

THE COLLEGE OF  
WOOSTER

August 24, 2011

TO: Members of the Board of Trustees and the Campus Community  
FROM: Grant Cornwell, President  
David Gunning, Chair of the Board of Trustees  
SUBJECT: Strategic Priorities for 2011-12

In this memo we convey Wooster's strategic priorities for 2011-12. To call something a priority is to say that it will receive special focus and attention, that we will try to do something differently that is designed to advance our mission and our collective work in some important way. In naming these priorities we seek in no way to diminish the importance or centrality of those activities that constitute our daily practice as a residential liberal arts college. A normal day at Wooster consists of outstanding teaching and learning, innovative research, a myriad of campus activities that make us a diverse and engaged community of learners, and the tireless commitment of many whose labors make it all possible. We recognize and champion all that you do that makes us who we are.

As we write, the global economy remains turbulent, the public system of American higher education is in the throes of relentless budget and program cutbacks, and certain segments of America's private system of higher education are having to adjust their missions and educational practices to survive in an increasingly stressful environment. In the face of this, we see ample grounds at The College of Wooster for confidence in our mission and optimism about our future. But our comparative prosperity is not a matter of luck; it is the result of our basic integrity as a liberal arts college, the careful stewardship of our mission and organization, and our rigorous efforts with strategic planning. Hence, the priorities we advance are chosen for their promise to strengthen the College, to bolster our foundations, and thus enable us to flourish well into the future.

The strategic theme for this year will be implementation. The strategic planning process has generated a host of good ideas and projects, and over the last several years we have been successful in building an increasingly strong foundation on which to pursue them. In the catalogue of goals and projects you will find below, you will see that there is no shortage of ambition in what we need to do this year, all of which flows from the Strategic Framework. You will also notice, we hope, that the strategic priorities for the coming year are all initiatives that are familiar and underway. If we get traction on these

priorities, implement the ideas, and complete the projects, the coming year will be another very productive one for the College.

As is our practice, this memo does not detail all of the important work to be done, but instead highlights those projects or initiatives that follow directly from our Strategic Framework that we will pursue because we believe they will move us further along in the pursuit of our strategic objectives: (1) to fulfill our educational purpose with distinction by making continuous improvements in providing a liberal arts education that is distinctive and demonstrably superior; (2) to strengthen the foundation of our college by securing and enhancing the availability of the human, financial, and physical resources needed to achieve our vision; and (3) to sustain our momentum by developing a campus-wide and sustainable culture of planning as an effective, collective endeavor.

### **Strategic Objective #1: To fulfill our educational purpose with distinction**

We have several initiatives underway that are intended to deepen our core educational mission. In the coming year, we will:

- Continue to develop educational practices designed to substantiate and advance our claim to be the nation's premier undergraduate college for mentored student research. We will build and launch the student research center, creating a distinctive new space in Andrews Library designed to enhance the process of individual and collaborative inquiry through engagement with each other, information resources, and technologies in a creative, supportive, and inspiring environment.
- Build and launch the Educational Planning and Advising Center, to cultivate a sense of purpose and intentionality in each of our students, give them guidance in developing their plans, and offer them ample opportunity to put their ideas to work in the world through a program of experiential and entrepreneurial learning opportunities. This initiative will also create new space in Andrews and Gault Libraries that will enable us to bring together our programs in academic advising, career planning, vocational discernment, and entrepreneurship, thus creating collaborative synergy in fostering an ethic of purposeful planning in our students.
- Continue to develop the mission of the Center for Diversity and Global Engagement by focusing on programmatic integration with Student Life and the academic program.
- Develop and initiate an implementation plan for the "Community of Learners" vision so that our approach to learning outside the classroom is every bit as purposeful and mission-centered as our approach to our academic program.

## **Strategic Objective #2: To strengthen the foundation of our college**

We also have several initiatives underway which are intended to strengthen the foundation of our college by securing and enhancing the availability of the human, financial, and physical resources needed to achieve our vision. We will continue the good work being done with the faculty and staff salary projects. In addition, we will:

- Develop a multi-year marketing plan for extending regional, national, and international awareness of The College of Wooster and of our quality and value. To ground this effort, we will continue to refine our key messages, seeking to capture and convey what is true and good about the College.
- Work with our new Vice President of Development and Alumni Relations, Laurie Houck, to craft a strategic plan for the next generation of College advancement.

## **Strategic Objective #3: To sustain our momentum by developing a sustainable culture of planning**

Through our Strategic Framework we intend to assess, revise, and refresh our planning efforts continuously. This year's strategic planning work will include the following. We will:

- Commence the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) reaccreditation self-study, a comprehensive assessment process that will have us prove that we are advancing our mission, that we are true to our core values, and that we are achieving our strategic objectives by demonstrating how we meet the Commission's criteria for accreditation. Every aspect of the College will be considered in this process.
- Assess, revise, and ratify the Campus Facilities Master Plan for Wooster.
- Develop a comprehensive financial plan for advancing our strategic initiatives and achieving our objectives.
- Assess, revise, and launch the performance metrics dashboard currently under construction so that the Cabinet, the College community, and the Board of Trustees can track our progress with measures that are objective and precise.
- Extend the horizon of our strategic planning through research and inquiry into the long-term prospects for higher education in general and The College of Wooster in particular.

We look forward to the coming year with great eagerness and optimism. The challenges are great, the work to be done is complex, but the ingredients for prosperity for this fine college, about which we care so deeply and to which we give so much, are taking shape.