

Board of Trustees Response to the Strategic Planning Steering Committee Report

Note to Readers

The Board of Trustees recognizes and applauds the extraordinary thoughtfulness of the strategic planning Working Groups and the Steering Committee. Though it offers some modification of strategies, this Response is aligned with the Report of the Steering Committee and work of the Grinnell community. The Response also recommends consideration of some additional tactics, but without comment retains most of the Steering Committee's recommended tactics. Going forward the President will lead the College in setting priorities, managing resources, defining performance expectations and ensuring an integrated set of actions.

As one of the nation's premier liberal arts colleges, Grinnell College is in an enviable position compared to most other institutions of higher education. The College's highly talented students are successful in a wide variety of personal and career pathways, its faculty members are devoted to teaching and scholarship in ways that are emulated by others, and its sense of community, its dedication to social justice, and its student development environment are exemplary.

With these successes as a foundation, with outstanding leadership, and with a clear focus on the opportunities presented by an ever-changing world, Grinnell is poised for even greater achievements. The College will realize this ambitious future by entering into a continuous strategic planning process, by nurturing innovation and constant tuning of decisions and actions, by taking carefully evaluated risks that offer high return values, by adroitly managing human and financial resources, and by adhering to Grinnell's renowned liberal arts values.

The strategic planning Steering Committee, Working Groups, and Grinnell community

came together over the past nine months and, not only developed ideas and major directions, but in so doing developed energy and enthusiasm around a new future.

The six strategies described herein form the framework of the College's path forward and stem directly from the report from the steering committee—the associated tactics offer near-term recommendations for how the strategies can be accomplished.

1. **The Grinnell Liberal Arts Experience in a Constantly Changing World:** *Create an innovative and evolving student centered, liberal arts curriculum (academic experience) that enables students to be successful in an ever-changing world and informs and enriches the lives of Grinnell graduates.*
2. **The Grinnell Student Population:** *Create a student body that individually and collectively reaches a remarkable record of achievement and that maximizes the interactive learning opportunities for all Grinnell students.*
3. **Grinnell as the Launch Pad for Multiple Life Paths and Careers:** *Create a curriculum and learning environment that enables and encourages students to pursue and succeed along multiple life paths and careers.*
4. **The Grinnell Learning Place:** *Design, operate and support all spaces on the campus to enhance the academic, social and environmental success of the Grinnell College community.*
5. **The Grinnell Alumni Community:** *Design the Grinnell alumni community, the alumni-to-alumni relations and the College-to-alumni*

relations by purposefully including alumni in all of the strategies.

- 6. The Management of Grinnell's Financial and Human Resources:**
Create a fiscally sustainable business model that supports the College's continuing enhancements and maintains stability through variations in revenue sources and expenditure patterns.

Strategy #1: The Grinnell Liberal Arts Experience in a Constantly Changing World

Create an innovative and evolving student centered, liberal arts curriculum (academic experience) that enables students to be successful in an ever-changing world and informs and enriches the lives of Grinnell graduates.

This unique "Grinnell Curriculum" is only possible because of the personal contact that Grinnell faculty provide as mentors, guides, and navigators. The educational experience and learning at Grinnell helps students put into perspective the constant flow of information that pervades daily life through technology and media. Grinnell's teaching and learning about information literacy, critical thinking, human behavior and other key ingredients of a liberal arts education are frequently omitted in more traditional learning environments, but are necessary for students graduating in this information-rich society. Fundamental to this strategy is re-thinking the curriculum in terms of the essential six competencies that are Grinnell's core mission: creative expression; human behavior; language; natural sciences; quantitative learning; and reading, thinking, and writing.

Among the practical characteristics of such an educational experience are the minimization of traditional academic discipline boundaries; the participation in multiple ways of individual and collaborative learning; the legitimate and effective use of information and interpretation to reach and

communicate reasoned conclusions; and the application of knowledge, judgment and creativity to understand the world and to solve interesting and important challenges. Most importantly, the curriculum and pedagogy are planned to make optimal use of both the information provided via technology and the mentoring provided by Grinnell's teachers, mentors, and peers and by the College's residential life and sense of community.

Tactics

- View the curriculum as a whole with departmental and divisional barriers made invisible to create a constantly evolving curriculum offered in a variety of formats based on how areas of knowledge can fit together in new ways.
- Continually redesign this dynamic curriculum by assessing its success according to the College's mission.
- Introduce new educational opportunities that give students more direct experience with the creation, interpretation and application of knowledge.
- Support the dynamic physical learning environment with progressive and effective information technologies.
- Encourage pilot projects in flexible scheduling of classes, interdisciplinary courses, course-embedded travel, online and technology-rich courses, inquiry-based learning, real-world problem-solving, and experiential learning.
- Maximize the time faculty members have for teaching, advising, and research by increasing the amount and level of support they receive in fulfilling their service and administrative work obligations.
- Strengthen global and cultural awareness, exchange, and understanding by providing more opportunities for Grinnell students to

study abroad and for international students to study at Grinnell.

- Create and support structures of interdisciplinary research and share resources and discoveries within and outside the Grinnell community.
- Ensure that we attract and retain the very best faculty members by exploring a menu of options that make Grinnell the best possible place to teach and live.
- Create a Center for Teaching and Learning to coordinate pilot curricular projects, curricular development, and assessment of learning.

Discussion

This strategy specifies a significant change in Grinnell's academic programming, specifically, that (a) the curriculum will easily assimilate and accommodate new ideas, (b) the administrative structure will be subordinate to the most powerful curriculum and mode of course presentation, (c) learning opportunities will be organized as a network of options rather than the traditional linear organization, (d) student learning will be assessed and the results used to guide continuous improvement, and (d) the educational experience will consciously include preparation for post-graduate success.

Strategy #2: *The Grinnell Student Population*

Create a student body that individually and collectively reaches a remarkable record of achievement and that maximizes the interactive learning opportunities for all Grinnell students.

This strategy recognizes that much learning is student-to-student, and thus other Grinnell students are a significant part of the College's learning environment for every student. It also recognizes that especially as part of a liberal arts education, diversity of cultures, backgrounds, perspectives, expectations and aspirations of fellow

students is an important ingredient of a rich learning environment. In addition, the inspiration provided by high-achieving students is particularly valuable for Grinnell's faculty, staff and students. Among the practical implications of this strategy is that the College will conduct annual assessment of the experience of the current student population to improve student life and academic programming while actively informing the admissions process. This process moves far beyond the traditional student recruitment goals, such as academic credentials, proportion of students who are first in their family to attend college, differences in socio-economic status, international and domestic students, and the many dimensions of diversity.

Tactics

- Define, shape and build the student community, broadening the pool of applicants and revising the selection criteria annually in the context of the current student community and the aspirations of the college.
- Develop clear guiding principles for the composition of each class, and then use these principles as the basis of a systematic process for evaluating all the implications of selecting individual students.
- Explore the financial considerations in decisions about the composition of the incoming class, and adjust these considerations in the context of the College's near- and longer-term budget and programmatic aspirations while maintaining a sustainable commitment to access to higher education.
- Understand the perceptions of prospective students and their families, and use this information in marketing and promoting the College.
- Restructure admission committees and consider other models of administering the student

recruitment and admission process.

- Change the admissions scoring system to better predict student enrollment, success and community involvement.
- Redesign recruitment materials in print, video, and web consistent with market research about prospective students who would be interested in and benefit most from Grinnell's offerings.
- Align the college's messaging (print, media, web, voice, publications) with the distinctive programs and news about Grinnell that resonate with its audiences.
- Develop content and messages that depict unique elements of Grinnell's past and present. Pilot focused retention programs consistent with research on the populations who leave the College and use this information to improve student-life and academic programming while informing admission processes.

Discussion

This strategy introduces several new components into the systematic process of crafting Grinnell's student population. For example, it requires an evaluation of learning, engagement, and retention among the members of the first-, second- and third-year students. Second, it requires explicit consideration of the financial consequences of the student admission process to the College's budget. And third, the design of the recruitment process is tied directly to the College's multitude of communication and promotion activities.

Strategy #3: Grinnell as the Launch Pad for Multiple Life Paths and Careers

Create a curriculum and learning environment that enables and encourages students to pursue and succeed along multiple life paths and careers.

While not straying from its traditional liberal

arts education, Grinnell will design a range of learning experiences that enable students to experience post-graduate options. Grinnell's liberal arts program benefits its graduates by emphasizing general competencies such as analytical and critical thinking, problem solving, and effective communication skills. These competencies have longer-term value than specific occupational skills, especially in a world that changes rapidly. On the other hand, achieving some practical experience provides a broader basis on which Grinnell graduates can choose careers and life paths, and these experiences enable students to achieve credentials that are valuable in pursuing post-graduate options.

Tactics

- Intentionally connect the Grinnell integrated educational experience to post-graduate endeavors and an orientation to the future; inculcate real-world experiences in the learning experience of students.
- Create a structure (one-stop shop) to coordinate internships, externships, community service opportunities, fellowships, and on-campus employment.
- Develop the Grinnell alumni network of career mentors to include a substantial number of internship or other work opportunities.
- Create a career buddy system for every graduating student including alumni, parents, and staff as potential buddies.
- Create an alumni week during the academic year to bring back alumni who have used their liberal education in a wide range of fields including business, law, higher education, medicine, and community service; create opportunities for interactions with current students.
- Integrate post-graduate plans and interests of students seamlessly with the alumni database.
- Create a retreat each year for all

students to reflect on their experience at Grinnell and refine their plans for the first five years after graduation.

- Support and expand the Career Development Office.
- Expand the College's career services to include assistance to recent alumni.

Discussion

This strategy includes two changes with the first more overt than the second. The curriculum and the learning experience created for Grinnell students, while not deviating from the liberal arts core, will provide many opportunities to gain experiences that will assist students in making and succeeding in post-graduate opportunities. More informally, the College will encourage students to make career and life path choices from a wide range of possibilities.

Strategy #4: The Grinnell Learning Place
Design, operate and support all spaces on the campus to enhance the academic, social and environmental success of the Grinnell College community.

Among the practical characteristics of such a campus are multiple spaces for educational and social experiences within all buildings and throughout the campus; living spaces that enhance individual and shared academic growth and encourage intellectual innovation; facilities for mentoring and creating positive student-to-student experiences; spaces that enhance the maturation of self-governance; best-in-class integrated technology; and a clear demonstration of Grinnell's commitment to high-quality spaces for the activities of the College community.

Tactics

- Create integrative learning environments to purposefully enhance and facilitate collaboration among the activities in classrooms,

co-curricular activities, and the library as well as the residence halls.

- Renovate ARH and Carnegie to provide modern, active, team-based, technology-enhanced learning spaces for the humanities and social sciences.
- Construct classrooms to foster student centered, collaborative learning with an emphasis on the liberal arts, of course, but also the application of knowledge to important questions.
- Renovate the Library to meet the current (and future) learning needs of students and faculty, to serve as a nexus for evaluating data and information, and for connecting the College virtually with external communities and learning opportunities.
- Implement an operation and maintenance process and budget that ensures the continual attention to these high-quality spaces and that anticipates and plans for future space-related needs.
- Create physical spaces that encourage collaboration, community building, inquiry, interdisciplinary interactions and learning.
- Systematically review all buildings and outdoor spaces, and implement facilities to enhance formal and informal learning and interactions among faculty, staff, students and administrators.
- Renovate the residence halls to meet the terms of this strategy, particularly to support the academic mission and to enhance social interaction, self-governance, and the joys of living in the College's community.
- Make better use of the campus facilities in the summer months.
- Incorporate the city of Grinnell as a place of learning for students, and ensure a continuing collaborative

relationship between the College and city.

Discussion

This strategy recognizes the importance of spaces on campus and the ways in which these spaces support learning and scholarship, encourages the social interactions of the community, and reflects Grinnell's pride in its high-quality and environmentally conscious facilities and campus. Implementation requires completely integrated planning in which, for example, planning a capital project of any size must consider the academic implications, and likewise, academic programming must consider how spaces can optimize the learning experience. Moreover, this strategy requires renovation not only of classroom buildings, but of both the residence halls and the library to meet this same interactive expectation. Space-experience integration must be supported by information technology that enables first-rate scholarship and ensures that Grinnell graduates possess the related skills to be successful in an information-rich world.

Strategy #5: The Grinnell Alumni Community

Redesign the Grinnell alumni community, the alumni-to-alumni relations and the College-to-alumni relations by purposefully including alumni in all of the strategies.

Among the practical characteristics of such an alumni community are visible statements and actions to meet the goal of bringing alumni closer to each other as having shared a similar experience and as those who are significantly responsible for the future success of Grinnell; making the Grinnell campus always home to alumni and ensuring that the College enriches the lives of its alumni; and involving alumni as a coordinated team in enriching the experience of current students, and as partners as these students enter their post-graduate experience.

Tactics

- Actively engage alumni as mentors, role models, and career guides.
- Foster life-long learning and contributions of alumni in the College's intellectual life, service, and mentorship and advising.
- Create ways in which alumni involvement can enhance learning opportunities in every academic class and academic program,
- Create opportunities for alumni to find and interact with faculty, students, staff, and other alumni.
- Inform alumni about each other and the campus activities using methods and professionally collected information.
- Build an Alumni Hall with a range of amenities, on or adjacent to the campus, to serve as a home for alumni and their activities with each other and with the College community.
- Create a one-stop, easy virtual campus that provides information about, to alumni and for alumni including online classes, YouTube links, webinars, lectures and convocations, careers, addresses, relocation help, hobbies, events, opportunities and enroll alumni in this virtual campus.
- Involve alumni as formal advisors in formulating admission aspirations and selection criteria, curricula content and learning experience standards, program design, and assessment process and criteria.
- Develop and implement an effective suite of alumni services, such as virtual space that links alumni to students for career connections, searchable, interactive, online alumni database, alumni week on campus, expand Career Services to include serving recent alumni, and celebrate alumni accomplishments, honors and recognitions in many ways, including on the website magazine, online news and internal

communications.

- Create an international and national travelling faculty lecture program with the Alumni College to bring the teaching/learning/research of Grinnell College to the alumni.
- Increase the number of alumni who offer externships and internships.
- Pilot creative ways to strengthen the connection between the liberal arts and a meaningful life defined broadly and beyond career success.
- Organize alumni involvement in multiple dimensions, such as areas of interest, geography, and age cohort.

Discussion

This strategy will lead to a very different and a much more involved alumni community (the term “alumni” includes friends of the College who are not actually alumni). If fully implemented, this strategy means that virtually every decision made and action taken will seek to include alumni, and the line between the College and its alumni community will become intentionally blurred. Literally hundreds of alumni will be engaged in a wide variety of ways, from short videoconferences in classes addressing specific topics to advisors on proven approaches to student health. Because there are so many potential alumni interactions, both among alumni and with the College, and each of these planned interaction must be evaluated for effectiveness, realizing this strategy will require unprecedented coordination and innovative thinking.

Strategy #6: The Management of Grinnell’s Financial and Human Resources

Create a fiscally sustainable business model that supports the College’s continuing enhancements and maintains stability through variations in revenue sources and expenditure patterns.

For the College to plan appropriately and to achieve its fiduciary responsibilities, the business model must incorporate the relevant revenues and expenditures in a framework that permits exploration of the interactions among all budget variables, both in the short-term and over longer planning horizons.

Tactics

- Invest strategically in the College’s programs and facilities to ensure the high quality of the educational experience and thus maintain the student demand for a Grinnell education.
- Diversify and increase the flow of revenues and reduce dependence on endowment.
- Maintain or grow the value of the endowment, thus creating resources for future students.
- Fully implement Enterprise Risk Management¹.
- Develop a suite of models to ensure that the entire financial system (revenues and expenditures, long- and short-term) is understood, including the feedback loops and the consequences of posited scenarios.
- Tie the budget process explicitly to these five strategies.
- Create an innovation fund to encourage and facilitate innovation throughout the College.
- Create a sustainable source of funding for innovation and pilot projects.
- Systematically search for efficiencies and better ways of working to steward the resources and maximize the impact the resources have on the educational experience and the opportunities for faculty and staff.
- Evaluate and eliminate expenditures that are of lower priority.

¹ A process by which an organization systematically identifies, prioritizes, and responds to risks and opportunities across functional areas.

- Review administrative and governance processes to assure that the college can quickly, nimbly, and effectively respond to opportunities and challenges.
- Set realistic goals and increase annual giving by alumni and friends.
- Develop shared understanding of cost structure and expenditure patterns, visible to the Grinnell community.

Discussion

The College has enjoyed excellent financial management, routinely receiving unqualified audit reports, excellent bond rating, and is regularly recognized as exemplary among its institutional peers. Through the recent joint work of the Administration and the Trustees, the College's financial planning processes are becoming more robust and predictive. The College must use these increased predictive capabilities to adjust and maintain a sustainable financial position and to enable the successful implementation of these strategies.

Tactical Actions Relating to Human Resources (Faculty and Staff)

(Selected from the Report of the Steering Committee)

Faculty

- Review the governance structure to make decision-making more streamlined, effective, efficient, and rewarding.
- Develop mechanisms for rewarding innovation.
- Make chairs and leadership positions in the faculty a distinction.
- Reward exceptional work with meaningful financial awards.
- Increase the number of academic support staff, provide them with deeper professional education and training, and empower them to share

administrative responsibilities with faculty more effectively.

Staff

- Review the evaluation system for staff that allows for recognition and reward for exceptional performance.
- Increase involvement and expertise of administrative support.
- Better support staff professional and educational development including the pursuit of graduate and doctoral work.
- Develop a sabbatical program for staff.
- Develop a culture of innovation in operations where appropriate.