

**Strategic Directions
For Macalester College
April 9, 2001¹**

¹ The SDC sincerely thanks the many faculty, staff, students, and trustees who provided the Committee with their feedback during the process of preparing this report.

FOREWORD

The Committee on Strategic Directions affirms the College's Statement of Purpose and Belief. This statement, developed and approved by the faculty, eloquently and strongly states a vision and set of values that should continue to guide the College in the future.

Macalester's Statement of Purpose and Belief

At Macalester College we believe that education is a fundamentally transforming experience. As a community of learners, the possibilities for this personal, social, and intellectual transformation extend to us all. We affirm the importance of the intellectual growth of the students, staff and faculty through individual and collaborative endeavor. We believe that this can best be achieved through an environment that values the diverse cultures of our world and recognizes our responsibility to provide a supportive and respectful environment for students, staff and faculty of all cultures and backgrounds.

We expect students to develop a broad understanding of the liberal arts while they are at Macalester. Students should follow a primary course of study in order to acquire an understanding of disciplinary theory and methodology; they should be able to apply their understanding of theories to address problems in the larger community. Students should develop the ability to use information and communication resources effectively, be adept at critical, analytical and logical thinking, and express themselves well in both oral and written forms. Finally, students should be prepared to take responsibility for their personal, social and intellectual choices.

We believe that the benefit of the educational experience at Macalester is the development of individuals who make informed judgments and interpretations of the broader world around them and choose actions or beliefs for which they are willing to be held accountable. We expect them to develop the ability to seek and use knowledge and experience in contexts that challenge and inform their suppositions about the world. We are committed to helping students grow intellectually and personally within an environment that models and promotes academic excellence and ethical behavior. The education a student begins at Macalester provides the basis for continuous transformation through learning and service.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 1992 Strategic Plan has now come into its final stage with the successful completion last year of the \$50 million capital campaign. As we now turn to face the next decade, President McPherson has initiated a strategic planning process to guide the College for the future. The President and the Long-Range Planning Committee have visualized the process as a planning portfolio graphically presented below.



In the Search for Core Values phase, the community engaged in a series of discussions to better understand and clarify what we care about, and what we wish to achieve as a pre - eminent liberal arts college. The discussions took place over the 1999 - 2000 academic year. A summary of those discussions are contained in the Narrative Summary of the December 4, 1999 Core Values Forum. The November 1999 Colloquy on Core Values and the August, 2000 draft Statement of Purpose and Values along with the College's Statement of Purpose and Belief also shed light on this discussion. The dialogue has deepened our understanding of what educational excellence means to us as a community. We are first and foremost an academic institution and thus academic achievement in the liberal arts resides at the center of our endeavor. The Macalester community strongly believes that these academic endeavors must be undertaken in a

humane environment that values individuality. Furthermore, the Macalester community strongly believes that it should include peoples from multiple North American cultures and multiple countries and that the study and respect of these cultures and countries should be integrated into the curriculum and campus community. Finally, the community believes that the exercise of civic and social responsibility is an essential aspect of a worthy life. These values have been a tradition at Macalester, underlie the College's Statement of Purpose and Belief, and have guided the work of the Strategic Directions Committee.

The planning portfolio also called for an Assessment of the Resources and the Environment that would both enable and constrain our capacity in the near future. This assessment is captured in the McPherson report on the Assessment of Opportunities and Constraints dated April 10, 2000. Today's realities make it clear that our current strategic planning effort will be fundamentally different from that undertaken in 1991 - 92 when the College had the luxury of deciding how to spend a very large addition to the budget. While the College has enjoyed substantial growth during the 1990's, much has been due to the unprecedented change in our endowment when the Readers Digest stock went public. Unless the College achieves extraordinary revenue gains beyond those that can be responsibly projected today, the operating budget will not grow significantly in the near to medium future. All planning must both recognize these constraints and emphasize the need to increase income.

At the same time, it must be noted that qualitative changes have come in our history independent of financial resources. Significant shifts in the academic life of the College in the 1980s pre-dated the financial windfalls of the early 1990s and there are several high quality liberal arts colleges that are considered to be as strong or stronger than Macalester that spend fewer resources per student than we do. Thus, in spite of financial constraints, we have tremendous assets that can be more fully utilized to further excellence in liberal educational.

The next phase in the planning process was to Identify Strategic Emphases. That has been the charge to the Committee on Strategic Directions whose work is summarized in this document.² The third, and most difficult, step will be the implementation of all or some of the proposed directions, a process that will begin in fall 2001. The challenge to this Committee has been to bring together the aspirations embedded in our Core Values with the considerable human and institutional assets of the College and the real world constraints associated with our resources and environment. The Committee was charged to identify key strategic directions that would provide guidance and priority as we move to close the gaps between our vision and our reality.

Throughout the fall of 2000, the Committee met in open forums with numerous groups to hear about needs, priorities, concerns, and the gaps between goals and achievements. During our many discussions with faculty, staff, students, alumni, and consultants, the Committee was constantly reminded that whatever the College chooses to do, it must do exceptionally well. There was near unanimous agreement among those we met that providing educational excellence is what the College does best and what must remain the College's central mission.

² Committee Members: faculty—Gary Krueger (chair), Mark Davis, Sears Eldredge, Tanya Pollard; staff: Richard Ammons, Sarah Griesse, Tom Wick, Irv Cross; alumnus and former trustee Anne Lewis; alumnus and trustee Janet Nelson; students: Hiam Abbas, Nick Berning, Nichole Alwell.

Strategic Directions

In an effort to continue Macalester's deep and sustained commitment to educational excellence, while recognizing the financial constraints described above, the Committee proposes ten strategic directions. These ten strategic directions are presented in the spirit of advancing our tradition of exceptional achievement and ensuring the College's long run vitality. While each Direction embodies a distinctive issue, taken together, there are many interdependencies. As the Planning Process continues, the Committee encourages the whole community to share responsibility for developing meaningful initiatives that will bring us closer to the full potential of Macalester's vision.

(Institutional Message) *The Committee recommends that the College unify internal and external communications to emphasize educational excellence as our primary strength. Our external communication must feature and focus upon the quality and strength of the educational program. The College should also celebrate its tradition as a diverse and distinctive intellectual community, which is part of the foundation of our excellent educational program. We must use this tradition to attract alumni support and recruit the very best students.*

(Campus Climate) *Celebrating diversity at Macalester requires that all community members interact with one another with respect, civility, and humanity, both in and outside the classroom. In order to sustain the environment of free inquiry and reasoned deliberation that is vital to liberal education, it is important that debate on important issues concerning our community and the world around us be open to all points of view, from mainstream to dissenting. To ensure that our members live and study in a humane environment, one of the institution's core values, and that visitors to the College also experience a humane environment, the College should implement effective programs and initiatives that promote discourse, tolerance, respect, and diversity. Civil discourse must be the mutual responsibility of faculty, staff, students and administrators.*

(Curriculum—academic program structure) *Knowledge and understanding continue to be shaped in new ways. As the curriculum evolves, the faculty needs to undertake a thorough review of department and program structure to determine if the current framework, much of which was put into place in the early 20th century, is the one that most effectively educates students.*

(Curriculum—content and rigor) *The Committee recommends that the College undertake a review of the academic program to evaluate the overall rigor of our curriculum. The Committee recommends that this review should evaluate the possible impacts on rigor (perceived and real) of such matters as grade inflation, the amount of writing training our students receive, our students' level of quantitative literacy, the amount of faculty-student collaboration that takes place, the extent to which students are formally trained in methodologies, and the level of expectations faculty impose on students, both with respect to the quantity and quality of the students' work. The Committee also emphasizes that this review must be led by the faculty.*

(Admissions—mix and yield of students) *To maintain a college of gifted students, who represent the diversity of the U.S. population and the world, the College must redouble its efforts to increase the number, strength, diversity, and yield of our domestic student applicants. We must effectively communicate our mission and our excellence, and tell our story so that the students we seek are informed of the educational advantages they will receive at Macalester.*

Equally we must be sure that students' on campus experience lives up to the story we tell in all respects.

(Admissions financial aid) *Consistent with the strategic direction on the mix and yield of admissions, and with the College's commitment to need-blind admissions and need-based financial aid, the College should investigate other financial-aid strategies to our increase our yield of outstanding applicants, and investigate what would make Macalester more attractive to low-need and no-need students.*

(Student Learning Experience) *Creating an integrated student learning experience at a residential college is a shared responsibility among faculty, staff, and students, and the College should take advantage of every opportunity to enhance our students' entire learning experience, within and outside the classroom.*

(Faculty/Staff Time Allocation) *The SDC recommends a review of faculty and staff time allocation to determine if our time is being best used to further the institution's educational goals and values. Faculty and Staff time, and that of our students, is by far the College's most precious resource, and we should think boldly and creatively about how to free people to realize their full potential. Among other things, this should include a review of faculty and staff committees to determine if some procedures and processes can be streamlined without compromising the principles of academic freedom and due process that are explicit in the characterization of shared governance in academic institutions.*

(Revenue Streams) *Maintaining a long-term focus on student learning, the College should acknowledge that educational excellence would be best sustained by increasing revenue from advancement, net tuition, and the endowment. Additionally, as we begin the planning for renovation of major facilities and infrastructure, the SDC recommends that we simultaneously begin planning the next capital campaign to help finance these renovations and to enhance our endowment resources. Finally, the SDC recommends that the faculty and staff, the Board of Trustees, and the President consider the benefits and costs of reducing the on-campus activities and responsibilities of the President so that the President can spend more time cultivating alumni relations, college advancement and recruitment of new students.*

(Facilities and Infrastructure) *All College facilities should be evaluated to determine the degree to which they promote educational excellence. To accomplish this evaluation, the Committee recommends that the College develop criteria and a process that can be used to prioritize competing facilities needs. Vital facilities and infrastructures that do not meet minimum program standards must be renovated or reconstructed as soon as funds permit. In particular, the Committee believes that the Fine Arts and Athletics facilities are grievously inadequate to fulfill Macalester's commitment to educational excellence, and that urgent attention must immediately be given to planning and financing major renovations.*

INTRODUCTION

As Macalester College completed a successful capital campaign based on the 1992 Strategic Plan, President McPherson prepared the community for its next strategic planning process. Preparation included the development of a "portfolio model" of planning in conjunction with the Long-Range Planning Committee and a series of "Core Values" discussions that took place during the 1999-2000 academic year. In autumn of the following year, President McPherson created the Strategic Directions Committee (SDC), and charged it with defining a set of strategic initiatives to be implemented over the next five to ten years. The President charged the Committee to base its recommendations on the outcome of the core values discussions.

The Committee consisted of four faculty members (Gary Krueger-chair, Mark Davis, Sears Eldredge, and Tanya Pollard), three students (Hiam Abbas, Nick Berning, and Nichole Alwell), Janet Nelson (alumna and trustee), Anne Lewis (alumna and former trustee), Irv Cross (Director of Athletics), Sarah Griesse (Associate Dean of Students and Director of Residential Life), Tom Wick (Director of Development), and Richard Ammons (Vice-President of College Advancement). To meet its obligations, the Committee met weekly throughout the fall with senior staff from across the college. In addition, the SDC sponsored several open campus forums designed to inform the Committee and the college community of campus-wide issues and opportunities. The weekly meetings might best be described as structured conversations between members of the SDC and the invited guests on a broad range of topics, including long-term budget and staffing questions, residential life and student profile, the academic program, internationalism and multiculturalism, facilities and technology, admissions and financial aid, and development and college advancement.

The Committee recommends that people who are interested in understanding more of the context and important ideas that were the basis for this report read materials produced during the core values discussions, particularly the Narrative Summary of the December 4, 1999 Core Values Forum, President McPherson's April 10, 2000 report on Assessment of Opportunities and Constraints, the November 1999 Colloquy (a special Core Values edition), and a working document on the College's purpose and values. All of these materials can be found on the President's Planning Portfolio link on Macalester's home page. (<http://www.macalester.edu/~planning/>). At the beginning of this document we included the College's Statement of Purpose and Belief, words that played an important role in guiding the Committee's deliberations (<http://www.macalester.edu/about/purpose.html/>).

The report that follows is divided into three parts. Part I places the Committee's recommendations in the context of recent college history and current budgetary realities. Part II consists of the specific strategic directions the SDC has identified and recommended. Each direction is followed by a background section intended to provide a context for the direction, often including data, other information, and perspectives of the Committee. (Note: the background sections are only provided to give the reader additional information. Any statements in the background sections are not part of the proposed directions.) Part III summarizes the results of the Committee's findings and identifies a few broad themes that emerged from the directions recommended by the Committee.

PART I: CONTEXT: HISTORY, CHALLENGES, AND CONSTRAINTS

Our Recent Past

In the 1960s the College made a commitment to extend its reach beyond the Midwest to the entire United States and the world. Using its financial resources effectively, the College succeeded quickly in attracting top faculty and students from around the country. Unfortunately, the momentum created by this initiative was abruptly halted by the severe financial crisis faced by the College in the 1970s. During the mid 1980s, the College was ready to regain that momentum and initiated another comprehensive effort to provide a liberal arts education as good as that provided by any other college in the country. This effort, which continues today, has also involved concerted efforts to attract top faculty and students.

One of the most dramatic changes in the College's circumstances since the 1980s has been the change in its financial resources. In the most recent fifteen-year period, the operating budget has doubled in real terms to the current forty-two million dollars. Much of this has happened with the generous support of our alumni. The College recently completed a campaign in which it raised \$55 million, of which approximately \$10 million went into the endowment; and increased the percentage of alumni who contribute to the College annually. The average gift has also increased. Our net tuition revenue has been increasing as well. Financial growth has enabled the College to make a considerable investment in itself. Since the mid 80s, we have increased our permanent faculty by thirty members, enabling us to reach a 10:1 student-faculty ratio. Our recent hiring efforts have changed the composition of the faculty. Since 1990, faculty of color have increased from twenty-three to thirty-five members and the proportion of female faculty increased from just over one-third in 1990 to almost 45%. Coincident with the increase in faculty hiring during the past fifteen years, the number of academic departments and programs in the College has increased. The College now staffs thirty-eight different programs with shared or unique resources. Significant commitment to program development was evident in the College's support of interdisciplinary programs such as International Studies, Environmental Studies and Women's and Gender Studies.

Financial aid has been one crucial way of attracting outstanding students of diverse backgrounds, and it has been used more aggressively in recent years. In 1984, a Macalester student received on the average \$2000 in aid (20% of the cost of tuition), while today the financial aid per student is roughly \$9,000 in 1984 dollars, and approximately 50% of tuition. (In order to facilitate comparisons over time figures are in inflation-adjusted dollars.) Much of the increase in aid was directed towards attracting the most talented students. As measured by the imperfect standard of SAT scores, the academic abilities of our students have increased to compare favorably with those of the best liberal arts colleges in the country. In the past four years, scores on the verbal and math SAT exams have increased 10-15 points.

In order to ensure that the our physical plant meets our expanding curricular and residential needs, the College embarked in the mid 1980s on an ambitious renovation and building period which continues today, amounting to approximately \$100 million of capital improvements. These included the renovation of some of the College's signature buildings, including Old Main, Carnegie, and Weyerhaeuser. Other building projects created new opportunities for the curriculum and residential life. Our current library was built, laboratory space in Olin-Rice was increased and upgraded; all academic buildings and dormitories were

wired for computer networking and access to the internet; new residential space has provided more recreational and meeting space; and, in January 2001, the new Ruth Stricker Dayton Campus Center opened, offering students an array of new amenities.

The College is thus in a dynamic period of achievement and strength. We have expanded our operating capacity tremendously, and have opted to use our new resources to strengthen the quality of our education. We have expanded our ability to recruit talented students and faculty, to attract support from alumni, educational foundations and the federal government, to house our students and provide new and improved spaces, and to increase technological access during a period when the world of communications has been revolutionized. To do this we have invested in our physical plant, but even more so in our staff, which has grown from approximately two-hundred thirty people in the mid 1980s to nearly three hundred full-time staff members today.

Of course, the College still faces many challenges. Macalester, like other colleges and universities, must deal with increasing costs for services, such as health care and information resources, including technology. Moreover, these challenges must be met at a time when the College enters not only the new millennium, but also a new period when we cannot rely on a major influx of revenue to improve the quality of our institution. It is important to note that qualitative changes have often come in the College's history independent of financial resources. For example, the significant shifts in the College in the 1980s pre-dated the financial windfalls of the early 1990s. Indeed, Macalester's history suggests that resources have followed significant improvements in quality, not the other way around. We note that at least several liberal arts colleges rank as high or higher than Macalester, yet spend fewer resources per student. We have tremendous assets in our tradition of academic excellence, our dedicated and engaged faculty, staff, students and alumni. The Committee believes that these resources can be more fully and effectively utilized to further the College in its mission of preparing intellectually vital citizens for a diverse world. We are now entering a new phase of our institutional life, one in which imagination, commitment, and hard decisions will be required for Macalester to continue its tradition of quality education. Certainly the College expects to increase its income in the future. However, even with enhanced financial resources, the Committee believes that a commitment to a focused set of initiatives will prove to be the key to improving Macalester College.

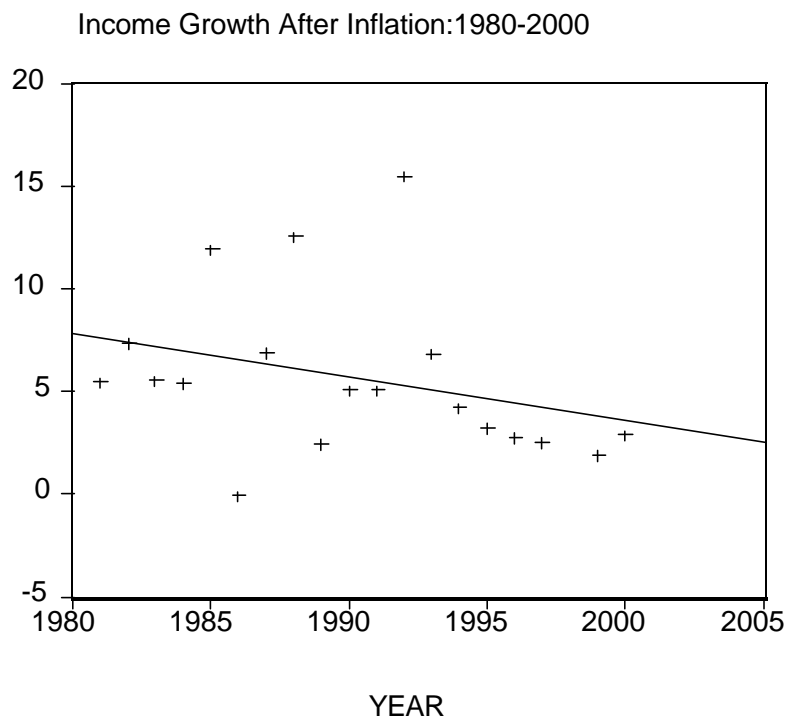
Current Challenges and Constraints: Maintaining Quality During Times of Low Growth

The Committee's charge from the President was to “identify a set of strategic directions that could be used to guide the College in making difficult choices among competing demands”. The President chose his language carefully to reflect the fact that our charge would be different from the previous planning effort in 1991-92, when the College had the luxury of deciding how to allocate a large addition to our operating budget. The College's operating budget approximately doubled in real dollars between 1985 and 1995 (Fig. 1). However, since 1995, real growth in the operating budget (adjusted for inflation) has dropped to roughly 1 to 1 1/2 percent per year (Fig. 2). Since academically related inflation is normally higher than the general inflation rate, this means that the real growth in our operating budget has dropped to near zero. Projections from the Treasurer suggest that the recent trend (limited real growth) is unlikely to change significantly in the near to medium future.

Figure 1



Figure 2

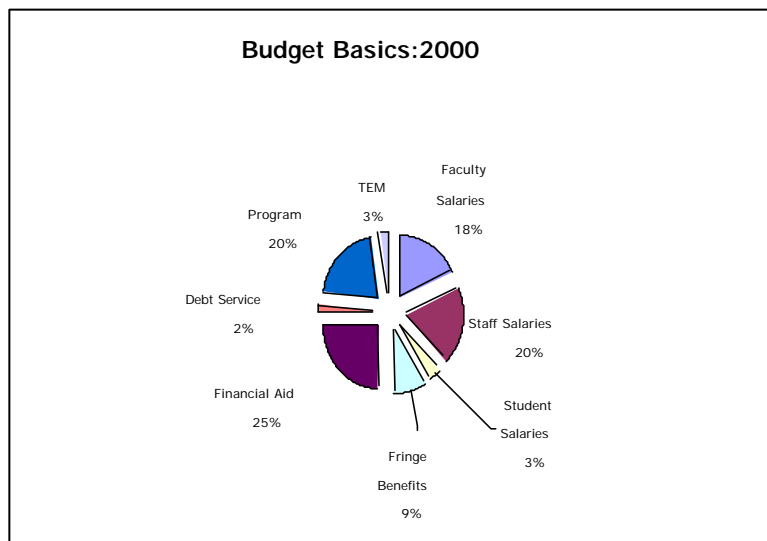


A primary cause of the slower growth in income has been a notable reversal in Macalester's endowment *relative to* our comparison schools. In 1994 Macalester's endowment ranked second among the elite liberal arts colleges in the country, while by the year 2000, the relative position of the College's endowment had slipped to tenth. Our endowment is now roughly half the level of the most prominent East Coast schools, whereas it had previously exceeded all but one. The most heavily endowed liberal arts schools can now draw the equivalent of our annual operating budget from their endowments alone.

In the absence of income growth, minimal real growth means that any new initiatives that require funding can only be undertaken if we reduce our spending in other areas of the budget, or drop something completely. The College must also consider additional methods of leveraging its resources, such as strategic use of collaborations with other liberal arts institutions.

Without substantial new income it would not be fiscally responsible to increase the number of faculty and staff members beyond current levels. Given the lean staffing levels at Macalester at present, this conclusion warrants some explanation. The Committee arrived at this conclusion after examining the basic elements of our budget. Fig. 3 breaks down the budget into its basic components: salaries and fringe benefits, program expenses, financial aid, and TEM (technology, equipment, and maintenance). Excluding financial aid, salary-related expenses total roughly two-thirds of the total. Given the low growth in our operating income anticipated in the foreseeable future, and the necessity of maintaining competitive salary levels in the face of a tight labor market, the Committee considers increases in the FTE level of staff to be untenable and unjustifiable if the College hopes to maintain competitive compensation for existing staff positions.

Figure 3



Exceptions to the Committee's recommendation for no net increase in staff size are warranted only for projects that resolve the strategic issues we describe. For example, in the most recent capital campaign, the approximately five million dollars that was spent to finance the campaign (some of which was used to hire additional development staff) was recovered as a result of the five million dollar campaign surplus. Were the college to mount another capital campaign in the near future, as we recommend, additional development staff likely would need to be hired. Another exception may involve Admissions. If additional admission staff members are added to Admissions, it would be expected that Admissions would increase its success in attracting more low need students, more than offsetting costs for the new staff members. In evaluating the case for new staff, we must include all associated costs, such as benefits, office space and support.

The Committee also strongly recommends against increasing the size of the student body. Although an increase in the number of students would bring in more income, it would likely reduce the overall quality of students admitted to the College. In addition, more students would raise our student faculty ratio above 10:1, diminish student access to faculty, and increase average class size. Finally, increasing the number of students would put even more demands on a staff that is already stretched to its limits. Indeed, the Committee suspects that important benefits in terms of program quality might be realized through a managed reduction in the size of the College.

PART II. PROPOSED STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

The Committee's Guiding Principles and Decision Framework

The Committee was guided by campus discussions during the past year on the College's core values and by the College's Statement of Purpose and Belief. One of the principles that emerged from discussion was that the College should prepare people to become intellectually vital citizen leaders for a diverse world, and the Committee found this principle a useful guide in its deliberations. The Committee was also consistently reminded by alumni, faculty, staff, students, and outside consultants that whatever we choose to do we must do exceptionally well. We were told that it was important that the College be able to deliver what it “promises” through its internal and external communications, and that it must take seriously the principles at the heart of its tradition. There was near unanimous agreement among those we met that academic excellence is indisputably at the center of all we do. Furthermore, based on the input we received, the Committee concluded that academic excellence is the core value that most unites all members of the Macalester community, including faculty, staff, students, and alumni. The Committee interprets academic excellence as requiring a campus environment and curriculum that challenges and engages students in thoughtful, informed, and critical analyses of the key issues current in academic disciplines, and places these analyses in the context of the larger national and global society. The quality of our institution depends on our ability to attract and retain top students, faculty and staff.

The Committee believes that although academic excellence needs to be the heart and soul of the College, the College also needs to lead our students to acquire a broader educational experience than the classroom can provide. This experience should involve our students in a wide variety of engagements with other individuals with diverse beliefs and backgrounds in settings ranging from athletic fields to the residence halls to the larger urban community outside of Macalester. The Committee believes that student engagement with diversity of all kinds, whether it occurs inside or outside the classroom, enhances the College's academic program. In this report, when the Committee refers to 'educational excellence' it is referring to the student's entire learning experience while they are enrolled at Macalester, at the center of which is academic excellence.

Strategic Directions

Although interrelated, the ten strategic directions that follow address the following topics:

- Institutional Message
- Campus Climate
- The Curriculum (Academic Program Structure)
- The Curriculum (Content and Rigor)
- Admissions (Student Mix and Yield)
- Admissions (Financial Aid)
- Student Learning Experience
- Faculty-Staff Time Allocation
- Revenue Streams
- Facilities and Infrastructure

1. INSTITUTIONAL MESSAGE

(Also relates to admissions, student learning experience, faculty and staff hiring, alumni relations, campus climate, and revenue)

Direction

The Committee recommends that the College unify internal and external communications to emphasize educational excellence as our primary strength. Our external communication must feature and focus upon the quality and strength of the educational program. The College should also celebrate its tradition as a diverse and distinctive intellectual community, which is part of the foundation of our excellent educational program. We must use this tradition to attract alumni support and recruit the very best students.

Background

During its discussions, members of the SDC were consistently reminded that educational excellence is and should be the heart of our institution. The standards expressed in the College statement of purpose and belief have proven a reliable guide in this endeavor. At the same time we were told that the College too often sends mixed messages about who we are and what we are about. We were told that these mixed messages are communicated to prospective students, current students, alumni and others. The Committee was advised of the importance of delivering on promises, whether those promises are explicit or implicit. Our mixed messages have produced a variety of expectations, some of which are not being consistently delivered. When expectations are not met, students may become disheartened, disenchanting, and ultimately even angry at the College. The Committee believes that unrealized expectations can be created when the College communicates its aspirations as promises. If the College does not consistently communicate a clear message of who we are, students are more likely to come with expectations that may not be met. We must not allow aspirations to be communicated as promises, and should act forthrightly in areas where the College is falling behind expectations. A proper alignment between message and reality is crucial. The Committee believes the College will be most successful in attracting top students of all races, cultures, and nationalities if our tradition of educational excellence – grounded in academic quality and extending throughout the student's experience -- is more clearly and accurately communicated.

2. CAMPUS CLIMATE

(Also related to academic quality, student experience, admissions, and hiring of faculty and staff)

Direction

Celebrating diversity at Macalester requires that all community members interact with one another with respect, civility, and humanity, both in and outside the classroom. In order to sustain the environment of free inquiry and reasoned deliberation that is vital to liberal education, it is important that debate on important issues concerning our community and the world around us must be open to all points of view, from mainstream to dissenting. To ensure that our members live and study in a humane environment, one of the institution's core values, and that visitors to the College also experience a humane environment, the College should implement effective programs and initiatives that promote discourse, tolerance, respect, and diversity. Civil discourse must be the mutual responsibility of faculty, staff, students and administrators.

Background

The Committee strongly believes that educational excellence is best achieved when individuals with diverse perspectives and values regularly engage one another in thoughtful dialogue. To fulfill the goal of developing future leaders through the experience of a liberal arts education, the college community must be composed of individuals with diverse political, social, cultural, and religious backgrounds and beliefs. The Committee also believes that an academic community that supports a broad diversity of ideas, beliefs, and lifestyles is more interesting and engaging for all its members. The community thrives when all members feel that their contributions to important discussions are considered. This allows them to develop reasoned points of view, and to articulate them in a responsible and informed manner. In addition, the Committee believes that an academic community in which members are comfortable being themselves will be experienced as a more humane environment, and that its members, particularly students, will find it easier to enjoy themselves and feel part of the campus community.

The Committee was disturbed by reports from some members of the campus community, particularly students, that they do not feel that the College is in all respects a humane environment and that, despite our claims to the contrary, the campus community does not tolerate a broad diversity of beliefs and lifestyles. Students of color and other historically discriminated-against groups continue too often to experience a negative learning environment in ways that challenge our claim to multicultural values. Other students feel their conservative opinions about politics or religion are ridiculed, or that they are ostracized for belonging to groups such as athletic teams.

The Committee believes that all members of the community, as well as visitors to our community, must feel safe and supported in expressing themselves without fear of being ridiculed or intimidated because of who they are or what they believe. The Committee recommends that the college consider ways to encourage the development of constructive and respectful engagement among individuals with divergent perspectives and beliefs, and to continue to hire faculty who represent a real diversity of views and backgrounds.

3. CURRICULUM (Academic Program Structure)

(Also relates to student learning experience, and faculty and staff time allocation)

Direction

Knowledge and understanding continue to be shaped in new ways. As the curriculum evolves, the faculty needs to undertake a thorough review of department and program structure to determine if the current framework, much of which was put into place in the early 20th century, is the one that most effectively educates students.

Background

The basic framework for the academic programs of liberal arts colleges was borrowed from research universities. This framework, organized around departments, has remained intact for the past century. The addition of interdepartmental programs has been the most common way that liberal arts colleges have incorporated new academic interests into their curriculum. The Committee believes the current organization of the College's academic program should be reviewed to determine if it best supports our academic goals.

The Committee recognizes that the range of academic programs offered by the College affords students and faculty broad choices, however, the Committee believes that this benefit comes with a cost. An increase in program numbers carries with it a decrease in the resources that can be devoted to all departments and interdisciplinary programs, leaving many staffed by only a few faculty members. Many programs, often those that drive curricular innovation on campus, have very small budgets and inadequate support staff.

We do not expect the overall academic program budget line to increase much beyond inflation in the near to mid future; nor do we expect the total faculty FTE to increase; nor do we expect an increase in the total FTE of academic support staff. If the College is to provide additional support to some academic units to permit them to undertake new initiatives, the Committee believes that some, if not most, of these resources will need to come from a reallocation of existing academic resources (including program budgets, and faculty and staff FTEs). The Committee also believes that the College should not offer academic programs (departments and interdisciplinary programs) that it will not be able to support in the future. The Committee believes that some increase in quality may be achieved by more effective cooperation among academic units and urges all to consider such opportunities, yet it is not convinced that the College has the financial resources to support the current number of academic units to the point of excellence. Our ability to respond to curricular initiatives and to provide academic excellence will depend on conserving and reallocating resources. As part of its review of the College's academic program, the College, led by the faculty must consider whether downsizing, reorganization, consolidation, or elimination of some programs or departments would help our efforts to conserve and reallocate academic resources.

4. CURRICULUM (Content and Challenge)

(Also related to admissions, student learning experience, institutional message)

Direction

The Committee recommends that the College undertake a review of the academic program to evaluate the overall level of challenge and rigor of our curriculum. The Committee recommends that this review should evaluate the possible impacts on rigor (perceived and real) of such matters as grade inflation, the amount of writing training our students receive, our students' level of quantitative literacy, the amount of faculty-student collaboration that takes place, the extent to which students are formally trained in methodologies, and the level of expectations faculty impose on students, both with respect to the quantity and quality of the students' work. The Committee also emphasizes that this review must be led by the faculty.

Background

During the past twenty years, the overall academic preparation and performance of our students has increased substantially. The Committee believes that Macalester will be best able to challenge its present student body, and to continue to attract the most academically gifted students in the future if our academic program is perceived to be challenging and if the College both expects and rewards high levels of intellectual achievement. The Committee believes that the best academic program is one that keeps the student intellectually engaged, and that the program best able to accomplish this is a rigorous one, that is, one that sets high expectations for students, clearly distinguishes between high quality and mediocre work, and challenges students to expand their intellectual limits.

The Committee heard from Admissions and current students that, in comparison with other top liberal arts colleges, Macalester is not regarded as offering one of the more challenging academic programs. Although those conducting the review will determine the curricular issues that should be examined, and whether in fact this perception is true, the Committee proposes several items it believes should be considered when making this determination.

The Committee is concerned that the pronounced grade inflation at Macalester may be having a negative effect on academic rigor. The Committee suspects that the grade compression that has resulted from grade inflation may be the real problem. Because grade compression provides little discrimination among mediocre, good, and excellent work, the Committee is concerned that many of our students are not learning to distinguish well from excellent work. The Committee believes that writing is at the heart of a rigorous academic program and that the College does not currently do a good job of providing writing training for our students. Students' level of "quantitative literacy," their ability to cope with basic mathematical analysis and statistical arguments, is of great importance to their capacity to function as informed citizens in contemporary society. The Committee also believes that part of rigor comes from learning academic methodology. Irrespective of the course of study, students must be formally trained in methodologies and research if they are to participate in their field beyond the basic level. Finally, the Committee believes that collaborative work with faculty members can play an important role in providing a demanding and rewarding academic experience for upper-level students.

5. ADMISSIONS (Mix and Yield)

(Also relates to institutional message, revenue, campus climate, curriculum, and student experience)

Direction

To maintain a college of gifted students, who represent the diversity of the U.S. population and the world, the College must redouble its efforts to increase the number, strength, diversity, and yield of our domestic student applicants. We must effectively communicate our mission and our excellence, and tell our story so that the students we seek are informed of the educational advantages they will receive at Macalester. Equally we must be sure that students' on campus experience lives up to the story we tell in all respects.

Background

The Committee believes that educational excellence is enhanced when the student body is diverse with respect to race, gender, culture, and country of origin and when these students are as academically strong as possible. A strong and diverse applicant pool permits the College to be more selective and therefore to create an incoming class with diverse academic and other interests. Although our applicant pool has grown stronger over the past fifteen years, there are signs that we are not holding our own among the country's best liberal arts colleges. Because of the tough competitive environment for attracting highly qualified students (Macalester currently enrolls approximately 25% of the students it accepts), Macalester must currently accept approximately two-thirds of all domestic applicants. Normally, the College's acceptance rate of domestic students of color is higher than this.

Although the decline of males in college is a national trend, and most pronounced in liberal arts colleges, the steady decline of males in Macalester's applicant and yield pool during the past ten years is even more pronounced than these trends. In the class of 2004, males represented 41% of the domestic pool of applicants, 38% of the accepted domestic students, and only 31% of the matriculated domestic students. The Committee believes that this decline in the number of male applicants means that the College is losing access to a large pool of academically gifted students. In line with the first strategic direction outlined in this report, we must learn to project our mission and tradition in ways that attract a more diverse and more talented pool of domestic students and that result in a higher yield rate for all groups of domestic students.

Focusing on domestic applicants would constitute a significant shift in the way the College recruits a talented student body. In the past, we have been able to rely on a large pool of talented international applicants. The College offers these students generous financial aid, and is able to be highly selective, normally accepting only about 15% of international applicants. For a long time, Macalester has had little competition for top international students. Recently, a few liberal arts colleges have announced their intent to use financial resources to aggressively pursue academically gifted international students. Thus, while we need to concentrate on improving domestic admissions, we cannot be complacent regarding our international admissions. Such competition could reduce our selectivity and hence the strength of our international students.

6. ADMISSIONS (Financial Aid)

(Also relates to revenue, institutional identity, student learning experience, and campus climate)

Direction

Consistent with the strategic direction on the mix and yield of admissions, and with the College's commitment to need-blind admissions and need-based financial aid, the College should investigate other financial-aid strategies to increase our yield of outstanding applicants, and investigate what would make Macalester more attractive to low-need and no-need students.

Background

One of the Colleges' three primary revenue streams is tuition (the other two being gifts and endowment income). The College's net student revenue (tuition income minus financial aid) is currently lower than that of many of our competitor colleges. The Committee agrees that need-blind admissions is an effective way of attracting a diverse group of academically gifted students. However, the College is a member of a very small group of liberal arts colleges in the country (approximately thirty) that still offers need-blind admissions and need-blind aid. Of this group, Macalester has one of the smallest revenue streams from gifts and overall net student revenue, the latter due primarily to the much lower percentage of no-need students we attract (about 30% compared to more than 50% for most of the other colleges in the group). For example, our net tuition revenue is approximately \$4,000 less than Carleton's, which results in a total difference in annual revenue of more than \$6,000,000. Many colleges with much higher gift and net student revenues than ours (including Carleton) have abandoned need-blind admissions because they think it exacts too large a financial cost and threatens academic excellence.

For Macalester to continue a need-blind admissions and need-blind aid policy into the future, we need to substantially increase our net student revenue, which means we need to attract more low and no-need students. The College needs to find out why it is not attractive to so many prospective low and no-need students. One possible way to attract such students might be to utilize merit scholarships much more than we currently do to attract a diverse group of gifted students. We are currently losing many low and no-need gifted students (majority and minority students) to other colleges who are offering them merit scholarships. For example, if we could attract a gifted no-need student by offering the student a \$5,000 merit scholarship, the College not only brings in a gifted student, it may save money. The Committee believes that such a strategy might increase our ability to attract both majority and minority academically gifted students, just as our generous financial aid policy for international students has so far enabled us to attract the top international students.

7. STUDENT LEARNING EXPERIENCE

(Also relates to admissions, campus climate, institutional message)

Direction

Creating an integrated student learning experience at a residential college is a shared responsibility among faculty, staff, and students, and the College should take advantage of every opportunity to enhance our students' entire learning experience, within and outside the classroom.

Background

Creating an integrated educational experience for our students is at the core of a residential liberal arts institution. It is important that faculty and staff acknowledge that our students' learning experiences occur both inside and outside the classroom. Broadening our perspective on our students' entire learning experience does not mean we are reducing our emphasis on a rigorous academic experience. Nor does it require faculty to "do" the out-of-classroom activities. But it does require communication, teamwork, and shared concern by faculty and staff for our students' total learning experience, not just their academic experience.

There are a number of things the College can do to help provide our students a more comprehensive, integrated, and satisfying learning experience. The vision of our typical alumnus as a citizen-leader implies preparation in informing one's self of the surrounding world, evaluating it and working with others for improvement. The College should provide the medium and program to practice productive interaction and collaboration both in the classroom and the student's co-curricular experiences.

As recommended in Direction 2, the College should consider ways it might incorporate into the educational experience the development of skills and behaviors for constructive, thoughtful, and respectful engagement among individuals with divergent perspectives and beliefs. Additionally, the College should identify the role of spiritual and physical fitness in the student learning experience. The College needs to develop specific means for the academic program to better utilize our urban location. As an urban institution, the College needs to determine what percentage of resident students it feels is necessary to ensure a rich college experience. We need to establish better ways for Macalester's academic program to provide students with more tangible career guidance and development and not view this portion of the students' lives as the sole responsibility of the Career Development Center. The College needs to develop a service component that more clearly supports the curriculum. The College needs to enhance its support for faculty-student collaborations along the lines of the Keck joint research program. Finally, systemic barriers that stand in the way of achieving an integrated student learning experience need to be eliminated. That is, the current faculty reward system needs to be re-evaluated as it relates to supporting the objective of an integrated student learning experience.

8. FACULTY-STAFF TIME ALLOCATION

(Also relates to student experience, admissions, and revenue streams)

Direction

The SDC recommends a review of faculty and staff time allocation to determine if our time is being best used to further the institution's educational goals and values. Faculty and Staff time, and that of our students, is by far the College's most precious resource, and we should think boldly and creatively about how to free people to realize their full potential. Among other things, this should include a review of faculty and staff committees to determine if some procedures and processes can be streamlined without compromising the principles of academic freedom and due process that are explicit in the characterization of shared governance in academic institutions.

Background

The Committee believes that if the College is to provide educational excellence with the resources at hand, it will be essential that all members of the community contribute in the most effective way possible. During the Committee's deliberations, it became clear that there was little systematic communication between the faculty and several college offices, including admissions, college and alumni relations, and development, even though those offices might function much more effectively with more faculty involvement.

The Committee believes this is a good time for the faculty to review its essential rights and responsibilities under the shared governance structure and to consider whether other faculty committee or decision structures might be able to operate more efficiently without compromising faculty authority and due process. If it is possible to free up some faculty time in this manner, faculty members may be able to contribute more toward the efforts to implement some of the other strategic directions and thereby help to improve our students' educational experience. The Committee recognizes that care must be taken to preserve academic freedom and due process during any review of committee structure, particularly elected faculty committees. The Committee recognizes that the ongoing Hewlett and Mellon grants are currently looking at the faculty life and role in higher education and recommends that these efforts be integrated into a College review of faculty time allocation and the faculty's rights and responsibilities under the shared governance structure.

On the staff side we see some possibilities for streamlining as well. In addition, we heard that some staff members feel they have been given little independent authority and must participate in a complex decision-making process that can make it difficult for them to respond effectively and in a timely manner to situations that arise. The Committee recommends that the College's senior staff and administrators review the decision-making procedures for staff members in their lines and consider giving their staff members more independent authority. The Committee wants to be clear that an increase in the independent authority for staff members would mean that staff members would be more individually accountable for their decisions. In any case, care must be taken to ensure that authority is not delegated to staff members that would infringe on the authority of the faculty.

9. REVENUE STREAMS

(Also relates to alumni, faculty and staff hiring and retention, financial aid, facilities, governance)

Direction

Maintaining a long-term focus on student learning, the College should acknowledge that educational excellence will be best sustained by increasing revenue from advancement, net tuition, and the endowment. Additionally, as we begin the planning for renovation of major facilities and infrastructure, the SDC recommends that we simultaneously begin planning the next capital campaign to help finance these renovations and to enhance our endowment resources. Finally, the SDC recommends that the faculty and staff, the Board of Trustees, and the President consider the benefits and costs of reducing the on-campus activities and responsibilities of the President so that the President can spend more time cultivating alumni relations, college advancement and recruitment of new students.

Background

During much of the 1990s, Macalester enjoyed substantial increases in annual revenue. We used those resources to enhance our curriculum, staff, faculty, and our physical plant. Since projected rates of growth of our operating income are expected to be not much higher than the annual rate of inflation, the College must search for ways to increase the long-run growth rate in our operating income while maintaining our focus on education. The SDC believes that the greatest long term potential for sustained growth in operating income is in the number and average size of gifts, and urges the College to continue its concerted efforts in this area, including a vigorous effort to mount an ambitious new comprehensive campaign. The Committee believes that the possibility of increasing net tuition revenue provides a more immediate opportunity to increase our revenue stream and urges the College to work hard at improving this revenue stream in the near future, without abandoning our commitment to need-blind admissions and need-based financial aid.

Based on the belief that the quality of our education will depend on providing resources for our programs, SDC recommends that, as new revenue does become available, priority be given to areas most likely to enhance further long-term revenue growth, including outreach to alumni, donors, and prospective students. Finally, the SDC is of the opinion that the President has an essential leadership role in the College advancement effort, and that the President is essential to promoting the College as an exceptional liberal arts institution. If the role and responsibilities of the President change, some of the senior staff responsibilities will likely need to change as well.

10. FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

(Also relates to admissions, student learning experience, finance and institutional identity)

Direction

All College facilities should be evaluated to determine the degree to which they promote educational excellence. To accomplish this evaluation, the Committee recommends that the College develop criteria and a process that can be used to prioritize competing facilities needs. Vital facilities and infrastructures that do not meet minimum program standards must be renovated or reconstructed as soon as funds permit. In particular, the Committee believes that the Fine Arts and Athletics facilities are grievously inadequate to fulfill Macalester's commitment to educational excellence, and that urgent attention must immediately be given to planning and financing major renovations.

Background

Decisions regarding the maintenance, repair, renovation, and new construction of the College's facilities and infrastructure should be considered strategic ones. The reality of maintaining a physical plant and technological infrastructure is that they need continual attention, repair, and periodic upgrading or replacement. There will continue to be competing facilities needs asserted by department, programs, or offices of the College. Thus, Macalester must establish a process and criteria for the evaluation of facility and infrastructure requests. The criteria should focus on how the program, department, or project meets the expressed priority of educational excellence. To ensure a comprehensive perspective, each project should include a variety of community members including students, faculty, and staff. Each proposal must demonstrate how it meets the criteria.

Since all community members are affected by prioritization decisions involving facilities maintenance and renovation, the Committee believes that a communication process should be established to keep the community as a whole informed regarding the priority of projects, and to permit community members to voice their concerns or preferences. For example, two proposed projects, the renovations of the Fine Arts and Athletic facilities, have been outstanding for quite some time without any systematic community input on their priority within the College.

PART III. SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSIONS

The primary commitment of the founders of Macalester and of the College leaders today has been to enrich the intellectual experience our students. The academic enterprise stands at the center of this experience, with a pursuit of knowledge that inspires our students to be informed, engaged, tolerant, and active citizens of a world of diverse perspectives and cultures. To fulfill our mission we must seek out talented students from many backgrounds and find the best teachers to challenge and inspire them. And we must tell our story to the world in a way that attracts the students and teachers we most desire and the donors who will support our mission.

The Committee believes that the directions it has proposed are all interrelated. All are directed at increasing the quality of the Macalester learning experience, which the Committee believes must be the College's central mission. Specifically, all directions focus on two fundamental objectives: doing a better job of attracting a diverse group of academically gifted students; and providing our students with a more challenging, satisfying, humane, and enjoyable learning experience.

During the Committee's deliberations, it became clear that the fiscal constraint that the College is now facing actually provides us with an opportunity. That opportunity comes from the fact that we must now, more than ever, be imaginative, thoughtful, and focused in our planning. Many architects say that the projects they enjoy most are those with limited space, limited resources and that contain an existing structure that must be integrated into the new construction. They enjoy these projects because they call upon their full imagination, knowledge and experience to accomplish the projects' goals within the constraints. This is the attitude that we need to take as architects of educational excellence in a new phase of our institutional life. If the College is to continue providing a first-rate liberal arts education, it must plan to do so without dramatic increases in resources or staff. This will require a concerted effort among all members of the community whose expectations and work habits may have to change.

In essence, the College's future rests on our ability to function as a community. We need to be able to talk frankly and respectfully with one another on a wide range of issues, and as a community we must find ways to identify priorities and make difficult decisions. Thus, one important outcome of these efforts is that we may finally learn how to be the community we have for so long sought to become. We need to undertake these efforts to prepare for a state of low income growth, but will find them beneficial even if greater resources become available. The Committee believes that liberal arts colleges are entering a very challenging period. Prospective students are much more career-oriented than twenty years ago and are looking for clear career guidance and advancement from their college education. Liberal arts colleges currently attract only 4% of all college students. Should this figure decline in the future, liberal arts colleges will face even more intense competition for students. Some liberal arts colleges have already closed their doors and others have begun to join forces in various sorts of collaborative efforts in order to meet some of these challenges. One thing is clear and that is Macalester cannot be content to do business as usual. The Committee hopes that the directions it has proposed will guide and focus the College's planning efforts such that the outcome will be a vital institution and community that, for years to come, will continue to be known for the quality of the educational experience it provides its students.