



ON PURPOSE: OUR STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

VERSION 6.0 (SEPTEMBER 2010)

OVERVIEW

When we began our planning process in May 2009, we set out to accomplish two important objectives: one, to develop an institutional culture of planning that fosters strategic thinking and influences all decision making, resource allocation, and assessment efforts; and the other, which would be appropriately fitting to such a culture, to develop a plan that is an agile, living document based on our core educational values and realities of our current and future contexts.

Last year we involved the Wooster community – faculty, administrative staff, students, trustees, and alumni – in an iterative process of reflection and analysis. In the first phase we formulated fresh articulations of our mission, core values, and vision for Wooster. In the second phase we established strategic objectives¹ and identified indicators we would track in our quest to accomplish them. In the third phase we generated a number of strategic initiatives we would undertake, things we would do differently which are designed to move us from where we are now to where we want to be.

Where do we want to be? Our fundamental vision is to prosper as a distinguished independent liberal arts college, to thrive as a vigorous intellectual community, and to create a reputation that reflects our achievements. The College of Wooster will be known as a “great place to live, learn, and work.” Our reputation will extend beyond the campus, nationally and internationally, and while we will be among the best undergraduate liberal arts colleges with a focus on research and collaboration, our programs will be clearly distinctive from others and reflect our character. Our financial resource base will remain strong and will be appropriate to support our mission and initiatives. Our alumni will be making a difference through their contributions to society, and we will have the proof to substantiate our assertions. We will have a College-wide, sustainable culture of planning.

We will get here by fulfilling our educational purpose with distinction, strengthening Wooster’s foundation for the long-term, and sustaining our momentum. Initially, we will focus our efforts improving the quality and effectiveness of our educational program in the areas of global engagement, intentional learning, discovery and sharing of knowledge, linking theory and practice, and on realizing our core value of being a Community of Learners. Enrolling a residential student body of an optimal

¹ A note on terminology: an objective is an end we want to achieve; an initiative is something we are going to do differently and distinctively so as to achieve our objectives.

number and profile for our mission is an important element of the comprehensive resource plan we will develop. Continued efforts to improve our governance and communications processes, to assess our efforts, and think strategically are core to our sustaining our momentum.

This framework is the first edition of our agile, living-plan document. Its purpose is to guide College decision-making and resource allocation in the near term. We anticipate it will be periodically revisited and revised to reflect the progress we make towards our objectives and the changes in our strategic context.

THE ELEMENTS OF OUR STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

OUR STRATEGIC CONTEXT

From a thorough analysis of Wooster's current internal and external contexts, we find that the future is promising and the way forward clear if we steer a strategic course that is bold, carefully planned, appropriately resourced, and rigorously assessed. Our current context is one in which we are known for a signature educational program and excellence in teaching undergraduates, we have a strong financial resource base and have and continue to invest strategically in our campus facilities. Our signature educational program, Independent Study, has characteristics that are valued by our external constituencies, yet the program is becoming less distinctive as undergraduate research has become recognized as a "high impact practice." While we have made great strides in how we communicate our distinctive approach to liberal education, focused developing independent minds through mentored inquiry, we must continue to become more disciplined and creative in how we convey the benefits of our approach to external audiences. We enjoy a very good reputation within the circles of higher education, but suffer from a general lack of name and brand recognition outside our academic circles. We have opportunities in our recognition as a premier teaching College, our untapped potential donor base of parents and alumni, and in our location in the City of Wooster.

Compared to peers and competitors, we have faced enrollment challenges, and find ourselves in a market position where our goals for student academic profile, diversity, and discount rate are dynamically intertwined, making it difficult to make progress in all three dimension of enrollment at once. Our enrollment of multi-ethnic students, as a proportion of our total enrollment, is comparable to our peers and has increased significantly in the last five years. We have a strong financial resource profile, yet discount more and realize less tuition revenue per student than our peers. Average Wooster Fund gifts per student and alumni giving rates lag our peers. We allocate our educational resources differently from our peers, generally investing less in our core educational mission and in average faculty salaries.

We have taken initial action on strategic initiatives to address our most pressing issues: faculty salaries, student recreational facilities, student recruitment, market positioning, and student retention.

Finally, we are well underway in a comprehensive strategic planning process and have identified a set of strategic initiatives we will undertake to move us decisively in the direction of our vision for Wooster.

OUR GUIDING STRATEGIC STATEMENTS

OUR DEFINING PURPOSE: WOOSTER'S MISSION

The College of Wooster is a community of independent minds, working together to prepare students to become leaders of character and influence in an interdependent global community. We engage motivated students in a rigorous and dynamic liberal education. Mentored by a faculty nationally recognized for excellence in teaching, Wooster graduates are creative and independent thinkers with exceptional abilities to ask important questions, research complex issues, solve problems, and communicate new knowledge and insight.

OUR IDEAS THAT WE HOLD TRUE: WOOSTER'S CORE VALUES

Education in the Liberal Arts Tradition: We believe that the most valuable approach to undergraduate education engages each student in a course of study that cultivates curiosity and develops independent judgment, creativity, breadth, depth, integration of knowledge, and intellectual skills in the tradition of liberal education tuned for the contemporary era.

A Focus on Research and Collaboration: At Wooster, faculty and students are co-learners, collaborating in liberal inquiry. Our faculty's commitment to excellence in teaching is nationally recognized for enabling students to realize their full potential as engaged scholars. We embrace unique pedagogical principles at Wooster: that research and teaching are integrated forms of inquiry, and that faculty and students share a common purpose in their pursuits of knowledge, insight, and creative expression.

A Community of Learners: Wooster is a residential liberal arts college. As such, we believe the learning process unfolds on our campus and beyond, in conversations in classrooms and residence halls, libraries and studios, laboratories and on playing fields, and through the relationships that develop between and among students, faculty and staff and which endure long after graduation. We recognize that the very process of living together educates, and that much of the learning that is part of our mission takes place through artistic expression, the performance of music, theater, and dance, athletics, community involvement, and in the myriad student organizations that infuse vitality in campus life. We embrace a holistic philosophy of education and seek to nurture the physical, social, and spiritual well-being of our students.

Independence of Thought: We are a community of independent minds, working together. We place the highest value on collegiality, collaboration, openness to persons and ideas in all of their variety, and the free exchange of different points of view. We vigorously champion academic freedom, and seek to sustain a campus

culture where the understanding of each is made more complete through an on-going process of dialogue with others who think differently.

Social and Intellectual Responsibility: As a community of learners, we hold ourselves to high standards of sound evidence, careful reasoning, proper attribution, and intellectual and personal integrity in all activities of teaching, learning, research, and governance. We recognize the privilege of being able, collectively, to pursue the mission of the College. We therefore seek to extend the benefits of learning beyond the campus and beyond ourselves, endeavoring to analyze problems, create solutions, exercise civic and intellectual leadership, and contribute to the welfare of humanity and the environment.

Diversity and Inclusivity: Wooster actively seeks students, faculty, and staff from a wide variety of backgrounds, starting places, experiences, and beliefs. We believe that achieving our educational purpose is only possible in a diverse community of learners. Therefore, we value members who bring a diversity of identities and beliefs to our common purpose, and who reflect a diversity of voices as varied as those our students will engage upon graduation.

OUR FUTURE TO WHICH WE ASPIRE: WOOSTER'S VISION

Our collective endeavor is to prosper as a distinguished independent liberal arts college, to thrive as a vigorous intellectual community, and to create a reputation that reflects our achievements. We seek to be leaders in liberal learning, building on our tradition of graduating independent thinkers who are well prepared to seek solutions to significant problems, to create and communicate new knowledge and insight, and to make significant contributions to our complex and interdependent world.

OUR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

We will make progress towards our vision by vigorously pursuing the following objectives:

1. **We will Fulfill Our Educational Purpose with Distinction** by making continuous improvements in providing a liberal arts education that is distinctive and demonstrably superior.
2. **We will Strengthen the Foundation of Our College** by:
 - a. Securing and enhancing the availability of the human, financial, and physical resources needed to achieve our vision.
 - b. Enrolling a residential student body of at least 1,800 students with a steadily improving mix of academic profile, diversity, and discount rate.
3. **We will Sustain Our Momentum** by developing a campus-wide and sustainable culture of planning as an effective, collective endeavor.

We will assess our strategies and revise our actions based on rigorous analysis of our progress, and allocate resources to advance our strategic objectives.

OUR STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

Realizing our vision requires change. The strategic initiatives listed below are things we are going to do differently, each designed to advance our strategic objectives. Some of our initiatives are research projects, where a strategic question must be answered before we can determine how best to move forward.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE I: TO FULFILL OUR EDUCATIONAL PURPOSE WITH DISTINCTION

[Leads: Provost; Dean for Curriculum and Academic Engagement, Dean for Faculty Development, Dean of Students, Chief Information & Planning Officer with Committee support from the Educational Policy Committee, the Teaching Staff & Tenure Committee, Campus Council, Student Government Association]

Building upon our recognition for our Independent Study program, our excellence in teaching undergraduates, and our traditions, we will make continuous improvements in fulfilling our mission and offering a liberal arts education that is distinctive and demonstrably superior. With an emphasis on the distinctive character of our educational programs as reflected in our core values, we will improve the quality and effectiveness of our educational program by developing distinctive approaches unique to Wooster in:

- ***Diversity and Global Engagement:*** We will further develop our educational approach to diversity and global engagement and identify new opportunities to increase our students' intercultural awareness and capacities for responsible global citizenship.
- ***Student Educational Planning and Advising:*** We will build upon the strong student-faculty and student-staff relationships that occur at Wooster to develop a distinctive program, uniquely Wooster's, based on the principles of Developmental Advising, which will encourage students to develop a clear sense of purpose in their educational program.
- ***Community of Learners:*** We will articulate a philosophy of campus life in which we make explicit our beliefs about how living and learning together advances our mission. This philosophy will guide our student development programs and housing strategies. In addition, we will deepen the campus' internalization of *The Wooster Ethic*, making it the reference point for guiding judgment and behavior in our Community. This continuing initiative will engage all areas of the College in understanding how The Wooster Ethic relates to their work, and their roles and responsibilities in fostering and upholding it.
- ***Wooster's Independent Study Program:*** Building on the strengths of our Independent Study program, we will develop a distinctive, integrated, and comprehensive approach to strengthening our students' skills, including oral and

written communication skills, research sophistication, and the application of technologies.

- ***Bringing Theory to Practice:*** We will increase opportunities for students to connect theory and practice through campus life and “real world” projects and experiences that strengthen the quality of student learning.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE II: TO STRENGTHEN THE FOUNDATION OF OUR COLLEGE

[Leads: Vice President for Development, Vice President for Finance and Business, Vice President for Enrollment and College Relations, Associate Vice President for College Relations and Marketing, Chief Information & Planning Officer, Director of College Investments with Committee support from the Financial Advisory Committee, the Teaching Staff & Tenure Committee, the Staff Committee, and appropriate committees of the Board of Trustees]

Focusing on our opportunities inherent in our alumni and parent constituencies and in the growing recognition of Wooster and its distinctions, and mindful of the recent experiences of the economic downturn, we will:

- Enroll a residential student body of an optimal number of on-campus students with a steadily improving mix of academic profile, diversity, and discount rate through:
 - ***Determining the Optimal Size of Wooster:*** We will research all aspects of the question “What is the optimal enrollment size for Wooster?” to determine our enrollment targets.
 - ***Continuing to Pursue an Enrollment Strategy:*** We will continue our efforts to develop a comprehensive plan for maintaining an optimal enrollment mix.
 - ***Continuing to Develop a Competitive Positioning Strategy:*** We will continue our efforts to develop a comprehensive plan to strengthen our market position and recognition.
- Develop a comprehensive plan for the generation and allocation of College resources that includes:
 - a ***Resource Generation Plan*** which includes specific targets for net student revenue, endowment support, capital projects support, and support from external constituencies (alumni, parents, friends, and foundations). This plan will draw on an *investment policy* that seeks to position the endowment to meet the College’s resource expectation and a *development plan* with specific targets for external support and the cultivation of a diverse and sustainable donor base; and
 - a ***Resource Allocation & Stewardship Plan*** which includes both human and physical resources. This plan will draw on the resource plans for each of our programmatic initiatives, specific targets for faculty and staff

salaries and size, an update of the College's facilities master plan consistent with our core mission and optimal size, and a new sustainability plan for buildings and grounds.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE III: TO SUSTAIN OUR MOMENTUM FOR THE LONG TERM

[Leads: Trustee Leadership, President, Chief Information & Planning Officer, and our faculty strategic planning liaison, John Sell, with Committee Support from the Committee on Conference and Campus Council]

Our planning process and the efforts we have taken to improve our governance and communications processes are initial attempts to cultivate a campus-wide and sustainable culture of planning as an effective, collective endeavor. Building upon our efforts to date, our growing culture of assessment, and taking advantage of the opportunity provided by our upcoming Higher Learning Commission self-study process for continued accreditation, we will sustain our process of continuous innovation and improvement by:

1. Engaging in a continuous and dynamic strategic planning process;
2. Working with the chairs of campus and Board of Trustee committees to establish annual agendas that reflect our strategic priorities;
3. Communicating regularly with students, faculty, staff, trustees, and alumni on the planning objectives, strategies, and outcomes;
4. Conceptualizing, planning, and launching our self-study process for continued accreditation;
5. Strengthening our governance groups and processes through continued review; and by
6. Exploring research questions leading to new, exciting, differentiating institutional opportunities.

OUR STRATEGIC INDICATORS

We will assess our progress towards realizing our objectives and achieving our vision by tracking a dashboard set of strategic indicators drawn from those identified by the College community in response to the question "What will tell us we have achieved our vision?" This dashboard is an overarching summary; we have and will continue to identify indicators of our progress to include in a comprehensive set that will be used by areas of the College to assess progress on specific initiatives and outcomes. These will have annual and long-term targets or clearly specified goals.

OUR DASHBOARD

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE	COMPOSITE INDICATOR	PROGRESS	
We will fulfill our educational purpose with distinction.	Graduate Outcomes:	↑ ↓ ↔	
	Graduate & Professional School Acceptance & Enrollment Rates		
	Job Placement (1 year after graduation)		
	Giving rate: Graduate alumni 10 yr out+		
	Graduate Qualities Assessment Composite		
	HEDS Alumni Survey "student learning & development" outcomes		
	Reputation:	↑ ↓ ↔	
	Faculty Distinction Composite		
	Growth in Net Tuition Revenue per Student:Change in Tuition & Fees Rate		
	Reputational Indicator Composite		
We will strengthen the foundation of our college.	Admissions Stats:	↑ ↓ ↔	
	Selectivity		
	Yield		
	International & US Multiethnic Students as a percentage of all first-year students		
	Academic Profile Composite		
	Retention:	↑ ↓ ↔	
	First-year to sophomore year		
	Six-year graduation rate		
	Revenue Sources:	↑ ↓ ↔	
	Net tuition revenue per student		
	Endowment Spending per student		
	Total Gifts per student (most recent 3-yr average)		
	Financial Strength:	↑ ↓ ↔	
	Viability Ratio		
	Composition Ratio		
	Primary Reserve Ratio		
	Campus Stewardship:	↑ ↓ ↔	
	Renovation v. Construction Age		
	Resource Allocation:	↑ ↓ ↔	
	Faculty Salaries by Rank		
Staff Salaries by Position Grouping			
Student: faculty ratio			
Student: staff ratio			
We will sustain our momentum.	Resource allocation reflects our institutional priorities:	↑ ↓ ↔	
	Investment in Core Mission Composite		
	\$ per student		
	% of total expenditures		
	"Providing access" composite indicator		
	Wooster is a "Best Place to Live, Learn & Work" Composite Indicator	↑ ↓ ↔	
Mission & Core Values Intentionality Composite Indicator	↑ ↓ ↔		