

Strategic Action Plan

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The ideal learning institution is characterized by a commitment to educating undergraduates, a residential setting that removes the student from the home and permits and encourages close student-student and student-faculty contact, small size, and a sense of history and tradition that generates a strong sense of community.

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Gettysburg College has unquestionably shared the characteristics of Astin's ideal learning institution since its founding in 1832. Its size and residential setting have provided close contact among students and faculty for nearly 170 years. In recent years, Gettysburg College has moved to enhance its learning environment in order to offer an innovative liberal arts education attuned to the needs of students preparing for the twenty-first century. At the core of our efforts has been a commitment to the principle of *active learning*. Gettysburg College students, whether through student-faculty interaction or collaboration among themselves, enact their education through dynamic projects within the classroom, across the campus, and in the community.

Among the many accomplishments of the past decade are:

- * The fostering of small work-study groups, collaborative learning initiatives, and leadership training;
- * The development of service-learning projects that blend citizenship and public service into the undergraduate experience;
- * The integration of new technology, such as the Internet, into the liberal arts curriculum; and
- * The enhancement of residential life on campus to promote the development of students in and *beyond* the classroom.

Through sound management, careful planning, and good stewardship of its resources, Gettysburg College is definitely stronger today than at any time in the past. It has moved from the ranks of strong regional colleges to being widely regarded as among the top fifty national liberal arts colleges in the nation. The quality and number of students who seek entrance have grown steadily over the past decade, and the College's endowment has grown from \$35 million to more than \$125 million. More importantly, the College is frequently recognized for its outstanding programs and distinctive commitment to an educational experience that is rooted in the liberal arts but open to innovation and the creative use of technology.

While pride in our accomplishments is warranted, we cannot afford to become complacent. We are competing for students, for faculty, for staff, and for public recognition with colleges that have substantially greater financial resources and better facilities. Nevertheless, we are convinced that we have an historic opportunity. We must be willing to take risks and challenge ourselves in order to raise the College to a new level of excellence among the best liberal arts colleges in the nation. The Strategic Action Plan outlined in these pages describes those initiatives, which we believe will make a significant difference to the future of Gettysburg College.

Enhanced Academic Excellence: The primary mission of Gettysburg College is to offer an innovative liberal arts education attuned to the needs of students preparing for the twenty-first century. We will continue to promote the pursuit of academic excellence by focusing our energies on the people and programs that distinguish Gettysburg College.

Development of the Faculty: Having an outstanding faculty is key to any and all plans for academic excellence. To advance our academic stature, Gettysburg College must continue to recruit and retain a first-rate faculty. This will require competitive compensation, strong faculty development programs for teaching and research, and other supportive professional arrangements. Globalization of the curriculum and developing areas of scholarship require us to recruit faculty with new scholarly specializations. Among the strategies we will pursue to meet these goals are the following:

Endowed Chairs: Endowed professorships are a sign of an institution's commitment to faculty strength. Since they provide an important opportunity to recruit strong senior faculty, as well as a way to recognize the best senior faculty currently on staff, we plan to create eight additional endowed faculty chairs. Each endowment for a professorship will support compensation and professional activities of the faculty member who holds the chair.

Visiting Senior Scholars: In order to enhance our students' academic experience and to strengthen Gettysburg College's academic reputation, we will establish a program to bring distinguished visiting scholars—top individuals in their fields—to Gettysburg College for a year's residency. This program would provide compensation, travel, materials, and program support.

Distinctive Programs: Gettysburg College, like other excellent liberal arts colleges, must be strong in all academic departments, and we must continue to ensure the rigor and quality of every department and program. Excellent colleges, however, do have distinctive programs, those which—by virtue of history, extraordinary beneficence, or deliberate choice—achieve unusual quality and become recognized as institutional hallmarks. Gettysburg College is fortunate to have in place the basis for several such programs, and we will take the steps

outlined below to ensure that these programs contribute to the College's reputation for excellence.

Civil War Studies and History: Because of its location, Gettysburg College is uniquely positioned to become a center for scholarly activity focused on the Civil War. We will therefore develop an undergraduate academic program for students interested in studying this critical period in our nation's history. Initially, students will be able to minor in Civil War Era Studies. This program will then expand into the Gettysburg Semester, an intensive fifteen-week program for undergraduates from other institutions. As we expand these programs, we will establish an endowment to support the Civil War Institute, the Gettysburg Semester, the Luce Chair (which is currently supported by a grant, not an endowment), and enhanced Civil War scholarly activities.

Another natural strength for the College is a strong history program, one that integrates American and world history and provides a context for nineteenth-century America. Thus, we will continue to expand and enhance the entire history program. A special opportunity comes with the proposed renovation of Thaddeus Stevens Hall as a center for these history programs. A renovated building could include an exhibit space for periodic display of artifacts and documents from such collections as the Gilder/Lehrman Collection as well as similar distinguished historical material.

Science & Psychology: Because an array of excellent science programs is the hallmark of outstanding academic institutions, we will strengthen our commitment to the sciences through both facilities and programs. We will establish an interdisciplinary program in Neuroscience and expand our current interdisciplinary program in Environmental Studies. We will increase support for student research grants and senior projects in all science fields and enhance Health and Exercise Science programming. We will also create a summer research program for students, offering stipends and materials costs for collaboration with faculty in science research projects.

In addition, we will construct a new building of approximately 70,000 square feet to house Chemistry, Biochemistry/Molecular Biology, Environmental Studies, Health & Exercise Sciences, and most of Mathematics and Computer Science. McCreary Hall will be renovated to provide improved quarters for Biology, Psychology, and the projected Neuroscience program, along with a new greenhouse, herbarium, and research animal-care facilities. Masters Hall will also be refurbished to provide improved facilities for Physics/Astronomy and portions of the Mathematics/Computer Science departments.

Writing Program: Clear and effective written communication is a necessity of modern life, and we are committed to providing our students

with opportunities to enhance their writing skills. We will develop a Writing Minor that will serve the needs of students from a variety of disciplines. We will also establish a Writer-in-Residence program to attract nationally known writers to Gettysburg College as visiting scholars. We will enhance our commitment to the Writing Center, the Writing House, the Writer-in-Residence program, and various Writing-Across-the-Curriculum efforts.

Management and Organizational Studies: Gettysburg College has a long tradition of providing students with courses of study in business, management, finance, and economics, preparing them for corporate and business careers through a strong liberal education, regardless of major. Building on that niche, the Management Department will develop a focus on the modern, complex organization, utilizing the traditional courses in economics, accounting, statistics, but grounded in a strong liberal arts education, thus providing a superb and distinctive education for students with a business interest within the traditions of a vibrant liberal education.

Public Affairs: Attention to public discourse and public affairs is important to an institution strategically placed between and close to Washington and Harrisburg. We will pursue an effective working relationship with the Eisenhower World Affairs Institute to provide students with internship opportunities, contact with national figures, Institute programs both on campus and in Washington, and a range of other educational and research opportunities for both students and faculty in matters of public issues. If an effective relationship does not develop, we will proceed to organize a Center for Public Affairs on campus.

Learning Beyond the Classroom: As a residential college, Gettysburg College is dedicated to providing our students with opportunities to extend their education beyond classroom walls. We believe that both our faculty and our students must learn to use technology, collaborative techniques, and service learning to enrich traditional academic learning.

Center for Teaching, Learning, and Advising: As the centerpiece of our “Learning Beyond the Classroom” efforts, we will create a facility to support teaching, learning and advising that will bring together a number of offices and house new initiatives. In the area of *teaching*, this facility will include a Center for Teaching Excellence, a demonstration “smart” classroom, and the Instructional Technology Group of Information Resources. *Learning* opportunities will bring together the Internship Office, the Office for Off-Campus Programs, the Center for Public Service, the Writing Center, and a Quantitative Skills Center. Finally, *advising* activities will include academic advising, portfolio development, international student advising, Pre-Medical and Pre-Law Advising Programs, and Career Counseling. The facility could also house the Registrar’s Office.

Enhanced Technology for Teaching and Learning: Although Gettysburg College has no plans to use technology for asynchronous distance learning, we will take a number of steps to ensure our continued excellence in academic technology including preparation and implementation of a comprehensive campus technology plan, support for programs and services offered by the Instructional Technology group, continued development of our unique CNAV system, and enhanced technological support for Career Planning and Portfolio development. These efforts may well include the establishment of a Center for Technology Advancement.

Center for Public Service: Because we believe that students learn extraordinarily valuable lessons when they direct their energies toward the betterment of others' lives, we will continue to strengthen our commitment to our Center for Public Service. To that end, we propose to endow the Directorship of the CPS, to establish Service Scholarships for students who cannot afford the tuition costs of service learning trips, and to create a faculty development program to encourage the development of new service-based courses in the curriculum.

Lifelong Learning: Just as one's education must extend beyond the classroom walls, so also must one's education extend beyond the college years. For this reason, the College will explore ways to use its resources to encourage alumni to pursue a life of learning beyond graduation and maintain an intellectual connection with the College.

Dynamic Student Life: Current higher education research is clear about the effect of students' life outside the classroom, whether it be playing sports, singing, volunteering, or taking field trips. It is in these settings, the research shows, that much of an undergraduate's learning and personal development take place. While fraternities and sororities have been historically important to Gettysburg College, considering changing student interests, we will continue to develop alternative social and living arrangements in order to provide students with a wide choice of options.

Residential Life: As a primary focus of student life, residence halls are the setting in which the ethos of community is shaped, tested, and lived on a daily basis. Residence halls must provide a dynamic and vital environment that draws together academic study, healthy social interaction, and personal development. They can be a fertile learning environment and the place where many of the friendships--which are so much a hallmark of the Gettysburg College experience--are formed.

New Residence Halls & Renovations: We will construct a series of new residential buildings to house a total of approximately two hundred upperclass students in suite-style living. These buildings, located at the

west end of the campus near the quarry, will be designed with social space and small-group space. In addition, many of the residence halls on campus will undergo extensive renovation over the next decade.

Residence Life Advisory Group: We have convened an advisory group, co-chaired by a trustee and a senior faculty member, to review the goals of the residential and social life programs and evaluate the College's policies and programs in light of those goals. The advisory group will make its report to the Board of Trustees at their regular meeting in May, 1999.

Social, Athletic, and Recreational Life: The settings for student activities outside the classroom--the hiking trail and ropes course, the playing fields and courts, student clubs and organizations-- are, like the classroom, learning laboratories for the application and honing of skills so essential to a successful life, including those of cooperation, problem solving, leadership, creative thinking, and ethical decision making.

New Recreation/Fitness Facility: Unlike many of our competitor institutions, Gettysburg College lacks a state-of-the-art fitness facility for our students. We will create a facility that will include a recreational gym with basketball courts, weight training, and cardiovascular equipment rooms (to replace those facilities presently located in Plank). This facility may also include the Health and Counseling Center, racquetball courts, an indoor track, and some social space.

Intercollegiate Athletic Participation: We propose to strengthen our successful, Division III program by enabling our student athletes to travel more widely to compete with others from the best liberal arts colleges in the country. We will retain our commitment to excellent balanced and competitive athletic programs for women and men, while continuing to encourage our students to participate in athletic teams.

Outdoor Recreation Program, Club Sports, and Intramurals: Because campus groups such as GRAB (Gettysburg Recreation Adventure Board) have proven to be an unqualified success with our students, we will support the growth of the outdoor adventure program (climbing, caving, backpacking, kayaking). We will strengthen club sports and intramural programs by linking them more closely to student activities in College Life and residential hall programming.

Natatorium: The pool located in the College Union Building is both outdated and poorly located; we will therefore build a new natatorium, possibly adjacent to the new Recreation/Fitness facility.

All-Weather Field: We will review and consider the value of a lighted artificial all-weather field to accommodate both athletic and recreational sports. If appropriate, we will install such a field.

Vibrant College Community: At Gettysburg College, we are blessed with a campus of great architectural and natural beauty. A college, however, is more than a collection of buildings; it is a community made up of students, faculty, administrators, and support staff whose network of daily interactions form the true life of the institution. We are dedicated to enriching the communal life of Gettysburg College through our efforts to reach out to our prospective students, our on-campus community, and our alumni.

Admissions and Retention: We are committed to recruiting and retaining the best students for Gettysburg College. Those students who would most benefit from our rich educational environment and who would contribute to our college community will be the focus of our admissions and retention initiatives.

Increased Applications: We will institute a strategic plan to increase selectivity of the College's admissions by increasing applications, increasing early decisions, and promoting the Presidential Scholars program.

Understanding Retention: We will develop a series of workshops over a three-year period to educate faculty and administrators on retention issues. In addition, we will improve attrition tracking so that information is obtained from every student who withdraws. Finally, to help us retain our very best students, we will establish an office for advising our most outstanding students in order to promote their application for national awards and scholarships.

Financial Aid: We will increase the endowment available for financial aid so that we can meet the financial need of more accepted students than we are presently able to fund.

Diversity: One hallmark of a vibrant college community is its willingness to welcome and respect racial, ethnic, and cultural differences among its members. At Gettysburg College, we believe that diversity among faculty, students, and staff enriches the educational experience for all and helps to prepare our students to become good citizens in our pluralistic society. For these reasons, we are committed to taking steps to enhance the diversity of our college community.

Strategic Diversity Plan: We will institute a plan setting forth recruitment and retention actions that will allow us to significantly increase the ethnic and racial diversity of the student body. Within five years, we propose to recruit between eighty and one hundred students of our entering class from diverse ethnic, racial, and international populations. During this period, the total number of students from diverse groups would increase to approximately ten percent of the total student body.

Scholarships: We will establish an endowment to provide increased financial aid to recruit students of great promise who come from groups currently under-represented at the College.

Peer Diversity Educators: We have initiated and will continue a peer education program focusing on issues of diversity. A group of twelve to fourteen student-educators will work with Wellness classes, athletic teams, and other student groups to raise awareness of racial and ethnic issues.

Performing Arts: The performing arts programs of the College are not only strong academic programs; they enrich the life of the campus and the Gettysburg community as well. We currently have the opportunity to enhance both facilities and programming.

Performing Arts Center: Although Paul Recital Hall in Schmucker is excellent, and the Kline Theatre in Brua Hall is a fine intimate theater, the College lacks a high-quality facility for large-scale performances in theater, dance, and music. The Majestic Theater building, owned by the College, represents a wonderful opportunity for renovation, and we now plan for it to be developed (with adjoining space) into a performance center. This project will be a joint community-college endeavor, providing a state-of-the-art performance hall located in the center of Gettysburg.

Music: Gettysburg College has a distinguished heritage of musical performance and music education, but we believe that a set of coordinated initiatives, some within the Music department, others campus and community-wide, will strengthen the musical arts at the College. These may include strengthening our instruction in strings, offering music talent scholarships, and establishing a string ensemble in residence. In addition, we will endeavor to enhance the quality and diversity of musical performances by visiting artists both on the campus and in the community. We also expect to make improvements in the Music department space within Schmucker Hall.

Theatre Arts: Although long an interest of talented students and faculty, Theatre Arts did not achieve departmental status until 1998. Considering the strong student interest this program enjoys, we will explore program enhancements that are needed to realize the potential of this area.

Outreach Initiatives: To maintain the vitality of our on-campus community, we must continually reach beyond our borders—to both former and prospective students—in order to maintain familiar bonds and build valuable new connections for the College.

Alumni House: To ensure that our alumni always have a place in the Gettysburg College community, we will renovate the “White House” (the second oldest building on campus) to provide alumni social and meeting space, as well as offices for alumni relations staff.

Marketing Plan: It is not enough for those of us within the Gettysburg College community to know that the College is reaching new heights of excellence. We must actively promote the reputation of the College through an aggressive outreach program. To that end, we will begin a college-wide integrated marketing program that will include the expansion of the chief public relations officer’s responsibilities and the reorganization of the public relations office, the creation of a campus communications task force and an alumni advisory group on communications and marketing issues, and the appointment of a graphic designer.

Campus Environment: The College will enhance the physical identity of the campus by implementing selected recommendations of the June 1997 Landscape Master Plan. In making these improvements, we will seek to “preserve the gracious fluidity” of the campus even as we enhance the impression of a unified landscape that connects and integrates the entire campus.

The Future of Our College: To predict the long-term viability of any organization is a bold step given the rapidly changing world in which we live. Nevertheless, since institutions of higher education have existed in similar purpose and form for more than eight hundred years, it would not be unreasonable to predict that they will continue. To survive is insufficient however. Those institutions that thrive will be the ones that remain true to their historic strengths while incorporating appropriate changes to address the challenges of modern times.

The strategic actions identified above are grounded in the centrality of active learning as the best education possible and the residential liberal arts college as the most effective environment in which such learning can occur. As we face the future, these actions provide Gettysburg College with a dynamic set of opportunities calculated to help the College not only to be *perceived* as one of the best colleges in America but, more importantly, to *be* one of the best.

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