

# Planning Priorities for Lake Forest College 2013-2018

## INTRODUCTION

In the spring of 2012, President Schutt charged the Five-Year Planning Committee to review the College's current strengths and challenges in light of external issues and trends in higher education, and to develop a five-year plan for 2013-18 that articulates clear priorities for the College and sets goals to inspire the next major fundraising campaign.

Throughout the 2012-13 academic year, the Five-Year Planning Committee worked to develop a plan for the College's future that would position the College to build on current strengths, manage potential challenges, and enhance its reputation as a leading small college in the Midwest. In the course of its work, the committee gathered data on trends in admissions and enrollments, examined current and potential new majors and minors, researched a variety of competing institutions, assessed our facility and infrastructure needs, collected information on employment trends and student interests, considered the integration of the co-curricular program with the academic program, and solicited opinions, suggestions and recommendations from a broad cross-section of the college community.

During a retreat on May 9-10, 2013, the Board of Trustees reviewed the work of the planning committee. The Board confirmed the necessity for the College, as a tuition-dependent institution, to increase our strength in two or three academic areas that attract well-qualified students who can pay an increasing share of our tuition charges. Following the Board meeting, President Schutt provided the committee with additional feedback for consideration and potential incorporation in the final report. After working to refine its recommendations, the committee compiled a draft plan and submitted it to the campus community for comment and feedback. Having gathered responses from the community at a series of informational meetings for faculty, staff and students and at additional meetings with the Alumni Board and student government, the committee finalized its plan for submission to the Board of Trustees for review and approval at its October Board meeting.

## BACKGROUND

The past decade has been a time of strength for the College in many ways. Student applications have more than doubled during this period, rising from 1,600 to over 3,700 this year, with student enrollment growing from 1250 to approximately 1550. At the same time, the size of the faculty has also grown, with the budgeted faculty FTE increasing from 96 to 124. During this same period, nearly a dozen new majors or minors have been launched, along with several new, accelerated degree programs developed in partnership with graduate and professional schools. We have established a number of important centers on campus, including the Center for Chicago Programs, the Gates Center for Leadership and Personal Growth, the Ethics Center, and the Math Resource Center, and

expanded our off-campus study options with new programs in China, New Zealand, Spain and the US/Mexico border. We have also significantly extended our connections with Chicago through the creation of our residential Chicago Loop program, now entering its third year of operation. In 2011, the College completed its largest ever development campaign, exceeding a \$100 million goal. Over the past ten years, nearly \$100 million has been invested in campus improvements, including the Donnelley & Lee Library, Mohr Student Center and Stuart Commons, the Sports and Recreation Center, and the new Moore Hall. Annual budgets have been consistently balanced while, at the same time, the College has steadily lowered its annual endowment draw to a projected 5% for FY 2014-15. Another indicator of institutional strength has been the diversity of our student body. With domestic students of color and international students comprising approximately 40% of our student body, our diversity places the College at the forefront of the Associated Colleges of the Midwest (ACM).

At the same time, the past decade has been one of significant challenges for the College. The distinguishing characteristics of our form of undergraduate education – highly qualified and motivated faculty, small classes, a beautiful residential campus, extensive student support systems – make a Lake Forest education very expensive to provide. Given our small endowment, the funds we have available to cover our costs come largely from student tuition payments, which account for nearly two-thirds of our annual revenue. During the past decade, median family income at almost all levels has declined in real terms, with the result that the average net cost for an incoming first-year student at the College (tuition, fees, room, and board) is now more than 50% of the average annual median household income in the US. As a direct consequence, families are more cost conscious than ever and are placing more and more weight on what they perceive as the return on investment for a college education. Institutional retention, graduation, and job placement rates are increasingly being scrutinized and understood as direct measures of institutional quality. Although the College has benefited from an improvement in our retention rate over the past three to four years, our graduation and retention rates are still low in comparison to many of our academic peers. We are also facing growing admissions competition from other institutions, at a time when the overall number of high school graduates has plateaued and the regional and national demographic trends in several of our key markets are challenging. All this is taking place at a time when the economy is still recovering and parents and prospective students are more skeptical about the benefits and relevance of studying the liberal arts.

### THE LIBERAL ARTS AND THE COLLEGE'S MISSION

In many important ways, the public's skepticism about the relevance of liberal arts education for employment is misplaced. Time and again, surveys of employers reveal that the skills that employers value most highly are closely aligned with the educational outcomes that lie at the heart of liberal education. A 2010 American Management Association survey of over 2,000 business leaders found that the top skills needed for business success were "communication skills (80.4 percent), critical thinking (72.4 percent), collaboration (71.2 percent), and creativity (57.3 percent). A 2013 survey of

employers sponsored by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), found that more than 90% of employers believe that “a demonstrated capacity to think critically, communicate clearly, and solve complex problems is more important than [a candidate’s] undergraduate major”; the same survey found that more than 75% of employers say they want more emphasis on key areas such as critical thinking, complex problem-solving, and written and oral communication.

The members of the Planning Committee, therefore, believe that the liberal arts must continue to inform and enrich a Lake Forest education and that the intellectual skills and abilities fostered by study of the liberal arts are, if anything, more valuable than ever. Our mission to develop students who can read critically, reason analytically, communicate persuasively, and think for themselves remains as relevant today as it has ever been. Because employers say they need employees with precisely these skills, we must do a better job explaining this career relevance to prospective students and their parents. We must also clearly show them how our academic programs develop these skills.

Nevertheless, given the level of concern among parents and students regarding employment prospects and the difficulties that students often encounter in entering the workforce in their chosen field, the planning committee believes that we must develop intentional and explicit bridges between all aspects of our academic curriculum and career preparation. In order to compete in the educational marketplace, we must be able to demonstrate that we successfully prepare our students for productive and rewarding careers, including initial employment and post-graduate study. In short, without abandoning our commitment to the values of the liberal arts, we must embrace a more intentional attitude towards career preparation. Ultimately, the committee believes that the best way for the College to make its case and recruit the students we want and need is to demonstrate convincingly that Lake Forest College students are prepared for successful careers and fulfilling lives.

In a column entitled “Bringing Career Planning into Liberal Arts Classrooms,” Wake Forest University President Nathan O. Hatch has captured the growing imperative for liberal arts colleges to rethink their relationship to career preparation:

Traditional, four-year institutions like Wake Forest University . . . should be honest about the uphill struggle students face in this fast-changing and complex economic environment. It is a terribly hard time to enter the workforce, and colleges need to make fundamental changes to help graduates find their way. . . . [F]aculty members . . . should prioritize mentoring students and teaching them to use what they learn after graduation. This means an end to the status quo at many universities, where faculty-student interaction is restricted largely to the mastery of a given academic discipline. . . . Today faculty members must see themselves in broader roles if they are to continue to attract students to a liberal arts education. It is great to major in English, philosophy, or physics, but students also must be shown how such academic paths lead beyond the academy. . . . A college's ultimate responsibility is to help students clarify their sense of self. We do them a disservice if we ignore their future working life as they discover their talents, passions and convictions.

(Nathan O. Hatch, October 5, 2011, *The Huffington Post*)

### OUR PRINCIPAL GOAL FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

As parents and students are understandably concerned about the return on their college investment, question the benefits of a liberal arts education, and seek persuasive evidence of future employment prospects, we must present a compelling case for the value of our educational offerings, demonstrate our commitment to ensuring student success, and clearly document the benefits that accrue to our graduates. If we are to compete successfully in today's admissions environment, we cannot afford to do anything less. As a tuition-dependent institution, the future health of the College and our ability to fulfill our mission depends directly on our capacity to increase tuition revenue. No other revenue source can come close to replacing student tuition payments and so our plans for the future must be designed to sustain our ability to grow net tuition revenue. For this reason, the Five-Year Planning Committee believes that the institution's principal goal over the next five years should be to attract, enroll, retain, and graduate an academically-qualified and diverse student body willing and able to pay an increasing share of our tuition.

This principal goal does not mean that the College can or will stop active fundraising. On the contrary, fundraising will continue to be essential in generating funds for major investments and providing annual support to the College. In preparation for our next major fundraising campaign, we must increase our efforts to build a culture of philanthropy among members of our community, strengthening awareness of the role of private support in furthering the College's mission and encouraging broader participation in charitable giving to the College. The campaign's objectives must also be aligned in support of the strategies in this plan.

### RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES

In order to achieve our goal of increasing tuition revenue, the planning committee recommends the following five broad strategies:

- Strengthen the quality and attractiveness of our academic programs
- Prepare students more effectively for productive and rewarding careers, including initial employment and post-graduate study
- Enhance student success at the College and improve retention and graduation rates
- Make targeted investments in facilities in support of strategic goals
- Enhance support for faculty and staff while optimizing the allocation of resources

These strategies are designed to build on existing strengths of the College, respond to student demand, and provide the College with a distinct value proposition that will attract students and persuade them and their parents that a Lake Forest College education will provide an outstanding return on their investment. To be successful in achieving this goal, we must raise the profile of the institution among key audiences, highlight those attributes

of a Lake Forest College education that parents, prospective students, and employers most value, and become recognized for our strength in specific areas. The existing strengths of Lake Forest College include our outstanding faculty and staff, an academic program that combines the traditional disciplines with more career-focused majors and pre-professional programs, a vibrant and supportive residential community, a diverse student body, a beautiful campus, an institution-wide commitment to teaching and personalized mentoring of students, and a close-knit campus community.

We must continue to celebrate these institutional attributes and publicize them to prospective students and parents, but we must also recognize that they will not sufficiently differentiate us from other selective residential liberal arts colleges. The committee is convinced, however, that our proximity to Chicago and the opportunities afforded by our location continue to give us a competitive advantage that can differentiate us from our competitors. Although the College has previously identified engagement with Chicago as a core strategy for shaping our identity, the committee believes that we can still do much more to fully realize the potential of our geographical location to further our educational mission, enrich the student experience, and prepare our graduates for the demands and opportunities of post-graduate careers. To the greatest extent possible, we must utilize the city's resources and surroundings to support the strategies and initiatives below and, in the process, strengthen our identity with Chicago and the distinctiveness it promotes.

In crafting this plan, the committee has been conscious of the rapidity with which the economic environment can change and new challenges or opportunities arise. The 2008 economic crash and its effect on the College's operations are still fresh in many minds. Better than many of our peers, the College was able to adjust to post-2008 realities while continuing to move forward, successfully completing the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Campaign and making progress on a number of fronts. But our relative success was not achieved easily. Given the uncertainty of the future, the committee believes our plan should retain greater flexibility than might be typical for a five-year strategic plan. The committee conceives of this document as a set of strategies for positioning the College rather than as an all-encompassing map of the future. While actively pursuing these strategic directions, the College must remain on the watch for unexpected disruptions in the national economy or the higher education marketplace. The College should also be mindful that student interests and employment trends are subject to change. The College must be flexible, retaining the ability to respond to opportunities that align with the strategic directions enumerated in this plan. Because the most consequential of the strategies will require a significant commitment of resources, the College should continue to test the strategies in the higher education marketplace, prior to committing funds. It will also be important for the College to monitor implementation of the strategies outlined in the plan, be attentive to any unintended consequences, and be ready to adjust the plan as needed.

Under each of the following strategies, recommended actions have been prioritized into two groups: actions with the highest priority are listed first; secondary initiatives judged to be important but somewhat less critical are included afterwards. Following the five strategies, a series of marketing priorities have been identified. These strategies, priorities

and initiatives have been developed to enable the College to respond to the changing environment of higher education and position itself to flourish at a time of uncertainty.

### ***STRATEGY 1: Strengthen the quality and attractiveness of our academic programs***

The College must make investments in key academic areas that match student interests and offer sound employment prospects so that we become more widely recognized for strength in these areas. Such investments will provide the College with a more distinctive identity and value proposition, attract more students, and persuade them and their parents that the investment of tuition will be worthwhile. Strategic investments in particular academic areas will benefit the College overall by attracting well-qualified students, bolstering retention, strengthening our market position and increasing our reputation. Because many students change majors or add a second major/minor, increasing the attractiveness of selected academic programs will bring students to campus who may end up pursuing other academic interests. The decision to invest in particular academic programs does not mean the College will stop supporting other programs and departments. The College has real strengths across a wide range of disciplines and must strive to maintain those strengths.

#### **TOP PRIORITIES**

- Invest in programs with strong student enrollment and clear employment relevance in order to strengthen areas of distinction:
  - Sciences/Health Professions  
Build on strong student interest in pre-health, biology, psychology, computer science and neuroscience to develop a more integrated and interdisciplinary approach to science education in which we train students to be scientific thinkers and problem solvers. Better prepare students for employment in the health professions, industry, research, and education. Strengthen existing collaborations with area universities and develop new connections with other Chicago-based institutions and health-care related companies.
  - Economics, Business and Finance  
Our finance major, in conjunction with majors in economics and business, already distinguishes us from other highly selective liberal arts colleges. Further developing these areas and adding a new program in entrepreneurship (see below) will allow us to accommodate strong student demand, build deeper connections with Chicago, and further differentiate ourselves in the market.
- Maintain strength in the humanities, visual and performing arts, and social sciences. Strength in these departments and programs constitutes a valuable institutional asset, and the College should strive to maintain, nourish and promote that strength. Developing clearer connections between the learning outcomes of these programs and a range of career options will enhance their attractiveness to prospective

students and parents. To support ongoing progress in these areas, enhance their career connections, and encourage new initiatives, the College's next fundraising campaign should seek support for a significant innovation fund.

- Expand and brand high-impact experiential learning opportunities across the curriculum. Strengthening real-world and high-impact learning experiences for all students will increase the value of our academic program. Consider requiring all students to complete at least one of the following forms of experiential education and to explain its connection to their academic interests and/or career plans: internships, faculty-student collaborative research, study abroad, or service learning.
  - Strengthen and expand internship opportunities in all academic areas. Consolidate the administration of the internship program (credit bearing and non-credit bearing) within the Career Advancement Center and improve communication about internships and administrative support for students, internship supervisors, academic departments, and employers.
  - Increase the availability of short-term study abroad opportunities so that more students can participate in off-campus study without the costs associated with semester-length programs. Monitor the impact of such short-term programs (if any) on the popularity of semester-length programs.
  - Develop new partnerships with Chicago-based educational, cultural, governmental, and business institutions to enrich our academic program and extend experiential learning opportunities.
  - Identify existing courses that incorporate service learning and encourage a wider adoption of this form of pedagogy in order to integrate academic learning with community service.
  - Utilize our alumni base (especially that part in the Chicago area) to extend real-world learning opportunities for students.
  - Ensure that all experiential learning opportunities are readily available and encouraged for traditionally underrepresented students.
- Revise the College's General Education Curriculum (GEC) in order to:
  - Incorporate the higher-level skills expressed in the College's Mission Statement ("to read critically, reason analytically, communicate persuasively, and, above all, to think for themselves") more rigorously into graduation requirements. Consider adopting a speaking requirement as well as an expanded writing requirement. Such higher-level skills are not only defining characteristics of a liberal education, they are also among the most desirable attributes cited by employers. Revising the GEC will enable us to better articulate the core skills that all students should be expected to acquire.
  - Establish specific learning objectives for each component of the GEC and meet the expectations of the Higher Learning Commission for the assessment of general education.

- Potentially include a requirement that all students engage in high-impact experiential learning.

## SECONDARY INITIATIVES

- Align our academic programs in international relations and politics with areas of strength in international economics and business, modern languages, area studies and off-campus study. Explore the potential for establishing a Center for Global Engagement that would integrate all aspects of international studies on campus, provide a marker of distinction, and prepare students for globally based employment.
- Building on existing areas of faculty expertise, potential student interest, and Chicago-area resources, enhance the attractiveness of our curriculum by supporting the development of new academic minors, such as:
  - Entrepreneurship
    - Designed to complement any of our existing academic majors, a new program in entrepreneurship will draw upon the resources of Chicago and our local alumni network to provide students with entrepreneurial coursework, training and experience.
  - Health and Society
    - A minor designed to provide a structured foundation facilitating entry into healthcare professions and providing a broader view of healthcare in society.
  - Print and Digital Publishing
    - Drawing upon the resources of the Lake Forest College Press and the College's annual Literary Festival and Plonsker Prize, this new academic area will prepare students for careers in the rapidly changing publishing industry and complement existing strengths in writing at the College.
  - Non-profit Management
    - With some minor enhancements, existing courses could be combined to create a new minor in non-profit management. This minor would complement a wide array of existing majors and could be integrated into the programming activities of the Gates Center, the Career Advancement Center (CAC) and the Office of Intercultural Relations (OIR).
  - Professional Writing and Public Advocacy
    - Structured to provide training in professionally oriented forms of writing, this minor would be intended to provide students with career-ready skills in writing and public speaking. As with the print and digital publishing proposal, this minor would complement existing strengths in writing at the College.
  - Museum Studies



- Largely drawing on existing courses in the curriculum and long-standing internship relationships with area museums, this minor would be suitable for students interested in pursuing employment at a wide range of cultural institutions.
- Adopt a consistent set of criteria to be used by the Curricular Policies Committee (CPC) to evaluate proposals for the addition of majors and minors. The planning committee developed a template which identifies the following considerations for adding new programs: mission alignment, resources needed, evaluation of student demand and competitor programs, proposed curriculum, support from other faculty and departments, learning outcomes, post-graduate opportunities, exit strategy in case the program is not successful, sustainability and synergies with existing strengths of the College. These considerations should also inform the criteria adopted by the Academic Resources Review Committee (ARRC) for conducting departmental and program reviews.
- Expand the use of technology and online tools to enhance the curriculum and improve student learning. Although the committee does not recommend the development of online courses and degree programs solely intended to generate revenue from new markets of students who would not otherwise attend the College, it strongly endorses the use of online technology to enhance the quality of instruction and encourage innovative pedagogies. The recent ACM online calculus course may provide a model for exploring consortial collaborations in the use of online technology. Provide the necessary resources, Library and Information Technology (LIT) support and technology platforms to permit faculty members to explore new pedagogical approaches and incorporate online tools and materials into their courses.

***STRATEGY 2: Prepare students more effectively for productive and rewarding careers, including initial employment and post-graduate study***

We believe that the core values of the institution should continue to reflect our liberal arts identity and that our mission to develop students who can read critically, reason analytically, communicate persuasively, and think for themselves, provides an educational foundation for a lifetime. However, students and parents are increasingly questioning the value of a liberal arts education and seeking assurances and demonstrated proof that attending Lake Forest College will enhance post-graduate employment prospects. In 2012, 87% of our students said that a very important reason to go to college is to get a better job. Families are demanding evidence of the post-graduate return on investment of attending college. With that end in mind, we recommend a series of steps that the College should take to ensure that we can address these concerns and remain competitive in the admissions market. We are convinced that we must enhance our ability to prepare students for post-graduate success by building more intentional bridges between each of our academic programs and employment opportunities. Demonstrating that all Lake Forest students,

regardless of their choice of major, are prepared for the next steps in their professional lives (whether immediate employment or attending graduate or professional school) will be the most effective way to address concerns about the relevance of the liberal arts and to increase the perceived value of a Lake Forest degree.

## TOP PRIORITIES

- Amend the College's Mission Statement to emphasize our commitment to helping students attain meaningful careers by adding the following statement: "We prepare our students for, and help them attain, productive and rewarding careers."
- Provide increased support to the Career Advancement Center (CAC) to expand staffing and office space, develop a more extensive career mentoring program, and assign a career advisor to each academic discipline to provide enhanced career counseling support for academic departments and advisors.
- Fully implement the CAC's career development model "Career Milestones," incorporating incentives for student participation. Provide academic advisors with greater support for helping students to engage in meaningful self-reflection and career planning.
- Achieve greater alignment, collaboration and integration between the Career Advancement Center, the Center for Chicago Programs, and the Gates Center.
  - Expand opportunities for students to develop their leadership skills, capacity for collaboration, and ability to work with cultural difference (in collaboration with the Office of Intercultural Relations).
  - Consider physically co-locating the Gates Center, the CAC, and the Center for Chicago Programs to facilitate collaboration and highlight our Chicago connections more prominently to current and prospective students and other campus visitors.
- Establish career tracks or pipelines within each academic department that lead to desirable career outcomes. Provide information about required and recommended coursework, internships, off-campus study and relevant experience for each career track/pipeline. Where possible, draw on examples from recent alumni to illustrate the range of possible career outcomes, including not only outcomes with a direct connection to the relevant academic discipline but also those that demonstrate the flexibility and adaptability fostered by our educational mission. Identify a faculty liaison within each academic department to coordinate efforts with the CAC.
- Utilize our Chicago connections to enhance employment opportunities for students. Draw upon the expertise and professional networks of area alumni to provide our students with a competitive advantage. To this end, further strengthen collaboration

between the CAC and the Office of Alumni Relations.

- Expand high-quality internship opportunities across all academic departments and programs (both credit bearing and non credit), increase the number of long-term relationships with well-established and reputable internship providers, and broaden the scope of the CAC's online job/internship database.

## SECONDARY INITIATIVES

- Improve web presentation of career opportunities and alumni successes for each academic department and program. Highlight the range of possible career outcomes, illustrating the breadth of employment options associated with each academic major. Departments should be given assistance in developing these web pages and not be expected to be solely responsible for maintaining them.
- Reconceive on-campus employment as career-readiness training. Make the experience of applying for a campus job and working on campus more similar to working in a professional capacity off campus. Add student jobs with higher levels of responsibility.
- Strengthen and extend collaborative agreements/pathways with area institutions in fields such as nursing, health professions, scientific research, and engineering.
- Improve graduate and professional school advising by seeking ways to lessen the administrative burden on faculty advisors and use the resources and expertise of the CAC.
- Achieve greater consistency in documenting the career outcomes of our alumni and disseminate more widely the CAC's First Destinations post-graduate outcomes report.
- Ensure that career development activities are made more accessible and culturally relevant for various subgroups of students, including international and traditionally underrepresented students.
- Develop and implement a basic technology skills certification program. The CAC and LIT should collaborate to determine whether an online vendor can provide an appropriate self-paced program and how peer tutors provided by the Brown Technology Resource Center could be utilized.
- Reconfigure the tuition model for summer internships in order to expand opportunities for students to complete credit-bearing internships during the summer.

### ***STRATEGY 3: Enhance student success at the College and improve retention and graduation rates***

Develop a campus-wide commitment to improving retention and graduation rates with a long-term goal of achieving a first-to-second year retention rate of 87%, a four-year graduation rate of 75% and a six-year graduation rate of 80%. Because retention and graduation rates are increasingly considered by external audiences as key markers of institutional quality, improving these metrics must become a strategic imperative for the College. Acknowledging the difficulty of increasing admissions selectivity at the present time, we must endeavor to improve our retention and graduation rates without lowering academic expectations, reducing graduation requirements, or encouraging grade inflation. We must recognize that all employees (teaching faculty, student affairs staff, coaches, LIT staff, support staff, senior administration, etc.) share responsibility for improving student success at the College.

#### **TOP PRIORITIES**

- Improve the first-year experience by increasing “transition to College” activities and programs, and incorporating Office of Student Affairs (OSA) staff members as co-curricular advisors integral to the first-year experience. Integrate First-Year Studies (FIYS) more explicitly into an overall first-year experience, developing more common experiences and incorporating “transition to College” activities into the course. Increase opportunities for collaboration between faculty and OSA, CAC and other support staff. Clarify the expectations for faculty FIYS advisors, and evaluate how effectively we are meeting student interest and needs.
- Address differential success rates in highly enrolled introductory courses. Success rates in certain courses are as low as 65% (success is defined as achieving C- or better). Evaluate the factors contributing to a lack of success in specific courses and identify appropriate steps to take to resolve the problem. Provide departments with better data on grade distribution, indicating clearly those courses in which students have higher rates of W, D and F grades than is typical. Examine the effectiveness of placement tests as a predictor of success in introductory courses.
- Strengthen the quality and coherence of the co-curricular experience by fully implementing the Forester Five co-curricular program recently developed by the Office of Student Affairs. Consider implementing a co-curricular transcript or other instrument to provide students with the opportunity to document their leadership activities and community involvement. Strengthening the co-curricular program will benefit students across all academic disciplines.
- Establish a new committee, the Student Success Committee (SSC), to oversee student success at the College, monitor retention and graduation rates, and develop and implement recommendations to improve student persistence. In order to avoid

duplication of effort and an unnecessary proliferation of committees, we recommend that College Council replace the Enrollment Committee, the informal retention group, and possibly the First-Year Studies Committee with this new committee. The committee should be charged annually by the President to address specific issues pertaining to student success. The composition of the committee should be tailored to the annual charge, with members being appointed by the President.

- Strengthen the academic advising system. Academic advisors play a pivotal role in helping students make well-informed decisions about their academic program (choosing classes, selecting or changing a major, understanding degree requirements, exploring career options, etc.) and contribute directly to student success at the College. We must ensure that advisors are well prepared for their role, that new advisors receive sufficient training, and that advising loads are appropriately shared across the faculty.

## SECONDARY INITIATIVES

- Working with the Office for Intercultural Affairs, provide faculty with specific training for teaching, advising, and working with traditionally underrepresented student populations. Numerous studies have shown that traditionally underrepresented students are especially vulnerable to attrition and face challenges that other students do not. Providing additional support to faculty advisors is likely to have a positive effect on the retention of such students.
- Re-evaluate the underlying financial and enrollment model for Summer Session course offerings to ensure that we are maximizing the opportunity to help students' academic progress. Expand the reduced-rate tuition program in Summer School Session I so that more students can make up credits during the summer. Rethink the faculty compensation model to ensure that we are able to provide the course selections that will be most helpful to students seeking to get back on track. Reconfigure Summer Session II as a revenue-producing option, perhaps by adopting a similar accelerated calendar to that used in Summer Session I, and market it to college students returning home for the summer and graduating North Shore high school students.
- Increase the number of partial credit courses. If a student reduces his or her academic load in a particular semester, there are very limited options during the school year for the student to make up credits. An increase in the number of partial credit courses (0.5 or 0.25 credit courses) would increase the ability of students to make up credits and get back on track for graduating on time.

- Evaluate the support structures (funding, advising, paraprofessional development opportunities) for student-run organizations that support College priorities.

***STRATEGY 4: Make targeted investments in facilities in support of strategic goals***

In order to sustain and strengthen key academic programs and bolster our market position, we must make strategic investments in capital improvements.

**TOP PRIORITIES**

- Renovate and expand the science facilities to support 21<sup>st</sup> century science pedagogy and research, facilitate interdisciplinary collaborations, accommodate enrollment growth, increase flexibility of space, and prepare students for post-graduate careers. Consider housing mathematics/computer science, psychology, and/or the environmental studies program in an expanded science building.
- Add additional classrooms, faculty office space and academic lounges (probably through an addition to Young Hall) to support investments in popular majors and programs.
- Conduct a space utilization study, in light of the proposed expansion of the science facilities and the possible relocation of mathematics/computer science, psychology and/or environmental studies, with a view to improving space allocation for other programs and departments.

**SECONDARY INITIATIVES**

- Make targeted and cost-effective improvements in performing and fine arts facilities to improve the quality of the teaching and learning environments, accommodate increased enrollments, and address the need for a multi-purpose space suitable for rehearsals and performances, large meetings and receptions.
- Continue to update classroom furniture, extend classroom technology, and improve the upkeep of classrooms and the public areas in academic buildings.
- Investigate the feasibility of co-locating the Career Advancement Center, the Center for Chicago Programs, and the Gates Center.
- Continue to address ADA compliance issues within campus buildings.
- To the extent necessary, update the Campus Master Plan (Spillman Farmer Master Plan, completed in 1999, and the Historic Preservation Master Plan, completed in 2006) to provide guidance in locating new construction projects.

- Address parking and cafeteria issues.
  - Parking—recent changes to student residential policy (upperclass students will no longer be living on Middle Campus) are expected to reduce the pressure on parking on Middle Campus. Re-evaluate parking needs after the first year of the new residential system.
  - Cafeteria—in order to address continued issues with pressure on dining hall capacity around the noon hour, request that the Curricular Policies Committee review the course slot system to determine if we would benefit from greater flexibility in scheduling classes during the noon hour.

***STRATEGY 5: Enhance support for faculty and staff while optimizing the allocation of resources***

The ability of the College to fulfill its mission depends above all on our ability to recruit and retain outstanding faculty and staff, with our human resources being among the College’s most valuable assets. It is, therefore, incumbent on the College to continually invest in its employees. At the same time, we must remain attentive to the resource constraints under which we operate and be aware of the compensation levels offered by our actual competitors (rather than aspirational peers). Above all, we must be certain that we are maximizing the effectiveness of our allocation of these resources. Given that faculty and staff compensation comprises approximately two-thirds of the College’s total budget and constitutes the largest single budget category, it is essential that the College monitors closely how these resources are allocated, continues to practice prudent financial management, and remains alert to opportunities for cost savings.

**TOP PRIORITY**

- Ensure that the College maintains a competitive compensation package for faculty and staff. To that end, we endorse the formation of a Trustee compensation committee to review the existing compensation structure for faculty and staff, establish appropriate benchmarks, and monitor progress in this area.

**SECONDARY INITIATIVES**

- Revise the process adopted by the Academic Resources Review Committee (ARRC) for allocating faculty FTE. Implement a regular review of departmental allocations in light of enrollment trends, numbers of majors and minors, average class size and numbers of full-time faculty. Establish criteria for rebalancing departmental faculty FTE allocation in response to changing demand, while remaining attentive to the need to maintain both breadth and depth in the curriculum. Coordinate ARRC reviews of departmental allocation with CPC oversight of the curriculum.

- Evaluate staffing levels in non-academic departments to ensure that we are allocating resources in the most effective way.
- Develop guidelines to govern the appropriate balance of numbers of full-time and adjunct faculty.
- Establish a specific appointment category for long-term non tenure-track faculty holding full-time term appointments.
- Provide financial resources and information technology support to encourage pedagogical and curricular innovation.
- Support professional development opportunities for faculty and staff.

### ***MARKETING PRIORITIES:***

If the College is to be successful in achieving its goal of attracting, enrolling, retaining and graduating well-qualified students and building its tuition revenue, it is essential that we position the institution for success in the admissions marketplace, raise the profile of the College among key audiences, and establish a more clearly defined institutional brand. To achieve these outcomes, we must:

- Refine and market test our admissions materials, website design, and communications and branding strategy.
- Emphasize those markers of institutional strength and distinctiveness that will most resonate with parents and prospective students, including
  - Extensive Chicago connections that enrich the academic program and bolster students' career choices.
  - High quality teaching and the personalized mentoring of students.
  - An exceptionally diverse student body that enriches the academic and residential experience, and helps prepare students to flourish in an increasingly multicultural society.
  - An engaged alumni network that exemplifies the motto "Foresters helping Foresters."
  - A robust internship program.
- Become better known for success in career mentoring, job or graduate school placement, and post-graduate outcomes.
- Identify the attributes of outstanding teaching and mentoring that the College most values and underscore them to prospective students and parents.
- Become recognized for specific academic programs and attract favorable attention for our investments in areas of strength, including the natural sciences and economics, business, and finance.



- Highlight aspects of our academic program that illustrate how we prepare our students for a wide variety of successful post-graduate outcomes and fulfill the goals of our mission statement.
- Fully utilize the College's website, social media, and traditional print materials to highlight the College's brand and celebrate student and faculty accomplishments, high quality internship opportunities, distinctive academic programs, alumni successes, etc.

Marketing the College more effectively will be critical for our success. Ultimately, we must develop and implement a marketing and branding plan that will support our communications strategy and develop further interest in the College among prospective students and their parents. Featuring our small size and proximity to Chicago, the marketing plan should highlight the special opportunities made possible by direct access to outstanding faculty, internships and other forms of experiential learning, and a network of engaged alumni who help students achieve post-graduate success. The marketing plan should emphasize that the access our students receive provides them with a competitive edge as they begin their lives after Lake Forest.