

From: President Bolton
Subject: Strategic Priorities for the College for 2017-2018
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Date: September 6, 2017
To: Members of the Board of Trustees, Alumni Board, and Campus Community
From: Sarah R. Bolton, President
Donald R. Frederico, Chair of the Board of Trustees
Subject: Strategic Priorities for 2017-2018

In this memorandum, we outline priorities for The College of Wooster for the coming year. These priorities have been developed in close collaboration with faculty, staff, students and the board of trustees, with particularly crucial work over the course of this year from the cabinet, the Strategic Planning and Priorities Advisory Committee (SPPAC), the Educational Policy Committee (EPC), the Staff Committee, the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategic Planning Group (DEISPG), and the Student Government Association (SGA).

These priorities represent new initiatives or efforts that are specific to this year. They overlay a great deal of work that is central, intense and ongoing. Core areas of our work – recruiting terrific students from across the country and around the world, teaching great classes and mentoring independent study, providing the services that support our students’ daily lives and well-being, supporting the core physical plant and technology and much more – aren’t listed, but they are critical to all we do.

Review of 2016-2017

Academic year 2016-2017 was the 150th anniversary of the College, and we made the most of it. We celebrated the College’s history, and focused on its central promise:

- A superb and far-reaching education that prepares students for lives of consequence;
- A closely mentored education, through which every student learns deeply and creates something new; and
- An education that welcomes all students to the community of learners – investing in each student’s promise, on equal terms.

We asked ourselves how we can best realize that promise for future generations of students, and acted on what we learned. We sought to build on our academic strength, engage and make more equitable our community, and deepen the financial resources that sustain our work and support the learning of our students inside and outside the classroom. We made important progress in all of

these areas, much of which continues into our strategic priorities for the coming year.

We also undertook significant work to upgrade the spaces in which our learning happens, including terrific progress on the Ruth W. Williams Hall of Life Science and crucial upgrades to Bornhuetter and Babcock residence halls.

This year we continued efforts to strengthen the support for employees. With contributions from many faculty and staff, the Benefits Task Force succeeded in altering the cost structure of our health insurance, so that more than half of employees are paying less for the same benefits this year than last. Human Resources expanded the availability of a variety of professional development opportunities, and at the recommendation of the Staff Committee, we restructured vacation time policy, so that all staff accrue vacation time at the same rate regardless of their role or pay structure.

We had the opportunity to show our work to an outside audience on many occasions this year, including with our Higher Learning Commission mid-term assurance review. Ellen Falduto, Anne Nurse, and Gary Gillund worked throughout the year, collaborating with many others, and produced a thorough and extensive update to the College's self-study of 2012. We are grateful for their work, and very pleased that the Higher Learning Commission approved our report and did not identify any areas of concern for follow up. Our 2017 self-study report is available at <http://selfstudy.spaces.wooster.edu>.

Strategic Priorities for 2017-2018

Strategic Planning Process

One of our most important priorities this year is planning. With the close of the *Wooster's Promise* campaign on June 30, 2018, we will bring to culmination the work initially articulated in the planning processes of 2009-2011. It will be time, then, to begin charting our directions for the coming years. While we will maintain the bedrock of our mission, we will consider anew the ways we can best fulfill it, and deepen the realization of Wooster's central promise for students of the coming decades. We will engage this process with our eyes open, bringing together our own sense as a community of the kinds of teaching, living, and learning that best serve our students with an honest understanding of the rapidly changing national and international environment in which we work. We will recommit to our central purpose – providing a superb education that prepares young people to become ethical and inclusive leaders with global perspective – while at the same time considering changes that will enable us to meet our commitments even more deeply. Our work will include careful consideration of our current strengths, challenges and opportunities, as well as input from outside the college that can help us better understand the ways that the things we do now and the initiatives we are considering are understood by potential students. This work will begin this fall, when there will be opportunities to reflect, campus-wide, on our strengths, opportunities, context and challenges. In the spring, we will engage in planning that grows from those reflections.

As we undertake that planning, we will also continue to move forward important initiatives, which are summarized below.

Strategic Objective 1: To Fulfill Wooster's Educational Purpose with Distinction

Sustaining our Educational Mission

We are committed to providing a liberal arts education in which all students learn broadly, expanding their horizons and acquiring crucial skills in critical thinking, analysis and communication. Following the campus-wide discussions of our core curriculum requirements last year, the faculty will dive deeply into four specific areas for potential curricular revision: Quantitative Literacy, First-Year Seminar and Advising, Diversity and Social Justice, and Global Engagement. The Educational Policy Committee (EPC) will work with task forces leading each of these areas, as well as with the faculty as a whole, to develop approaches ensuring that our curricular requirements best serve our students' learning and their lives.

At the same time, we will engage conversations about interdisciplinary areas of study. Many students and faculty find that the most exciting areas of inquiry connect knowledge and ways of knowing across traditional academic departments. At Wooster, we have the benefit of several such areas of study – Neuroscience, Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, and Women's Gender and Sexuality Studies, for example. We expect that there are additional clusters of faculty interest around interdisciplinary work, and that we can develop new ways to support them and make them visible and available to students. At the same time, we are thinking about ways to support students' interdisciplinary work in Independent Study and in other aspects of our teaching and learning.

The Community of Learners

The learning that students do outside the classroom – in residence halls, on our playing fields, and in musical groups, student organizations, faith communities, and other settings – is central to their growth and development as ethical leaders. This year we will continue to broaden our efforts in student engagement and leadership development, and in ensuring that students' experiences on campus are welcoming, engaging and equitable. We have also established new policies and educational approaches so that student groups operate safely, without hazing or other harmful activities. Likewise, our new Title IX coordinator, Lori Makin-Byrd, will continue to promote campus safety by collaborating with students, staff and faculty to strengthen our prevention of sexual and intimate-partner violence. She will also work to ensure that our responses to incidents and allegations of harm, and our investigation and adjudication processes, are protective, fair and respectful to all.

This year we will also continue initiatives to improve the spaces in which learning happens outside the classroom, with renovations in Lowry Center, Stevenson Hall, and the Physical Education Center (PEC). Facilities, dining, student affairs, athletics and grounds staff have key roles in designing and leading these projects, as they support student learning daily in these spaces.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

The learning of our students depends critically on their opportunities to live and create meaning with others whose experiences, beliefs and identities are different from their own. We work to increase the diversity of our community because it is crucial to the quality of the education that we provide and to our commitment to preparing students to lead consequential lives, and because it is the right thing to do to ensure that opportunities to learn and work here are fair and accessible to all. In addition, one of our highest responsibilities is to ensure that all members of our community know that they are welcomed and respected. Over the course of 2016-2017, the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategic Planning Group (DEISPG) worked to create a multi-year plan to expand our

diversity, combat bias and discrimination of every kind, and bring Wooster closer to the ideal of true equity and inclusion. This year, the College will begin enacting the plans developed by the DEISPG and the cabinet, which were discussed by the board of trustees in June. More specifics about those plans were shared in an email to campus on August 23rd.

Strategic Objective 2: Strengthen the Foundation of our College

The *Wooster's Promise* campaign grew from the strategic planning process of 2009-2011. From that process came the central fundraising priorities of the campaign – academic excellence, experiential learning, scholarships, the Wooster Fund, and the Ruth W. Williams Hall of Life Science. In addition to building financial gifts, the campaign seeks to deepen alumni engagement with the College more broadly. Leadership fundraising for the campaign began in 2013, and we launched the public phase on April 28, 2017 – Senior Research Symposium day. This was a wonderful time to launch, as the day is such a superb demonstration of what is special – and powerful – about a Wooster education. We subsequently held regional launches with hundreds of alumni, parents and friends in New York City, Washington, D.C., San Francisco, Chicago and Cleveland.

The *Wooster's Promise* campaign will close on June 30, 2018. Over the course of this coming year, we will visit additional cities, and continue to build alumni engagement, with the goal of over \$165 million in commitments and the engagement of at least 40 percent of the alumni body.

At the same time, we are strategizing to use debt wisely to invest in needed campus infrastructure. We are also working to steward our endowment as effectively as possible, so that the generous gifts of our alumni and friends most powerfully support the College and our students for many generations to come.

Equitable Compensation

The foundation of our College is its people. Our goal is to ensure that we recruit and retain an excellent and diverse staff and faculty, by ensuring that Wooster is a great place to work and by careful consideration of the workplace environment and compensation. Last year, we met the goal that we have had for several years of having our faculty salaries at all ranks meet or exceed the GLCA median salaries. This year, we will undertake a compensation study for staff so that we can understand how our compensation lines up, both across similar roles on campus and between Wooster and other employers. Once we have that information, we will look at ways we can begin to make appropriate adjustments over the course of coming years. We are also continuing to strengthen professional development for staff and faculty, so that those who work at Wooster can have excellent opportunities to deepen and develop their knowledge and skills over time.

Strategic Objective 3: Sustain our Momentum for the Future

Communicating our Message Powerfully Through Electronic Media

The College of Wooster provides a superb education, and we are constantly striving to make it even better. Maintaining our momentum requires not only that we continue to enhance the excellent education we offer, but also that we communicate, broadly and effectively, the strength and distinctiveness of what we do. The audiences for those communications are many – prospective students and their families across the United States and around the world, people who are

considering working at Wooster, our colleagues at other colleges and universities, alumni, residents of our local community, and even government regulatory bodies. Nearly all of those audiences get their first substantive glance at The College of Wooster through our website and/or our social media. This year, we will make significant updates to these modes of communication, thinking carefully about the needs and interests of the audiences (both on and off campus) who rely on them, the kinds of messages that will resonate most powerfully, and the most effective ways to convey them.

Conclusion

There is a great deal to do, and we look forward to working together for the future of our college and for the students we will serve, for many decades to come.

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