values of a liberal arts education, and not trying to imitate the "practical focus" of Iowa State or the University of Iowa as is intimated in point 4 of the proposal. Grinnell is neither of those schools, and I would never have come here had it if it were.

*

Enhancing the Student Experience: I can hardly argue with the basic idea here. The proposal looks very good.

One problem: the idea that we need to reduce course offerings to offset the cost of the program. This is a very, very dubious proposition that appears entirely unnecessary in the light of some of the other costly plans on the table. Decreasing course offerings would frustrate students, frighten off prospective students, and generally reduce the quality of education at Grinnell to a degree that I do not think would be justified by the benefits of the proposal. I have already had too many large classes at Grinnell, and would not want to have more -- sufficient course choice and sufficiently small class-sizes are some of the most essential elements of positive student experience, in my opinion.

Why does the proposal not mention prospects for increased donations that might come with such an initiative? Granted, it would not generate the buzz that dropping tuition would, but would we not expect some kind of rise in donation levels?

*

Focus on Recruiting Faculty who will Enhance the College's Academic Reputation

This one strikes me as bad in several places. While we do need some way to increase the number of promising professors here (focusing on spousal employment seems like a good idea), Grinnell's focus has always been and should remain quality teaching. The suggestion that it would be worth it for Grinnell to cut the number of courses it offers and to increase class sizes in order to make the Grinnell degree "worth more" or to enhance our access to elite graduate programs strikes me as fundamentally flawed. I came to Grinnell for a good education while I'm here, not for intangible benefits some point in the future. And how are we to truly make use of our "access" to prominent scholars if our overall access to professors is reduced?

Grinnell isn't a research university, and I don't think we should be. As with the more "practical" Iowa State, if I had wanted a research-oriented University of Michigan, UC-Berkeley, or Harvard, I would have applied to those places. I wanted a quality teaching environment with committed and accessible professors, and I suspect most Grinnellians would agree with me.

Why should Grinnell embrace the "publish-or-perish" mentality of academia? Scholarship on the part of the faculty is probably a good thing in many ways, but I think the emphasis should definitely be on the quality of education provided to students, and this proposal does not address that as it stands.

*

Building on the College's Strengths

I agree strongly with most of the points here, especially regarding the re-emphasis of Grinnell's liberal arts mission and avoiding becoming a "mini-research university". I disagree on one key point: I don't think that high tuition is a strength of the college, and I do not think we should build on it by increasing it. I also question the need to increase class-sizes, as this has a negative impact on our fundamental educational mission.

Here are my opinions on the strategic plan initiatives:

Firstly, I'm opposed to anything that would have teachers teaching less. I'm completely against the plan that would "lure" teachers to Grinnell by offering more sabbaticals, more research opportunities, and fewer classes to teach. I feel that would hurt the students in so many ways, seeing that students are already limited in the number of classes they have access to just by virtue of how small the school is. Also, when I was applying to schools, Grinnell really tried hard to sell the fact that it is NOT a research institution, the teachers are here to teach, not to research. Doing this would make Grinnell a research institution.

I like the ideas of fewer temporary faculty, more faculty-student interaction out of class, increasing the ethnic and socio-economic diversity of the student body, and more funding for resident life and mental health programs.

However, I feel that the objective of a more diverse student body is in direct opposition of one of the other strategies, which would make Grinnell more attractive and accessible to graduates of Iowa high schools. I do not like this idea because I feel it would make Grinnell less diverse. I applied to several other schools that are similar to Grinnell and was turned off because over 50% of their student bodies were in-state students. If I wanted that, I would have gone to the University of Illinois for half of what

I'm paying to go here. I also feel that admissions would have to change a lot of its policies in order to make the school more diverse. For one thing, I feel that the school has been recruiting in wealthier and wealthier areas. Granted, having these students come to the school is much cheaper on the school, but the school loses something in the process. Also, I feel the school recruits A LOT in the Chicago area. This may not be true, but, being from the area myself, I was rather disappointed when I arrived here to realize how many other students were from that area, despite the fact that I knew of no one from my school who had gone to Grinnell in recent years. This policy detracts a lot from the diversity experience at Grinnell as well.

However, in looking at this objective, there is a fine line to tread. Many Grinnellians are all for this idea of diversity. Unfortunately, I doubt it would be as easy to implement as it sounds and many students who support the policy would not be here if the policy does get instated. (Given that most students are financially comfortable, white, students.)

On the idea of offering a full ride to national merit scholars, national achievement scholars, and national Hispanic scholars. First off, I'm a little weary of how these tests determine "merit." I also feel that this would put a huge gap between students who do not achieve these awards and those who do and it may seem very unfair to those students that were just below achieving the awards. (Say in the 95th percentile rather than the 98th or 99th). Finally, I feel that the money that would go towards this could be put to better use by offering more full-rides to students with tremendous financial need or at least offering more grants and other forms of aid that would not need to be repaid in order to allow more financially troubled students to come here.

Finally- A tuition free Grinnell. I feel this is somewhat out of the question. It would put the college on extremely shaky financial ground that would hurt it in the future. I also feel that a lot more problems would arise than can be foreseen right now.

My general comment on the six proposals is that there are quite a number of meritorious ideas throughout that could be implemented without the need for additional funding, and a number of ideas (regardless of merit) that no amount of additional funding could effectuate. I believe this is a natural part of a "wish list" process, and I have seen it in the college's previous efforts at strategic planning and institutional review. I trust that whatever the college decides to do will be "Building on the College's Strengths" (if not as exactly described in Proposal Six), since choosing only one of the other five proposals would elevate to an intolerable level the "us versus them" mentality currently observed on campus.

Here are a few things I would like to see:

(1) Financial aid should meet "demonstrated need" for all Grinnell students, not just for US citizens and Permanent Residents. Let's get rid of the asterisk on financial aid, and get an economically broader International Student applicant pool. At the moment, we serve a limited number of dirt-poor international students with full rides and a larger number of (relatively) wealthy ones. Why not improve the IS applicant pool and, at the same time, demonstrate our "internationalism?" As a practical matter, not a few of the qualified students we would enroll as a result are in the United States "permanently" already; legal (or other) immigrants who do not yet have PR status. I see them every year in New York as an admission volunteer.

(2) Financial aid should be 100% grants and scholarships; no loans and no work study. If we are going to make a Grinnell education available to students regardless of their families' means, why not let them be at Grinnell and leave Grinnell on an equal footing? Eliminate the loan burden entirely, and make campus jobs an option for students who want to take the time to earn spending money. If students don't voluntarily fill all positions, the job openings will benefit the City of Grinnell. This proposal makes #1 (above) much simpler, since most of the added cost to Grinnell of financial aid for International Students is due to the fact that they don't qualify for Federal loan programs or Federally supported work-study positions. #2 would almost make #1 moot.

(3) The Comprehensive Fee should be increased to a level that covers 100% of the operating budget of the college...and then "Endowment Grants," "Pioneer Fund Grants" and the existing named Grants and Scholarships should be given to every Grinnell student, reducing their net charges to about what they are now (i.e., everywhere from \$0 to \$31,000). For those who want a marketing ploy (i.e., free tuition), let's use one that would cost nothing. Obviously Grinnell would stand out with a \$75,000 or \$100,000 (or whatever it would be; ask Dave Clay!) Comprehensive Fee, and the absurdity of it would force applicants and their parents to look at the real (i.e. net) cost of Grinnell versus other colleges. Further, it would make it absolutely clear to alumni (and other prospective donors), parents, and current students (i.e. future donors) exactly how much the endowment does...and it would make it clearer to Pioneer Fund donors exactly how little it does.

I believe these three proposals would have a beneficial impact across the board on the applicant pool, would offer specific benefits and attractions for prospective international, multicultural domestic, and Iowa students, and would address major issues in the student experience. That leaves the faculty. I leave it to you and your colleagues, Mark, perhaps in consultation with Grinnell alumni who are teaching faculty at other undergraduate schools, to determine how best to recruit and retain an even stronger and more diverse faculty.

The Biology Department is strongly opposed to the elements of various plans that envision an increase in class size. We prefer mechanisms that achieve these goals without the diminishment to student learning that increased class size would have.

It was evident that a great deal of thought, and work, went into the preparation and a number of good options are presented. Also the process, I am sure, was extremely beneficial.

My overall reaction, however, was that the various options were rather tame and safe. They seemed to reflect an accommodation of differing points of view with the object not to offend. I had hoped for something innovative and controversial, something to stir the blood. (Admittedly, the no tuition option was original but it struck me as a non-starter). Also the options did not seem to reflect any hard choices - what are we giving up.

In our focus group there was a tendency to pick out specific element from the various options, and in effect to construct a new option. I don't think this response was intended by the Committee. I think I would have preferred for the Committee to present the option or options that it favored and guided us through the reasoning in selecting that option.

It seemed that we were being guided to the option to build on the College's strengths. If so we might have arrived at this result without a strategic planning process. This option also seemed to be internally inconsistent in stressing the international character of the College while at the same time stressing its Iowa setting.

Please feel free to pass this on to the Committee, or to lose it - whichever you think best.

The EcoCampus Committee, consisting of several appointed faculty, plus student and staff members, provides a central voice for environmental concerns at Grinnell College. We do research and give advice about College actions that affect the environment. The Strategic Planning process raises serious issues about the College's focus,

curriculum, and use of resources. Therefore the EcoCampus Committee offers the following recommendations about the planning process and about the strategies currently under consideration by the Planners and the campus community

1. First and foremost, we recommend that environmental sustainability become a central objective of strategic planning. All life depends on the sustainability of ecosystem services, the continual regeneration of natural resources. In carrying out its mission to educate students who are prepared to serve the common good, the College should promote the long-term sustainability of earth's natural systems, for the benefit of humans and the other living things that share the planet with us. We strongly believe that incorporating sustainability into long-term campus planning is not only consonant with Grinnell College's mission, but also that doing so will generate additional academic, economic, and recruiting benefits.

The objective of sustainability clearly resonates with several themes found among the six strategies under consideration. Increased emphasis on sustainability in the College's resource use, buildings, and landscaping would: enhance our connection to Iowa; better anchor the college in its Midwestern setting; enhance the experience of (and aid in recruiting) students, faculty, and staff; reduce the College's expenditures over the lifetime of buildings and landscapes; and possibly attract additional sources of revenue from gifts and grants. Increased curricular focus on sustainability would necessarily increase both local experiential learning and awareness of international issues.

2. To meet this objective, we recommend

- Initiating a process that will set explicit environmental goals for the College, for example:
 - quantitative reductions in energy use, greenhouse gas emissions, and solid waste
 - increases in native biodiversity on campus
 - thorough sustainability reviews of all proposed construction, landscaping, and demolition projects
- Putting in place systems (metrics, instruments, class projects, research projects) to measure these goals, with students using the campus itself as an object of study
- Developing a position for a permanent Environmental Coordinator—a professional in environmental design, environmental engineering, or a related field—responsible for coordinating research, advice, and implementation regarding College environmental practices.

3. Though we do not endorse any single proposed strategy, it is easiest for us to comment on “Building on the College's Strengths,” because it addresses sustainability issues most directly. We agree with some of its specific ideas, including those to: (1) increase investment in Prairie Studies and Environmental Studies; (2) “more appropriately plant the campus” (which we interpret to mean landscaping with local plant materials and with greater attention to sustainability); (3) encourage using our campus and its surroundings as “laboratories for learning”; (4) consider the acquisition and restoration/reconstruction of an additional natural area closer to campus than CERA (a natural area that complements CERA, but does not replace it); and (5) enhance students' acceptance of responsibility for their community and their environment. (We suspect that ideas 1-4 will help accomplish idea 5.)

At the same time, we encourage caution regarding this strategy's proposal to “try to reduce expenditures by such means as decommissioning older facilities.” As we have advocated above, and in many previous communications with the College community, the College ought to consider carefully the environmental consequences of demolition as well as construction. We argue that, when possible, it is better not to build than to build, to re-use adaptively than to demolish, and to preserve space rather than to occupy it.

In summary, the EcoCampus Committee feels that environmental sustainability ought to be an underlying principle and essential component of any strategic plan for Grinnell College. We appreciate the opportunity to contribute advice to the strategic planning process.

I read this with great interest and did have a few comments/thoughts. First, I note these are strategies without a goal. This is a bit theoretical, but any strategies must ultimately be based on a long-term goal. What is it Grinnell wants to be 5-10 years from now? What kind of reputation, student mix, culture, faculty, etc. does the institution want to have in the future? It's impossible to consider strategies until the goal/end state is identified. These strategies are pretty interesting, and imply certain goals, but I'm frustrated by the lack of explicit goals. Many of the strategies seem to have different goals, as well (e.g., more Iowa students, more International, higher SATs). A somewhat cynical view of this document would be that Grinnell has come under so much pressure regarding its high endowment and simultaneous high tuition that the institution decided to look at ways to spend it. A better scenario would be for the college to determine what the desired end-state was and then decide what strategies would best get it there – using the large endowment as one possible tool.

On the specific strategies, it's difficult for me to make much comment without knowing the desired end-state. There were a few notable blank spots. First, no mention was made of the town of Grinnell. Grinnell has become steadily less attractive since I graduated and the relations between college and town have never been strong. Why would that not impact our strategies? Second, the fourth and fifth strategies (enhance student experience and build on strengths) were awfully vague – I didn't really get a sense of what would change or how. Third, there was no 'base case' – what would the college do in lieu of these strategies and what would the expected outcome be?

My personal concerns regarding Grinnell are:

- Limited career development resources leading to 'meandering' graduates for 2-10 years following graduation
- Ever-increasing tuition
- Massive spending on buildings, potentially overshadowing 'softer' development
- Constantly degrading town.

I do appreciate your sending the strategies to me and hope this is helpful. I'd love to speak with someone.

I did participate in one of the faculty focus groups on strategic planning, but I wanted to put in some last words to emphasize my opinion.

I participated in the focus group, but that should not be read as support for these ideas. I was mostly interested in saying how bad I thought almost every alternative presented in the planning document was. I also thought the focus group I attended was poorly run, and I am worried that the committee won't really be able to get people's opinions using focus groups such as that.

My main objection to the plans is that they don't seem to have concrete goals, and therefore, they seem to have buried an unspoken goals--many of which I am very opposed to. They seem to place money at the heart of the mission of the college, and although I know finances are very important, they should not be the guiding force for the vision of the college.

Basically, I think keeping ourselves committed to our present and traditional liberal arts mission and improving what we do now (as outlined, I believe, on page 26 of the document) is the best thing to do. It's a real goal. It recognizes that we do good things, and it will build on our strengths.

All the other over-arching strategies I dislike intensely. I think there are small items from each of them that could do good things to build on our present strengths: better recruiting in Iowa, more career services, etc. But they should NOT be accomplished by changing directions for the college. I think it is pure folly to make tuition free just because we can (and I'm not convinced we even can, given the fundraising numbers). Colleges that do that, do so for a very real mission (such as Berea College to educate Appalachian youth).

I do NOT agree that committing ourselves to liberal arts and making what we do currently better will require no resources, as the last strategy states. Why not make concrete improvements along those lines? THIS IS NOT A FREE OPTION, nor should it be a reason to cut resources (which seems to be implied in the document).

Our faculty, staff, students, and administrators do many good things at a great institution. I say let us recognize how good we are and strive to be a better version of ourselves, not a poor imitation of someone else.

Comments on the Six Long-Term Strategies

Congratulations to the Planning Steering Committee for coming up with a lively, provocative and promising list of ideas and reflections. Thank you for inviting our thoughts and responses.

The Big View:

YES, take a two-pronged approach of anchoring the college in its Midwestern setting while emphasizing our thriving international connections: This a great pairing that will make Grinnell unique....BUT these programs are still pretty new, and a second-wave burst in their growth should wait until there have been a couple more years of proving/ assessing themselves, getting the message out, and coordinating what we already have.

NO, please don't give any broad general category of student (or all students) a "free ride." Is it really so wonderful and progressive to ask nothing at all, even from the rich, in exchange for a Grinnell education? I strongly disagree that this policy would be easy and painless to reverse if it turned out to be disastrous for budget planning and for the fiscal health of the college. It's a blunt instrument that (1) wastefully offers money above and beyond the "best deal" that would get the student here; (2) makes our base budget a lot more vulnerable to stock volatility; (3) for a school that already meets full demonstrated need, this regressive step would reward the affluent disproportionately (the more tuition you can afford, the more money you save); and (4) sends message "although you can afford to contribute toward college, we'd like you to spend those dollars elsewhere instead of supporting higher education." INSTEAD, let's build on the great start we have made in the past five or six years to fine-tune our formerly disorganized financial-aid procedures. We can keep tweaking and refining those offers to make it ever more likely we'll come up with *sufficiently* attractive packages for the students we want most. With skill, I think we can steadily raise tuition revenue while improving yield, remaining need-blind, and continuing to meet full demonstrated need.

YES, institute a "flexible fifth" course in the faculty teaching load....BUT not only for a "suitable research project." It should be even more flexible...for teaching MAPS, for carrying out a substantial project in service to the college...this strategy will make us competitive with 2/2 schools, while also a better fit to Grinnell's holistic view of faculty responsibilities and valuable tradition of faculty governance.

NO, please don't appoint "big name" scholars directly into specially-created senior positions. This would cause pressure to create a special class of faculty with higher salaries, a lower teaching load, more time for research and less for students, and/or a lower expectation of service to the institution. The negative effects on faculty culture would likely outweigh any benefits of students feeling lucky to hang around the stars.

CONSIDER giving fresh emphasis to fitness and wellness programs for the whole college community. These help retain faculty and staff as well as students. A culture of self-awareness, staying well, and taking care of oneself could be as valuable as adding more counseling staff for the purposes of helping students deal with pressure and

stress. The wellness program often seems like a very poor cousin of our organized and varsity team athletics, yet it is potentially accessible to, and benefits, a wider group of people.

NO, please don't make specific changes to the curriculum as part of our strategic plan. The proposed ideas, such as emphasizing skill acquisition to make the liberal arts look more practical, or adding economics in order to appeal to international students, are not made on the fundamental basis of what the faculty believes students should learn. Let's not modify the curriculum as a means to such ends as "sculpting" the entering class.

Doing Things Somewhat Differently:

ADMISSIONS:

YES, make our impressive policies of need-blind admissions and meeting full demonstrated need better and more widely known—ideally, these should be among the things people instantly recall when they think "Grinnell College." We need to be more proud, and more vocal, about this generous and progressive policy.

NO, please don't erode our need-blind admissions. It is a point of pride that we don't consider the ability to pay when we offer a place to students. Moving to a need-sensitive policy for international admissions would undermine the core value that we do not let people use affluence, but only individual merit, to gain admission. INSTEAD, let's try to move slowly toward meeting a greater part of the need, eventually meeting full demonstrated need of our strongest international students.

YES, do more outreach to Iowa students, counselors, high schools, and teachers. It would be great to aim for the goal that every highly qualified high-school senior in the state gives real consideration to attending Grinnell College. We should remember, though, that we could get better and better Iowa students while remaining at 12%, and that would be fine; the 20% target might tempt us to apply lower standards to Iowans: bad idea.

YES, if Posse is working, do more of it. From what I've heard it sounds very successful.

FACULTY RESOURCES:

YES, cancel tiny-enrollment courses that are elective or redundant. Courses or sections with fewer than five students should routinely be cancelled unless students would be left unable to graduate. In some cases, reduce frequency of offering, and enrollment will rise above five. Having fewer tiny classes increases average class size, but represents better use of faculty resources than the current situation and is vastly preferable to swelling introductory or middle-level classes to unworkable size. If the topic of the tiny class is wonderful but esoteric, maybe it can be taught as a MAP or group independent, rather than count as a whole 20% of teaching load.

YES, offer modest incentives for faculty to interact with students outside of class. For example, extend the tutorial "social budget" to all faculty members, encouraging us to use that fund for reimbursing expenses associated with social get-togethers with students/advises. Students often express a wish for more such events.

YES, ask Council to entertain leave-proofing requests from departments as partial justification for a proposed new position or replacement, BUT ask them consider each one on its individual merits rather than approve leave-proofing across the board. Temporary appointments are not all bad; a fully tenured department might benefit from the fresh perspective of a temporary colleague. On the other hand, leave-proofing can cure the ills and weariness caused by a never-ending string of successive temporary appointments in the same department.

YES, offering more time for research will help us attract even better faculty...BUT don't give everyone more sabbaticals; INSTEAD, gradually grow the competitive Study Leave program, increasing leave opportunities where they are most desired and deserved.

CONSIDER highlighting our SFS and emeritus faculty by calling on them more, making them more visible on campus, and deliberately involving them more fully in campus events and governance. These people are one of the college's most neglected resources.

YES, be vigilant about maintaining competitive faculty salaries. As long as our location is a perceived drawback (e.g. for partners, lack of urban amenities, etc.), a slip in salary competitiveness will make it too easy for faculty to decide to go elsewhere.

BUDGET:

YES to fostering budget discipline at all levels, and continuing to hammer home a better, wider-understood picture of the college's overall finances and long-term outlook; YES to continuing to make the budget process more transparent and YES to a bigger development budget as long as it more than "pays for itself" with increased gifts/grants.

YES, experiment with innovative fund-raising ideas (did I see any in this document?) to boost gifts and grants...BUT don't assume that Development can provide a quick fix to fund highly costly new strategies. In the strategies document, I find a lot of probably unrealistic projections of alumni giving and other donations shooting up simply out of gratitude for the college's adoption of appealing strategies.

CONSIDER, as something more specific than "do something about partner employment," assigning a college staff member the duty of employment counseling for faculty partners and spouses. Offering this help could encourage partners to take the plunge and move to central Iowa.

One more suggestion:

CONSIDER issuing public clarification on the remaining steps in the current planning process. The web page states that the Planning Steering Committee is charged to articulate a strategy for the college to adopt. It would be good to know at what point (for example, before or after the Planning Committee finishes its work) the faculty as a whole will have a chance to deliberate and express its support for a proposed strategic plan. Ultimately, who (and through what process) decides on the plan to be institutionally adopted?

I wanted to offer my responses to the 6 strategies outlined by the planning committee.

Of the 6 proposed strategies, I most favor #4 (Enhancing the Student Experience) and #5 (Recruitment of Faculty). I see these strategies as closely linked. Hiring the best faculty should translate into a better educational experience for students. Of the actual steps mentioned to achieve the goals of these strategies, any that lead to an increase in full-time, tenure-track faculty make sense to me. Those that call for larger class sizes, or for more MAPs and fewer courses, move us in the wrong direction. The small classroom should be a hallmark of the uniquely close faculty-student contact that can be achieved within regular courses. I, for one, believe the classroom is the optimal setting, since students have to interact with one another as well as with the faculty member. MAPs and Independents are no doubt valuable, but the idea that they should replace regular course offerings concerns me.

I wanted to speak out in objection to the first 2 strategies (free-ride for most meritorious students, tuition-free Grinnell). If anything, a free ride for the most academically successful students means a free ride for those who, most likely, need it less. I would think that many meritorious students have had the benefit of educational experiences that many underprivileged students have not, and that granting a free ride to those more fortunate students only further disadvantages less well-off students, comparatively speaking. I oppose a tuition-free Grinnell because I think an education is something valuable, and that the payment of tuition signals a recognition of that value. Furthermore, tuition obligates the student to commit to realizing the value of their education through hard work. If tuition is free, I believe that some students will be less inclined to understand that education at an institution like Grinnell is a privilege, not a right, and will take the opportunity less seriously.

The following are my comments on the various proposals, presented in order of least favorable to most favorable. I will be in Grinnell over break, and

would be happy to discuss these policies further with you, the trustees, etc if you would like.

I'd like to preface my comments by saying that I much rather would see the community of the college strengthened rather than our admission statistics go up. I personally do not look at the rankings, and I know many students here do not either. I think Grinnell has carved out a niche for itself in the college market. (A niche we are currently moving out of, which is most unfortunate. There is simply less money for student activities than there used to be [no student activities fund, etc.], which has a drastic effect on the types of activities students can do.) I think we should continue to foster a very unique environment - Students who like that environment will seek us out, and continue to come.

Before we start, here are a few problems I see with some philosophies of the administration, which play into my thoughts on the proposals:

- Peer institutions: Why can't we be a leader, not a follower? Why do we justify everything by stating what our peer institutions do? I applied to 0 of our peer institutions when I applied to colleges - There was a reason for that. I see implementing these strategies as a good start to Grinnell getting away from this.

- Reduce reliance on the endowment: We have an awesome endowment out-performing the markets. Why should we reduce our reliance on it? If someone wanted to give us money, would we say no? Then why are we trying to rely less on this form of income?

- Working our way up the US News rankings: Grinnell is a niche school. That's why I came here. That is why lots of students come here. Yes, US News will help with fundraising, and perhaps help alumni get jobs. However, many students, such as myself, would rather see Grinnell be the fun unique place we applied to. In just 1.25 years, I have come to notice many changes to Grinnell (lack of OCCO houses [a huge reason I came], Crystal Center replacing Mears for Admissions [I liked the fact I had to duck to avoid hitting my head on my way upstairs to my admissions interview - Grinnell _didn't_ have its Admissions office in some crummy office building], etc.).

I truly believe that the administration has the right to change Grinnell in any way they feel fit. They only have to live with student complaints for four years: After that, everyone at the college will have applied with those features already in place. You threaten to upset alumni (remember "Plans"?) with large changes, but the largest problem I see in making the college more "mainstream" (do not argue that this is not happening - we are recruiting at wealthy school and creating buildings like the Crystal Center while using houses less for both offices and dorms) is that we can never beat other colleges on one thing: location. The college can be 110% better than other liberal arts schools in every other way, but we will still not attract that very top tier of students because they do not like the cornfields. Many of your current students came to Grinnell because it is quirky, and the cornfields were part of that quirkiness - They like that. However, changes are the administration's decision, and I recognize and respect that.

Proposal 1: Full Ride for Merit

When reading the proposals, I was struck by the line "according to Admissions staff there exists a substantial pool of highly talented students, in the US and abroad, for whom an education at Grinnell College is infeasible at current levels of financial aid." If we truly are committed to meeting 100% of demonstrated financial need for our domestic students, why are students from the US in this situation? And if they are, I do NOT think it should be taken into account when considering these 6 proposals - We should rectify the problem by living up to one of the central tenets discussed when the college does fundraising - that we meet 100% of need for our domestic students.

But that is somewhat inconsequential. Overall, I do not think this proposal should be implemented. As I outlined above, I am more concerned with the college community than with admission statistics (though I would like to see diversity increased), and all this proposal does is pump up our SAT scores, etc.

Proposal 3: Focus on Iowa Students

I'm not a big fan of this one. I think many students feel connected to Iowa already, and going from about 200 to 275 Iowan students will not magically make the un-connected students more connected. Perhaps we should market ourselves better in Iowa, but not on this scale - Maybe admissions can just be pushed to increase our visibility here a bit. I do not feel this proposal offers that much to the college.

Proposal 2: Tuition-Free

Part 6 of the "strategic elements" for this one can be implemented immediately: Use the endowment more, stop jacking up tuition, build less, and knock down fewer buildings.

Overall, I am undecided on this proposal. Though it would make us very unique, I am concerned with maintaining our current level of income with no tuition. Perhaps we would also be attracting students who would not be here because they wanted to go to Grinnell, but because they wanted a cheap, first rate college - I think that would be unfortunate.

My feelings towards this proposal are merely slightly negative, though I would not be incredibly opposed to its implementation.

Proposal 6: Building on Our Strengths

I believe this proposal contains some faulty logic: It does not call for an increase in net expenses, but under "Improving the Faculty Experience" it calls for improving academic facilities and improving the local community economically and physically - I think both of these would incur significant costs.

That being said, I find this proposal very vague compared to the others. This makes me not very excited about it. There are many components to it, some of which are detailed and some of which are just goals with no plans on how to reach them.

Some of the academic changes discussed in this proposal sound like they could be gearing Grinnell up to have a core curriculum. If this is so, I would be VERY against it. Open curriculum is an exciting policy we have, and I feel many students came here in part because of it. This is one thing that sets us apart from many other schools, and we should retain it.

And since this proposal includes larger class sizes and/or fewer classes, I feel we would be cheapening the student experience even further, and would be against this proposal for that reason as well.

Proposal 5: Recruiting Faculty

I believe this proposal has some good components, and many poor ones. I would be for adapting this in part. A hot student issue on campus already is increased class sizes. (We know, through _no_ fault of the college, there are more students on campus than normal this semester because of increased retention rate and less study abroad students - This has made this semester have notably large classes.) I would be against any proposal that would have as a side-effect increased class sizes and/or a decreasing amount of courses offered.

One strategy we currently use to recruit students is explaining that the faculty are very teaching-focused. I think this is a big plus, and would be against attempting to recruit faculty that are more into research, especially since an increased amount of sabbaticals would mean larger class sizes.

That being said, I strongly believe we do need to offer competitive salaries to our faculty. Furthermore, an increased commitment to partner employment would also be very beneficial to faculty retention.

Proposal 4: Student Experience

This is the big winner. A 20% reduction in costs still makes us an expensive-looking, but affordable, school. Temporary faculty and diversity are huge complaints of mine and the student body that would be rectified. And "more funding for residential life and mental health programs" should be extended to mean starting the Student Activities Fund back up, etc. (I have heard about all these great things like the Fund for Excellence that existed before my time - it would be great to restart these as well.)

This would enhance the student experience, both inside and outside the classroom, greatly. And happier alumni mean more money down the line. This strategy is the one to go with.

Thank you for helping to continually improve our college.

Because [name] preferred to talk, I've summarized his observations here. In general, [name] had the strongest response to the "tuition free" and "Iowa students" ideas. As background, you probably know that [name] is from Grinnell, is a Grinnell College alum, and chose to settle, raise his family and build his business in town. Prior to our conversation, he was not aware of Grinnell's current need-based financial aid approach.

"TUITION FREE" / "IOWA STUDENTS"

Again, [name] presumed merit-based aid only when judging that this strategy would be a dramatic departure from where the College is now. [name] expressed several concerns with this strategy. First, he was cautious about making such a dramatic, sudden change (to paraphrase):

"From my background in business, I'd say that you should work your way into things instead of just jumping in. You don't jump into a lake to learn to swim. You may think that you understand everything, but things will blindside you that you haven't thought of. You don't want to run before you walk. You should do it in steps."

Next, he was concerned that in going tuition-free, we are teaching the students a poor lesson:

“Grinnell College is all about educating young people. Do you want to say, ‘you get this for free’ or that ‘you have to earn the privilege of acquiring an education’? If you don’t have to earn it, you generally don’t appreciate it. It’s easier to cast aside.”

He was somewhat concerned that in reaching out so heavily to out-of-state and international students, that the benefits of a Grinnell education would leave the state and leave the country:

“If students are from the area, then there’s more chance of having them think of, and support Grinnell”

Related to this, he expressed some concern about a strong focus on “*shining star*” students (in the “full ride” and “Iowa” concepts) at the expense of average, strong, hard-working students:

“Strong students from the Iowa farm utilized that education and gave back and made important contributions to the community they live in – their town, their state and their country. It’s important to remember those students and not shut them out.”

Finally, although [name] was hopeful that the goal of increasing alumni gifts could realistically make a tuition-free college possible, he also cautioned that the strategy could also backfire, making fundraising more difficult:

“It would be great if people would actually give more money to do this, but I also know some people who would say, ‘I’m not giving for that. I had to pay for my education. Why the hell should they not have to pay for theirs?’”

Thank you for opening up comments on the strategic planning process to the whole College community. It is clear that a tremendous amount of work has gone into this process and that the team has generated a lot of very good material. As you both know, I come at this from the perspective of a research and planning consultant for marketing clients. So, please understand that most of my comments are filtered through this lens. You may or may not find this different perspective appropriate for Grinnell’s own process.

Nevertheless, after taking some time to digest the strategies and some of the ancillary documents, I thought that I would share my thoughts on the model overall, the 6 specific concept ideas, and some suggestions for continuing to move the process forward.

A) THE STRATEGIC PLANNING MODEL

The decision model driving Grinnell College’s planning process is a three-level pyramid that puts “Mission/Core Values/Grinnell Education” at the top, under which come strategies and tactics. As I read the strategies and reviewed the model, it seems that there are also two additional areas I would normally see incorporated into a planning exercise that have been touched upon tangentially for Grinnell, but don’t appear to have been addressed head-on so far in the process (based on the documents I’ve read). Those two areas are: 1) a single top-level measurable goal, and 2) the client’s “brand essence” (or “identity” “positioning” “hedgehog” “niche” etc.). I suspect that by incorporating these ideas more directly into the process it might be considerably easier to evaluate the strategic concept ideas in relation to one another.

Top-level Measurable Goal for the Decision Table.

In the “Framing” document (10/02), the “decision frame” is described as, “a limited description of a problem that filters what is relevant.” This is described as an early-stage decision in the process to drive and filter what comes next. In traditional concept evaluation, I would expect to see 6 different concepts that all take different approaches to achieve the same goal. Then, via concept testing among the constituencies, one has the ability to weigh strengths and weaknesses of the different approaches in regard to how well they work to achieve that single goal.

Yet, nowhere in Grinnell College’s strategy documents is there a mention of what that single measurable top-level goal is. Instead, items “D” through “I” on the decision grid address several areas of impact on the institution. Without the single “gestalt” goal explicitly stated to give context to the ideas, I expect that it will be much more difficult to weigh the different ideas using objective criteria. In 2000, the College’s planning discussions (on Mission Statement, Core Values, etc.), incorporated an element called, “Present Goal.” I think that this might be useful to reintroduce this concept to the current discussion.

What is Grinnell’s goal? The “Overview of Grinnell College and its Environment (Oct, 2002)” offers a rich source of clues. In this document, it becomes clear that one of the College’s greatest challenges is in *getting people to want to be affiliated, and stay affiliated, with the institution*. Across the board, there are indications that the College falls short in this area:

- Grinnell’s Applications are 55% of peer average
- Grinnell’s Selectivity is 59% less selective than peer average
- Grinnell’s Yield is 74% of peer average
- Grinnell’s Income Per Student is 75% of peer average
- Grinnell has the lowest early action/early decision enrollment of its peers (11% vs. 33% peer average).
- Grinnell is one of the 3 least selective schools among its peers
- Half of Grinnell’s faculty choose Grinnell because they have no other offer
- Grinnell’s alumni giving rank in US News is 22nd in contrast to our overall rank of 12th

Given these findings, one could easily argue that Grinnell College’s overarching goal (in order to help make the most strategic use of resources in advancing the mission) needs to be: *“make people fall over themselves to be part of the institution, and then fight to stay a part of the institution forever.”* “People” applies to all constituencies – students/alumni, faculty/staff and others. Also important to note is that this idea is not the same as “recruiting and retaining highest quality students, faculty and staff.” This proposed goal does not qualify certain people as “good enough.” Rather, it qualifies their attraction and commitment to Grinnell College as “good enough.” It would be appropriate to add this overarching goal as a primary column in the Planning Table grid.

To evaluate progress, this single goal could easily be operationalized via a broad range of specific measures. One could track Grinnell College’s changes over time and Grinnell’s relative position vs. other schools in the competitive set (selective liberal arts colleges). Example measures could include many of those suggested by institutional research:

Measuring Attraction and Commitment				
Students	Faculty	Staff	Alumni	Others
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of applicants • Selectivity • Yield • % full-tuition students enrolled (given need-blind admission) • Morale surveys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % first choices who accept • Number of applicants for openings • Attrition • Morale surveys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % first choices who accept • Number of applicants for openings • Attrition • Morale surveys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall giving rate • # major gifts • # unrestricted gifts • Median gift amount • % participation in alumni events • % settling/retiring near Grinnell • Morale surveys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gifts and Grants

Brand Essence. A second planning element that seems to have been addressed tangentially for Grinnell College, but not yet head-on, is the idea of “brand essence.” Depending on the vocabulary one chooses to use, this could also be described roughly as “positioning” “identity” “hedgehog” etc. Very broadly speaking, the essence is a simple, vernacular idea that speaks to “what we do” AND “who we are.” It must be true to the nature of the institution, it must speak to the core of what we are about, and (at its best) points to a unique position among the competitive set. Having a firm grasp of one’s brand essence is not inherently necessary to goal setting and strategy development, and it is sometimes left to implication and innuendo because the distillation and articulation is not easy to do. However, clarifying the essence can help make everything else that follows that much more effective and efficient.

For example, under the overarching goal of “making a hit movie,” one could certainly choose the strategy of casting Bill Murray as the Terminator. However, it would be an uphill battle the whole way because the strategy runs counter to his “brand essence.” In contrast, having a firm grasp of Bill Murray’s “essence” early on could help you get to Caddyshack that much sooner. From the documentation available, it appears as though there has been certain amount of discussion around this “hedgehogging” for Grinnell. Certainly much of this thinking has gone into the Core Values. However, I would argue that further distillation and articulation would be helpful to the planning process.

B) THE 6 SPECIFIC CONCEPTS

In evaluating the 6 ideas relative to each other, I found it helpful to summarize them in parallel language and format using four basic elements that I’ve seen used well in concept testing in the past. My summary of each idea may not perfectly reflect what was intended, but nevertheless I believe that the exercise is useful because it puts the concepts on equal footing by stripping each idea to its core and doesn’t let you “hide” behind well-written prose. The four basic elements are:

- **Insight** (the key observation that inspires the strategy)
- **Concept** (the core of the strategy – the promise)
- **Benefit** (the benefit to the target – why this would be important to the people you care about). In this case I’ve considered the target to be prospective students
- **Evidence** (any facts that Grinnell College would use in the future to back up the claim making it believable to the target)

Following each summary below, I have also added a few of my own thoughts based on how well each idea addresses the **proposed goal** (p.2) and other subjective impressions. Again, a clearer definition of the brand essence would have further focused the analysis.

Strategy #6 (...Building on Strengths)

This strategy was the most unique in that the title (“Build on Our Strengths”) does not read to me as an idea in itself, but rather as a filter that should be applied in evaluating all of the ideas (*Does “Idea X” build on Grinnell College’s strengths/is it consistent with the essence?*). However, the body of the concept touches on many rich areas. This is one of the few ideas that seriously starts getting close to the question of our unique position/niche by addressing those aspects of the College that are central and unique. However, I would say that it still stops short of tying it all together. Right now, I find it hard to discern between the core concept and the evidence that supports that idea.

Goal	Make people fall over themselves to be part of the institution, and then fight to stay a part of the institution forever
Insight	Grinnell is essentially “on track” to do this but could still build on key strengths to make the school even more attractive
Concept	Grinnell College is the selective liberal arts college that: has an international focus in a Midwestern prairie setting that cares about the student experience, faculty experience and responsibility toward one another.
Benefit	If this is the kind of college you’re looking for, you can find it with us

Evidence Because GC is a highly selective liberal arts college, with an international focus in a Midwestern prairie setting that cares about the student experience, faculty experience and responsibility toward one another.

Strategy #1(...“A full ride for the best students”)

Goal Make people fall over themselves to be part of the institution, and then fight to stay a part of the institution forever

Insight Grinnell needs to attract the best and brightest students to make itself more attractive

Concept Grinnell College is the selective liberal arts college that: is free to the best students

Benefit If you are a top scholar, you don’t have to financially strain yourself or your family to attend a liberal arts college

Evidence Because Grinnell College offers a full ride to National Merit Scholars, national Achievement Scholars, National Hispanic Scholars and International students of sufficient merit.

A few concerns: In my opinion, I would worry that this doesn’t address the root problem of attraction and commitment. Specifically, I would be concerned that people would apply because Grinnell College is free, but not because the College inherently offers something that they value. I also wonder if this idea sufficiently differentiates what the students get? They get “the Grinnell Experience” free, but what is that experience? I would question whether this is really a compelling benefit to the students far and above “need blind/need based,” and lastly would be concerned that the College might set up antagonism among the students. Would there be “worthy” vs. “unworthy” students?

Strategy #2 (“...Tuition Free”)

Goal Make people fall over themselves to be part of the institution, and then fight to stay a part of the institution forever

Insight People would be attracted to the school if Grinnell College did something dramatic and inspiring with the endowment by helping those in need and keeping with the character of the school

Concept Grinnell College is the selective liberal arts college that: doesn’t charge any student tuition

Benefit You don’t have to financially strain yourself or your family to attend a liberal arts college

Evidence Because Grinnell College doesn’t charge any tuition for the students that it admits.

With this concept, I see similar issues to #1 (“...Free Ride for the Best Students”). Does it get at the root problem of attraction and commitment? Does it sufficiently differentiate what the students get? Is it a dramatic benefit above “need blind/need based?” In addition, I would be highly concerned that a discounted price would quickly lead people psychologically to discount the College as a whole. It’s human nature – we don’t value those things that come too easily. Procter and Gamble found this in the 1980’s when it tried “every-day-low-pricing” for its premium brands and saw sales and brand image erode.

Strategy #3 (“...Connection to IA”)

Goal Make people fall over themselves to be part of the institution, and then fight to stay a part of the institution forever

Insight A larger, stronger, Iowa student body would make Grinnell more attractive overall

Concept	Grinnell College is the selective liberal arts college that: is the college of choice for Iowa students
Benefit	If you are a top student in Iowa, Grinnell really wants you and will do what it takes to get you and make you happy
Evidence	Because Grinnell College reaches out to IA students, gives a full ride to Iowa's top scholars and is not as impractical and left-liberal as you think

This is the only idea concept of the 6 that overtly plays on a single unique existing attribute – connection to Iowa. Yet, I think that more richness could be incorporated to flesh it out to help it address the larger goal of attraction and commitment more fully. By building and celebrating Grinnell's "sense of place," the idea could be much more than attracting top IA students. It could also encompass attracting anyone and everyone who would love a selective liberal arts college firmly rooted in the IA experience. Likely implications of executing this might be expansion of Prairie Studies, curricular ties to IA and continued International focus for balance (as in concept #6:... "building on strengths").

Strategy #4 ("...Student Experience")

Goal	Make people fall over themselves to be part of the institution, and then fight to stay a part of the institution forever
Insight	Prospective students and alumni are not connected to Grinnell because as students they are not as happy and productive as they could be. This hinders recruitment and alumni giving
Concept	Grinnell College is the selective liberal arts college that: gives you a great student experience
Benefit	At Grinnell, you know that the College is always doing its best to be aware of your needs and give you individualized attention.
Evidence	Because Grinnell College is dedicated to heading off many of the problems that students face when they get to college (e.g. (list).)

This concept also fails to address the core issue of attraction and commitment. By attracting students who are really dedicated to being here in the first place, I expect that they might encounter fewer issues when they get here and be more intent on resolving them with less institutional assistance. I also wonder whether the idea is overly subjective in presuming that all students have similar expectations and issues. There is an implied sense of what the "enhanced experience" would be, but it is not explicitly stated. Many of the ideas discussed in the detail of the strategy sound like they could act as compelling "evidence" to give credibility to a broader idea, but the core idea ("a great student experience") doesn't feel as rich as it could be.

Strategy #5 ("...Best Faculty")

Goal	Make people fall over themselves to be part of the institution, and then fight to stay a part of the institution forever
Insight	Grinnell needs top faculty (to provide an excellent education) to make people be attracted to the College
Concept	Grinnell College is the selective liberal arts college that: has the most prestigious faculty
Benefit	Learning directly with professors who are at the forefront of their fields will give you the best education possible
Evidence	We make it easier for faculty to focus on research and make it easier for them to make the move to Grinnell.

Like strategy #4, this also sounds like it could be compelling evidence for a broader idea (e.g., *Grinnell College has the faculty best equipped to help you do/experience (X)...*). On its own, I wonder if this is the richest, most unique, and compelling thing that Grinnell College can say about itself.

C) IDEAS FOR MOVING FORWARD

If the ideas of one overarching goal and a clarified brand essence sound like they would help Grinnell College's process, this would be an ideal time to formulate both. With a firmer sense of those two elements, it will likely be easier to evaluate the relative strengths of the 6 current concepts, reformulate them based on the goals, the essence and the feedback from the community, and then do one last round of concept testing with the College community for fine-tuning.

First, thank you for the tremendous amount of work that you have already put into the Strategic Planning process, and for your openness for input from all sectors of the campus. I know that this must be a time-consuming and difficult job, and I appreciate your efforts. What follows are a few of my thoughts and comments, both positive and negative, on the six proposed strategies. These comments are not given in ranked order, but, as you will see, some of them are more strongly stated than others.

- 1) First, and most importantly, I was very disappointed that there was no mention of community service, social commitment, public or civic engagement, or community-based education in this document. Certainly educating students to serve the public good is at least as important to Grinnell, if not more so, than our connection to Iowa, which garnered an entire possible strategic plan. This spirit of service is mentioned in our Mission Statement ("The College aims to graduate women and men... who are prepared in life and work to use their knowledge and their abilities to serve the common good."), and our Core Values ("Social Responsibility" is one of three headers, and detailed as, "our strong tradition of social responsibility and action"). I would argue that Grinnell's commitment to service is a crucial, historic, and vital part of this institution, and it is a disservice to not include this part of our fiber in a strategic plan.
- 2) "Building On the College's Strengths" is probably my favorite plan, but I would encourage you to expand it. I think it would be marvelous if we tried to define what makes Grinnell different and unique, and then asked the campus to come up with new and innovative ways to build on those strengths. One could easily imagine the campus generating a list (small-town location on the prairie, self-governance, open curriculum, international focus, importance of service, academic rigor, need-blind admissions policy, and small size) that we could all (ok, *almost* all) agree on as the defining characteristics of our institution, and then devising more strategies for enhancing these traits. Grinnell is a unique, special place, and instead of trying to become something else, we should just be who we already are – but even better.
- 3) I have three serious reservations about the tuition-free plan. First, I want students to choose Grinnell as their undergraduate institution because of who we are, not just because we don't charge tuition. I chose to attend Grinnell because I was attracted to the concepts of self-governance, an open curriculum, and the other pieces that make this place Grinnell (See #2, above). Certainly many students choose to come here already because of our comparatively lower cost, or because they received a favorable financial aid package, but I fear that a tuition-free plan would attract many students who just want to go to "that college in Iowa that's free." Second, while the plan calls for "No change in present academic program or college budget levels," I fear that the financial crunch of supporting a tuition-free college would stifle the college's ability to create and innovate with new programs. Third, I think many Grinnell students already have an overdeveloped sense of entitlement, and this would just further feed that negative trait.
- 4) I really like the title of "Enhancing our Connection to Iowa," but am unenthusiastic about the implementation scheme, which focuses solely on getting more high-quality Iowans to attend Grinnell. "Serving more students in the larger Iowa community" is not, contrary to page 9 of the strategic plan, "part of the College's mission." If anything, by calling for students from "diverse social and cultural circumstances," the Mission Statement seems to argue *against* greater representation for students from Iowa. That said, I really do like the idea of continuing to treat our location as a strength, not a weakness. I would like to see the College invest even more in the community and in our Prairie Studies program. Perhaps we should start the first (?) Prairie Studies major in the country?

- 5) The “Focus on Recruiting Faculty Who Will Enhance the College’s Academic Reputation” has a poor title, but excellent aims. One of our most important strengths is the brilliance of our faculty, but attracting and retaining the very best is difficult. While I would not want to see us “hiring some ‘big names,’” making Grinnell a more enjoyable, lucrative, and rewarding place to work will benefit the college greatly in the end. This needs to be done carefully, though, since I have seen many students, when applying for scholarships, be hurt by the absence of a key advisor or professor who is on leave and therefore unavailable to write a letter of recommendation for them. If there is a way to enhance the professor experience at Grinnell while also trying to leave-proof the faculty, I would be all for it.
- 6) There are many parts of the “Enhancing the Student Experience” plan that I think will appeal broadly to students. That said, I was disappointed to see a petition table set up by students in the Forum last week to try to get their peers to support this plan. Doing so seemed to be a fairly anti-intellectual (“don’t think, just sign the petition”) and non-consensus-building way to rally student opinion around one plan, rather than asking students to individually and carefully read and respond to the plan in its entirety. This is especially true because the table advertising the petition advertised that it was “The only one written by STUDENTS!” (thus promoting the unfortunate “We vs. Them” attitude noted on page 19 of the strategic plan). The advertising did not, though, mention that this plan would potentially raise the average class size and reduce the number of courses offered, both of which are details that I think would meet with fairly serious student opposition. I hope you will treat any such petitions with some skepticism and restraint.

Thanks again for your work, your willingness to seek out others’ opinions, and for reading this. Please let me know if you have any questions about what I have written here.

First reaction to the Planning Steering Committee document: why aren't the parents of current students included in the focus groups? They are among the first schools ask for donations. They should be among the first asked about planning...and, after all, they are your current market. If you don't know your current customer, how can you attract new ones?

Second reaction: Grinnell is a bargain already and still fails to attract top students (like my daughter) even with substantial merit money inducement. Cheapening the brand is not the solution. Knee jerk reaction in play. What's free is worth just that. Nothing. Students aware of costs will work harder. Even merit students need incentives and feel good about achieving goals. We are, after all, a goal-oriented society. Focus should be on VALUE RECEIVED, EXPERIENCE GAINED, not on price paid.

Third: What is a Posse?

Other problems, I thought: The document addresses symptoms and doesn't get to the causes. No idea breaks out of the box...Grinnell needs to be a guerilla marketer.

Thanks for your involvement.

Thank you for inviting me to comment on the six initial strategy ideas coming out of the College’s Strategic Planning process.

I found something I like in each of the six proposals, but I can’t say one stood out as being clearly “most attractive”.

“Full Ride” and “Tuition Free” are the strategies I find least attractive. Over the years I’ve visited with alums old, young and in between. Many of them have become good friends. Consistently, they express appreciation for aid supplied them and just as consistently they express their pride in earning part of their way through college. It is important to them to pay their way. The struggle makes the diploma more meaningful. Sure there will be more applicants, but I’d like to think we want students to choose Grinnell for more than the “Free Ride”. Being able to admit more students who are National Merit Scholars, etc. is appealing to a point, but do we want only the super intelligent? Diversity in an institution calls for more than racial, gender and economic diversity. After all many of our most successful alums were not the academic brainy one.

Having international students on campus has been an important part of the Grinnell experience for many years. It is an enriching experience for our domestic students and for our international students. I believe the College should continue to recruit international students and provide aid, but not “Free Ride”. It is doubtful that more international students will increase financial support of the College. Most come from environments that have no philanthropic traditions.

I find attractive the idea of offering greater emphasis on placement and career counseling. Arranging internships where students could gain practical work experience could benefit students, local businesses and state organizations.

Giving a “Free Ride” or Free Tuition doesn’t automatically translate into more giving. Those very alums who are proud of earning their way could assume that Grinnell Doesn’t need their support. There’s a fair number of those folks already.

Numerous time I’ve heard parents of full-pay students voice frustration that large amounts of financial aid are available but not to their off-spring. If Grinnell aggressively promotes “Free Ride” and/or “Tuition free” it could backlash causing full pay parents to look to other institutions. It has been my experience that money goes where it is appreciated.

“Enhancing our Connection to Iowa” strikes a responsive chord. It is something we haven’t done as well as we could. [name] did a great job, but we haven’t, I don’t think, consistently pursued Iowans. I concur with the idea we need to be ideologically diverse. This effort could improve our state-wide image. Faulconer Gallery is an excellent example of creating a draw for the College as well as the community. Holding music or debate competitions on campus could also bring people in.

“Enhancing Student Experience” – Grinnell’s faculty is strong, it is a shame when students have to experience a less than satisfactory leave replacement for courses they’ll take only once. Expand on the successful one-on-one research experience.

“Focus on Faculty” – I like the idea of bringing in more “Big names” for chaired positions. This will increase image and visibility of College and Town. Increasing partner employment is necessary to get and keep the best faculty. I don’t feel qualified to judge what is the proper course workload for a professor. My observation is that the course workload isn’t the culprit. Members of the faculty are too tied up with committee work. Can’t the committees be streamlines, eliminated or staffed by administrators? Let’s let the teachers teach.

“Building on College Strengths” – Lots of good ideas in this Strategy especially strengthening International Aspects of the Curriculum and maintaining the emphasis on teaching vs publishing. The focus on Prairie and Environmental studies give Grinnell a unique selling proposition. Hopefully, net tuition increases can be modest.

The College is embarked on a worthy endeavor. I hope you get lots of feedback.

Obviously, I am enthusiastic about some parts of the plan. My general reaction, however, is that the strategic plan is not very impressive--it reeks of the *status quo* and a defense of the current curriculum and a liberal arts justification. Among most vigorous high-quality institutions there are several revolutions going on to better help individual learning, inculcate life-long learning practices, engage powerful learning technologies, etc. This plan doesn't plow any new ground, to continue the prairie setting.

I'll be interested in the view from those truly outside of Grinnell. I predict they will be disappointed.

Don't take my comments as criticism--just that I am proud of Grinnell and want it to be very successful.

Comments on the Strategic Plan

Most Attractive:

Enhancing the Student Experience

I see this general goal as highly desirable.

As part of this goal, we might want, as a faculty, to consider academic stress. Are there things that we could do collectively to help spread out the work loads for students? I really like the intention of this goal. I like the idea of more faculty-student interaction and increased diversity. I also think that this should mean ensuring small class sizes at the lower and mid level classes.

My concern with this strategy is: where does the time for more interaction come from? I would not be able to meet the burden of more maps and out-of-class activities with students without decreasing my time input somewhere else. This might mean decreasing the teaching load, though this would seem to push us to higher class sizes unless we significantly increased the number of faculty. I do not want to decrease the demands on scholarship.

Building on the College's Strengths

While I think that it is important to build on some of Grinnell College's strengths, I also think that it is important that we don't confuse this with conservatism (e.g. we have always done this, therefore...).

Liberal arts is important and should remain a core of the college, but we should also build internship opportunities and career placement. This does not make us a vocational school, but rather increases resources available to students.

I am VERY supportive of strengthening the international character of the college and I think that this can be combined with a better anchor to the Midwest. I think that both of these are very good ideas.

I agree with developing student life experience, though I don't necessarily see "facilities" as a core aspect of this. I would support the memo provided by the Eco-campus committee in this regard.

Yes, we should improve the faculty experience. I believe that I have commented on this above.

Culture of responsibility is a great idea.

Focus on Recruiting Faculty who will enhance the College's Academic Reputation.

I like the idea of having academically rigorous faculty members, but isn't this what we do now? I don't see it as an issue of needing to "recruit" better, but providing the time and incentives to existing faculty to do the work.

I highly like the idea reducing the teaching load, though I would not want to significantly increase class sizes. I would be willing to increase class sizes of introductory courses, but not mid level and seminar courses.

The idea of having a fifth course that could be waived for research is a very interesting one. I would be open to this idea, but would want to hear other opinions on this. I suspect that it would have significant impacts, but can't envision what they would be.

I don't see the need for more sabbaticals. Neither do I see the need for more senior faculty hires, though I think that this option could be considered on a case-by-case basis. We shouldn't reject it in principle.

Of course I like the idea of competitive salaries. This really needs to be a component of any strategy if Grinnell College is going to remain competitive with top tier schools – which I see as absolutely necessary. Frankly, I would not remain at Grinnell College were it not for the academic and scholarly reputation of the school AND the relatively high salary combined with low cost of living (e.g. housing prices/taxes).

I think that increased commitment to partner employment is a very good idea, but needs to be thought out carefully before the hiring process begins, and candidates with partners need to be provided with clear timetable on what will happen when. Leaving new faculty with "maybes or likelys" in regards to their partners will lead them to look for more secure guarantees.

Least Attractive (or necessary)

Enhancing connection to Iowa.

I see the key valuable components of this one encompassed in "building on strengths"

I am interested in enhancing our connection to Iowa, but less concerned with increasing our attractiveness to Iowans. I think that increasing our regional connection would be beneficial to all students. I would not, however, want to do this at the expense of our international strengths.

I like elements 3 and 4 of this because they are generally beneficial for the college. They make us attractive to Iowans and others.

I also like element 6 – regional internships. I think that this would be beneficial for ALL students. I think that the college should take an active role in the community.

Full Ride to most meritorious

I am not entirely clear if this means work-study would not be necessary.

I don't think that it is necessary to provide an entirely free college, without even having to work. I would see this as beneficial if it includes work study.

I think that the focus on increasing the pool of international students and students of color is very attractive.

I also like the increased support for career placement.

I do think that it would be nice to make it possible for the best students to come to Grinnell College. I might rethink the "need blind" policy in order to ensure that financial burden was NOT an issue in consideration of Grinnell – though I am not convinced that this needs to mean a full ride to all.

How would this affect me: there seems to be a relatively high interest in Global Development Studies by international students, a number of whom want to combine it with economics or science. I suspect that this would increase demands on the GDS course. This would be welcome.

Tuition-free Grinnell.

While I think that increasing the applicant pool is nice, it seems to me that there are other, cheaper ways to do it. I think the funds required for this could be better spent on improving opportunities for students at the college. If free tuition meant a decrease in other areas of spending, or a lack of new investments, it could actually lead to a decrease in the quality of student. Someone might prefer to go to a college with better resources but not quite a free ride.

I don't see how this would specifically affect me or GDS.

Hopefully not too late, here are some thoughts on the Strategic Planning documents from the SCC. As you may or may not know, the SCC is the Student Curriculum Committee, which is comprised of representatives from the SEPCs from the departments/majors, as well as one concentration.

When reviewing the documents, we took a very academic/curricular-minded approach. On a general level, there was resounding support for the enhancing the student's experience" strategy, and many criticisms of the strategy focusing on hiring "big names" to "enhance our academic reputation."

Unanimously, our committee supports efforts that strive for the maintenance of the assets every one of us saw in Grinnell Small class sizes. Ample, personal contact with caring, passionate professors. Classrooms led by experienced instructors, either tenured at Grinnell or aspiring to tenure at Grinnell. The strategy entitled "Enhancing the Student Experience," we believe, embody our criteria the best.

A SUGGESTION: In the "Enhancing the Student Experience" strategy, there is a line discussing the allocation of funds towards residential programming, etc. in the context of student's mental health. Much discussion ensued among the SCC on this matter, including students who were both on campus last Spring, were abroad last Spring and are returning to campus, and who are involved in the Student Affairs framework at various levels. We are very leery of the effectiveness of measures taken to cope with mental illness, and encourage planners to explore ways in which we can allocate resources that PREVENT mental illness from beginning. In short, get to the root of the problem, not just destroy its seeds. WE SUGGEST exploring the possibility of educational psychology seminars/training for Grinnell College faculty. It is our understanding that professors are not formally trained in running a classroom or understanding the classroom experience of students other than themselves. We do not believe that professors want to see us crumple under the stress. Therefore, we feel that it may be very beneficial to train professors in hopes that they might be able to sense problems before they get out of control in a student's life. What behavior can be attributed to lack of sleep, apathy, or mental anguish? Early recognition and intervention by faculty may play an important role.

A SPECIFIC COMMENT: We do not believe that the value of a Grinnell College degree, especially when it comes to admission into postgraduate programs, is significantly determined by the faculty in the department from which the degree is issued. In both my personal experience and the experience of others who have begun to explore graduate schools, etc., the value of Grinnell has been experienced first-hand by those who have worked with and been impressed with Grinnell students. I myself have heard graduate professors say how they want to get more Grinnell students in their labs, because they have been impressed with the performance exhibited by Grinnell students. As a committee, we feel it is important to invest our resources in a manner which will ensure that Grinnell students enter into programs experienced and well-versed in their discipline; this includes small class sizes and opportunities to interact with faculty, both personally and through independent research. It is not a priority for us to take a class with a "big name" along with a large number of other people; besides, we are very proud to say that we feel our faculty is quite distinguished as it is now.

A GENERAL COMMENT: This stems from the above discussion of degree value. We feel that Grinnell's value is strongest when generated empirically and via word-of-mouth. Too many of the strategies focus on the College's image to the outside world, and we ask, since when has Grinnell ever cared about our image? We implore you to allow the College to "...dance as if no one is watching," to quote a common junior high classroom poster. Let's do what we know how to do, and do it well. And since we are so resource-rich, we are in a place as an institution to do very, very good things very, very well. People will notice without us displaying it in their faces: we do not need to have "popular" names listed in our faculty roster to command academic respect, as our Product speaks for itself.

Thank-you for considering our contribution. Best of luck for the meeting on Thursday. I know how busy you are, but if you have any questions or especially comments, I'd love to hear your response. Let me know if I can help in any way.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the six initial “strategy” ideas by the Planning Steering Committee. I will say that offering these comments has been a difficult task, only because I have attempted to quickly come up to speed on the planning process, progress to date, and ultimate goals of the committee, in order that my comments might seem appropriate and valuable. I would be happy to discuss these further, and elaborate on them, if warranted.

The overarching question I have within the various strategies is how well do they fit within the mission statement and core values of the College. Additionally, I attempted to review the prior planning and survey results as well as peer comparisons to see what others were looking at on the various subjects. It is with that framework in mind that I offer the following comments on the various strategies.

Strategy 1.) Offering a full ride to the most meritorious students.

How might this affect me? It appears that a more diverse culture would be created on campus, which I hope would filter into the greater Grinnell community. This may have a positive effect on the culture in Grinnell, with more diverse retail development serving increased and changing needs of the student population. However, I do believe that a strategy that potentially reduces the number of Iowa students (which I assume, maybe incorrectly, means City of Grinnell as well) will not be viewed favorably and therefore needs to be taken with caution.

What I like/dislike about this strategy? One of the elements in this strategy I liked (based on some of the survey feedback) was the increased support for career placement, which if I interpreted the results correctly, is something that is warranted. Another element I liked was the increase in applicant pool, which would allow greater selection of candidates and therefore reduce the % of applicants admitted. (This might move GC into the upper right quadrant of the peer scoring diagram, which I assume is one of the goals).

Strategy 2.) A tuition free Grinnell College.

How might this affect me? This continues to tell the story of the college from a fundraising perspective, as well as meet many of the core values and mission statement objectives of serving the “common good”. It certainly would make it much easier from a public support standpoint on answering the question of “what is being done with that huge endowment?”. I believe it would be seen positively by some in the community.

What I like/dislike about this strategy? Similar to strategy 1 above, it should increase applications, accomplish several of the diversity goals, and quite frankly, improve the USN&WR rankings, even though that is not the intent. I also believe it meets many of the core values of Grinnell College regarding financial assistance and diversity. I am not sure, however, if everyone in the community would recognize this as positive as many are still looking for increased investment by the college in the community.

Strategy 3.) Enhancing our connection to Iowa.

How might this affect me? Being a native Iowan (living my entire life here), this strategy is close to my heart as I would like to see more students from Iowa here. In fact, my friends in college from the suburbs of Chicago knew more about the positive reputation of Grinnell College than my classmates in Iowa City. Becoming the “college of choice for Iowa high school seniors” also creates a positive feeling in the Grinnell community. Whether it translates into the “college of choice for *Greater Grinnell* high school seniors” is not as important as lessening the image of the typical student as being a “rich kid from the suburbs of XYZ”.

What I like/dislike about this strategy? I like the increased use of the GC facilities by outside groups as it will lead to even greater visibility for the College. I also believe it will help the community to see the increased value of the College as a whole. Additionally, I believe it may line up with the diverse community portion of the values and as noted may help to overcome the image of having too narrow of a left-liberal orientation.

Strategy 4.) Enhancing the student experience.

How might this affect me? It appears that this strategy may promote greater student interaction with the community through enhanced relationship development (positive). I believe reducing the financial burden may also help the students to have more resources available to spend in the community on recreation or retail, which would require additional development of those activities in the community.

What I like/dislike about this strategy? I like that the focus is on the students (as I liken them to the patients of the hospital) and I feel that although there are many others trying to be heard (community, faculty, staff, administration) the ultimate focus should be on improving the student experience. Once again, I think this strategy will have many positive effects, including increasing applications, increasing diversity, and assisting community both directly and indirectly. It doesn't mean that other areas should be ignored, but much of the focus on students begins with focusing on outside areas as well.

Strategy 5.) Focus on recruiting faculty who will enhance the College's academic reputation.

How might this affect me? Being a part of something that is highly regarded is always much better than trying to repair something moving in the opposite direction. That being said, it appears that the reputation of the faculty is already highly regarded by its peer institutions and by student applicants. An increased focus on partner employment may lead to a more community wide effort to recruit new faculty, which is a strategy we should consider for all major employers in the area. I like the idea of retaining and developing the faculty we have on campus by enhancing quality of life in the community as well as facilities we have available.

What I like/dislike about this strategy? I like the idea of ensuring compensation is at the higher end of the scale for existing faculty as well as for new members. I am not convinced that larger class sizes, less access to faculty, or "big name" hires are consistent with the overall mission or strategy of the College, and therefore would be cautious with that portion of the strategy.

Strategy 6.) Building on the College's strengths.

How might this affect me? Increased investment in community will certainly have a positive effect on the quality of life for all in the area. Increasing the compensation and retention of the faculty will allow for greater social interaction with faculty members due to increased longevity in Grinnell. One of the most difficult elements to tackle, and yet most positive, is working to eliminate the "We vs. Them" culture, not only on campus but in the community as well. I think we have come a long way, but we need to continue to work on developing that relationship.

What I like/dislike about this strategy? I like it because it is consistent with the core values and mission statement of the college, and appears to address many of the items of concern I had with the strategies above.

Of the six strategies outlined, which are most attractive? Ultimately, it depends on how much emphasis should be placed on the USN&WR rankings, the Peer institution comparisons, and the mission statement/core values of the college. Some of these may appear to be in conflict with each other, although many are complimentary. It appears that the final strategy, **Building on the College's strengths**, could accomplish much of what is looked at in USN&WR, move the College up on the Peer institution comparisons, while still maintaining the focus on current mission statement and core values. However, I would add a few of the following objectives to that strategy.

- 1.) Maintain smaller class size and increased access to faculty (which may require hiring of additional faculty).
- 2.) Increase applications through the improved focus on Midwestern (proximate) recruiting as well as international financial aid (which may create a more selective environment for the college).
- 3.) Small increases in net tuition, maintaining "good value" proposition of the College. (Helps in rankings/comparisons, as well as applicant pool).
- 4.) Move the avoidance of a "we vs. them" culture outside of the College to encompass the community as well. (The more the community embraces the college, and vice-versa, the better for everyone in the long run.)

- 5.) Don't be afraid to spend some additional resources and increase net expenditures in the short run, which may lead to higher returns and expenditure decreases in the long term.

You can still maintain financial discipline, as well as lessen dependence on endowment over the long term, if you invest some additional monies in the short term. The long term payoff is in additional fundraising, reduction in recruitment costs of faculty and students, and potentially lesser marketing of products. (Grinnell College becomes *the* place for international and Midwestern students to go for higher education.) If the short term investment in Grinnell creates enough "good will and positive feelings" from the community, they will support the College both philanthropically and through increased retail/recreational activities as well as opening up their homes (and minds) to the College experience. If the students and faculty appreciate the enhancements, they will support the College both philanthropically and by increased longevity here. Finally, if the reputation of the College is such that it "sells" itself, whether through word of mouth, high school counselor recommendations, or national recognition, resources can be directed into other facets of the College's activities.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to share my thoughts on the Strategic Plan. Hopefully they were helpful and the type of comments you were looking to receive. Please feel free to contact me to discuss further.

1. Seems to me the decision is to become an elitist school or a diverse school, and the connected question is – how do we best prepare college students for life in a very diverse world (surely more diverse as year pass) – by having a diverse population or a population of intellectually elite? I know how we try to approach it in a K-12 public education but it may not be the same for private colleges. However, in other areas I thought I noted a concern for diversity which I interpreted to be more than only racial.
2. The Iowa connection issue – I'd think it would be great to have Grinnell College be the mid-west Harvard and Stanford. The college desire to be "liberal education": (and I'm not sure what that all means) has certainly prevented parents from being interested in past years. After all I think the mid-west is likely more conservative in nature than the East or West. The perception on the part of many about "liberal" is not positive.
3. Where do graduates of liberal arts colleges go and or what are they trained to do? I'd think the 3 major Iowa universities would all love to have Grinnell College graduates in their post-graduate program. University of Iowa, Iowa State and UNI all have very good masters and doctorate program. I'd bet an agreement of some type could be forged enabling Grinnell College graduates to easily transfer to these 3 universities depending on interests and future plans. Potential students could come to Iowa for the whole package whether it's 4 years, 5 years, or 8 years.
4. I believe the point of "enhancing the student experience" is significant. Kids like success, opportunity, recreation, entertainment and good food. I'm not sure about counseling programs at the college level but they certainly have been greatly enhanced in high schools the past few years. Peer counseling, group counseling, transition counseling as well as career counseling have greatly increased and will likely grow more in 5-12 grades the next decade. For some reason we seem to have more insecure people nowadays, or at least people who want to seek help from other professionals and colleagues.

I think Grinnell College provides many great benefits to the community of Grinnell. Allowing townspeople to games, the lecture services, the art exhibits, and other programs is wonderful. In a couple years there will be a new gymnasium and a new theater at the high school. I hope many significant cultural and entertainment events can be collaboratively planned to benefit college students and Poweshiek County residents.

Lastly – under the Chamber of Commerce hat – I’d like to know what college employees and college students find lacking in their community. If we could identify that we could set out to eliminate weaknesses. I’d think that would greatly enhance life for the students and faculty. Thank you for listening!

P.S. I’ve always thought these many summer athletic, fine arts, computer, writing camps were done largely to recruit. Does Grinnell College do much of it?

Thank you for the opportunity to share some of my thoughts on the strategic plan being developed by the College.

First and foremost, let me say that the strategies developed by the Planning Steering Committee can have a tremendous impact on the College and its mission. However, you pose two questions in your cover letter that I’m afraid I can’t answer. I would prefer to raise an issue that is absent from various strategies—a key component that I feel should be included.

I believe the community—the City of Grinnell—has a tremendous impact on the College’s ability to connect with Iowa, its ability to enhance the student experience, and its ability to recruit outstanding faculty. It is impossible to view the College as an island, yet that is what it appears these strategies do. There is a need to include a seventh strategy that somehow addresses the College’s relationship with the Community and its ability to affect its surroundings.

I know first-hand the interest that prospective students and their parents have in the community. I have met with them and told them what the community has to offer. They see our strengths and weaknesses.

I know first-hand the factors that prospective faculty members have when they consider Grinnell. Salary, teaching load and sabbaticals are important. Community, quality of life, arts and culture and housing can outweigh those internal benefits. I have watched candidates turn down Grinnell to stay in graduate school and finish their dissertation rather than come here. That is disturbing.

Yet nowhere in this document do I see anything but peripheral references to the town.

Again- I think this document is, in many ways, an excellent internal blueprint for the future of the College. But it fails to address some significant external factors that may influence the willingness of prospective students and faculty to choose Grinnell.

Thanks for this opportunity.

Thanks for including me in the list of community individuals to review the thoughts of the Strategic Planning Committee.

To me by far the most attractive of the strategies was the tuition free Grinnell College. I have heard this idea bandied about for several years but certainly feel that it would add a new dimension to and probably increase the abilities of an already talented student body. I am sure that it would have a devastating effect on some of the schools who like to say that they compete with Grinnell for students. I know from personal contacts that many of them do not want Grinnell to take this path. I am not in favor of offering a full ride to the most meritorious students as I feel that this would just cause another fracture in the student body. There would be the “haves”, in a sense, and the “have-nots”. I would like to see the college continue to court and enlarge the Iowa population in the student body. I know this has been a continuing concern and one that the college has been addressing in the past. The other three items while interesting are things that I feel the college is constantly doing but like everything else must continue to take a look at these areas.

None of these strategies would have an immediate impact on me or the business that I operate in Grinnell. Naturally as the student body increases and the faculty and staff increase this does have an effect on all businesses in the community. Also as programming and outreaches into the community are enhanced these too make this a better place for all of us.

Thanks again for soliciting my comments.

The only option I will support is Enhancing the Student Experience, and that one gets my support with conditions. I disagree strongly with both taking away the visiting/temporary professors and reducing the current professors’ class load to 2 classes / semester. I think that Grinnell is a wonderful experience because of the accessibility of a multitude of diverse topics. To take away the large selection of classes is to undermine the idea of having an open curriculum.

To comment on the others: basically, I think all of the plans laid out were faulty in some crucial way.

- Everything except the one about Enhancing the Student Experience and Tuition Free Grinnell was antithetical to my reasons to enrolling in this school.
- The Tuition Free Grinnell, while something I would love to happen, was a bit far fetched and too high a goal to reasonably implement at this time (although I wouldn’t mind a decrease in tuition). It is right however in bringing up that the school has been going in a direction opposite of what Grinnell -in my mind, and I’m sure in many others- represents as an institution.
- The option which focuses Grinnell on Iowa is a bad idea seeing as we are a national and international school and we are striving to increase diversity. I like Grinnell being a left-liberal oriented institution because it was started that way and has continued to be so throughout all of its history. Being a good academic institution doesn’t mean having to be conservative. And I will emphasize again that Grinnell is a national/international college, not an Iowan college. I myself am from the coasts: West coast, Pacific Northwest, and originally from the Middle States (Pennsylvania and Maryland), and having Grinnell be accessible to me gave me the chance to experience living in the Midwest - which has really brought to bear the unity of our country as a whole.
- Osgood’s proposition of pushing his plan further is completely the opposite of what I want. The Grinnell I applied to and happily attend should not be the Grinnell he keeps vocally envisioning.
- The proposition encouraging the most “meritous” students seems to be based in implementation on largely stereotypical assumptions about what kind of person that this action would attract. Not all international and multicultural students are interested in Computer Science and Grinnell is a very rounded school and should not focus in on one area like that. I don’t want Grinnell to try to attract kids with the career-track mentality, because they will only resent the Liberal Arts process. And lastly, I was in the top 11% of my class in high school, which means I and people like me would have been excluded from any benefit.

I can’t think of a single student who would disagree with a tuition-free policy, but how could the college go from charging 30 thousand a year to zero? I do believe that this policy would greatly increase the diversity of the campus in a positive way.

I have to disagree with the greater connection to Iowa strategy for the most part. Grinnell campus would be a unique place no matter where it was located; it has a special characteristic to it that I can't put in to words. I think by changing Grinnell's recruiting policy may change the dynamics of the campus. I don't have anything personal against Iowans; I happen to be one myself.

Finally, I like the idea of reducing the number of temporary faculty. Having a more stable teaching staff can greatly increase the connection between professors and students.

I do truly like the student plan better, but there are two points that I would like to speak on. The focus on recruiting Iowans will limit the amount geographic diversity that is very much an enjoyable part of my Grinnell experience. I would, however, strongly support the recent initiative to increase the socio-economic diversity at this college. Absence of tuition would definitely increase the possibility of me donating money to Grinnell in the future. I think that it is a remarkably progressive idea/strategy for improving the college on an international level, and should be considered more seriously than the other policies, which I don't see to be very interesting or useful.

I like these ideas:

1. Offering a Full Ride to the Most Meritorious Students

3. Enhancing the Student Experience

- 20% reduction on financial burden on students and their families
- fewer temporary faculty more faculty-student interaction in and out of class
- increase the ethnic and socio-economic diversity of the student body
- more funding for residential life and mental health programs increased funding for scholarship

6. Building on the College's Strengths

- re-emphasize the liberal arts core of the Grinnell experience strengthen the international character of the Grinnell experience
- better anchor the college in its midwest prairie setting
- improve and develop the student life experience
- improve culture of responsibility

NO tuition plan seems unnecessary and pragmatically impossible.

Most important is offering more financial aid to international and lower income students w/o requiring them to do work-study. I believe this compromises these students educational experience.

Which of these strategies is the most meritorious?

Offering a free ride to the most meritorious students. While academic merit is good and all, I didn't come to Grinnell because kids here are the smartest. They're smart, yes, but there are other traits essential in constituting a good Grinnellian that don't have anything to do with test scores. This may send the message that academic achievement is our highest value, which I don't think should be the case.

Tuition-free Grinnell. This sounds like a mighty appealing idea for me, not only because it would ease the financial burden on my family (because it might not), but because it would be a bold and important thing for Grinnell to do. We shouldn't just be trying to do "the right things to make a good school" like every other college in the nation. This strategy to me best embodies Grinnell's mission and purpose. It would alter the way students, prospective students, professors, staff, parents, alums, and others view our institution. It's not so much the students give the college money, the college gives them a good education, but rather Grinnell choosing a team of students who will become a part of their ideal: continuing discovery and making the world a better place. This is an idea about which I get really excited, and I imagine others will as well.

Reaching out to Iowa. As a student from Iowa, this idea doesn't particularly make me feel one way or another. I didn't choose Grinnell because it was in my home state. In fact, when considering colleges Grinnell's Iowa location was in the minus, not the plus, column. I don't understand how greater selectivity in Iowa would translate to greater selectivity in other areas. And frankly, I'd rather have a more diverse student body than a 20% Iowa student body.

Enhancing student experience. This is appealing to me because it addresses recurring concerns I've had myself and heard voiced as a student in some areas. However, I don't like increasing class size or decreasing the number of low-enrollment courses. That's going in the wrong direction.

Hiring pretentious faculty. In my opinion, the costs of this play outweigh the benefits

How would these strategies affect me?

Offering a free ride to the most meritorious students. The most meritorious students are not necessarily the most needy ones, so although my qualifications are excellent, I probably would not see any increase in financial aid. There would be fewer of my fellow Iowans, and there would be less emphasis on humanities programs.

A tuition-free Grinnell would probably ease my financial burden (perhaps, depending on how aid worked out for room and board), but the primary effect would be to my mindset. Right now Grinnell owes me something. If I wasn't paying tuition, I would owe something to Grinnell, and would probably be glad to give it my all.

Reaching out to Iowa. Not much at all, except perhaps for seeing more prospies from my home state.

The reduction of financial burden would be nice, but classes already suffer from over-crowding and student are often unable to take classes they want or need to. I would probably not be getting as good of an in-class experience.

I like 1 and 4.

- Working towards getting permanent Faculty members is in my opinion MOST important because just “trying” out these temporary faculty people isn’t working. I don’t know of anyone who is happy with their “temporary” prof.s.
- Improving career placement sounds good because I don’t feel the CDO does much to help students much. Or I don’t think they do enough as much as the other career development offices in other liberal arts schools.

I would support the option described as “A Tuition-Free Grinnell College.” By eliminating tuition for all students you would be able to enhance the overall quality of students. This would allow the college to encourage applicants with superior academic backgrounds as well as allow for other diverse students that can bring specific talents to the school in the area of arts or athletics.

I also support the promotion of Grinnell College and the connection to Iowa.

I feel that Grinnell is a valuable part of Iowa and the Iowa experience can be promoted nationally as well as internationally. This particular strength of Grinnell can also aid the school in other ways such as promoting mental health and improving the character of the Grinnell experience.

Offering a full-ride to the Most Meritorious Students:

In general, I agree with this; it’s an interesting option for the college to look at as a long-term goal. My one concern relates to point 5 (increasing support for career placement). While this is an important consideration in general (and one that probably needs to be addressed at Grinnell in any case), I do not see how this is integral to the goal of providing full scholarships to meritorious students. Rather, along with proposed increases in Economics, Computer Science (including a 3/2 program for CS), and Engineering, the fifth point seems to push the proposal down a track that focuses more on post-Grinnell career success than on the provision of a liberal arts education.

Surely that should not be part of our long-term vision for Grinnell.

If we can attract stronger students without straying from the liberal arts basis of Grinnell, I’m all for it.

One more point: I for one was saddened when Grinnell was dropped from Loren Pope’s “Colleges that Change Lives: 40 Schools You Should Know About Even If You’re Not a Straight-A Student” in 2000 (saddened because my college of choice was all of a sudden no longer present in a book that had had quite an impact on my college search process). I think I’m right in assuming that Grinnell got dropped not because it stopped changing lives, but because it got too selective. Now the proposal notes that we might see *everyone* in the incoming class coming in the top 10% of their high school graduating class. Do we really want to become this selective in our admissions? Shouldn’t there be room at Grinnell for people who show academic promise but who did not excel in high school. My feeling is that Grinnell ought to maintain high standards for its students and could probably benefit from academically stronger incoming classes. It ought not, however, pursue this course to the exclusion of those bright high schoolers who did not excel in high school but who could still contribute to life at the college. That, it seems to me, would change the character of the student body for the worse.

*

Tuition-free Grinnell College:

Not surprisingly, I agree with this proposal most of all. Grinnell is getting too expensive—there is no way around this fact. True, the price is increasing in line with higher education costs across the country (and its peer group), but since I object to the trend as a whole this is a poor excuse for Grinnell’s price-tag. And while our financial aid is excellent, many prospective students probably wouldn’t bother to read about the financial aid when they see the initial sticker-price—they’d simply dismiss Grinnell as too expensive. The benefits we could reap in terms of a more talented, varied, and desirable student body are obvious.

I would love to see the trustees consider this proposal. It has obvious costs to it, but the potential benefits are intriguing. I think that my progressive predecessors at this school would love to see Grinnell bucking the trend of absurdly expensive education, setting an example for other institutions (although I suppose few others would have the endowment necessary to support such an endeavor).

At the very least, trustees ought to test the waters a little—examine universities where this sort of proposal has worked (Berea, I believe, is a good example, although it focuses on particular group for its student body) and what the college might expect to reap in increased donations.

*

Enhancing our connection to Iowa:

This is largely unobjectionable, although I question the suggestion that institutions are strengthened by a sense of place. I might also note that the low percentage of Iowans was a big plus for me when I was comparing Grinnell to other small liberal arts colleges as a high-school senior; while I have nothing against Iowans, I regarded a large percentage of in-state students at any college as indicative of a lack of cosmopolitan atmosphere. Having said this, the 20% goal suggested in the proposal would probably have been fine with my high-school self.

A bigger problem: point 3. Does the proposal really mean, as the bolded text suggests, that we need to *become* more ideologically diverse, or is the problem actually, as the text below it suggests, with the college's image? I would agree that we have an image problem, and that more Iowans should be told about the true variety of ideas at Grinnell as well as of the practical value of a liberal arts education. To suggest that we need to actually change the views of students is another proposal altogether, and one that I would object to.

Lastly, before really being comfortable with this proposal I would have to be certain that we were really trying to sell Iowans on the values of a *liberal arts* education, and not trying to imitate the "practical focus" of Iowa State or the University of Iowa as is intimated in point 4 of the proposal. Grinnell is neither of those schools, and I would never have come here had it were.

*

Enhancing the Student Experience:

I can hardly argue with the basic idea here. The proposal looks very good.

One problem: the idea that we need to reduce course offerings to offset the cost of the program. This is a very, very dubious proposition that appears entirely unnecessary in the light of some of the other costly plans on the table. Decreasing course offerings would frustrate students, frighten off prospective students, and generally reduce the quality of education at Grinnell to a degree that I do not think would be justified by the benefits of the proposal. I have already had too many large classes at Grinnell, and would not want to have more—sufficient course choice and sufficiently small class-sizes are some of the most essential elements of positive student experience, in my opinion.

Why does the proposal not mention prospects for increased donations that might come with such an initiative? Granted, it would not generate the buzz that dropping tuition would, but would we not expect some kind of rise in donation levels?

*

Focus on Recruiting Faculty who will Enhance the College's Academic Reputation

This one strikes me as bad in several places. While we do need some way to increase the number of promising professors here (focusing on spousal employment seems like a good idea), Grinnell's focus has always been and should remain quality teaching. The suggestion that it would be worth it for Grinnell to cut the number of courses it offers and to increase class sizes in order to make the Grinnell degree "worth more" or to enhance our access to elite graduate programs strikes me as fundamentally flawed. I came to Grinnell for a good education while I'm here, not for intangible benefits some point in the future. And how are we to truly make use of our "access" to prominent scholars if our overall access to professors is reduced?

Grinnell isn't a research university, and I don't think we should be. As with the more "practical" Iowa State, if I had wanted a research-oriented University of Michigan, UC-Berkeley, or Harvard, I would have applied to those places. I wanted a quality teaching environment with committed and accessible professors, and I suspect most Grinnellians would agree with me.

Why should Grinnell embrace the "publish-or-perish" mentality of academia? Scholarship on the part of the faculty is probably a good thing in many ways, but I think the emphasis should definitely be on the quality of education provided to students, and this proposal does not address that as it stands.

*

Building on the College's Strengths

I agree strongly with most of the points here, especially regarding the re-emphasis of Grinnell's liberal arts mission and avoiding becoming a "mini-research university". I disagree on one key point: I don't think that high tuition is a strength of the college, and I do not think we should build on it by increasing it. I also question the need to increase class-sizes, as this has a negative impact on our fundamental educational mission.

It would seem that in Osgood's plan, he believes that all should continue as normal, no changes should be made, except that the college should make more money. But there is a consistent feeling on campus that the college is more concerned with recruiting new students than with maintaining the satisfaction of current students. An example—tuition-free Grinnell. This helps with new student recruitment—who doesn't want to go to a school without tuition? An all-out bad idea. Cuts back on funds available. Not that it ever stood much of a chance, though. Student involvement in the arts—generally overlooked. General neglect of arts programs of study—film studies, for example. Students in the arts—something that strategic planning should include. Photography, dance, etc. studios need to have a place on a future Grinnell College campus.

I totally support a tuition-free Grinnell. This would undoubtedly have an effect on the quality of the students, because more qualified students from lower economic backgrounds would apply. I think in general the applications would increase, making selection more competitive. I do not support "feeder schools" in Iowa, because it puts pressure on high school students to attend those schools which would probably have faculty of higher quality. I also support enhancing the quality of student life. Basically, I find the best 2 options to meld would be the grants for students who do well academically and the recruiting of better professors. I definitely think that having fewer temporary professors would be much superior to the current state of seemingly every other professor being temporary. The grants in not necessarily as crucial, but I think it would something to improve (as it would help recruit students who do even better academically. thus improving Grinnell rank, thus improving Grinnell reputation, thus helping grad school/employment chances of all Grinnell grads). Overall, if these two enhancements were implemented then Grinnell would be greatly enhanced vs. our peers and vs. any other school.

We had a hall meeting last night, and I just wanted to recap some of the students views:

1. reduction in temporary faculty seemed to be a very attractive goal
2. negative reactions all around to increased class size and more conservative faculty

3. students suggested that if we try to recruit prestigious faculty, we look especially for prestige in undergraduate teaching as well as prestige in research, publications, etc.
4. some students voiced concern over the reduction in diversity that might result from the focus on Iowa strategy. rather than recruiting students specifically because they are from Iowa (feeder schools, etc.), we might just provide more scholarships or financial aid to attract Iowa students. also, someone suggested that creating a scholarship specifically for students from Grinnell high school might improve town-gown relations

offering free ride to meritorious students.

1. and 2 of above seem fine in theory, but does that mean tuition and no. of students would have to be increased? if tuition increases and no. of students stays the same then in effect the dumber kids would be subsidizing the education of smarter kids which is unfair

free tuition for all

I like the free tuition idea over the free ride idea: it'll keep the Grinnell ethos pretty much the same while reducing burden on students. it seem impossible though.

Iowa connection

I can't bring myself to care much about Iowa, maybe b/c I'm not from here.

enhancing student experience

I like this the best of all. more maps gives students the opportunity. to work and grow through self observation, while giving time to enhance/improve particular skill/interest.

building on strengths

close second. emphasis should not be vocationalizing Grinnell. Grinnell should help students form ideas and opinions and introduce others' ideas/opinions.

I like initiative #5 a lot. I would really like to see more faculty and prestigious faculty. I would also be in favor of #6 and #4. I am NOT in favor of #1,2 and 3. I think that Grinnell could decrease tuition and that at the very least, it should not rise any more for a couple of years, but I think spending all of our money at once is a bad idea and that's why I'm against the tuition free Grinnell. I also think that Grinnell should recruit all sorts of people and not just national merit scholars or people from Iowa. Hence my objections to the other initiatives. So in sum: more faculty, good faculty, better facilities, better living experience, no increase in tuition.

Overall, I am nervous about the suggestions of a few of the options proposed to “reduce regular course offerings.” I feel that offering a class once every 2 years is unacceptable and the duration between repetitions should be reduced, not increased. An emphasis on lowering the number of temporary faculty members is excellent as the temporary professors I have had either have not challenged me in class, or were simply poor teachers. Reduction of tuition is an excellent idea, but I would not want that reduction to cause degradation of ANY of the opportunities or resources that the school currently offers. I wholeheartedly disagree with plan #1 offer full-ride scholarships to a select group of students. Attaining National Merit Scholarship level is difficult, and in some cases can suggest that a student is a high achiever, but to receive such a title requires more money than many people are willing to pay. Furthermore, since the quality of a school’s AP program generally varies with the wealth of the school’s community, those who attain NMS levels are probably wealthier on the whole anyway.

I think #4- enhancing the student experience sounds the best. I don’t like the idea of tuition free Grinnell because I think there are many people here whose parents can afford this and many whose can’t. the people who can afford it should continue to pay and those who can’t should get more financial aid. I may even prefer a plan that simply allows a larger financial aid budget and does not reduce tuition costs for everyone. I think its important to increase funding for mental health. almost everyone I know uses the existing facilities and could benefit from 1. less expenses- some students don’t want to tell their families 2. more choice in who to see. it’s hard to find a counselor you like when there’s only 10 to choose from. It would be good if the college brought more mental health people into Grinnell to work at the college. I think they should work very hard to make sure they find very experienced, very good therapists. mental health improvements only work if the quality is good. I think some students stop going to Powesheik county because they simply feel they aren’t making any progress with the staff there. in addition, they are always booked for weeks in advance. it’s hard for students to plan this far ahead- especially in terms of mood. and you don’t want to go every week-because it gets expensive.

Having reviewed the 6 proposed strategies I have strong opinions about free tuition for national merit scholars and international students.

I am concerned about basing such a large scholarship on test scores (as far as I can remember, national merit is awarded based on SAT scores). I was wait-listed at Grinnell (and thus offered no scholarship money) primarily based on the fact that my SAT scores were under 1200. I have a severe learning disability, making testing extremely difficult for me. I however was admitted, have a 3.56 gpa, am extremely active on campus and in the community. I STRONGLY disagree with the conception that test scores represent merit/intelligence/ability. I would recommend using the scholarship money to award students who excel in areas other than test-taking (such as volunteer work, commitment to causes, international awareness/experience, etc...) I realize this would take much more effort; it is a lot simpler to look at numbers and rank them in order, than it is to look at extensive resumes and rank them, however I feel the later option would be well worth the time it took.

Which brings me to my next concern. Having spent a year abroad as an exchange student (which was unrecognized on my scholarship applications), I discovered many excellent students who might consider Grinnell balk at the cost (University of Vienna costs a bit more than 1000 dollars a year), so don’t bother applying. Substantial scholarship money would encourage them to consider Grinnell. Also increasing the international student body is extremely important to me, as I feel the United States (and Iowa especially) is very closed to the outside world. Culture and language experiences, though not at all completed by talking to a native, is extremely interesting. It is also important to me to have the diversity we do now, and would encourage any movement to increase that diversity.

A few more thoughts on the future of the college:

I personally feel that care should be taken to include a less pronounced hierarchy between the administration and students regardless of the economic or ideological decisions made in strategic planning. I am not simply describing an enhanced student forum in the trustees' presence. Rather, I would like to see actions that more actively attempt to involve students in the college.

For instance—convocations seem to have been lacking last semester, and seem to be continuing along the same path. Trustees, President Osgood, and the deans should take advantage of this time to either furnish the student body with Q/A sessions or lectures on their perceived future of the college. It needs not be structured; it must only exist.

In addition, trustees should be invited and welcomed (either on stipend or out of charity) to teach at the college for short courses or longer endeavors, with academic credit nullified, for the sake of student exposure to applied areas of interest. These could be recorded at the registrar on an audit basis, so that students would have incentive to attend classes regularly to receive recognition. (I realize that this one is a bit idyllic, but very possible)

Finally, President Osgood should become a more visible figure for the student body. Quite honestly, negative student responses to his salary visible in the S&B are a result of perceived lack of effort, and these perceptions are vindicated by his absence.

The free tuition idea sounds quite appealing, but unrealistic. Maybe Grinnell could cut the tuition by 40 or 50% for all students. I do not support the idea of a full ride for National Merit Scholars since they are determined solely by PSAT scores junior year; not their scholarship as students. I do not like the idea of improving Iowa connections because the college should focus more on students from outside the Midwest, like Maine, Utah, or Delaware. Enhancing student experience sounds like the best, but more than a 20% tuition reduction.

-
- I'm against the tuition free Grinnell proposal. I think that the resultant change in the nature of the Grinnell student body would adversely affect the nature of the college.
 - I am, however, for a tuition/work study cut, as proposed in Enhancing the Student Experience. The model that you described for calculating the tuition that I pay is, to put it mildly, silly.
 - I'm against any move that would cut the number of classes, or sections of classes. If I had wanted to go to a school with 100+ Intro to Bio classes, I would have gone to U of Iowa.
 - I'm also against any move that would reduce the number of teaching faculty. At its core, Grinnell is a learning, not a research institution. The trustees need to be aware of this. To try to cultivate a reputation as a research institution would change the very nature of Grinnell, in a direction I'm sure I don't like.
 - Finally, I'm against any moves that would change Grinnell to more reflect the surroundings. Grinnell is a bastion of free, if not liberal, though. The city and surroundings are... well, less so. If I was looking for conservatism, I'dve gone to Wheaton.
-

I also have to say that I'm concerned by the relative opacity with which this process is occurring. When you come down to it, SPI is going to affect me, as a student, much more than it's going to affect the trustees. I can't see any other way of interpreting the actions of the board (e.g. meeting over break, not scheduling a student forum) except as an indication that my concerns as a student are really not the concern of the board. This is not a state of affairs that I think that we as students should have to accept. I urge the board of trustees to adopt a more student-centered approach in this strategic planning initiative.

I would be interested to know how "Most Meritorious Students" is defined.

- I definitely support a tuition-free Grinnell. Also, I agree with using increased applicants to improve quality, NOT NUMBER, of students.

- Goal 6 seems pretty vague, but if better defined, could be one I support. Working toward a tuition-free Grinnell is an exciting goal, but Enhancing the Student Experience should be #1 priority. Lowering financial burden on students should be #2.
-

#3 Makes no logical sense in context of our national aims. #2 would de-value the education the Grinnell provides. #1 what about helping lower middle class?

I think 1 and 3 run contrary to the Grinnell spirit. In particular, 3 is ridiculous. 2 is ultimately not practical. I like 4. A college is supposed to benefit the students, is it not? Keep 4! Regarding 5, we are not an R.I. institution and shouldn't try to act like one. 6 reads like a propaganda sound byte, and if we can even consider 2, I don't think we need to worry about fiscal stability—i.e., it's theoretically possible to go tuition-free or we need to raise tuition, not both.

I disapprove of increasing class size and/or reducing courses offered. I think the college should put students before its reputation or the endowment. If I wanted to go to a research-oriented institution, I'd pick a university in a more interesting setting.

- tuition-free does not seem feasible
 - enhancing the student experience seems like best plan EXCEPT upping class size and decreasing course offering
 - please keep MAPs and up funding
-

I write this as a summary of my views as expressed at a rather tumultuous meeting with consultants at the focus group on the Strategies outlined by the Strategic Planning Committee. I may say, as I said in the group, that I am skeptical of the entire process, beginning with the composition of the Planning Steering Committee—eight trustees, six administrators (beholden to trustees), and seven faculty---attempting to micromanage many matters traditionally understood as faculty responsibilities.

Strategy !-A Tuition Free Grinnell (to most meritorious students):

This proposal would distinguish or discriminate on the basis of test scores. There are class dimensions here and implications for a meritocracy. There is no recognition of “need” in the award of financial aid. And the implication that we should measure success by “immediate employment” and improved “career counseling” has curricular

implications that would have Grinnell emulate “comprehensive undergraduate colleges” like Buena Vista, Simpson, and Central, with their programs in accounting, management, marketing, exercise science, health science, etc. Do these latter programs cater to international students?

Strategy 2: A Tuition Free Grinnell:

A colleague characterized this proposal as “goofy” and I agree. Prohibitive cost considerations aside; the proposal’s public relations aim of giving all students a free ride is a problematic way to enhance our reputation. Do we want students who come because it is really cheap? This does not help the “morale” situation.” Doing good” is a better use of the endowment than building buildings, but there are many ways to do “good” A review of the financial aid operation would be good, particularly a look at why Grinnell already gives more no-need financial aid than any other college in the country.

Strategy 3: Enhancing our Connection to Iowa:

This is a useful proposal, but it should be a constant admissions policy not a “strategic” aim. More resources need to be allocated to implement this policy, but the rationale that the college needs to be more “practical” and to “market” our success in “placing” our students smacks of the illiberal tone noted above in Strategy 1. The challenge in Iowa is to offer the best possible liberal arts education, not to compete with the “practical” career oriented programs of the many “comprehensive undergraduate colleges” in the state.

Strategy 4: Enhancing the Student Experience:

Again the general aim is satisfactory, as are the proposals to reduce the financial burden on students and parents, to reduce the number of temporary faculty, to increase diversity, and to improve residential life and a sense of community That these goals could be achieved by reducing faculty leaves, increasing class size, and reducing course offerings is clearly wrong-headed. Leave proofing the faculty and cutting way back on the number of temporary faculty was the one goal on which our group expressed unanimity.

Strategy 5: Recruiting Faculty Who Will Enhance the College’s Academic Reputation:

There is a need for more competitive salaries at the entering assistant level, and a need to recruit exceptional faculty at the associate level, something the college has avoided for decades. But to link such hiring to reduced teaching responsibilities, more sabbaticals, and a greater emphasis on research is to emulate a university style faculty, something Grinnell has made a reputation of avoiding. Bowdoin has tried this to their loss. This proposal smacks of a failed public relations marketing approach to strategy. It clearly would have unfortunate effects on the “student experience” in its implications for larger classes, more temporary faculty, fewer courses, and less access to faculty.

Strategy 6: Building on the College’s Strengths:

Our focus group agreed that this was the only major strategy worth consideration, although not without a few caveats. We need to resist the drift to narrow vocationalism, a drift evident in other strategies. We need to continue to emphasize teaching and close student/faculty teaching (and research). We need to remain international in focus without pandering to “practical” interests. We can do more in Iowa and the Midwest—an area that Carleton is beginning to ignore. We need to add faculty to keep up with the gradual increase in the number of students. The strategic emphasis on improving the “Culture of responsibility” is ambiguous. What is meant by the “overall ownership of fiscal prudence and stability.” Is this a declaration of greater faculty financial decision-making? And is the “culture of responsibility” responsible for larger class size, and is it meant to deny “faculty expansion?

All of the strategies are important, and I think interrelated. The one that stands out is: A tuition-free Grinnell College.

Free tuition to all capable, qualified and enrolled Grinnell College students is indeed a laudable and attainable strategy! It will help secure Grinnell's place among the very top liberal arts colleges in the country. It will entice more and better applicants, provide a higher yield, and perhaps provide new pressures to increase the enrollment.

Free tuition will encourage Iowa's top high school scholars to apply, thus enhancing Grinnell's connection to Iowa. (I note that Iowa's most capable high schoolers tend to enroll at the state's universities).

I believe that Grinnell College can afford this Free Tuition Strategy. Another \$20 million from endowment income can be made up as outlined in the elements within the strategies. Tuition is not tax deductible.

I appreciate the opportunity to offer some feedback. Thankfully, the college remains unwilling to sit back and "bask in the glory" of past successes. The Strategic Planning Committee has done a great job in getting the strategies before the total community. The mission of Grinnell College will continue to be fulfilled.

I have re-read the information on the strategic plans, and my experience as an educator for 34 years leads me to endorse the plan to enhance the student experience, which should always be at the heart of an educational institution, whether an elementary school, a high school, or a college. I think reducing the financial burden, especially in these times, would be significant for students. The reduction of temporary faculty I am sure would be much appreciated by students for the reasons stated in the plan. Interaction between faculty and students is one of the things Grinnell grads have told me they have loved and they believe makes the college special, so increasing that could only improve the college. Obviously, mental health is an issue from what I read last year about the suicides.

I also think building on one's strengths is essential. From what little I have been told and have read, the strength of this college is its liberal arts core, a value underemphasized in so many post secondary institutions today with all of the emphasis on employment. For students that love learning and value small groups, research, and artistic and literary appreciation, Grinnell provides a niche that makes it unique. Part of this plan is also to improve and develop student life experience, and as a newcomer to Grinnell, I see definite value in that. I really miss the urban atmosphere of the Omaha metro area, and I often feel like the town closes up in the evenings and on Sunday afternoons. I imagine some students that come here from larger cities struggle with the small town atmosphere. I'm sure you already do a lot to help them, but I think more could be done. My husband and I walked the campus on Sunday afternoon and saw almost no one! In addition, we noted that some of the facilities, especially the older dorms, look a little run down and in need of repair.

Anyway, I hope I have contributed something. I think the college is to be commended for continuing to look at overarching ideas for improvement. The institution received quite a compliment in recent magazine reviews, so it's wonderful to see that it is not resting on its laurels.

We very much appreciate being included in this process. We find it a noble and interesting way to make the College better, although we find it quite good as it is. Of the 6 different initiatives, there were two that we especially responded to. The first was the "Iowa Experience." First, it was news to know that the representation of Iowa students had dropped. But, we liked this idea because of our experience that the students usually appreciate our basic Iowa values. Not that other places don't have basic

values – but that ours are honed from the Prairie. The other idea that we responded to was “building on the Colleges’ strengths.” This is very important because it’s what has built the College in the past. It’s important to make it known if you’re driven to be successful. The College does a great job already.

I am quite pleased to be able to respond to your invitation for my reactions to the College Strategic Planning Process. In considering the six plans, I realize that in addition to calling upon my current role in the community, I am drawing upon my almost sixty years as an Iowan.

Though the plan does not set out the six strategies by number, I found it useful to number them. Thus I will respond in my letter accordingly. To answer your specific question asking which of the six strategies are the most attractive, I would have to say Numbers 1 and 3 are particularly attractive. But numbers 4 and 5 and 6 have at least some attraction to me. Number 2 causes me concern.

To more completely explain why I find the above-mentioned strategies attractive and their affect upon me, I offer the following:

1. Offering a full ride to most meritorious students – of course this assumes that one can identify the “most meritorious students.” Frankly, having rented to Grinnell students for 20 years I sometimes wonder...But assuming we can so determine, I particularly like the fact that not only would it tend to raise the quality of the student body, but the “fact” (as the paper indicates) that the student body would become more diverse. I would very much welcome more diversity. I think it would enhance the environment for the community (as well as the college). However it probably would make the community’s function in this partnership with Grinnell College more difficult. By that I mean having a student body with a more diverse cultural background means that it is going to be more difficult for the community (and the college) to insure that our visitors/students are allowed to “fit in” and to feel welcomed. I would look forward to the challenge!
2. Tuition-free Grinnell College- I must simply state that I find this to be the least attractive strategy. Indeed I have difficulty in not being very opposed to this strategy. I suspect part of my feelings come from knowledge that some of the students come from very wealthy backgrounds. I am offended that they would be given a free ride much the same as somebody from the poorest of economic backgrounds. Further to the extent that there is a misconception about the wealth of our student’s families (see Number 3 below). I think this would only exacerbate the negative feelings toward the college. I realize this idea could very well be “sexy” (something that is unique that can be in a rather east message touted) but I truly question the statement that it would “improve the image of Grinnell College both inside and outside the college community...”
3. Enhancing our Connection to Iowa-Suffice to say that I would wager that far too many of our state’s high school counselors do not understand that one’s finances do not necessarily limit one’s ability to attend Grinnell. Further the more the College markets itself in Iowa, the more positive marketing effect Grinnell as a community is going to have (even if it is by osmosis). A stronger Iowa base would be (in my opinion) good for the College, good for the community and good for Iowa. However, I would hasten to add that this strategy will “work” only if combines with something such as strategy number one above (which is said to increase diversity). [In part because my family began farming in Iowa the same decade the J.B. Grinnell moved the College to Grinnell, I have a definite love for Iowa and its people. But too many of us white one-generation-removed-from-the-farm boys/girls would not be a good thing!] Again, for emphasis, the fact that to implement this strategy the College will extensively market within Iowa (in my opinion) equator benefit to be gained by the community.
4. Enhancing the student experience—Again this is attractive to me. Almost by definition, if one is strengthening some of the communities’ institutions and having more interactions between students and the community it is going to be nothing but positive.

5. Focus on Recruiting Faculty Who Will Enhance the College's Academic Reputation—I have a little concern how the hiring of “big names” would play out with other faculty members but obviously that is beyond my field of knowledge. However if we do have “extra money” to be used for these strategies and want something “sexy” I surely find this strategy number 4 far more attractive than strategy Number 2 (the other “sexy” strategy.) Again, by definition, the more quality people (be they college or community) that we add to Grinnell, the more interesting the community as a place to live.
6. Building on the college's strengths. I can't imagine that you wouldn't want to build upon strengths, (although I suppose if one was going to emphasize trying to improve weaknesses, one could merely let strengths, “go”). This is attractive because one of the strengths of the college has got to be its location; the community is that location. Therefore by definition the community will be further strengthened. Conversely, one of the reasons the community is as strong as it is, notwithstanding the economic realities of rural Iowa, is because of the people who are attracted to the community because of the College. There are truly many, many outstanding individuals living in this community who would not be here but for the college. I would not put myself in the “outstanding” category, but I certainly would not be in Grinnell if there were no Grinnell College.