



DATE: June 17, 2015
TO: Members of the Board of Trustees
FROM: Grant H. Cornwell, President
William A. Longbrake, Chair of the Board of Trustees
SUBJECT: Our Progress on our 2014-15 Strategic Priorities

Introduction

Each fall, we outline Wooster's strategic priorities for the coming year within the context of our long-term strategic plan. In this memo, we report on our progress on these priorities and other significant accomplishments and developments over the past year.

Summary

This year overall was one of building strength and considerable progress.

As a College community, we were struck by tragedy, not once, but three times with the losses of associate professor of chemistry Melissa Schultz, senior philosophy major Rhishav Choudhury, and mathematics and business economics graduate Nancy Tinoza '12. Externally, we faced a challenging environment: changing student demographics, an extremely competitive recruitment market, and continuing public skepticism about the value of a family's investment in higher education. Our strong mission mindset, our commitment to strategic planning, and our resolve to accomplish our objectives resulted in significant, and often remarkable, progress on our strategic priorities:

- We completed the construction funding for our new Ruth W. Williams Hall of Life Science.
- The College's campaign, which is still in the quiet phase, has tallied more than \$112 million in commitments in the first two years of its leadership phase. Though we are probably a couple of years away from the public launch of "Wooster's Promise: A Campaign for Our Future," these early results have been nothing short of breath-taking.
- We are on target to achieve our fall 2015 enrollment and net tuition revenue goals, despite a challenging competitive environment that has tripped up a number of our peers. Four out of every 10 members of the entering class are in the top 10 percent of their high school class, and 63 percent are in the top quintile. Our admit rate (selectivity), which was 74 percent in 2007, was 55 percent this year.
- For a second consecutive year we can state that "our class of new students beginning this fall is the most diverse in Wooster's history." Twenty percent are domestic students of color and another 12 percent are international students.

- For the twelfth consecutive year, Wooster ranked alongside Princeton in *U.S. News & World Report's* survey of college presidents, provosts, and deans as an institution with outstanding undergraduate research opportunities and stellar senior capstone projects.
- Gallup, Inc.'s research on the largest representative sample of college graduates found that graduates with "great jobs and great lives" were those who had a mentor in college and completed a long-term project as a student. Gallup executives recognized that Wooster is doing "exactly what should be happening."
- The "Gault Schoolhouse" opened to rave reviews. Students love living in the building and it has been a tangible success with our neighbors, rebuilding trust as we move toward future College projects.
- We are undertaking a transformational renovation of Holden Annex, thanks to the generosity of Trustee Doug Brush. A facility that has been temporary housing for students for two-thirds of the College's history will become our newest state-of-the-art student residence.
- Our planning work centered on developing a sustainable budget for the College, an endeavor that engaged everyone in an intentional and inclusive process. Literally hundreds of ideas were identified; from them, we selected expenditure reductions and new revenues totaling \$2,265,000 that were included in the 2015-16 budget approved by the Board in May.
- Our faculty unanimously endorsed, and the Board approved, a new governance committee, the Strategic Planning and Priorities Advisory Committee (SPPAC), that replaces the Financial Advisory Committee. The committee already has a full agenda for 2015-16, as it will advise on the annual Strategic Priorities memo, our continuing sustainable budget work; an updated analysis of our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats; and principles for equitable compensation for all College employees.

2014-15 Strategic Priorities Progress

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

Future of the Sciences at Wooster

Our Priorities: Two years into a six-year process to reimagine our programs in the life sciences, we set out to select an architect, begin work with faculty and staff on the detailed design work, and by the end of the academic year, have initial drawings of possible designs.

Our Progress:

- We selected EYP as the architectural firm for the design of the new integrated life science complex in October, and have been on a fast track in planning and design.
- After careful study and consideration of options, the first major decision was made to pursue all-new construction rather than renovation of Mateer.

- The programmatic concept design phase is now nearly complete and several basic design concepts have emerged as motifs for the new building. One of these, the concourse model, is the current leading idea for the backbone of the building that will create a seamless connection between the new building and Severance Chemistry. We have worked hard to maximize the amount of space devoted to interdisciplinarity and collaboration.
- We received approval for the footprint of the new structure from the Wooster City Planning Commission and Zoning Board.

Graduate Qualities Assessment

Our Priorities: While we have good traction in our “Proof Project,” which is our effort to bring clear and compelling evidence to the claims we make about a Wooster education, we must continue to devote attention to this effort. This year, our efforts focused on assessing specific components of a few of our Graduate Qualities.

Our Progress:

- A five-year-out alumni survey was completed and analyzed, and initial results pertaining to the Graduate Qualities have been shared with the Academic Mission Committee. Areas of perceived strength include effective writing and critical thinking; areas that need improvement include oral communication, teamwork, civic and social responsibility, intercultural knowledge, global engagement, and respect for diversity. This study provides a “Pre-APEX” baseline.
- Other assessment projects include the direct assessment of writing in First Year Seminar, an assessment of the College Writing course that has led to the development of a Writing Studio pilot, a survey of the campus religious and spiritual climate, and the initial phase of a study in collaboration with EYP that will determine the impact of the new integrated life science building on student learning.

Community of Learners

Our Priorities: We continue our several-year effort to be more intentional about the quality of human relations and human development in our Community of Learners and to cultivate a culture of respect on campus grounded in the values and commitments that we express in the Wooster Ethic. This year, we will focus on the themes of sexual respect, which includes building social norms and judicial processes that are intolerant of sexual assault, and also positively embrace the variety of different forms of sexual identity. With regard to racial respect, we will push forward with our campus outreach and educational programming, especially that coming out of the Center for Diversity and Global Engagement, even as we initiate a project to consider whether we have the right resources and framework both to support the diversity of our community and to encourage all students, faculty, and staff to engage our diversity as a central dimension of our mission.

Our Progress:

- Our efforts toward educating the campus community about sexual respect/sexual misconduct and options for reporting complaints/cases were successful as evidenced by use of the new online reporting form, an increase of reporting from students and from staff, and more open discussions on campus

about sexual assault/misconduct. We also improved our management of and response to sexual misconduct cases.

- Angela Johnston's role as advisor to the student groups k(NO)w (sexual assault/sexual respect advocacy) and QSU (Queer Student Union) proved beneficial in increasing communication between students and the administration and resulted in the resolution of several difficult issues that individual students were facing and in several positive outcomes for the campus. Examples of these outcomes include implementation of a preferred name policy, multiple training/awareness sessions with staff in Facilities and Dining Services, and many speakers, events, and programs organized and offered by the Administration and the student groups.
- This year a "Listening Tour" and subsequent discussions led to a new leadership structure and name for the Center for Diversity and Global Engagement, now called the Center for Diversity and Inclusion. The Center will be supported by a new President's Advisory Council on Diversity and Inclusion that includes those directly involved in our work in this area.
- Perhaps the most visible event on campus promoting diversity was the full day of events on Martin Luther King, J. Day, which was enriched through collaboration with the Wooster City Schools. Events included social justice dialogues, three major service projects, and an opening ceremony devoted to social justice through the arts.
- An NCAA review team examined diversity and inclusion in athletics. As a result of this review, we have created a new position in athletics that will provide leadership and support for students, coaches, and the broader campus for issues of diversity and inclusion.
- The Office of International Student Affairs piloted the Global Engagement Seminar with notable success.
- We made interventions into the historical pattern of harassment on Beall Avenue by installing Blue Phones and surveillance cameras and launching a new smart phone application that calls for help with one touch of a button.
- In the spring, we invited an expert in Title IX compliance to examine our women's and men's athletic programs and we look forward to beginning to implement recommendations from this report next year.
- For the first time the Wooster Ethic Committee was able to connect their efforts with the Trustees by inviting Trustees to sign the Wooster Ethic.

Beyond CoRE

Our Priorities: Continue innovation and improvement in our hallmark approach to mentored undergraduate research by engaging students and faculty in imagining new directions for Independent Study. Continue to broaden the availability, understanding, and use of digital teaching, research, and communication technologies in our mission.

Our Progress:

- The Mellon Grant provided support for collaborative interdisciplinary research projects for student/faculty teams in History, Anthropology, and Biology.
- We developed a learning community for faculty on GIS applications and mapping and continued faculty discussions on future directions for the I.S. program.

- Through CoRE, workshops were provided for students on filmmaking and almost a dozen students created short films, "I.S. trailers," to tell the story of their I.S. projects, which were presented at a special session at the Senior Research Symposium.
- We provided training for several faculty on new directions in digital humanities.

APEX

Our Priorities: This year we sought to deepen our students' engagement with APEX both practically, in their use of the services and programs offered, and philosophically, in the degree of intentionality they bring to their Wooster educations. By placing a priority on developing sustainable models for those initiatives that have demonstrated potential for success, our goals were to:

- *Increase the number of first-year students who have a rich and active e-portfolio to 75 percent;*
- *Support underprepared STEM students through the STEM Scholar Zone, a program designed to encourage persistence in the study of STEM disciplines;*
- *Expand the Experiential Learning Symposium and the number of applications for APEX Fellowships;*
- *Launch Woo-Link, a searchable web application for internships and experiential learning programs.*

Our Progress:

- Members of APEX welcomed the addition of the office of Off-Campus Studies. The team quickly recognized that experiential learning experiences, such as internships and study abroad, share many concerns in common, such as risk management.
- During the week of fall break, several new experiential learning initiatives were offered to students including a service trip to West Virginia, a Leadership Essentials program offered through Entrepreneurship, and an opportunity for students to connect with Cleveland Alumni.
- The number of APEX Fellowship applications has steadily increased, with 57 awards being made to students this year.
- Approximately 50% of first-year students actively use their e-portfolios. Several departments are integrating them into the major, and e-portfolios are used for off-campus study, APEX Fellowships, Peace Corp preparation, and by students on Academic Probation. We anticipate greater use of e-portfolios over time.
- The Learning Center continues to meet with 25 percent of the student population, the Peer Tutoring program is expanding, and this year the Learning Center helped to improve the learning experience of students in introductory Biology, Chemistry, and Math classes through the STEM Zone initiative.
- Additional support for international students was provided by a new position in English Language Learning.
- Career Services launched "WOOLink," a web-based resource and tool for Wooster students where they can manage their job and internship search and application processes electronically. Students can access additional career-related tools and resources such as CareerBeam, Liberal Arts Career NetWork, and NEO Intern sites. Efforts to build and promote the LinkedIn "Scots Career Network (SCN)" continue. SCN is designed to provide current students a professional network of contacts in various career fields.

- The members of APEX have worked hard to create new models of leadership and programming through crafting a vision for APEX in 2020.

Global Engagement

Our Progress:

We laid the groundwork for two new programs, one with International Christian University (ICU) in Tokyo, Japan, and one at Ashesi University in Ghana. Both President Cornwell and Provost Newton visited ICU and gave presentations there. A group of faculty and administrators from ICU visited Wooster to finalize plans for a student exchange program to begin in 2015-16. Dave Noble and the Noble Foundation are funding a robust collaboration with Ashesi; just recently Hank Kreuzman led a team to Ghana for a very productive planning trip and even this summer we have four Ashesi students working on AMRE teams here in Wooster and two of our recent graduates going to Ashesi in the fall to assist their faculty in the teaching of writing. In addition, we continued to participate with the Global Liberal Arts Alliance in initiatives for global engagement including the creation of a globalization studies major.

Strategic Objective #2

To strengthen the foundation of our college

The ambitions and goals we all share for Wooster can only be realized by continuously strengthening our human, financial, and physical resources. This year, we focused on Wooster's position in the higher education marketplace and our fundraising campaign.

Strengthening Wooster's Position in a Competitive Market

Our Priorities: Following from the recruitment and enrollment challenges we and our peers faced in 2014, and recognizing that the challenge foreshadowed an increase in competition for a limited number of potential applicants that could become more intense over time, we made our top priority to determine our strategic response to the sector-wide enrollment shortfall we and our peers experienced. This response would necessitate analysis to come to the best determination we can of what happened and why and then developing and deploying our strategy for 2015 that would achieve both our enrollment and revenue targets.

Our Progress:

- The consistently strong enrollment results we have achieved in recent years continued this year. The competition for top students is fiercer than ever, but our positioning as the top college for mentored research keeps us distinguished and valued in a crowded market place.
- Our small new student shortfall in 2014 was not repeated in 2015, although the private college sector again found meeting enrollment goals a challenge in 2015 with half the GLCA and many, perhaps most, of the private colleges in Ohio missing targets.
- We continued to accentuate our mentored research message and take full advantage of our external endorsements – Gallup in particular.

- We developed an update to our Five Year Enrollment Plan which was presented to the Enrollment and Marketing Strategy Committee in May.

Campaign Progress

Our Priorities: We had an outstanding first year in our campaign, breaking many fund raising records at the College. We were off to a terrific start, but much remained to be done. In 2014-15, we set out to sustain our very high level of commitment to this endeavor. The campaign is a critical element in our strategy for the future of Wooster; over the course of it we will be asking all of our alumni and friends to help sustain Wooster's momentum forward as we approach our 150th year of excellence in liberal learning.

Our Progress:

- The College's campaign ("Wooster's Promise: A Campaign for Our Future") has concluded its second year with more than \$112 million in cash raised and commitments. The enthusiasm for Wooster and the campaign priorities -- scholarships, faculty support, the science initiative, APEX, and The Wooster Fund -- have created momentum for this effort that will continue to engage alumni and parents in coming years.
 - One key component of Wooster's ability to fulfill its educational purpose with distinction is building a new life science building. The board and donor traction created in 2013-14, was followed with conversations about impact of the building, its importance to Wooster, and its relevance to donors to great effect in building fundraising. This team effort required many to coalesce around a common narrative, a narrative that was built by faculty -- led by the building shepherds -- and supported by the Provost, as well as leadership and buy-in across the Cabinet team that made the building come alive for donors.
 - The ability to build on strong partnerships on campus and the integrity of the APEX's purpose with respect to Wooster's mission made it possible to raise significant dollars for APEX's growth.
- The Wooster Fund appears poised to meet its goal of \$3.1M this fiscal year, an important benchmark on the way to a difference-making \$5M annual goal by 2020.
- Through partnership with Generation, we undertook work to develop comprehensive campaign communications, producing a campaign narrative, tagline, logo, "look and feel," and case language.

Residential Housing Plan

Our Progress:

To enhance the residential experience for our students and Wooster's position in the competitive market, a ten-year vision for residential housing was developed through a collaborative effort among facilities, residence life, College administration, and Trustees. The residential housing vision incorporated information from intensive assessments of existing facilities, proposed improvements from several master plans, and programmatic needs. It was informed by consultants who advised on current trends in higher education housing. The plan addresses major deferred maintenance concerns in the aging residence halls.

Strategic Objective #3

To sustain our momentum by developing a sustainable culture of planning

Developing a Sustainable Budget

Our Priorities: Our planning initiatives this year focused on resource allocation and developing a sustainable budget for the College. The challenge was to develop a sustainable balanced budget, one that works with smaller annual increases in both our published price and net price inclusive of financial aid than those to which we have been accustomed.

Our Progress:

- We rose to the challenge with commitment, good will, and boundless energy. In fact, our response to this initiative elicited the interest of *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.
- Each division of the College took on the challenge of identifying new sources of revenue, reductions in expenditures, and ways of doing things differently. Students, faculty, and staff submitted ideas that were considered by the applicable division. The ideas were vetted and prioritized and emerging recommendations presented to campus constituencies for feedback. We recognized that several ideas required additional study or a longer timeline to implement, and those have been held for further review.
- The 2015-16 budget reflects expenditure reductions and new revenues totaling \$2,265,000 from our sustainable budget planning work.
- Our work in support of our Sustainable Budget planning yielded several analyses of our resource allocation patterns. Trends were examined for Wooster-only data; trend analyses and benchmark comparisons were examined for data where Wooster and GLCA data were available.
- The annual Board retreat focused on "Strategic Resource Allocation." The idea of pursuing the development and implementation of "mission-based budgeting" was endorsed as a next step in evolving the coming year's Sustainable Budget planning initiative towards an on-going culture of strategic resource allocation.

Conclusion

As we enter a year of presidential transition we are struck with Wooster's strength and vitality. We are confident that we are well positioned to attract a robust pool of outstanding candidates and believe the last eight years have built a solid foundation for a prosperous and exciting future.

We are grateful for your passionate commitment to this fine college.

Go Scots!