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Thriving Together: The Strategic Plan of Washington & Jefferson College

Washington & Jefferson College is dedicated to ensuring that every student benefits from a distinctive educational experience of unsurpassed quality and value. This strategic plan establishes a set of commitments to continuously enhance the College's success in attracting, retaining, and graduating talented students. While these commitments will require consistent execution over time, a series of short-term priorities comprise the first phase of this work. Taken together, the elements of this plan are intended to bolster the College's enrollment at a time of increasing competitive pressures and a decline in the college-going population of our region and nation. Our goal is to achieve and maintain overall enrollment of 1,450, with a sustainable first-year retention rate of 88 percent, by fall 2024. This will permit the College to optimize enrollment by serving the maximum number of students that can be fully supported by our current capacity and resources.

In adopting this strategic plan, we renew our dedication to quality and continuous improvement in every aspect of our College. These initiatives will further differentiate the W&J student experience and position the College to announce an even more powerful brand. To ensure that our current and potential stakeholders understand our planned trajectory and commitments, the College will execute a comprehensive marketing strategy to convey and amplify the value of a W&J education, including our academic distinctiveness and the unique, high-value student experience conceived by this plan.

This plan also recognizes that in order for our college community to thrive together, we must fully support the success of all members of the W&J community while recognizing and publicizing individual and collective achievements to raise the College's visibility within and beyond the region.

Our Mission

The mission of Washington & Jefferson College is to graduate people of uncommon integrity, competence, and maturity, who are effective lifelong learners and responsible citizens and who are prepared to contribute substantially to the world in which they live.

To this end, the College promotes the development of skills, knowledge, personal qualities, and a worldview that characterize a well-educated person. All components of the living and learning environment at W&J are designed and intended to support this mission.

Our Strategic Vision

Washington & Jefferson College will inspire and equip students, faculty, staff, and alumni to contribute to the betterment of the world while achieving their full potential through a shared dedication to individual and mutual success.

Our Commitments

Commitment No. 1 - Every student will achieve professional readiness and prepare for a fulfilling life through an innovative four-year learning experience, guided by outstanding teaching, holistic advising and mentoring, and ethical leadership development.

- a. All students will complete study in two academic areas (practical and liberating) with ongoing input from advising and guided reflection.

Phase One Actions:

- i. Faculty will review the academic curriculum and develop a proposal. (Target: Proposal to be adopted by May 2020 so that marketing for Admissions can begin Summer 2020; Launch new curriculum by AY 2021-22) [Faculty Governance committees]

- ii. Cross reference 1.b.i.

iii. Develop additional space to meet the current and anticipated needs of our academic program.

1. Building on the feasibility study conducted in 2018-19, develop a plan to renovate Lazear Hall; secure philanthropic support to complete the project. (Targets: Plan by the end of 2019-20 AY; fund raising by the end of the 2021-22 AY) [Business & Finance in collaboration with Academic Affairs and Development & Alumni Engagement]

b. All students will benefit from a new four-year approach to advising that integrates academic, co-curricular, and career development support, to assure successful personal and professional outcomes.

Phase One Actions:

i. Design a plan that fully integrates academic advising, career development, student employment and internships, and other elements of preparation for professional success. This plan will define the W&J mentoring and advising experience (enlisting, as appropriate, alumni, parents, and other external constituencies) and will propose strategies for professional development to ensure that this experience is delivered consistently and effectively to every student. (Target: End of 2019-20 AY) [Academic Affairs & Student Life collaboration]

ii. Develop a proposal for a new center or office to consolidate and strengthen academic support (including writing support) for students. (Target: End of 2019-20 AY) [Academic Affairs & Student Life collaboration]

iii. Explore and identify practical ways to leverage the advantages of our Pittsburgh location to enhance the student experience. (Target: Complete research to identify opportunities/locations by end of spring 2020; begin to create programming as appropriate in fall 2020) [Academic Affairs, Student Life, Development & Alumni Engagement]

iv. Building on the feasibility study conducted in 2018-19, develop a plan for repurposing the Tech Center to serve primarily as a comprehensive student center serving as a hub for social life, student organizations, student services, curricular/co-curricular collaboration, and a welcoming place for visitors; secure philanthropic support to make the capital improvements. (Targets: develop a plan by the end of 2019-20 AY; fund raising by the end of 2021-22 AY) [Business & Finance in collaboration with Student Life, Academic Affairs, Admissions, and Development & Alumni Engagement]

c. All students will participate in designed experiences to ensure their development as ethical leaders who are able to serve the good of others and society.

Phase One Actions:

i. Define the outcomes and desired attributes (values, attitudes, knowledge, competencies) that can be learned and assessed to qualify W&J students and graduates as ethical leaders. (Target: Design by the end of 2019-2020 AY) [Academic Affairs and Student Life collaboration]

ii. Identify existing and proposed experiences, both within and outside the curriculum,¹ that can be designed to achieve these outcomes, and develop a plan to ensure that (1) the identified experiences yield the desired outcomes and (2) all students benefit from a personalized, four-year experience designed to develop fully their capacities as ethical leaders. (Target: End of 2019-2020 academic year) [Academic Affairs and Student Life collaboration]

¹ Such experiences may include academic course content, Magellan projects, internships, study abroad, Washington Fellows, student leadership, service learning, athletics, FYS, orientation, alumni mentoring, Symposium on Democracy, JayTerm, etc.

iii. Design and establish a Center for Ethics & Leadership to provide oversight, expertise, and resources to ensure that every student's four-year experience achieves these outcomes. (Targets: Design by the end of fall semester 2020-21 AY; establish by the end of 2020-21 AY) [Academic Affairs and Student Life collaboration]

Commitment No. 2 - Cultivate and nurture the active participation of community members in decision-making to ensure the success of the College.

a. Ensure that the principles of shared governance guide our collective efforts in decision-making processes.

Phase One Actions:

i. Continue the work of the Board of Trustees to enhance their effectiveness in shared governance. (Target: End of the 2019-20 AY) [President's Office and Board of Trustees]

ii. Strengthen the faculty's role in shared governance through continued efforts to improve collaboration among trustees, faculty, and the administration; continue to enhance faculty governance effectiveness. (Target: End of the 2019-2020 AY) [Faculty Governance, Trustees, Administrative divisions]

iii. Clarify and improve avenues for students and staff to provide formal input in decision processes. (Target: End of Fall semester 2019) [Senior Staff in collaboration with Student Government Association and staff committees]

b. Establish a collaborative, data-driven process for budget development and stewardship.

Phase One Actions:

i. Develop a new institutional budget process that (1) invites greater input and accountability from all parts of the college and (2) relies on a transparent, data-informed approach to decisions about programs and personnel. (Target: Beginning of spring semester, 2020) [Business & Finance in collaboration with Academic Affairs]

c. Enhance communication to increase effective internal collaboration. [Communication & Marketing in collaboration with Senior Staff]

Phase One Actions:

i. Establish a new intranet site dedicated to timely communication for employees and students. (Target: Beginning of spring 2020) [Communication & Marketing]

Commitment No. 3 - Foster a supportive, diverse culture where all members of the community are valued, included, and able to realize their full potential.

a. Design policies, practices, and training to ensure that all members of the community are valued, respected, and fully included in the life of the college.

Phase One Actions:

i. Develop and implement a comprehensive inclusion plan for all areas of the college to ensure that all individuals invited to our community are able to thrive. (Target: End of 2019-20 AY) [Human Resources in collaboration with all divisions]

b. Become a more welcoming and visibly diverse community every year, increasingly reflecting the demographics of the region and nation, and improve our welcome to international stakeholders.

Phase One Actions:

i. Examine and refine recruitment/hiring strategies for faculty, staff, and students to accelerate change where needed. (Target: End of 2019-20 AY) [Human Resources in collaboration with all divisions]

c. Provide resources and infrastructure to support the academic, professional, and personal growth and success of all members of the campus community.

Phase One Actions:

i. Cross reference 1. b. iv.

ii. Review compensation and benefits policies to establish and/or recommit to clear benchmarks for fairness, equity, and competitiveness. (Target: End of 2019-20 AY) [Human Resources and Business & Finance in collaboration with all divisions]

iii. Establish a center or dedicated office to support faculty development and continuous improvement in teaching, learning, scholarship, and creative activity. The center may also oversee staff development opportunities. (Target: End of 2020-21 AY) [Academic Affairs]

iv. Develop and implement a campuswide wellness program. (Target: Beginning of spring semester, 2020) [Human Resources]

d. Continually improve W&J's facilities and campus environment.

e. Continually seek to increase endowed resources to support financial aid and scholarships for students.

Appendix: The Strategic Planning Process

The strategic planning process spanned an eighteen-month period from March 2018 through September 2019 before approval was sought from the Board of Trustees in early October 2019.

The strategic planning committee (SPC) included representation from across campus. The membership of the committee was:²

John Knapp, President (chair)
Donna Grier, Trustee
Chuck Marcy, Trustee
Pete Mooney, Trustee
Melissa Cook, Associate Professor of Communication Arts
Zheyu Gai, Professor of Political Science
Jennifer Harding, Professor of English
Michael Leonard, Professor of Chemistry (strategic planning project director)
Max Miller, Assistant Professor of Entrepreneurship
Anu Shanmuganathan, Associate Professor of Biology
Eva Chatterjee-Sutton, Vice President of Student Life & Dean of Students
Nicole Focareto, Vice President for Enrollment
Kelly Kimberland, Vice President for Communication & Marketing
Mike Grzesiak, Vice President for Development & Alumni Relations
Jeffrey Frick, Vice President for Academic Affairs & Dean of the College
Thomas Szejko, Associate Vice President for Business & Finance
James Irwin, Vice President for Business & Finance
Kevin Bergen, Class of 2020
Jared Heller, Class of 2021

At the outset, a multi-constituent survey solicited input from alumni, faculty and staff, families of current students, students, trustees, and Washington community leaders regarding the most pressing issues facing the College. Taken together with the institutional priorities identified during the recent Middle States self-study, the community feedback suggested six areas of focus:

- (1) Determining Optimum Enrollment and Resource Implications
- (2) Building a Campus Culture of Trust, Collaboration, and Inclusion
- (3) Strengthening Student Support and Campus Infrastructure
- (4) Enhancing Our Portfolio of High-Impact, Experiential Learning Opportunities, Both On- and Off-Campus
- (5) Evaluating Opportunities to Differentiate More Effectively Our Academic Program
- (6) Clarifying and Sharpening Our Value Proposition

The SPC then subdivided into six subcommittees, one for each area of focus, and a call for faculty and staff volunteers to serve on these subcommittees was issued. All respondents were placed on a subcommittee, and placement was correlated as closely as possible with volunteers' preferences. In total, more than 90 members of the campus community served on strategic planning subcommittees, which spent the summer and fall of 2018 gathering information and studying their areas of focus. Each subcommittee also held open forums to

² Former members: Robert Gould, Vice President for Enrollment; Judy Kirkpatrick, Vice President for Academic Affairs & Dean of the College; Denny McMaster, Vice President for Business & Finance; Sarah Behr, Class of 2021

invite even more participation by listening to the thoughts and ideas of faculty and staff attendees. The work of the subcommittees culminated with the preparation of white papers that were submitted to the SPC in January 2019.

W&J also retained the services of Art & Science (A&S) Group, LLC to conduct a market study in parallel with the work of the strategic planning committee. A&S began to learn about the College by reviewing a wide array of background material and spending time on campus meeting with representatives of various critical campus offices, chairs and program directors, groups of assistant professors, first-year students, and upperclass students. A&S then worked closely with the SPC to distill this information into a research plan, and the ensuing fieldwork took place over approximately a year from May 2018 to May 2019. The market study included inquirers, those prospective students that chose to apply as well as those that did not, and admitted applicants, both matriculants and non-matriculants. The A&S work resulted in presentations to the SPC (November 2018 and May 2019), the Board of Trustees (June 2019), and College employees (July 2019). The presentation to employees was followed by SPC listening sessions, in which faculty and staff were invited to share their reflections. A&S worked with the SPC during the summer of 2019 to finalize their strategic recommendations.

During June of 2019, the Board of Trustees held a retreat devoted entirely to strategic planning. During the retreat, A&S presented findings and preliminary recommendations, and the Board participated in a series of roundtable discussions to brainstorm and prioritize ideas.

The SPC spent the balance of the summer of 2019 preparing an initial draft of the strategic plan, which was shared with faculty and staff in August. During the faculty retreat ushering in the start of the 2019 - 2020 academic year, the faculty were divided into five groups for listening sessions in which the SPC gathered feedback on the draft. Four additional listening sessions (two for faculty and two for staff) were held in the subsequent weeks. During this time, two teleconferences provided opportunities for the Board of Trustees to respond to the draft as well. The SPC utilized input from all these venues as it revised the plan during September 2019, producing a final draft for consideration by the Board.

The SPC wholeheartedly thanks the countless contributors to the process, who have helped to shape the plan immeasurably over the course of the last year and a half. The plan is undoubtedly stronger as a result of your participation.