

STRATEGIC PLAN

Strategic Plan, St. John's College – 2008-2013
October 20, 2008

Mission Statement:

St. John's College is a community dedicated to liberal education. Such education seeks to free human beings from prejudice and unexamined opinion, to help them reflect on the nature of things and on the ends and means of human endeavors, and to enable them to make thoughtful choices in public and private life.

Students at St. John's pursue such an education by participating in the activities of its community of learning. The central activity is the reading and discussion, in small classes, of the great works of the West. This study is supported by and intertwined with the study of the elements of languages, mathematics, science, and music. In Santa Fe there is also a program that focuses on the great works of the East.

At St. John's College, we seek to develop in our students an awareness of fundamental alternatives for understanding the human condition, a desire and capacity for lifelong learning, and an ability to deal with complex issues through both cooperative inquiry and independent thinking.

Vision:

Liberal education at St. John's College involves adherence to an ideal that we attempt to embody in activity. By engaging students in an examination of the fundamental questions that human beings need to consider and by giving students the responsibility for their own learning, we hope to open the world to them in such a way that they become excellent citizens, parents, partners, colleagues, and friends. We aspire to provide the best possible educational experience guided by our mission and supported by appropriate resources. As one college on two campuses, including Board, faculty, staff, students and alumni, we strive to build a community where careful listening, respect for the contributions of others and thoughtful attempts to reach a shared understanding extend to all aspects of the life of the college.

Preface:

The program of instruction, called "the Program," is at the heart of the college. This is always the most basic assumption underlying all planning and activity at St. John's. Since its inception in 1937, the all-required undergraduate curriculum has undergone and will continue to undergo alterations within a framework understood by the faculty and overseen by the Instruction Committee. Reading and study of original texts considered to be at the center of Western thought, a roughly chronological approach in all areas, a seminar-style format in all classrooms, a shared responsibility for learning, and the acquisition and exercise of intellectual skills in the service of radical questioning – these form the structure within which liberal learning takes place at St. John's. The Graduate Institute adheres to the same basic structure with two exceptions: an Eastern Classics program focuses on texts and ideas from India, China, and Japan; and the approach across segments is not strictly chronological.

The period covered by this strategic plan, 2008 through 2013, will be pivotal for the college. The previous strategic plan covered the period of 2000 through 2008, a time of intense activity. A major capital campaign raised more than \$133 million in gifts and pledges in support of the college's priorities: increasing the amount of funding available for financial aid; bringing tutor salaries to the median of our peer group and providing a solid program of faculty development; improving student and campus life by funding internships, strengthening the libraries and laboratories, and funding opportunities for teachers to attend the Graduate Institute; increasing the endowment; and renovating and constructing facilities.

Coming off this campaign, not only have some major priorities been addressed, but the college is in a better position to address future needs. The donor base has increased and alumni, friends, and foundations provide financial support to a significantly greater degree. Financial controls and cross-campus budgeting have been put into place. Leadership on the two campuses is strong, and the Management Committee brings the

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two campuses together as one college in effective ways. As always, the program of instruction is under constant review; with the increased opportunities for faculty study, new approaches to program books and studies have been undertaken, to the benefit of students and tutors on both campuses.

In short, mere survival is no longer an issue for St. John's College. While we are by no means as well off as some of our peer institutions, we are on stable ground.

Especially considered in the light of the college's condition 15 years ago, we have the opportunity to address challenges and to take advantage of opportunities as never before. We have stabilized draw on the endowment. New gifts and good performance have meant a growth in the total endowment. Tuition revenue and gifts have created a steady revenue for operations. Both campuses show a small surplus annually. We have refined our admissions practices and financial aid policies. We have improved print materials to award-winning status, upgraded the website, and produced distinctive videos, all of which helped to attract potential students who are well-suited to the program as a result. (However, we recognize the necessity to continue to refine admissions and financial aid practices in both the immediate and long-range future.) Needed facilities of excellent quality have been added to each campus, and both campuses operate under an annual planning cycle that addresses all major areas of operation. The base of support from alumni has increased significantly, and the college has brought in friends who understand and support the program in greater numbers. More foundations recognize the quality of the educational activity at the college and support it.

The task over the five years covered in this plan will be to evolve so that new challenges identified can be met. A number of fundamental questions remain for us. These are summarized below in the "Challenges" section. How we address and move forward with respect to these questions will determine important directions for the college. The fundamental educational goals of St. John's College, summarized in the mission statement, remain. We hope to continue to improve the educational experience for our students and provide the best possible environments for carrying out the mission.

Challenges and Opportunities:

The challenges St. John's College will face over the five years covered by the plan are closely linked to the impact on the core mission of certain questions. To remain true to our mission may require that we change, adapt, be flexible in certain ways.

1. How do we sustain what we value? If we believe there is a limit to the size of the community within which this education can be actualized, we are faced with a daunting financial challenge. Certainly the financial needs of the campuses – for operations, physical improvements, etc. – will continue to increase. Without a proportionate increase in the revenue from tuition, our ability to address priorities will diminish. Similarly, fundraising also has limited potential to increase the revenue stream significantly. We will be in rough period following the campaign, building the donor base for the next campaign and stewarding current donors. Our constituent groups are not large; foundation support will always be limited without a research component to our proposals and without innovations or new initiatives.
2. How do we continue to attract students and expand our applicant pool in today's higher education climate? How do we commit to diversity and gender balance on the campuses, and what means will we consider for these commitments? The very distinctiveness of the program and the importance of it means that we have to be flexible, adaptive in our admissions practices. What prospective students expect will change, what our competitors offer and the tactics they use to attract students will change. Even if we have been comfortable with the number and quality of students we have been attracting, we may need to try new adaptive measures. We must also consider demographics and the state of the economy – both of which may adversely impact our recruiting efforts and enrollment.
3. How do we mold our campuses' physical spaces so that they are best suited to the pursuits of the program? Some projects remain unfunded from the campaign – most notably the Santa Fe laboratory renovations and addition. How do we fund this and also capital projects identified in the next few years?

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Can we adequately fund necessary deferred maintenance? First steps to solid campus master planning, including deferred maintenance and environmental sustainability issues, have been taken. The ability to foresee improvements that will be important beyond our current status is crucial.

4. How can we become the best community of learning – and what does that mean for each member of the college community on each of the campuses? As the administrative tasks of running a college like St. John's successfully become more complex, will we be able to sustain the values of cooperation and consensus that have always bound us together in the past? Addressing concerns about faculty governance and a meaningful recognition of the contribution of staff; formulating a comprehensive approach to student life that centers on their experience of the program but also recognizes the importance of nurturing other interests; and furthering the cooperative academic and administrative tasks carried on by the two campuses will be challenging.

5. How can we reach out to the world beyond in ways that will benefit those who participate in what we offer and best bring benefit to the college? We have a number of successful outreach programs designed to inform various constituent groups about the college and its ways, serve as continuing education to groups of constituents, increase knowledge about the college, and develop Friends and donors. Such outreach is a necessity for the college's survival and ability to thrive. Participants in these groups often push for more...but what does that mean with respect to the mission of the college as an undergraduate institution? We continue to need to reach out to various communities, but what about the internal pressure against expansion? How do we consider outreach with respect to our alumni? What are the differences in the Santa Fe and Annapolis communities that might influence outreach activities? How can outreach help the college with issues like diversity and admissions?

The opportunities available to St. John's College over the next five years center around the firmness with which we adhere to our core mission. Certainty about who we are and what we do can stand in the way of improving, or it can reinforce our ability to evolve.

1. The program of instruction is at the center of all academic life at the college and its success over the years can serve as a model of liberal education. For admissions, such a niche is an enviable attribute. For alumni, the steadfastness of ideals with respect to the program is a rallying point. The Graduate Institute and the Eastern Classics program add depth to the academic experience as a whole.

2. The faculty on the two campuses are committed to the ideals of the mission. Without departments, they function as a collaborative group with a common purpose. The faculty development program made possible through the allocation of resources and grants and gifts has significantly increased the range of subjects dealt with and enabled the faculty to deepen their own understanding and that of their students.

3. The success of the campaign reaches beyond the dollars raised. For the first time, the college has a solid base of financial support among alumni. Additionally, friends and foundations consider the college more seriously as a real presence because of the affirmation the campaign success indicates. Everything from public relations to communication with parents to relationships with local government is easier. The program itself is considered more seriously by outsiders and those unfamiliar with it because it has been the basis of support. Our ability to leverage the successes of the campaign is both a challenge and an opportunity.

4. The increased financial stability provided by solid leadership, partnership between the campuses, better fundraising, and sound fiscal management means that the college can consider improvements to the educational experience offered rather than simply survival in the usual mode.

Unless otherwise indicated, all goals and means apply college-wide.

I. Maintain the health and vitality of the program of instruction for undergraduate and graduate students

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The program of instruction at St. John's College embodies a distinctive, indeed radical, vision of liberal education. It is an immense strategic challenge to sustain this vision in the face of external pressures, both predictable and unpredictable, and to provide the conditions in which it can flourish. The Polity entrusts the organization of the program of instruction to the faculty and provides mechanisms by which it can implement such changes as it deems desirable.

Certain factors have been identified as conducive to the health and vitality of the program. Management of these goals should enable the campuses to provide the conditions necessary for that vitality.

Goal A: Ensure optimal campus size and class size (*Deans and Presidents*)

ANNAPOLIS – Undergraduates @ 450 +/-25; 475 budgeted enrollment 2008-2013;
Graduate Institute @ 80-90 during academic year and 60-80 summer
SANTA FE – Undergraduates @ 450 +/- 25; Graduate Institute @ 80-90 MALA students
and 30-35 MAEC students
COLLEGE-WIDE – All classes @ 17-19 for seminars and 13-15 for tutorials

Goal B: Recruit and develop a strong faculty (*Deans and Instruction Committee*)

Means:

- a. Expand faculty development, increasing support for summer study groups to \$200,000 on each campus; provide at least three full stations of released time for auditing or study groups for junior faculty
- b. Broaden and strengthen applicant pool
- c. Maintain sabbatical program

Goal C: Structure undergraduate admissions to attract a student body that will most benefit from and provide benefit to the Program (*Deans, Presidents, and Admission Directors*)

Means:

- a. Conduct a comprehensive review of the St. John's College admissions structure, strategies, communications, policies and procedures and make recommendations for improvements to the college's Management Committee, the presidents and deans. Within this broad review specifically focus on the need to increase and balance applications with the goal of 900-1000 applications college-wide and with sensitivity to the gender and diversity concerns on each of the campuses.
- b. Advance other communications tools, especially the web site
- c. Increase interest and applications from students we have had difficulty attracting (students of color, international students) by expanding current admissions efforts and exploring partnerships, print and web opportunities, international visits, and specialized publications.

Goal D: Ensure appropriate financial aid policies, maintaining the college's need-based financial aid program (*Deans and Financial Aid Directors*)

Means:

- a. Annually review competitiveness of financial aid packages and consider proportion of loan
- b. Re-evaluate policies for international students and review policies for veterans
- c. SANTA FE – Study and evaluate employment situation of students with respect to the demands of the program

Goal E: Structure graduate admissions to attract a student body that will most benefit from and provide benefit to the Program (*Deans, GI Directors*)

Means:

COLLEGE-WIDE - Ensure effectiveness of communications efforts (print, advertising, web) and review publications and practices.
ANNAPOLIS - Increase effectiveness and expand means of reaching potential students for the summer Hodson Trust Teacher Fellowship Program

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SANTA FE – Seek funding and establish a program parallel to the Hodson program for teachers

Goal F: Improve the quality of support materials for the academic program: manuals, laboratory equipment and project materials. Explore academic uses of IT (*Deans and Instruction Committee*)

Means:

- a. Produce electronic versions of manuals, working through a college-wide faculty committee
- b. Review procedures for manual revision and production
- c. SANTA FE – Provide updated laboratories and laboratory equipment
- d. ANNAPOLIS – Continue to improve laboratory equipment and project materials
- e. Improve support materials for music program (instruments, electronic access, etc.)
- f. Provide IT support for tutors who wish to explore possible academic uses of IT resources

Goal G: Improve the library collections and services (*Deans and Library Directors*)

Means:

COLLEGE-WIDE – Continue to increase funding for books, electronic databases, periodicals, and replacements

- a. Strengthen weak areas in collections
- b. SANTA FE: Seek additional funding for critical acquisitions
- c. ANNAPOLIS: Develop policy for selection of electronic resources
- d. Address conservation and preservation needs

II. Promote a student experience that complements and enhances the program of instruction and supports retention

St. John's is a residential college whose cohesive academic program permeates every aspect of student life. We seek to improve the student experience so that in every area it matches the quality, richness, and depth of students' classroom experience.

Goal A: Enhance residential life and community experience (*Deans and Assistant Deans*)

Means:

- a. Improve the introduction to the college for freshmen
- b. Improve the preparation and support of Resident Assistants and Senior Residents
- c. Seek student input regarding residential and campus life priorities as part of master planning for facilities (see section IV) (Annapolis)
- d. Increase interaction between student and student-faculty committees
- e. Increase on-campus housing to accommodate 80% of students (see section IV) (Santa Fe)
- f. Improve Residential Assistant and Senior Resident training and support

Goal B: Improve the support of the mental and physical health of the students (*Deans and Assistant Deans*)

Means:

ANNAPOLIS

- a. Develop stronger support program to address physical and mental health issues
- b. Develop programming on alcohol, drugs, social and sexual issues through the Health and Counseling centers
- c. Improve our ability to support students with disabilities and respond to ADA issues
- d. Continue to improve support for athletic program (focus on equipment replacement, boating programs)

SANTA FE

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- a. Develop programming for drug and alcohol education, coordinated with the Student Health Office and Student Life Committee
- b. Improve Student Health Office
- c. Improve our ability to support students with disabilities and respond to ADA issues

Goal C: Support student-initiated activities beyond the classroom (*Deans and Assistant Deans*)

Means:

COLLEGE-WIDE – Promote student service possibilities and support with staffing assistance and resources

ANNAPOLIS – Improve support of student-initiated activities in consultation with Student Committee on Instruction, RAs, and Delegate Council; explore creation of stronger volunteer program

SANTA FE – Provide broader support for extracurricular activities; review and coordinate all student activities (athletics, music, etc.); provide more opportunities for GI involvement in student activities

Goal D: Strengthen Career Services program (*Deans and Career Services Directors*)

Means:

- a. Conduct a programmatic review of Career Services
- b. Increase number of funded internship opportunities offered
- c. Strengthen graduate school and fellowship opportunity counseling
- d. Improve communication with students regarding use of Career Services offices
- e. Improve available resources for students and improve staff training in use of resources
- f. Develop strong alumni resource pipeline for graduate and professional options

Goal E: Ensure an environment that welcomes and supports diversity and addresses the challenge of acculturation (*Presidents and Deans*)

Means:

ANNAPOLIS

Seek recommendations from a faculty/staff committee to consider best ways to look at questions surrounding issues of diversity on campus: recruitment, campus atmosphere, support systems for minority students, educational and community outreach activities

SANTA FE

- a. Improve resources available to international students to assist with their particular needs
- b. Encourage dialogue about diversity through Student Committee on Instruction panel discussions
- c. Continue to focus on the Opportunity Initiative with special attention to the development of a three-year plan
- d. Attend to question of gender balance

Goal F: Study issues related to retention: academic, health, social, financial, campus life (*Deans*)

Means:

- a. Improve tracking of reasons for withdrawal
- b. Develop early warning and response strategies so as to retain students who will most benefit from and provide benefit to the program

Goal G: Develop and implement Emergency Response and Continuity of Operations Plans for each campus (*Treasurers*)

III. Provide the means to support the program of instruction and address college priorities

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Although the college is completing a successful capital campaign in 2008, the necessity for astute financial planning, financial forecasting, and fundraising remains. During this crucial five-year period, we seek to firmly establish financial controls and plan fundraising to cover priorities identified as well as lay the groundwork for the next, more extended phase of planning and fundraising.

Goal A: Ensure the financial health and stability of the college (*Treasurers and Vice Presidents*)

Means:

- a. Maintain adequate financial controls
- b. Balance budgets and develop multi-year budget/financial plan
- c. Raise funds sufficient for operations and capital projects, with a focus on increasing endowment, meeting aggressive annual fund goals, and leveraging campaign accomplishments; address unmet campaign priorities through fundraising
- d. Continue to provide resources for equivalent experience for students on both campuses

Goal B: Plan, implement, monitor, and measure performance in accordance with strategic plan (*Officers*)

IV. Ensure optimal organizational structure, practices, and compensation that are necessary to maintain the health of the program, promote effective operations, and improve sense of community

The St. John's organizational structure – one college on two campuses, with a single board and faculties and staffs on each – presents certain challenges. We seek to provide faculty and staff who can best serve the college, and who are compensated fairly, encouraged in their professional development, and active participants in a healthy, open community.

Goal A: Provide fair salary and benefits, to attract and retain a talented, dedicated, and diverse faculty and staff (*Officers*)

Means:

With respect to TUTORS

- a. Review, revise and propose tutor compensation goals
- b. Provide adequate opportunities for faculty development (see section I)

With respect to STAFF and ASSOCIATE FACULTY

- a. Revise and propose staff compensation goals by means of the Compease system for job evaluation;
- b. Develop appropriate professional development plan, including benchmarks and goals

With respect to ALL

- a. Address unfunded liability of post-retirement medical plan

Goal B: Study factors that influence effective operations and develop practices to ensure effectiveness (*Officers*)

Means:

- a. Utilize completed study of the impact of college size (attached) and the resulting operational expectations on faculty and staff to assess range of possibilities for effective internal organization
- b. Improve intercampus coordination

Goal C: Improve the sense of community on the campuses and between the campuses (*Officers*)

Means:

- a. Review role of faculty in the organization of the college (*Deans, Faculty*)
- b. Review staff role in the organization of the college, and enhance understanding of the role of staff among the larger community (*Officers, Staff*)

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- c. Improve internal and cross-campus communication
- d. Improve new employee orientation
- e. Encourage activities that promote a sense of community among students, faculty and staff
- f. Continue to provide the means for intercampus visits and collaboration among faculty and staff

Goal D: Work with the Board of Visitors and Governors to help the college achieve its strategic priorities (*Presidents, BVG*)

Means:

- a. Work to achieve diversity, maximize expertise, encourage fundraising potential among nominees
- b. Use the web to facilitate and improve communication
- c. Focus on development of future leadership

V. Develop a physical environment for each campus that is worthy of the program and college community

Goal A: Plan for short- and long- term projects to improve the physical plant (*Treasurers*)

Means:

- a. Develop annual and multi-year project plans to address physical plant improvements
- b. Develop a college-wide sustainability program

Goal B: Maintain buildings and grounds to a high standard (*Treasurers*)

Means:

Develop annual and multi-year plans for each campus

Goal C: Construct new buildings, hardscaping, and landscaping to meet the needs of the community (*Treasurers*)

ANNAPOLIS

- a. Develop new campus master and landscaping plans
- b. Develop timeline for completion of various phases of master plan

SANTA FE

- a. Construct Levan Hall
- b. Update master plan with City of Santa Fe
- c. Construct new Residential Center
- d. Renovate/add to Evans Science Laboratory

Goal D: Provide adequate IT to support the priorities of the college (*Officers, IT Director*)

Means:

- a. Review the ITS Program Plan of June 2006 and revise as needed to fully align with this strategic plan

VI. Engage alumni in a lifelong relationship with the college

By virtue of the curriculum at St. John's, alumni have in common a particular intellectual experience. A strategy for providing a mutually beneficial and effective alumni relations program should recognize the power of this common experience.

Goal A. Encourage alumni sense of responsibility for the future well-being of the college and provide optimal conditions for alumni interaction with each other and with the college (*Vice Presidents, Alumni Director*)

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Means:

Form a task force of alumni and college staff to make recommendations on best ways to attain goals, with the guidance and advice of a consultant

Goal B: Support the continuing intellectual development of alumni (*Vice Presidents, Alumni Director*)

Means:

- a. Continue the Piraeus Program (alumni seminars) on both campuses and consider expansion to major cities
- b. Continue to support Alumni Association chapter seminars and other opportunities for alumni access to the reading and discussion of great books

Goal C: Improve career services to better serve alumni and to better utilize alumni volunteers (*Vice Presidents, Deans, Career Services Directors*)

Goal D: Develop programs in four areas – young alumni, Graduate Institute alumni, alumni support of the college (financial and volunteer); identification of future leaders (*Vice Presidents, Alumni Director*)

Means:

- a. Provide support for Alumni Association chapters to increase effective networking, social life, and intellectual stimulation
- b. Maximize effectiveness of the web by developing the online community and improving e-newsletter communication
- c. Develop and implement next phases of fundraising volunteer activities
- d. Develop and implement programs and activities on the campuses and in cities to involve potential alumni leaders for volunteer activities

VII. Strengthen involvement with the greater communities within which the college exists

Outreach is an important factor in our consideration of the future. The college should continue its efforts to be recognized and understood, so that it can more effectively serve as a model of liberal arts education. In terms of support – financial and otherwise – outreach is an effective tool for bringing the excellence of St. John's to a wider audience than alumni and the immediate college community. Such outreach is a necessity for the college's survival and ability to thrive.

Goal A: Improve recognition and understanding of the college's mission and activities in its greater communities (city, state, nation) (*Vice Presidents, Communications Directors*)

Means:

- a. Expand communications and media relations for continued visibility of the college
- b. Continue to engage local friends groups to further town-gown relations
- c. Encourage volunteerism and service by students, faculty and staff as signs of St. John's presence in the community
- d. Maintain high standards for publications
- e. Improve the web site so that it serves admissions, advancement, and alumni as well as presenting a clear picture of the college and its activities to various constituent groups

Goal B: Conduct appropriate outreach activities based on the following principles: *The college's distinctive ways of teaching and learning constitute a good that merits sharing with others in ways that are compatible with and supportive of its primary mission as an institution of liberal education; and The college is dependent on the goodwill and support of individuals, organizations, and agencies (local and national) and must provide opportunities to make itself known to them and to cultivate their friendship and support.* (*Vice Presidents*)

Means:

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- a. Continue to offer St. John's as an intellectual and cultural resource for local communities through lectures, concerts, Mitchell Art Gallery, Santa Fe Art Gallery, Continuing Education programs
- b. Continue to offer, based upon regular cost/benefit analyses (including consideration of faculty time and attention), seminar programs as part of effort to create awareness of the college's mission and encourage potential donors; consider expanding the kinds of groups for whom outreach is conducted

Goal C: Support and promote the good of liberal education (*Presidents, Vice Presidents, Deans*)

Means:

- a. Support a public policy committee of the BVG
- b. Utilize strong presidential voices as part of Annapolis Group and other state and national higher education groups
- c. Recognize and support faculty involvement with curriculum development at other schools, symposia, conferences, groups (e.g., ACTC)
- d. Recognize and support writing for publication or public appearances of deans, tutors, presidents on the topic of liberal learning