

Choosing Grinnell's Future The Report of Grinnell College's Strategic Planning Steering Committee April 29, 2012

Executive Summary

In August 2011 Grinnell College set out to chart a strategic plan for its future. Early in this process, the community affirmed its commitment to the belief that a liberal arts education filled with opportunities for discovery and collaboration remains the best preparation for meeting life's opportunities and challenges. Defining the best way to provide a liberal arts education in the twenty-first century requires re-evaluating how we deliver this exceptional experience, and what the experience includes.

In this plan we propose changes in the way we teach, learn, and work at Grinnell—ways that remain faithful to the liberal arts while envisioning practices that will inspire new levels of excellence, creativity and confidence. Grinnell will be agile and adaptive without losing sight of its distinctive qualities and core values. Through this plan we are choosing to work at the forefront of liberal arts education.

The plan addresses six major areas, or directions, each of which connects us to our distinctive qualities. Our pursuit of excellence in these six areas will advance the College's commitment to collaborative, inquiry-based learning, anchored in a diverse community of mentors and colleagues who foster one another's intellectual development.

The six major directions are:

- Re-envision our commitment to a liberal education and its value in the 21st century.
- Attract, enrich, and graduate a diverse and talented student community.
- Instill an orientation to the future and intentionally connect the Grinnell educational experience to post-graduate endeavors.
- Foster life-long learning and contributions of alumni in the College's intellectual life, service, and mentorship and advising.
- Celebrate the diverse achievements of our students, faculty, staff and alumni.
- Transform administrative practices to maintain continuous, collaborative, and adaptive planning for the College.

Under each major direction we have organized a selection of relevant, suggested tactics. These are designed to help us move toward a continuous state of attentiveness—a culture of ongoing evaluation and re-evaluation.

Preamble

Among the various characterizations of Grinnell College, one of the simplest and most instructive comes from the College's original Articles of Incorporation: "The object of this institution shall be to promote the general interests of education and to qualify young [people] for the different professions and for the honorable discharge of the various duties of life." Grinnell educates students with three goals in mind—to prepare them for the many activities and occupations that they will pursue in their adult lives; to nurture a lifelong curiosity and interest in learning; and, equally important, to develop their conscientiousness and responsibility toward others. The College's founders recognized that education is liberating—freeing the mind from constraints of tradition, fear, and prejudice—but also that it has enormous practical application, giving students opportunities for meaningful work and substantive engagement with the world.

Grinnell has pursued this mission in different ways throughout its history, ranging from an original course of study that included no electives, to the creation of Classical and Scientific tracks, to a Group System of courses with majors and minors, to the combination of different areas of study within distinctive divisions (five, then three) made up of different departments. Over time Grinnell transformed its curriculum from one that was highly prescriptive, in which students made no selection of their courses, to one that is distinctively open, giving students enormous latitude in their choice of study. Our educational experience has also evolved to incorporate learning opportunities outside the classroom, such as off-campus study, internships, and summer research projects.

Underneath it all, Grinnell has always upheld its original goal of "promot[ing] the general interests of education"—that is, educating students to ask fundamental questions about nature and society and develop a variety of methods for answering them. Even the most recent changes to Grinnell's educational program—the introduction of new forms of interdisciplinary study, the creation of Mentored Advanced Projects (MAPs), the emphasis on inquiry-based learning—have all been in the service of deepening students' ability to ask those fundamental questions and pursue answers in innovative ways.

Today, a Grinnell education is distinctive in its emphasis on active, rigorous, and collaborative learning supported and guided by exceptional scholars and devoted mentors. The College's commitment to social justice is part of the fabric of our community and permeates our culture. We also ask our students to take an unusual level of responsibility for their college education. In an environment rich with peer, faculty, and staff mentoring and within a strong academic advising structure, they make choices about their lives, their academic programs, their course selections, and the ways in which they construct knowledge. Learning at Grinnell is active and participatory, moving well beyond simple absorption and recollection of facts. Wide curricular choice coupled with a strong advising program is not only designed to tailor the education to the student, but to develop in each student the confidence and agency to make choices that will lead to positive personal and professional accomplishments and civic engagement.

Now, in 2012, Grinnell College faces new challenges to its educational mission. Economic uncertainty and the rising costs of higher education have underscored the College's responsibility to prepare students for "the different professions," including professions that

have not yet been invented. At the same time, we feel an ever more pressing need to graduate men and women who will apply themselves to the world's social and ecological problems—to pursue not just private gain, but public good “for the honorable discharge of the duties of life.”

President Kington, in his address to the College that began the strategic planning process, delineated the social forces and trends that will confront Grinnell in its future:

- a decline in the use of public resources to support higher education access;
- an increase in public scrutiny of higher education's costs, and their relation to quality;
- inadequate preparation of students for college by the U.S. educational system;
- growing competition from higher education systems around the world;
- technological innovations that enable delivery of some types of advanced education without the fixed costs of a residential college;
- increased racial/ethnic diversity in high-school aged population; and
- demographic growth focused in the American south and southwest, which has not traditionally been an area of recruitment strength for Grinnell.

In addition to these national and international trends, we also face our own internal challenges. In the spring of 2011, President Kington reported that the College's net tuition revenues were dwindling while philanthropic giving was declining. The burden of operational costs had come to rest largely on our endowment.

In order to pursue Grinnell's educational mission we need to adapt to a changing environment, and this is how the Strategic Plan has been conceived and articulated. It is in hewing closely to the spirit of our founders that we as a community can best achieve the flexibility essential to the College's future. By more fully engaging our alumni and creating better connections between Grinnell and post-graduate careers and opportunities, the College can more intentionally “qualify young men and women for the different professions.” By improving our practices for attracting, enrolling and graduating a diverse and talented student body we can ensure that we are fully preparing our students for the “honorable discharge of the duties of life.” Most important, by re-envisioning Grinnell's commitment to “the general interests of education,” Grinnell can become a leader of liberal education in the twenty-first century.

Launching Strategic Planning

On June 9, 2011, Grinnell's Board of Trustees set the stage for strategic planning:

The Board of Trustees charges the President with the development, within the next academic year, of an ambitious, five-year Strategic Plan and authorizes the Board Chair and the President to take all actions deemed necessary and appropriate to implement the formation of such a plan.

The Board instructed the community to complete a strategic plan in nine months, addressing five areas that they defined as essential for raising the level and profile of a Grinnell education:

- Alumni Engagement
- Distinctiveness
- Enrollment
- Post-graduate Success
- Teaching and Learning

In presentations to the campus community and alumni around the globe, President Kington described why Grinnell's large endowment was insufficient to sustain the College on its own. A dearth of new revenues would eventually leave us unable to maintain, let alone grow, our exceptional programs. This began a conversation about how Grinnell's work fit into the higher education context nationally and globally. President Kington also identified the need for us to manage the College's administrative costs through continuous planning, improvement and strategic investment. With this in mind, the strategic planning committee added a sixth major direction: operational planning, collaboration and assessment.

The Grinnell College Strategic Planning Steering Committee began its work in the fall of 2011 by creating working groups to generate, receive and synthesize ideas from the community. A list of the steering committee members appears in Appendix 1. Students, staff, faculty, alumni and friends submitted more than a thousand suggestions. The Committee also created a transparency working group to facilitate community communication and participation. By the end of December 2011 the working groups had generated a long list of strategies and tactics that addressed the Board-defined priorities, with the goal of moving Grinnell into position as the one of the nation's premiere liberal arts colleges.

After reviewing this list of strategies and tactics the Steering Committee identified six underlying themes, or strategic directions:

- Re-envision our commitment to a liberal education and its value in the 21st century.
- Attract, enrich, and graduate a diverse and talented student community.
- Instill an orientation to the future and intentionally connect the Grinnell educational experience to post-graduate endeavors.
- Foster life-long learning and contributions of alumni in the College's intellectual life, service, and mentorship and advising.
- Celebrate the diverse achievements of our students, faculty, staff and alumni.
- Transform administrative practices to maintain continuous, collaborative, and adaptive planning for the College.

Six Major Directions

1. Re-envision Grinnell's commitment to a liberal education and its value in the twenty-first century.

Liberal arts colleges throughout the United States are being called upon to articulate their value in terms of growing demands for affordable, practical and intellectually rigorous education. Grinnell is well-positioned to respond to these challenges given our commitment to access, our high standing among our peer institutions and our tradition of connecting intellectual work to social engagement. The fact that we impose relatively few constraints on our students' four-year plan of study especially frees the College to experiment with new ways of guiding students toward transformative experiences.

To achieve this position of leadership, we will ensure that our learning remains grounded in inquiry, that learning spaces are state-of-the-art, and that our whole community—students, faculty, staff and alumni alike—embraces the commitment to lifelong learning that is the hallmark of a liberal arts education. Our faculty, in particular, model the “living” of a liberal education: not only when they keep up with their respective fields, but especially when they pursue learning in areas other than the ones in which they teach. We believe that such a teaching and learning environment fosters an adaptive curriculum and pedagogy that will evolve fluidly, creatively, and intentionally in response to new and sometimes unanticipated challenges.

Such an environment will more effectively cultivate students who can integrate knowledge across disciplines; who are sophisticated in their writing, analysis and research; and who understand the social basis and responsibilities of knowledge. It will include more multidisciplinary courses at the introductory and capstone levels; more courses that include off-campus travel; and greater integration of knowledge from multiple sources. Faculty will have opportunities to design courses and projects that allow them to learn each other's disciplines. Students will participate in the full cycle of inquiry from definition of a problem and engagement with the appropriate primary evidence to dissemination of their results in an open forum subject to public critique.

Departments and divisions serve important and historical roles, but their boundaries sometimes impede our aspirations to be more creative and collaborative across disciplines. Faculty need flexibility to re-envision the liberal arts. Governance structures can be revised to promote efficient decision-making, giving faculty more time to be learners themselves. Meanwhile, the structures of majors can be oriented to a multitude of career paths, including graduate school.

This direction challenges our current assumptions about how we spend our time and how we create connections among different learning experiences. We cannot simply “do more,” but rather must change what we do to ensure that our work reflects our highest aspirations as educators. Collaboration and coordination are the keys. This includes linking faculty and academic resource centers, classroom learning and learning outside the classroom, and faculty in one discipline with faculty in others. Staff should also be empowered to

collaborate with faculty and alumni in developing innovative teaching and learning methods.

Proposed Strategies

Introduce new educational opportunities in both teaching and research that increase cross-disciplinary collaboration

The following strategies build on the College's earlier innovations, including the Expanded Knowledge Initiative (EKI), Mentored Advanced Projects (MAPs) and the interdisciplinary centers.

- A. View the entire constellation of Grinnell College courses with departmental and divisional barriers made provisionally "invisible" to assess how areas of knowledge might fit together in new ways.
- B. Support bridging projects between faculty in different disciplines and courses that may combine two or more disciplines, including introductory- to advanced-level multidisciplinary courses.
- C. Create a Center for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment to support curricular innovation and experimentation. Whether viewed as a physical or virtual space, this Center would encourage experimentation with:
 - new ways of teaching writing, oral communication, and quantitative, visual, and information literacy;
 - opportunities to share improvements and discoveries in pedagogy, within and beyond the College; and
 - new partnerships between faculty and non-faculty specialists (including alumni, academic resource professionals and other staff).
- D. Empower new or existing centers to coordinate and support ongoing programs of interdisciplinary research involving faculty and advanced students.
- E. Increase the accessibility and sharing of knowledge, scholarship, and primary source materials created at or owned by the College.

Build new learning spaces that encourage collaboration, creativity, and inquiry

The physical environment of a college can hinder or promote collaborative learning. We have learned that the physical spaces in which students and faculty meet and in which classes and discussions take place contribute to the engagement of students in the learning enterprise. Even residence halls can act as spaces where intellectual and social engagements are seamlessly blended. The nature of these locations themselves can make the difference between a student considering themselves "in the right place" and feeling unwelcome.

At Grinnell, our existing learning spaces in the humanities and social sciences do not foster collaboration. Most importantly, we need facilities configured with the right technology and access to necessary data and primary source material to support emerging forms of inquiry-based learning. Well-designed physical spaces will enable faculty to show films, do in-class work on statistics packages or use databases of images and sounds and allow students to create different forms of work-products beyond the traditional “term paper.” Mission-driven architecture would support the full creative range of original materials and scholarly products generated at Grinnell.

- F. Renovate and build learning spaces that will increase collaboration, mentorship, and inquiry-based learning, especially in the Humanities and Social Studies and the Libraries.

Give students more direct experience with the creation and interpretation of knowledge

During the past fifteen years we have witnessed a growth in the number of learning experiences that challenge traditional definitions of “course,” “classroom” and “professor”: these include Mentored Advanced Projects (MAPs) that involve off-campus research; course-embedded travel, such as when an instructor takes a class to CERA, Chicago or Berlin; projects that rely on specialists for guidance in a particular technology or research method. These opportunities have provided students with experience in interpreting, creating, synthesizing, collecting, performing and writing. The College needs to continue supporting such experiences and offer the flexibility to test new ones. As have MAPs, such new ideas may challenge the notion of the traditional academic calendar.

- G. Create more opportunities for:

- course-embedded travel;
- courses with experiential components;
- clinics for real-world problem solving;
- alternative uses of the academic calendar (such as two short courses in lieu of a single, semester-long course); and
- curricular structures that are coordinated with and complement co-curricular activities (such as the Rosenfield Symposia or Scholars’ Convocations)

Analyze faculty responsibilities in order to ensure that time spent is fulfilling to the individual and the institution

Study the current ways that faculty time is spent to determine which activities can be delegated to others, eliminated or made more meaningful to the individual and the institution.

- H. Explore the potential of various modifications of individual teaching responsibilities, up to and including possibilities like a “flexible fifth” or a two-two teaching load.
- I. Review the governance structure of the College to make decision-making more streamlined, reduce the burden of service and, most importantly, make better decisions.

- J. Re-imagine the structure of the organization of the faculty, in order to increase collaboration between disciplines, attract and retain faculty in cutting-edge fields and maintain flexibility in the curriculum.
- K. 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.

2. Attract, enrich, and graduate a diverse and talented student community.

An important part of students' extraordinary experience at Grinnell is the opportunity to live and learn as part of a diverse community where high scholarly expectations are backed with substantial resources to support learning. Our location in rural Iowa further promotes a deeply engaged and collaborative academic community. The diversity which is such an integral aspect of this learning experience is supported by our commitment to access through a need-blind admission policy and a promise to meet full demonstrated need for domestic students.

The socio-economic, cultural, geographic, and racial and ethnic diversity of Grinnell's student body is a purposeful expression of the belief that transformation occurs at the nexus of open-mindedness and encounters with difference. Students are invited to examine their lives in the context of the world they will encounter upon graduation. They engage their peers' ideas and perspectives in a robust residential, on-campus immersion experience that often challenges their assumptions or conventional wisdom. Our recruitment efforts directly contribute to this learning environment by creating a community with a wide variety of people and perspectives. We believe that our current mix of domestic and international students is roughly the right mix to accomplish our goals.

The strategies described in this section can shape an enrollment approach that fulfills this mission. To be successful, they will have to overcome several potential impediments:

- declining domestic applications, at a time when most selective colleges observed increases;
- concerns about a possible increase in the number of low-performing students;
- less-than-ideal socioeconomic diversity among our student body;
- questions about the efficacy of the established admission rating system.

In the most recent cycle the Office of Admission successfully confronted the first of these obstacles by reviving applications with targeted marketing, publications that better represented the Grinnell experience, and tremendous Admission staff travel and outreach. In order to sustain and build on this progress, we need to examine several key factors related to admission and enrollment: market perceptions of prospective students and their families; our recruitment and admission practices and policies; and the deployment of financial aid in a manner compatible with the need for sustainable student revenues over time. This may also be the right moment to redefine the role played by faculty committees in the admission process.

Grinnell seeks to “graduate women and men who can think clearly, who can speak and write persuasively and even eloquently, who can evaluate critically both their own and others' ideas, who can acquire new knowledge, and who are prepared in life and work to use their knowledge and their abilities to serve the common good.” We can achieve this aim by enrolling academically distinguished and diverse classes of students who will contribute to a vibrant culture of scholarly, co-curricular and extracurricular pursuits. In doing so, we must attend to the relationship between net tuition revenue and the investments necessary to realize our mission.

Proposed Strategies

Shape and build the student community

One critical expression of Grinnell’s mission is the composition of the class we choose to enroll. It embodies Grinnell’s commitment to educating students who will promote the common good through their contributions to their professions and communities. The following are possible strategies to shape and build such a community:

- A. develop guiding principles and associated parameters regarding the composition of the class specific to academic qualifications, gender balance, domestic and international geographic diversity, ethnic/racial diversity, socio-economic diversity, and talent diversity;
- B. revamp the admission rating system to better reflect the expectations and goals for the class to select those students who will most benefit from and contribute to the Grinnell experience and to better ensure the matriculation of those who are most likely to carry out Grinnell’s purpose of promoting the common good;
- C. develop specific tactics to broaden the pool of applicants who will possess the strongest possible combination of qualifications;
- D. consider creating a partnership with established educational programs that provide developmental instruction and lead to admission to Grinnell College; and
- E. charge the Committee on Admission and Financial Aid (or its successor) with the responsibility to assess the alignment of entering classes with the guiding admission principles and associated parameters.

Strategically determine the size of the student body

At the behest of the Board of Trustees, the working group on enrollment reviewed various arguments for decreasing, increasing or maintaining the size of the student body. Decreasing the student body from its current size (1500 on campus and 100 more studying abroad) would allow the College to be more selective in its admissions and more easily maintain a diverse student body. But a decrease would also lead to the loss of tuition revenue, a need to reduce personnel and possibly a need to eliminate departments and programs that have relatively small enrollments.

Increasing the size of the student body might make the College more attractive to students seeking a larger community and support expansion in the number of faculty and majors. But a larger student body would also challenge the College's admission selectivity, make it more difficult to maintain current levels of diversity and possibly undermine our distinctive sense of community. Our assessment of other institutions' experiences and the costs associated with expansion suggests that enrollment growth would be unlikely to lead to useful economies of scale. In fact, a significant increase in students would require further construction and renovation, since the building projects of the last ten years were explicitly designed for a community of 1500 on-campus students.

Ultimately, the working group was persuaded that maintaining the current student body size is the best option for the foreseeable future.

- F. Maintain the current student body size of 1600.¹

Understand market perceptions among prospective students and their families

We want to raise Grinnell's profile and reputation. This requires an understanding of how we are currently perceived by prospective students and their influencers, and a better understanding of what motivates college choice among the applicants we wish to attract.

The market research firm Art and Science Group is completing a year-long study to determine prospective students' perceptions of Grinnell, and how they influence enrollment behavior. The research may affect how we set the College's comprehensive fee and answer questions about Grinnell's price sensitivity among top-tier national liberal arts colleges. The firm's findings and recommendations will be available in October 2012. These will shape future admission materials, as well as our priorities and strategic activities in the Offices of Admission and Financial Aid.

- G. Develop recruitment materials, redesign admission and financial aid websites, analyze enrollment-related data to inform practices by the staff members and alumni volunteers.
- H. Set price and financial aid packaging based on market research and predictive modeling.
- I. Identify enhancements to the academic program that would attract desirable applicants for admission who will be compelled by the strength of Grinnell's offerings and will be likely to become imaginative problem-solvers and effective global citizens.

Finance the educational experience

Higher education is the most reliable path to social mobility. Grinnell provides access to higher education by enrolling highly qualified students whose families cannot afford the associated costs. This is a direct reflection of our mission to promote the common good, and our need-blind admission policy has served us well for many years. The working group

¹ This number includes students studying abroad.

believes the College can continue to uphold this responsibility by developing a financial aid model that serves current students while sustaining our ability to educate future generations. Moreover, the working group strongly reaffirms Grinnell's core values of need-blind admission and a commitment to meet the full demonstrated financial need of domestic students.

Rising levels of total financial aid spending challenge our ability to admit students without regard to need. We have a range of options for how we continue to meet their need: impose further on our endowment; attract more gift dollars to the College; increase the percentage of students who can contribute tuition toward operational costs; or some combination of the three. Such strategies require informed pricing decisions, strategic and sophisticated financial aid practices, and the development of an economically balanced pool of applicants. The College views the issue as so urgent that it has already begun taking steps toward those goals.

- J. Review financial-aid and merit-aid practices in order to better construct the classes we seek and to contribute to long-term financial sustainability.

Retain and graduate students who choose to pursue an education at Grinnell

Grinnell's graduation rate (that is, the percentage of our students who graduate from the College) is excellent compared to the national average, but does not fare as well in comparison to our peers. At the same time, faculty value the willingness of the institution to take chances on students who might contribute to the life of the College. To balance these competing concerns, the College needs to understand the answers to several questions: Why are students not graduating? Who are the students who are not graduating? What in our practices or culture makes it difficult or undesirable to stay at Grinnell? Do we adequately support the students we choose to take chances on? What programs are needed to support them?

- K. Understand more about why some of our students do not continue at Grinnell by:
 - clearly assigning a committee—possibly the Committee on Admission and Financial Aid (or its successor)—the responsibility to guide institutional decisions related to student retention; and
 - participating in and using surveys that help to determine strategic and programmatic needs for improvement such as the national Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI).
- L. Evaluate programs we now use to retain students and determine if new ones are required.

Restructure administrative committees on admissions

The time may have come for a significant change in admission and financial aid governance procedures. There are currently two faculty committees involved in the admission process: the Admission Board and the Committee on Admission and Financial Aid. The Admission Board was designed as a process committee and is involved in the actual admission of

students to the College. However, its review of fewer than a hundred applications a year does not make a substantive contribution to the shaping of a given class, especially as application numbers have grown. The Committee on Admission and Financial Aid, meanwhile, serves as a policy group overseeing the overall admission and financial aid process.

Given other governance responsibilities, it may not be the best use of faculty time to sustain two separate committees. The College could modify the charge of the Committee on Financial Aid and Admission to more clearly define its role in admission, class composition, graduation and retention, and the awarding of financial aid and merit aid. It might be useful to redefine them as a committee of stature, which would be regarded as important service for the purpose of merit reviews.

M. Establish a single committee with a clear charge to:

- assess the alignment of entering classes with admission principles and parameters;
- check that price and financial aid packaging are supporting our admission goals; and
- guide institutional decisions related to student retention.

3. Instill an orientation to the future and intentionally connect the Grinnell educational experience to post-graduate endeavors.

The learning that takes place at Grinnell is active learning, rather than simple absorption and recall. Wide curricular choice, coupled with a strong advising program, not only enables each student to tailor her or his education but encourages them to make choices that lead to positive personal and professional accomplishments and civic engagement.

Encouraging students to look beyond their four years on campus, to life after graduation, further encourages their sense of choice and agency. As their confidence grows, their options for post-college experience broaden, and may create new opportunities for them to engage with the College in the future.

A great deal of learning at Grinnell takes place outside the classroom. Internships, externships, apprenticeships, employment, service opportunities, travel and performances, to name a few, all contribute to the Grinnell experience. Yet it can be difficult for students to make connections between these learning experiences and what happens in the classroom. Students need guidance as they synthesize their multiple options and experience into a coherent whole. They need opportunities to apply, reflect on and articulate how their skills are applicable to their futures, answering the question: “How will this education help me for what comes *after* Grinnell?” Faculty, staff, students, alumni and members of the community at large can mentor them in ways that help make these connections. By engaging alumni in this mentoring work and integrating them into the College’s

educational efforts, we can simultaneously prepare our students to take their learning out into the world and strengthen our graduates' relationship back to the College.

Young alumni are challenged by the current economy and look to the College for guidance and networking opportunities. Providing them with an exceptional support network could help us develop a culture of philanthropy and foster life-long learning.

Possible Strategies

Coordinate and enhance resources

The College offers a rich array of offices supporting employment, internships, apprenticeships, short courses, training and community service, but students are not always aware of all the resources available to them. If we enhance the capacity of our offices and programs and coordinate their efforts, we can increase efficiencies, build awareness of available supports and better serve our students' needs.

- A. Create a Student Employment Office to coordinate and enhance campus employment experiences for students, departments, and supervisors.
- B. Explore how the programming, services, and initiatives led by the Career Development Office, the Office of Community Enhancement, the Wilson Program, the Office of Social Commitment, the Community Service Program, and a to-be-created student employment office can be better coordinated and communicated. Investigate the value and feasibility of integrating some of these programs into a new physical structure, such as a Center for Post Graduate Success.
- C. Support and expand the staff and services of the Career Development Office.
- D. Evaluate the staffing and resource levels of other key programs including community service, post-graduate service, and fellowship advising.
- E. Expand career development support for young alumni.

Increase access to experiential learning

Grinnell students benefit from multiple opportunities to connect what they have learned in the classroom to the world they will join as alumni. Government agencies, corporations, libraries, performance studios and other settings all serve as learning laboratories where students can apply their skills, clarify their goals and values and discern their strengths. Such activities enable them to build confidence, envision their futures and prepare for life after Grinnell.

- F. Multiply opportunities for students including internships, campus employment, peer mentoring, research, etc.
- G. Ensure that no student will be denied an internship because of a lack of funding, while maintaining a selective and rigorous funding application process.

Develop robust networking and mentoring opportunities

The Grinnell College community is a rich source of networks and mentors, including alumni, faculty, staff and parents. Thoughtful coordination would make these networks more visible, accessible and productive. In particular, students, faculty, staff, and alumni need ways to find each other and connect electronically; but they also need opportunities to meet in person, share their interests and develop meaningful relationships.

- H. Develop Grinnell-specific social networks as well as an online environment that links alumni to students, faculty and fellow alumni by field of study, career, city, interests, etc.
- I. Provide training for faculty advisors who wish to integrate more intensive career planning into their academic advising.
- J. While keeping a focus on excellent academic advising being done by the faculty, expand mentoring and increase the type of potential advisors to include intentional discussions of possible futures growing out of current learning and co-curricular experiences. Mentoring relationships may include interactions with other students, staff, faculty, alumni, and the greater community.
- K. Expand Alumni Scholars program, implement an Alumni-in-Residence program, and coordinate with the Wilson programs (Creative Careers and alumni short courses) to provide direct contact on campus with alumni who can model a successful life after Grinnell.
- L. Create an Alumni Week inviting alumni back to speak about pertinent topics in their profession and how their Grinnell education prepared them/put them on that path. Showcase how alumni have used their education and provide narratives from which students can learn about the array of different careers: understanding that careers are often built upon passion and experience, and that one's professional path may not always be linear.

Create explicit opportunities for reflection and planning

Given the constant whirl of campus life, Grinnell students need chances to pause and reflect on their collective experiences within and beyond the classroom. They may also need to be encouraged to take advantage of these opportunities. The College can promote such self-discovery and clarity by providing role modeling, mentoring, advising and other tools.

- M. Model opportunities for reflection and planning throughout the College through more intentional planning mechanisms and programmed time for introspection, review and re-assessment.
- N. Help students identify, articulate, and reflect upon the skill they have acquired through their liberal arts education.
- O. Capture co-curricular and experiential learning opportunities for students through advising and a plan for the future such as a portfolio, co-curricular transcript, or five-year plan.

4. Foster life-long learning and contributions of alumni in the College's intellectual life, service, and mentorship and advising.

Grinnell College alumni fondly remember their Grinnell experiences as periods of rigorous intellectual exchange, commitment to social responsibility and strong relationships with peers and mentors. Yet survey data and informal communication suggest that many graduates view their current engagement with the College as unidirectional, limited to receiving *The Grinnell Magazine* and solicitations for contributions. The College mindset needs to shift towards more actively serving alumni in ways that they deem meaningful, and increasing the quality and frequency of engagement activities. This includes promoting lifelong learning and shifting emphasis away from event-based engagement toward more systematic involvement with faculty, staff, students and each other.

Alumni want the College to relate to them in ways that are true to our mission and their experience as students. Engagement efforts should reflect traditions of academic rigor, independent thinking and service and close mentorship of students by faculty and staff. These connections will enable us to foster lifelong learning among alumni and encourage their contributions to the College. Examples include:

- expanding opportunities to continue their intellectual exchange with students, faculty, staff and other alumni;
- providing College-sponsored service- and social responsibility-related programming; and
- supporting mentorship opportunities that allow alumni to contribute professional or personal expertise, discipline-specific information or employment connections and interact based on shared geography, hobbies, avocations and interests.

Alumni also want opportunities to engage directly in campus life. The College needs to help students, faculty, and staff understand how they can benefit from alumni expertise, and give alumni opportunities to benefit from the expertise of students, faculty and staff. Finally, Grinnell must instill in each student a strong sense of attachment to the College, its mission and its community (including alumni, staff, faculty and students) that will endure long after they graduate. We already have successful programs that exemplify these principles. They include alumni athletic competitions and team reunions, Alumni College, Alumni Reunion Weekend, the Alumni Scholars Program, the GRASP (**G**rinne**R**ne**L**l **R**egional **A**dmission **S**upport **P**rogram) network and the Wilson Program. We can also establish new traditions, all with the goal of offering alumni a great range of options for connecting with the College.

However, fostering relationships with our current alumni will only take the College so far. The next step is to begin engaging our current students as future alums. By educating students about how alumni have contributed to their educational experience we encourage them to think about how they in turn will support future students. This cycle will foster a culture of philanthropy that recognizes the critical role of alumni giving and provides our

graduates with meaningful opportunities to give back to the College community through their time, energy, expertise and money.

Proposed Strategies

Create opportunities for alumni to return to campus

- A. Establish an annual alumni week (perhaps a J.B. Grinnell Week) during which students, alumni, faculty and staff gather on campus to present, discuss, and network around the intersections of business, education, social activism, health care, law, ecology, politics etc. This week of celebration will seek to advance alumni and faculty engagement with the College and to illuminate the vast array of post-graduate opportunities available to Grinnell College students.²
- B. Encourage faculty to collaborate with alumni in creating experiential components in their courses and increase the number of Practitioners-in-Residence who are invited back to campus.
- C. Formalize Alumni Mentors to include assigning a participating, local Grinnell Alumna or Alumnus to each tutorial.

Create opportunities for alumni to experience Grinnell off campus

- D. Develop a program for faculty to give lectures and meet alumni in cities across the globe.
- E. Expand the Alumni College program to different cities across the world.
- F. Encourage and organize regional volunteering in service to Grinnell (admission, career development) and community service.
- G. Reinvigorate the alumni travel program.

Create opportunities for alumni to find and interact with faculty, students, staff, and other alumni

- H. Create a virtual space where faculty, students, alumni, parents, and staff can exchange information, find community, and develop career and social connections.
- I. Develop a searchable database for alumni, faculty, students, and staff to share information, interests, and make connections.
- J. Create a Grinnell College YouTube Channel – perhaps with sub-stations for alumni posts related to lifelong learning, student posts for academic and co-curricular projects, and faculty/staff-related posts (coursework, admission, social commitment, etc.).

² This strategy also appears in Major Direction 4.

5. Celebrate the diverse achievements of our students, faculty, staff and alumni.

We want Grinnell to be recognized as one of the world's great liberal arts colleges. The prestige will support our admission and enrollment, our faculty recruitment and retention and our alumni engagement. It could also buoy morale and fuel a sense of common purpose. However, despite the fact that Grinnell consistently ranks among America's top liberal arts colleges, public awareness and appreciation for the College currently lags, nationally and globally.

What is the cause of this disconnect between the quality of a Grinnell education and unsatisfactory public awareness about our excellence? Inadequate marketing is partly to blame. In recent times we have not done enough, or perhaps done the right things to persuade audiences of Grinnell's excellence as an institution and as a community of high-achieving individuals.

Fortunately, the College community is not wanting for achievement. Our faculty, students, staff and alumni earn distinguished awards in their disciplines and professional fields; hold elected leadership positions; run successful businesses and nonprofit organizations; publish influential academic and popular writings; win sought-after grants; create and perform acclaimed artistic works and conduct pioneering research. Our faculty are especially known for their outstanding teaching and mentorship, frequently balanced with the demands of high-level scholarship.

We need to be more strategic in how we publicly celebrate these accomplishments, representing ourselves to the world in terms and manners that will make a strong positive impression on our audiences, and inspire them to connect with the College in ways that advance our mutual interests.

Grinnell has a powerful story it can tell the world about itself. That story involves outstanding teaching and learning; a dynamic, passionate body of alumni; talented and diverse students, faculty and staff. We need to tell the story of our unique community, and tell it well. This includes sharing news of our accomplishments, individual and collective. Happily, our definitions of achievement do not need to unswervingly emulate convention. Better to convey our excellence in ways that are true to Grinnell's mission, core values and strategic priorities—that celebrate the best, most attractive and most distinctive aspects of our character. We believe this truly “Grinnellian” definition of excellence will appeal to the audiences we hope to engage.

The College has achieved meaningful increases in our applications and alumni giving numbers this year. Sophisticated marketing can help further our national and global reputation and enhance our ability to attract the best prospective students, faculty and staff; fuel our continued commitment to outstanding teaching and learning; inspire alumni engagement and philanthropic support; and secure the long-term wellbeing of our entire College community. We are all lifted up on a rising tide of individual and collective achievement.

Possible Strategies

Promote new ideas

- A. Develop a mechanism for innovation in faculty, staff, and students that allows for experimenting and developing new programs, courses, and practices.
- B. Encourage and reward faculty and staff creativity and achievement.
- C. Investigate the rewards that motivate faculty and staff.
- D. Review the review system for staff that allows for recognition and reward for exceptional performance.
- E. Make chairs and leadership positions in the faculty a distinction.
- F. Reward excellent work with “meaningful” financial rewards.
- G. Better support staff professional and educational development including the pursuit of graduate and doctoral work.
- H. Explore rewards that recognize excellence from a team.

Publicize achievements

- I. Celebrate student, staff, alumni, and faculty accomplishments, honors and recognitions on the website, magazine, online news, and internal communications.
- J. Feature these achievements in our publicity, as examples of how the Grinnell community is committed to living our mission and core values.
- K. Develop content and messages that depict the unique elements of our past, present and future-vision.
- L. Initiate a marketing strategy that uses the distinctiveness message to engage and mobilize our target audiences.

Encourage and reward student creativity and achievement

- M. Create a liberal arts scholars award for students to create a yearlong capstone experience (design your own curriculum for a semester).
- N. Use merit aid strategically after enrollment.
- O. Use the College’s messaging to promote a sense of responsibility in a mentored and supportive environment. Support positive, impactful behavior by students, faculty, staff, and alumni.

6. Transform administrative practices to maintain continuous, collaborative, and adaptive planning for the College.

Grinnell wants to position itself to be a leader in the teaching and learning of the liberal arts. One outcome of the strategic planning process is agreement that we need to become an adaptive and resourceful institution in order to achieve this goal. Our efforts depend in part on the administration of the College—the services we provide to the community in support of our mission.

Grinnell aspires to a culture of continual planning. The success of this process depends on effective follow-through. A strategic plan that aspires to transformational change therefore needs to be accompanied by a plan for supportive governance. In some cases, changes in governance will be structural: for example, retiring unnecessary committees or supplying increased staff support. In other cases, the changes may be functional, such as new modes of governance to parallel new approaches to the curriculum.

Proposed Strategies

Share responsibilities, experience and information

Managing the strategic plan will require a continual awareness of the landscape of higher education, sensitivity to information, and an understanding of the costs in money, time, and human effort connected with college operations. The administration, faculty, staff, and students need to share understanding about how the College functions. By analogy, faculty members on governing committees should have more information regarding the cost of the various academic programs they govern.

Make evidence-based decisions

The development of goals in the strategic plan implies a set of metrics and rubrics – the collection of which will help the governing bodies discern the degree of success of the various tactics that are proposed in the service of each strategy. It will be necessary that members of these governing bodies not only have access to this information but that they be educated in the best ways to discern the implications of the data. It should be possible to use evidence to enhance, modify, or discontinue activities aligned with strategic goals.

Find economies of activity

Like most colleges, Grinnell has employed a decentralized operation with responsible autonomy guiding the use of resources at the department level. Decentralized decision-making may facilitate variable approaches to solving problems, but it is often injurious to cost control. Much like the need to provide a more coordinated way for students to plan their futures, the College should strive to provide a more coordinated way to plan its pluralistic futures. In the absence of a centralized governance structure, the College may wish to adopt the view that we operate on a related series of matrices (or spreadsheets) where a change in one cell of the matrix causes a cascade of changes in other cells. The

Registrar's data base of student transcripts, the College's operating budget, and the employee's workload planner are all forms of matrices that can show the implications of changed, reduced, or added resources and expenditures.

- A. Develop a shared understanding among students, faculty, and staff of how the College functions.
- B. Develop a research and development environment in operations where appropriate.
- C. Develop a mechanism for innovation in faculty, staff, and students that allows for experimenting and developing new programs, courses, and practices.³
- D. Employ sustainability as a means of improving adaptive, efficient stewardship of College resources.
- E. Build and maintain the physical environment.
- F. Build a larger and permanent analytics team.
- G. Reduce committee work for faculty.
- H. Increase the involvement and expertise of administrative support.
- I. Create a week each year for campus wide reflection and planning. Make one week out of the year a planning week for students and all to reflect, for wellness, for a time to stop, and for sustainability of human resources.
- J. Establish an annual alumni week (perhaps a J.B. Grinnell Week) at which students, alumni, faculty and staff gather on campus to present, discuss, and network around the intersections of business, education, social activism, health care, law, ecology, politics etc. This week of celebration will seek to advance alumni and faculty engagement with the College and to illuminate the vast array of post-graduate opportunities available to Grinnell College students.⁴
- K. Anticipate and plan for personnel changes that are adaptive to the creation of new facilities and learning initiatives.

³ This strategy appears in Major Directions 1 and Major Direction 3.

⁴ This strategy also appears in Major Direction 4 and Major Direction 5.

Committee Members:

Steve Andrews - Associate Professor, Department of English

Joe Bagnoli - Vice President of Enrollment and Dean of Admission and Financial Aid

Christi Baker - Administrative Support Assistant, College Services

Heather Benning - Associate Professor, Department of Physical Education

Jeff Blanchard - Assistant Professor, Department of Mathematics and Statistics

Keith Brouhle - Associate Professor, Department of Economics

Andrea Conner - Assistant Dean/Director of Residence Life, Student Affairs

Janet Davis - Assistant Professor, Department of Computer Science

Richard Fyffe - Librarian of the College, Library

Travis Greene - Dean of Students, Student Affairs

Beth Halloran - Vice-President of Development and Alumni Relations; Chair of the Alumni Working Group

David Harrison - Associate Professor, Department of French; Director, Center for International Studies; Chair of the Teaching and Learning Working Group

David Lopatto - Professor, Department of Psychology; Chair of the Faculty; Co-Chair of Strategic Planning

Angela Onwuachi-Willig '94 - Alumna, Law Professor at the University of Iowa

Mark Peltz - Associate Dean and Director of Career Development

Mary Phipps - Operations Manager, Admission; Chair of the Transparency Working Group

Vida Praitis - Associate Professor, Department of Biology

Sarah Purcell - Associate Professor, Department of History; Director, Rosenfield Program

Jim Reische - Vice President of Communications

Gabe Schechter '12 - President, Student Government Association

Pablo Silva - Associate Professor, Department of History; Chair of the Enrollment Working Group

Paula Smith - Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of the College; Professor, Department of English

Jim Swartz - Professor, Department of Chemistry; Interim Associate Vice President of Analytic Support and Institutional Research; Chair of the Distinctiveness Working Group

Justin Thomas - Assistant Professor, Department of Theatre and Dance

Angela Voos - Special Assistant to the President; Co-Chair of Strategic Planning

Karen Voss - Vice President for Finance and Treasurer

Eliza Willis - Professor, Department of Political Science

Lesley Wright - Director of the Faulconer Gallery; Lecturer, Department of Art; Chair of the Post-graduation Success Working Group

Mervat Youssef - Assistant Professor of Arabic, Department of French