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Dear Member of the Macalester Community,

I write to share with you a copy of the attached planning document, entitled "*World Class*": *Strategic Imperatives for Macalester College, 2005–2015*. Understood most narrowly, the document is my response to a request from the Board of Trustees to describe, after two years at Macalester, my vision for the college's future and my sense of the actions required to bring that vision to fruition. Understood more broadly, the document is intended to provide a clear and meaningful framework within which strategic decisions can be made by a wide range of stakeholders in an institution about which many of us care very deeply.

While I have attempted to bring my own judgment to bear upon the pages that follow, much credit for the ideas and priorities therein must go to the many groups and individuals at Macalester who have worked over the past decade or more to chart a path for the college. In particular, I want to acknowledge the work of the members of the various task forces that comprised the *Strategic Directions* initiative that culminated in the spring of 2001. Though it might have appeared at times as if the voices of those groups went unheeded, the truth is that they have helped shape institutional decision-making over the past several years and surely have played a role in the evolution of this report. My hope is that I have captured the aspirations for Macalester that emerged from several years of comprehensive and inclusive discussions and helped express them through concrete actions and specific goals.

After receipt and discussion of this document, the Board of Trustees unanimously passed the following resolution at its meeting on October 7, 2005:

The Board of Trustees of Macalester College formally endorses the following statement of the college's central goal for the coming decade:

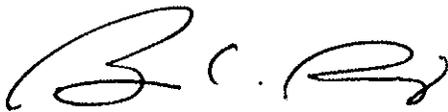
Macalester's fundamental goal over the next ten years and beyond is to be, and to be widely recognized as, a college distinguished by exceptional academic quality, a pervasive sense of excitement and innovation, a keen awareness of the changing world into which we are sending our graduates, a distinctive and demonstrable commitment to the education of socially responsible global citizens and leaders, and a student experience informed and enhanced by a rich urban environment.

Moreover, the Board supports the use of this goal as articulated in the document entitled *Strategic Imperatives for Macalester College, 2005–2015* as the basis of strategic and campaign planning and of work to strengthen quality, community, distinctiveness, and visibility at Macalester.

In taking this action, the Board has encouraged all of us to bear in mind the critical social function of the college as we carry out our individual work: to bear in mind, that is, the collective effort of which each of us forms a part. Precisely *how* this awareness should shape the development of our academic and co-curricular programs, our fundraising campaigns, our budgets, and our admissions materials remains for us to determine; *that* it should do so seems indisputable.

I look forward to the many ways in which each of you will contribute to our shared mission and thank you most deeply for your efforts—past, present, and future—on behalf of the college.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. Rosenberg". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "B." and the last name "Rosenberg" clearly distinguishable.

Brian Rosenberg

“World Class”

STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES FOR MACALESTER COLLEGE, 2005–2015

Buried deep within the archives of Macalester College is a handwritten note from DeWitt Wallace, dating to the late 1960s, in which the largest benefactor in the history of the college observes that Macalester represents the “greatest opportunity any college president has ever had.” “There must be,” he adds, “at least 1500 small colleges in the U.S. . . . [Macalester] can demonstrate just what higher education in a small college *should be*.”

Macalester remains for its president—for all of us charged with its care and oversight—an extraordinary opportunity to provide leadership in American higher education by providing leaders for the world. Our history, mission, resources, location, and energy comprise a formidable foundation upon which to build; our planning should allow us to continue to construct upon that foundation a college that is enviable in its quality and admirable in its fundamental goals. Animating all our efforts should be the belief that our responsibility is to nurture and inspire generations of global citizens who will lead us, in the words of journalist Thomas Friedman, toward “productive outcomes that advance and unite civilization”—toward “openness, opportunity, and hope rather than limits, suspicion, and grievance” (*The World is Flat*, 443). Nearly every day, the news from around the country and around the globe reminds us that this is a great and good mission, as essential now as at any moment in recent history. Put another way, we will succeed in building the future for Macalester to the extent that we are guided by a powerful and precise sense of the critical social function of the college: a sense not merely of what would be good for Macalester, but of what good Macalester, through its graduates, can do in the world.

If we are to succeed in carrying out our mission during a time of complex challenges and intense competition for public and private resources, we must be purposeful in defining our priorities, our strategies for supporting those priorities, and the indicators through which we will measure progress toward our goals. **Macalester’s fundamental goal over the next ten years and beyond should be to become widely recognized as a college distinguished by exceptional academic quality, a pervasive sense of excitement and innovation, a keen awareness of the changing world into which we are sending our graduates, a distinctive and demonstrable commitment to the education of socially responsible global citizens and leaders, and a student experience informed and enhanced by a rich urban environment.** In sum, we should aspire to be a “world class” institution, both in the sense that we seek the highest quality in all our efforts *and* in the sense that those efforts are shaped by the needs and opportunities of the twenty-first-century world. This would in no respect entail a change of direction; rather, it would entail a strengthening of characteristics already

present or incipient in the college, some of which are products of decades of work and planning. It would also, I believe, be a goal that would resonate powerfully with our present constituencies and make the college more attractive to new and important constituencies: prospective students, prospective donors, and the broader public within and well beyond the Twin Cities.

American colleges and universities by and large do an outstanding job of preparing the educated citizenry that Thomas Jefferson identified as a prerequisite for the success of our democracy. We must be able to assert with conviction, and to demonstrate, that Macalester does this as well as any college in the country because, more than most, we are deliberately preparing students for positions of leadership in—for productive engagement with—an increasingly urban, increasingly diverse global society within which national boundaries are more permeable and cross-cultural expertise more crucial than ever before.

Accomplishing this very challenging goal means in particular making improvements and investments in four broadly defined areas: **quality, community, distinctiveness, and visibility.**

Quality

The foundation of any plan for the future of Macalester must be the strengthening of the educational work of the college. Study after study confirms that, among the strongest students, the single most important determinant of interest in a particular college is the perceived quality and depth of the academic programs. Similar observations might be made regarding alumni support, corporate and foundation interest, and attractiveness to graduate schools and prospective employers. Even more important, our mission of educating informed leaders for a global society will be carried out more successfully if our academic programs are more robust.

Over the past two decades, the improvement in the actual quality and perceived quality of the academic programs at Macalester has been dramatic and measurable: we see it in the increased size and improved strength of our applicant pool, in the academic reputation of the college as gauged by a variety of indicators, in the credentials and scholarly productivity of the faculty, in the graduate and professional schools into which our students are accepted, and—less tangibly but perhaps most significantly—in the broader recognition of and respect for the Macalester name. Within just the past two years, we have been selected for special mention by both *U.S. News & World Report* and the *Newsweek-Kaplan College Guide*. Equally clear, however, is the need for further improvement, assuming that our goal is to be distinguished by our academic quality even among the nation's best colleges and universities. At present our reputation for academic excellence trails that of our strongest

competitors, which may account for the fact that our yield among our most desirable applicants remains low and that our retention rates—while the best in our history—continue to lag behind those of the national leaders. Put simply, the students who select another college instead of Macalester do so most often because they perceive the academic quality and reputation of that other college to be stronger than ours. To reduce the number of students who make such a choice, we must alter this perception.

Few things are more difficult to measure than the *actual* quality of a college education, whose most important outcomes unfold in complex ways over decades. Most of the indicators typically used to gauge quality are, at best, proxies for the thing itself. Nevertheless, these indicators do tell us much about how Macalester compares to peer institutions and about how we are likely to be perceived by prospective students and within the world of higher education.

To realize improvements in academic quality, strategies must be devised and funding obtained to achieve the following specific objectives:

- Quality requires investment. The dollars spent per student at Macalester must more closely approach the median within our 40-school comparison group. This can only be achieved through a combination of strategies and tactics: more efficient management of net tuition revenue, more successful fundraising, and continued prudent management of the endowment and of other assets.
- Since the recruitment and retention of a strong faculty—of skilled teachers, dedicated scholars, and engaged institutional citizens—lies at the heart of academic quality, faculty compensation, along with levels of support for teaching and scholarship, must remain consistently at or above the median within our 40-school comparison group.
- The student/faculty ratio has in the past few years crept upward from about 10/1 to 11/1 or higher. We must drive that ratio back down, not through a reduction in the size of the student body but through the careful and strategic addition of faculty positions. The most responsible way to achieve this growth in faculty size would be through the creation of additional endowed professorships, of which Macalester continues to have too few. Some of these professorships might fund additions to current programs that are under-staffed and some might inspire the creation of new and desirable programs in areas not currently addressed in our curriculum.
- Though faculty have the primary responsibility for carrying out the teaching and learning mission of the college, their work would be impossible without the efforts of a talented and dedicated staff. Macalester's current staffing levels are unacceptably low: by most measures, the lowest within our 40-school comparison group. We must find the resources to increase that level strategically so that, within the next decade, it approaches more nearly the median within that comparison group.

- We must continue to shape our curriculum and staff in ways that allow us to deploy our available resources most effectively. No college, and especially no small college, can provide all things to all people. In order to ensure that every program that we offer is of the highest caliber and that we have the resources available to buttress our strengths and explore new areas, we should be prepared to make difficult choices and to recognize that everything we *have* done is not everything we must forever continue to do. *These choices should be shaped by the strategic imperatives outlined in this document and in subsequent planning processes.*
- Even the best faculty and staff cannot carry out their work effectively without appropriate facilities. We must ensure that those academic facilities that are currently excellent are well-maintained and that those that are not meeting our needs are improved. In particular, we must create improved and expanded facilities for the fine and performing arts, an area in which the opportunity for academic strength is currently being compromised by inadequate spaces. Eventually we must create space for the Institute for Global Citizenship, which is of primary strategic importance to the college.
- Even as we work to manage net tuition revenue more effectively, financial aid will remain critical to Macalester's ability to enroll a high-quality and appropriately diverse student body. Far too much of our current financial aid budget is "unfunded" by designated scholarships. The college must increase substantially the number and size of endowed scholarships in order to ensure our continued attractiveness and accessibility to the best students from all segments of society.

Community

The well-publicized "Documenting Effective Educational Practice" (or DEEP) report on Macalester, written by the creators of the National Survey of Student Engagement, concludes with the following trenchant observation:

Macalester College may be its own worst critic...[M]embers of the college community are modest about their accomplishments (which are notable and in abundant supply) and focus on areas for potential improvement. Macalester may "undersell" itself in relationship to its peers.

While there is doubtless something admirable in such unsparing self-scrutiny, there is also something debilitating in the tendency to highlight failure over success. The excellence of Macalester will not be recognized by others unless and until we recognize and celebrate it ourselves. If our college is to rise to the level of our aspirations, we must create and foster

a community that is closely knit, affirmative, and unashamedly supportive of our mission. We must encourage all stakeholders—students and alumni, faculty and staff, parents and friends—to accept stewardship of the institution as both a privilege and a critical responsibility.

Macalester in recent decades has acquired a reputation for a certain degree of fractiousness and for creating an environment in which individual interests and identities too often take precedence over the well-being of the college. There is evidence that this reputation has never been more than partially justified and that it is becoming less and less accurate by the year. The percentage of alumni who contribute to the college financially or through volunteer work has been rising rapidly and is currently at record levels; student retention is also at record levels, as is financial support from our most recent graduates. While attitudes are less easily measured, anecdotal evidence and the overwhelming success of such events as Founders Day suggest that Macalester students today are more interested in forging a strong community and in connecting with the history and traditions of the college than might have been the case in the past.

To maintain this momentum, we must do a better and better job of telling the *story* of the college, of transcending a list of what we *need* and announcing what we hope to *accomplish* in the world. At bottom, our story should not chiefly be about what gifts of resources and time can do for Macalester, but about what a Macalester amply supported by alumni, parents, and friends can do to strengthen local, national, and global communities. Our own clarity and enthusiasm on this point will be essential.

Equally essential will be our success in strengthening the current commitment at Macalester to including in our community and our dialogues students, faculty, and staff whose diversity mirrors the communities into which our graduates will move. This means that we must foster an environment within which individuals from different racial, ethnic, economic, and national backgrounds—or with different sexual orientations, ideological positions, or religious faiths—can with enthusiasm call Macalester home. Absent such a condition, the educational mission of the college will be compromised.

Those of us charged with the oversight of the college must respond to, encourage, and build upon increasing levels of engagement and pride among students and alumni and reinforce our commitment to both unity and diversity. To accomplish this, strategies must be devised and funding obtained to achieve the following specific objectives:

- We must continue to build upon current, increased levels of stewardship, especially from alumni. The percentage of alumni contributing to the college annually should reach or exceed 50 percent; the total raised by the Annual Fund should reach or exceed \$5 million; the total raised annually for gifts for all purposes should reach

or exceed \$20 million. The upcoming comprehensive campaign must be used as a vehicle for moving us closer and closer to these goals.

- We must continue to expand the volunteer network among alumni and parents, chiefly in areas relating to advancement but also in areas including admissions, career counseling, athletics, campus life, and others. This effort will be helped by the creation of various alumni “communities” built around shared interests and histories.
- We must seek to achieve and sustain a six-year graduation rate of higher than 85 percent, along with a first to second year retention rate that approaches or exceeds 95 percent. Both rates are reasonable (if imperfect) indicators of student satisfaction and fairly reliable predictors of eventual alumni support and engagement.
- We must build and sustain enthusiasm among current students, faculty, and staff for the mission, history, and character of the college. This will require multiple strategies, including the support of events that create and strengthen community, the reinforcement in our published materials of our distinctive identity, and the creation on campus of visible signs and symbols of Macalester’s traditions and character.
- We must improve and increase the spaces on campus that bring the community together, as the Ruth Stricker Dayton Campus Center currently does so well. Both the Athletics, Wellness, and Recreation project and the Fine Arts project have the potential to accomplish this goal, since both are spaces in which individuals from across and beyond the campus come together for activities, events, and performances. The re-design of Shaw Field also represents an opportunity to create new gathering spaces and to enhance the distinctiveness and memorability of campus.
- We must strengthen our programs in intercollegiate athletics, which not only engage many students directly, but inspire pride in the college and bring members of the community together for exciting and celebratory events. This will require updated facilities, improved recruitment of student athletes, and better internal management of programs.
- We must strengthen and augment programs that promote and support a diverse and inclusive campus, without which both our sense of community and our educational objectives will be undermined.
- We must make our boundaries with the local community—in Saint Paul and the greater Twin Cities—more permeable. This can be accomplished both by bringing more people onto campus for events and programs and by encouraging Macalester students, faculty, and staff to work in a variety of capacities with local organizations, businesses, and individuals. The resultant increase in community support for the efforts of the college would benefit Macalester in a host of ways.

Distinctiveness

“Macalester is committed to being a preeminent liberal arts college with an educational program known for its high standards for scholarship and its special emphasis on internationalism, multiculturalism, and service to society.”

Mission Statement, approved by the Board of Trustees, May 1992

When speaking about the distinctiveness of any small, residential liberal arts college, two caveats are important to keep in mind: first, that any such college is by its very nature distinctive within the world of American higher education, since about 97 percent of students attend institutions of some other kind; and second, that elite liberal arts colleges tend not to be recognized or rewarded very much for their *differences* from one another. That said, it is nonetheless true that Macalester has an almost unique opportunity to build upon a distinctive identity, mission, and location to advance the fortunes of the college. This is the case because we are one of a small handful of colleges that *is* associated positively with some defining characteristics—most notably, a strong commitment to internationalism and to civic engagement—and that is located in an attractive, vibrant, and increasingly diverse urban environment. These are and will remain desirable attributes within our marketplace, and the situation of the college will be strengthened if we can manifest them even more fully in our programs and promotional materials. We must be less tentative in embracing our status as a global college of the first caliber and in reminding others, along with ourselves, that we are not newcomers to the game of preparing students for success in Friedman’s “flat” world.

It is also worth remembering that over the next twenty years the demographics within both the region and the nation will change in ways that make it essential for Macalester to increase its attractiveness to a more diverse set of domestic applicants. Despite the challenges posed by our upper-Midwestern location—and these are formidable, to say the least—we should be able to translate both our reputation for inclusiveness and our urban environment into some success in the recruitment and retention of domestic students of color. This success will depend in part on our ability to do a better job of both recruiting and retaining faculty and staff of color and to form a campus culture genuinely welcoming to and supportive of diverse populations. While it is unlikely, at least in the near term, that our recruitment and retention numbers among under-represented populations will challenge those of the national leaders, it is important that those numbers be robust enough to justify our claim to being a college that prepares students especially well for citizenship in the world they will inherit.

In short, we must work to ensure that what we are in fact and what we declare in our mission statement coincide and that we embrace the challenges and opportunities of being

an urban institution. To accomplish this, strategies must be devised and funding obtained to achieve the following specific objectives.

- We must continue to enroll a sufficiently high number of international students, from a sufficiently diverse range of countries, to maintain our distinctive identity and character: historically this number has been about 12 percent of the student body, very high by national standards though somewhat lower than the recent levels of nearly 15 percent. For similar reasons, we must maintain and even seek to expand the number of Macalester students who spend time studying abroad.
- We must strengthen the recruitment and retention of domestic students of color. The number of students of color at the college should be above the median within our comparison group, and the retention rate among those students should be as high as our overall retention rate. Similarly, we must devise strategies and policies that will improve our ability to recruit and retain faculty and staff of color.
- Macalester must develop a highly visible, “flagship” enterprise that will embody, advance, and publicize its distinctive mission. This will be the Institute for Global Citizenship, for which we must create support, programming, space, and visibility. We must make the Institute a catalyst for cutting-edge teaching, scholarship, and events that foster the education of citizen-leaders for the interconnected world of the twenty-first century.
- We must embed the distinctive aspects of our mission—internationalism, multiculturalism, and service—even more fully in the life of the college by expanding and reinforcing the curriculum in these areas and by providing ongoing support for new and existing events and programs.
- We must increase the number of academic departments and programs that incorporate the Twin Cities into their teaching, as well as the number of students engaged in internships and other curricular and co-curricular activities within the local community. In our co-curricular programming, we must increase the opportunities for service in local communities.
- We must maintain and reinforce our connection to Project Pericles®, a distinctive and visible sign of our commitment to service and democratic citizenship.

Visibility

Research conducted within the past two years by the firms of Art and Science Group, Inc., and Mark Edwards and Company confirms what many at Macalester know: one of the chief impediments to the further success of the college is the absence of visibility or “name recognition” among the most desirable students in many parts of the country. This absence

is easily enough traced to our Midwestern location, to our relatively recent entrance into the most elite tier of private colleges, and, perhaps, to the inherent modesty alluded to in the DEEP Report. A remarkably high number of our applicants *first* learned of Macalester through one of our admissions mailings, which may be good news regarding our doggedness and ingenuity but is surely bad news regarding the breadth of our reputation.

Some of this reputational disadvantage will diminish over time as Macalester spends more years ranked among the country's best colleges and attracts more attention of the sort provided by *U.S. News* and *Newsweek-Kaplan*. This will, however, be a slow and gradual process (like most changes within the world of higher education), absent some planned intervention on our part. This does *not* mean that we should go to any length or expense to seek attention for its own sake: worth remembering is the truth that attention actively sought is typically more ephemeral than attention honestly earned. It does mean that we should seek chances to publicize the impressive and distinctive things we do and, especially, to plan programs and events that are both consistent with the mission of the college and likely to draw the notice of important constituencies. We should be prepared to invest some funds, and even to take some risks, when the right opportunities to draw favorable attention to Macalester present themselves.

To increase the visibility and enhance the reputation of the college, strategies must be devised and funding obtained to achieve the following specific objectives:

- We must increase the number of domestic applicants for admission to Macalester. Both the number and the academic quality of applicants have increased sharply in recent years, and we must work to continue this trend, particularly as long as our yield on our offers of admission remains relatively low. The single best way to enhance the visibility of the college among our target audience is to attract applications from, and ultimately enroll, a growing number of the strongest students from around the country.
- We must increase the yield on our offers of admission. Currently our overall yield and especially our yield among the strongest admitted students are low in relation to many peer colleges. This is unsurprising given the quality of the schools with which we are now competing, but it signals that Macalester continues to trail the most prestigious institutions in reputation and perceived quality. An improved yield would both signal and contribute to a strengthening of reputation.
- As we work to increase applications and improve yield, we must develop promotional materials and strategies that capture not only the excellence of Macalester, but the particular qualities with which we want Macalester to be associated: intellectual rigor, innovation, global citizenship, urban engagement.

- Though the beauty and fine maintenance of our physical environs are currently assets, we must use the new Campus Master Plan to develop more visible and attractive “doorways” into the campus and a more compelling experience for prospective students and other visitors to Macalester.
- We must seek broader and more positive media coverage both nationally and locally. This will mean *doing* things that merit such coverage as well as taking steps to ensure that our accomplishments are effectively publicized.
- Increased visibility and respect within the Twin Cities would enhance both institutional self-esteem and the base of philanthropic support for our programs. We must employ a range of strategies to accomplish this goal, including additions to the Board of Trustees, the hosting of events that would attract corporate and foundation interest, and more effective local publicizing of our strengths and accomplishments.

There is no inconsequential moment in the history of a college. Anyone who studies the history of Macalester will discover quickly that our college in particular has faced challenges and critical decisions for nearly all of its 131 years and has traveled a road with more than its share of forks. Nevertheless, it is fair to say that the present moment in the life of Macalester is one of peculiar importance, heightened risk, yet perhaps unparalleled opportunity. At no point in the recent history of higher education in America have the threats to small, residential liberal arts colleges been more numerous; at the same time, at no point has Macalester been better poised to achieve DeWitt Wallace’s goal of demonstrating “just what higher education in a small college *should be*.” What it should be, of course, is unparalleled grounding in the knowledge, skills, and habits of mind that will help form a world of greater justice and abundance. If we do our work well at the college—if we remain focused on the truth that education should enhance both individual well-being and the public good—we will contribute through the ideas and accomplishments of our graduates to this invaluable enterprise.

Brian Rosenberg

October 2005

APPENDIX: SUMMARY OF IMPORTANT INDICATORS

While it is true that success in higher education is difficult to measure and that some of our accomplishments are more easily measurable than others, it is nonetheless important to identify devices for tracking the degree of progress toward our goals. Periodic review of the following indicators would serve as such a tracking device. All are meaningful in one way or another; some would be relatively accessible for the purpose of year-to-year or peer group comparisons, while others would be more difficult to determine annually but would provide important information over time.

Quality

- Dollars spent per student
- Tuition revenue per student
- Median faculty salaries
- Student/faculty ratio
- Student/staff ratio
- Number of endowed professorships
- Percentage of “funded” financial aid
- Scholarly and artistic output of the faculty
- Number and percentage of students attending graduate and professional schools

Community

- Percentage of alumni contributing annually
- Annual Fund total
- Total funds raised annually
- Number of alumni volunteers
- Six-year graduation rate
- First to second year retention rate

Distinctiveness

- Percentage of international students
- Percentage of domestic students of color
- Percentage of faculty and staff of color
- Percentage of students studying abroad
- Number of internships
- Number of service-learning opportunities

Visibility

- Number of applications for admission
- Yield on offers of admission
- Number of citations in local and national media