1 - Mission and Planning

Introduction

For Geneseo, this is a moment of trial. In response to significant state budget cuts, the college has resolved to strengthen rather than reduce its commitment to undergraduate liberal education of the highest quality. It is well positioned to do so because its mission, planning goals, and values already orient it towards the kinds of teaching and learning most likely to transform students’ lives; because this orientation is shared throughout the institution; and because the institution has processes in place to advance its mission and values through strategic decision-making informed by continuous measurement of institutional effectiveness.
In spring 2009, the college launched an initiative named Six Big Ideas. Although, as the name suggests, the initiative comprises six different actions designed to move Geneseo forward in a time of severe budgetary stress, the keynote idea is the first: Bringing Theory to Practice. The Association of American Colleges and Universities, to which Geneseo owes this idea, sees "bringing theory to practice" as a means to promote "engaged forms of learning that actively involve students both within and beyond the classroom," and that thereby "directly contribute to their cognitive, emotional, and civic development." AAC&U has highlighted a number of specific "high-impact" educational experiences that connect theory to practice, such as undergraduate research and service learning.

It is precisely by re-focusing its institutional energies on the delivery of high-impact, transformational learning that Geneseo will turn the present moment of budgetary crisis into a moment of re-invention and renewal. To repeat, Geneseo's current mission, values, and goals — adopted over a decade ago, in 2000-01, through campus-wide consultation — already orient the college's activity towards providing a life-changing educational experience, one that will "develop socially responsible citizens with skills and values important to the pursuit of an enriched life and success in the world." The challenge for Geneseo is not to undertake a radical revision of educational philosophy or practice, but to realize its present vision more completely and with greater intelligence.

Mission and values statement

Mission

SUNY Geneseo, nationally recognized as a center of excellence in undergraduate education, is a public liberal arts college with selected professional and master's level programs. It combines a rigorous curriculum and a rich co-curricular life to create a learning-centered environment. The entire college community works together to develop socially responsible citizens with skills and values important to the pursuit of an enriched life and success in the world.

Geneseo values . . .

- **Excellence**, and upholds high standards for intellectual inquiry and scholarly achievement
- **Innovation**, and affirms a spirit of exploration that fosters continued excellence
- **Community**, and embraces the educational aspirations and interests that its members share
- **Diversity**, and respects the unique contributions of each individual to the campus community
- **Integrity**, and promotes the development of ethical citizens
- **Service to Society**, and models the qualities it seeks to develop in its students
- **Tradition**, and celebrates its long history of collaborative, learning centered education.

Consistency, pervasiveness, prominence

The above mission, values, and goals reflect the Geneseo community’s shared aspirations. They are publicized prominently and pervasively within and outside the college. Over the past decade, they have served as first principles governing all activity at the college, informing present practice and justifying projected changes. They are consistent with the aims of the Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges (COPLAC), of which Geneseo is a long-time member; of private institutions considered aspirational peers; and of the higher education community in general.

Here are some facts that illustrate the pervasiveness and prominence of the college’s mission, values, and goals:

- The college displays its statement of mission, values, and goals on its website, includes it in admissions brochures (as well those distributed to faculty, staff, employment candidates, and alumni), and incorporates it in the front matter of the Undergraduate Bulletin.

- The college’s mission statement is echoed in the mission statements of campus units. For example, the Teaching and Learning Center seeks "...to reinforce the importance of teaching excellence as a fundamental responsibility of a public university"; Mine Library’s mission is "to support the college as a center of excellence in undergraduate education"; the Office of Sponsored Research mission aims "to support, promote, and develop the research and scholarly activities...in accordance with Geneseo’s institutional mission"; and the Division of Student and Campus Life seeks to advance the mission of the college through programs and services that “facilitate the overall development of each student, and enhance the sense of community at the college.”

- During the present state and national budget crises, President Dahl has repeatedly turned to Geneseo’s mission, values, and goals to remind the college how it has met and continues to meet challenges beyond its control. Closing his August 2010 convocation speech (tp://www.geneseo.edu/webfm_send/2964), for example, the president noted that Geneseo will weather such challenges by continuing to “keep the mission and the long-term interests of the college in mind and measure our decisions against Geneseo’s fundamental values.”

A sense of shared purpose

Recent survey data provide strong evidence that Geneseo’s “mission and goals are developed and recognized by the institution with the participation of its members and its governing body”:

Recent results from the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) Faculty Survey show:

- 81 percent of Geneseo faculty agree that my values are congruent with the dominant institutional values. (compare: 74 percent of faculty at other 4-year public institutions nationally)
- 78 percent of faculty consider it very important or essential to instill a basic appreciation of the liberal arts. (compare: 68 percent of faculty in 2011 at other 4-year public colleges)
- 55 percent, over half, agree that faculty are sufficiently involved in campus decision making. (compare: 60 percent of faculty at other 4-year public colleges)
• Only 9 percent of faculty report that "faculty are typically at odds with campus administration" is very descriptive of Geneseo. (compare: 23 percent of faculty at other 4-year public colleges)
• 79 percent find administrators consider faculty concerns when making policy either very descriptive or somewhat descriptive of Geneseo. (compare: 70 percent at other public four-year institutions)
• 94 percent strongly or somewhat agree that faculty are committed to the welfare of Geneseo. (compare: 89 percent at other public four-year institutions)

The Middle States team designed an internal survey of faculty and staff to gather data necessary to answer their research questions. Results show:

• 88 percent of responding faculty and staff feel at least moderately aware of the current mission statement's salient themes; almost half (49 percent) feel that they know the mission's themes extremely or very well. (Source: 2011 internal faculty survey.)
• 95 percent believe that striving for excellence is extremely or very important to their duties at Geneseo. (Source: 2011 internal faculty survey.)
• 96 percent believe excellence as an institutional core value is consistent with and supports the college's mission. (Source: 2011 internal faculty survey.)
• 93 percent believe that providing the highest quality education through a rigorous, challenging, and active learning experience supports the college's mission.
• 81 percent believe that the theme of rigorous curriculum guides them in developing and planning college duties. (Source: 2011 internal faculty survey.)
• 92 percent are guided in their duties by the mission's call to provide skills and values important to the pursuit of an enriched life. (Source: 2011 internal faculty survey.)

The HERI data reveal an equally strong consensus with regard to modeling and promoting intellectual inquiry and scholarly achievement. Geneseo full-time faculty consistently engage undergraduates in their research, a high-impact educational experience supporting transformational learning and the college's commitment to its value of "embracing the educational aspirations and interests that its members share."

• 84 percent of Geneseo full time faculty report collaborating with undergraduates on a research project within the last two years. (compare: 62 percent of full-time faculty at other public four-year institutions)
• 51 percent report that they supervised an undergraduate thesis during the last two years. (compare: 28 percent for other public four-year institutions)
• 67 percent of faculty state they engage undergraduate students in their own research. (compare: 44 percent for other public four-year institutions)
• 91 percent of Geneseo faculty report that they devote one or more hours per week to research and scholarly writing (compare: 85 percent for other public four-year institutions).
• 52 percent of Geneseo faculty report publishing five or more articles in academic or professional journals (compare: 39 percent for other public four-year institutions)
• 24 percent of Geneseo faculty have written three or more chapters in edited volumes (compare: 15 percent for other public four-year institutions)
• 37 percent of Geneseo faculty received funding from foundations for their work in the past two years (compare: 20 percent for other public four-year institutions)

The Geneseo community's firm commitment to the value of diversity is reflected in facts such as these from the HERI Faculty Survey:

• 95 percent of faculty agree either strongly or somewhat with the statement that a racially/ethnically diverse student body enhances the educational experience of all students, a sentiment that is pervasive nationwide (compare: 94 percent of faculty at other public four-year institutions)
• 61 percent consider it a high or highest institutional priority to develop an appreciation for multiculturalism (compare: 50 percent of faculty at other public four-year institutions)

In the past two years:

• 15 percent of Geneseo faculty have taught an ethnic studies course (compare: 11 percent at other public four-year institutions)
• 12 percent have taught a women's studies course (compare: 8 percent at other public four-year institutions)
• 33 percent conducted research or writing focused on international or global issues (compare: 27 percent at other public four-year institutions)
• 27 percent conducted research or writing focused on racial or ethnic minorities (compare: 20 percent at other public four-year institutions)
• 30 percent conducted research or writing focused on women and gender issues (compare 19 percent at other public four-year institutions)

According to Geneseo's internal survey conducted for Middle States:

• 86 percent of faculty and staff feel diversity is at least moderately important to performing their duties at Geneseo. (Source: 2011 internal survey.)

Two areas for further self-reflection

It should come as no surprise that the college's values are not equally valued by all employees. For example, less than half, 47 percent, consider tradition to be extremely or very important (Source: internal survey). In two areas — community engagement and the co-curriculum — commitment, though solid, could be stronger.

With regard to community engagement, 47 percent of Geneseo faculty regard it as a high or the highest institutional priority to facilitate student involvement in community service. This number is comparable to that for other public four-year institutions: 45 percent. (Source: 2011 HERI Faculty Survey.) More faculty at Geneseo advised student groups involved in service or volunteer work in the past two years than did faculty at other public four-year institutions, 59 percent compared to 49 percent. Moreover, in considering both faculty and staff, an internal survey reveals that 65 percent of Geneseo faculty consider community as extremely or very important to their duties, and that 74 percent of staff view community as extremely or very important to their duties. Faculty and staff perceptions align more closely concerning service to society; 63 percent of faculty feel service to society is extremely or very important to their duties, compared to 68 percent of staff.

When it comes to the co-curriculum, whereas 35 percent of faculty identify the promotion of a rich co-curricular life as very or extremely helpful when developing and planning their duties, more staff, 40 percent, view this area their purview. This result is perhaps unsurprising given that many faculty may not see their courses as aligned directly with co-curriculum. Nevertheless, given the importance of faculty in advising, counseling, and otherwise contributing to co-curricular life, such results warrant further self-reflection. Geneseo's intensified devotion to transformational learning — bringing theory to practice — will require faculty to see a strong connection between academics and the co-curriculum.
Planning

Geneseo's seven current planning goals are consonant with its mission and values. As a brief history of those goals will suggest, they have helped Geneseo realize or make progress in many of its aspirations. Perhaps most notably, the emphasis in these goals on active learning, intellectual engagement, personal growth, diversity, serving the community, and integration between curricular and co-curricular programs has played a crucial role in helping Geneseo provide a life-transforming learning experience.

However, as the college responds to a challenging fiscal environment by making its pursuit of transformational learning more intentional, more programmatic, more pervasive, and more effective, it is taking new directions in planning to help accomplish this end, augmenting the seven goals with Six Big Ideas. And it has been forced to make some difficult choices.

Planning Goals

1. Provide every student the highest quality education through a rigorous, challenging, and active learning experience in close working relationships with faculty and staff that encourages intellectual engagement and personal growth.
2. Recruit, support, and foster the development of a diverse community of outstanding students, faculty, and staff.
3. Enrich the collegiate experience by strengthening the integration between curricular and co-curricular programs.
4. Cultivate relationships between the College and wider community that support College programs and serve the community.
5. Expand funding for institutional priorities and initiatives through public and private support, grants, and entrepreneurial activities.
6. Promote institutional effectiveness through ongoing assessment in every program.
7. Provide facilities, equipment, and a physical environment (of a quality) consistent with the College's aspirations for national recognition.

A brief history of planning at Geneseo

Geneseo's contemporary era of college planning dates to 1989, when President Carol Harter and Professor Gary Towsley, as co-chairs of the College Planning Council, prepared A Quest for Excellence: Geneseo's Plan for a Decade 1990-2000. This comprehensive document framed a mission statement, identified roles and aims for divisions such as Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, Advancement, and Administration and Finance, and established a primary goal for the college of helping students "become active, rather than passive learners."

Between 1990 and 2000, a new planning committee was created, the present-day Strategic Planning Group (SPG) — or, as it was at first called, Strategic Planning Advisory Group. Chaired by the provost, the SPG is described in Article X, Section 3 of the Geneseo Faculty Constitution as follows:

> The Strategic Planning Advisory Group (SPG) will define overarching goals for the College, evaluate priorities and, where appropriate, recommend new or revised goals and strategies that will strengthen the mission of the College. SPG will review the goals of the College and its constituent units to ensure that they are in keeping with the Vision and Mission Statements and will regularly review the College’s progress towards these goals. The Strategic Planning Advisory Group will make all of its recommendations directly to the President.

In the early 2000's, after broad consultation with the campus community, the SPG formulated the seven planning goals listed above. Since then, the SPG has regularly monitored the college's progress on these goals. It has been aided in its work by the College Council, the Budget Advisory Committee, the president's cabinet, and various presidential task forces and commissions. (Chapter 5 will discuss the emergence of a new, faculty-only deliberative body — developed partly in response to the proliferation of such task forces and commissions — that may help to make strategic planning more prominent in faculty's everyday consciousness.)

Completed objectives, resulting initiatives

The SPG developed a "Goals and Objectives" document in June 2002 that filled out the seven goals with specific objectives, timelines, projected budgets, and assignments of responsibility for implementation.

By 2008-09, the majority of these objectives had been met (SPG 2008 Progress Report). Moreover, at least one significant college initiative had emerged from each of the planning goals. The sections below describe initiatives on campus-wide assessment (an outgrowth of goal 6, institutional effectiveness), bringing theory to practice (a result of goals 1-3), diversity (goal 2), sustainability (4 and 7), technology (7), and undergraduate research (1). Later chapters will take up other initiatives, such as Livingston Cares (3 and 4), sponsored research (5), the ongoing capital campaign (5), and the campus master plan (7).

Campus-wide assessment

With the development of the present strategic plan, systematic, campus-wide assessment at Geneseo began in earnest. In 1999 an ad hoc program review committee recommended that outcomes assessment plans be included in all department reviews. That same year, a new associate provost position was created, in part to provide oversight of assessment, while the Dean of the College, together with the chairs of the various area committees for general education, developed learning outcomes for general education areas. Within Academic Affairs, an assessment planning committee was formed. Since then, assessment has been extended to all divisions of the college.

Bringing Theory to Practice

During the time that the Strategic Planning Group has been monitoring Geneseo’s success in fulfilling its mission to develop socially responsible citizens and meeting its goal to promote active learning that leads to intellectual and personal growth, a national movement in higher education has grown up around these very same ideals. Its aim has been to make institutions more intentional about educating the student as a "whole person" and producing graduates who are civically engaged. Geneseo has not turned a blind eye to this movement; on the contrary, it has embraced it.

The college has joined two prominent national initiatives designed to help institutions take a more mindful and systematic approach to promoting civic engagement and emotional well-being: the American Democracy Project (sponsored in part by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, AASCU) and the above-mentioned Bringing Theory to Practice project initiated by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U).
Geneseo was moved to join these initiatives not only by the fact that the initiatives seemed to be in the vanguard of educational best practice, but also by local evidence that students would benefit from more active and energetic efforts to address their emotional, social, and civic development. For example, results on the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), which Geneseo administers every two years, have indicated room for improvement on questions related to student civic engagement. In addition, results from an internal survey conducted by the Student Health and Counseling Center have indicated a level of student emotional distress worthy of concern.

Geneseo is one of 45 institutions invited to join the Leadership Coalition for AAC&U's Bringing Theory to Practice (BTtoP) project. Locally, a BTtoP working group has been formed to ensure that the college's efforts toward transformational learning are coordinated and intentional. In summer 2009, this working group held a retreat at which participants formulated tentative outcomes for transformational learning. These outcomes include development of the following:

- the ability to reflect upon and participate in creating one's own learning experience
- the ability to solve problems
- the emotional stability to balance competing interests
- the skills, knowledge, and motivation to better the local, national, and global community

Moreover, the working group aspires to help Geneseo ensure that academic and co-curricular experiences will be intellectually as well as emotionally liberating, and that the campus culture models and reinforces the same outcomes in civic understanding and participation that students are expected to meet.

Finally, as already mentioned, Bringing Theory to Practice has been incorporated into, and is more or less the soul of, the Six Big Ideas initiative that President Dahl launched in early 2009.

The college has provided solid support for Bringing Theory to Practice and related activities designed to intensity, expand, and strengthen Geneseo's long-standing commitment to life-transforming education. For example:

- In 2010-11, the administration provided $10,589 in matching funds for a $7,500 Program Grant from the national BTtoP program.
- In spring 2011, the Office of the Provost invited academic departments and programs to apply for curriculum innovation grants of up to $25,000. Applicants were encouraged to seek funds to promote high-impact educational practices, civic engagement, global and intercultural learning, expanded instructional delivery, greater depth of student learning, re-alignment of teaching resources, and a major suitable for a four-course student load. (Exploring the feasibility of a four-course load is another of the president's six big ideas — see below.) The provost's office awarded a total of $193,140 in curriculum innovation funding to 10 academic departments.
- A year-long series of workshops for faculty and staff provided guidance on recognizing and responding to student emotional distress.
- After the President's Commission on Diversity and Community, the Xerox Center for Multicultural Education, the Office of Multicultural Programs, and the local BTtoP task force collaborated to create two highly successful, experimental high-impact courses — Real World Geneseo and Something in the Air — Academic Affairs put forward a combination of national BTtoP grant money and internal funds to support development of similar courses (six to date) under the rubric "extreme learning."

Undergraduate research

A high-impact, active-learning practice at Geneseo that deserves special mention is undergraduate research. On the 2011 HERI Faculty Survey, 67 percent of Geneseo full-time faculty reported including undergraduates as collaborators in their own research (compare: 44 percent at other public four-year colleges). Many recent faculty publications directly acknowledge student research assistants, and students have even co-authored some publications. More broadly, on the same survey 78 percent of Geneseo faculty, and 84 percent of full-time faculty report that they have worked with undergraduates on a research project of some kind (compare: 62 percent at other four-year colleges).

Geneseo's commitment to undergraduate research as a high-impact, transformational learning experience has led to a number of college and department initiatives:

- Most departments offer students a senior honors thesis option and/or a capstone requirement calling for a significant research project.
- Since 2007, GREAT Day at Geneseo (the acronym stands for Geneseo Recognizing Excellence, Achievement and Talent) has served as a showcase for student scholarship and creativity, a venue for the exchange of student ideas, a celebration of learning, and an opportunity for professional development. In 2010, 879 students across all academic departments participated in the 490 presentations, performances, and exhibits composing this full-day (classes are suspended), campus-wide event. The number of participants has increased yearly since the original 411 students took part in 306 presentations.
- Geneseo has increased its internal funding for undergraduate research. (The Office of Sponsored Research reports that 179 students received a total of $92,249 in internal monetary support in 2009-10, up from $45,910 for 96 students in 1999-2000.)

Campus diversity

Geneseo has been unwavering in its support of the second planning goal listed above: "Recruit, support, and foster the development of a diverse community of outstanding students, faculty, and staff." The link to "Diversity at Geneseo" on the president's web page is one of many ways that the college promotes appreciation for a wide range of cultures, beliefs, practices, and opinions, and announces its commitment to the value of mutual respect.

Several measures indicate the college's success in meeting its objective — associated with Planning Goal 2 — to "increase the proportion of racially and ethnically diverse students in the student body."

- Between 2004 and 2010, the percentage of the student population self-identifying as minority nearly doubled, from 9.9 percent to 17.4 percent.
- In 1999, the number of international students attending Geneseo stood at two. As a result of a 2000 decision to create and staff an Office of International Student Services that recruits, admits, and supports degree-seeking students, that number had grown to 154, or 2.5 percent of the total student body.

When it comes to recruiting and retaining a diverse faculty, the college has had more modest success, in part because budgetary constraints have slowed down hiring altogether. The percentage of full-time faculty classified as either minority or non-resident alien grew from 14.1 percent in 2001 to 14.3 percent in 2006 to 15.5 percent in 2009-10.

Faculty take an increasingly favorable view of the campus climate with respect to diversity. Half of faculty feel that increasing the representation of minorities in faculty and administration is a high or highest priority for Geneseo, compared to only 38 percent for other public four-year institutions. The
number of faculty who agree there is a lot of campus racial conflict here on campus dropped from 33 percent in 2007 to 18 percent in 2010. Although Geneseo has seen improvement in its own perceptions, compared to other schools, significantly more faculty agree that there is a lot of racial conflict compared to our public four-year peer, 18 percent agree strongly or somewhat for Geneseo compared to eight percent for other public four-year institutions (source: HERI Faculty Survey).

Despite noteworthy success in approaching Planning Goal 2, however, the college has room for improvement, and it has undertaken several initiatives to speed progress on this goal.

The assessment subcommittee of the President’s Commission on Diversity and Community has been tracking nine key diversity indicators. These include NSSE results, responses to the Student Opinion Survey (SOS) administered to all SUNY students, as well as retention and graduation rates for students of color. Among the findings are these:

- Geneseo students ranked their development of an understanding and appreciation of ethnic/cultural diversity and other individual differences at 3.04 (up from 2.91 in 2003, but lower than the 3.24 ranking earned by other state-operated colleges and the 3.34 earned by other SUNY comprehensive colleges).
- Geneseo students ranked their satisfaction with the racial harmony on campus at 3.78 on a five-point scale (up from 3.64 in 2003 but lower than the 3.83 earned by other state-operated colleges the 3.92 earned by other SUNY comprehensive colleges.)

In response to these and similar indicators, the provost in 2005 created a committee to review assessment data and make recommendations to improve success for students of color. In addition, the college set up a website, "Procedures for Students to Report Bias-related Incidents," to inform students of the protocols to follow if they experience a bias-related incident.

The prototype for "extreme learning" at Geneseo — the course, developed in connection with Bringing Theory to Practice, titled Real World Geneseo — is aimed directly at improving students’ cultural competency and their attitudes toward diversity. Three rounds of assessment have indicated that the program has accomplished its aim.

Finally, in 2008 a new objective was added to Planning Goal 2: to develop a campus diversity plan that includes goals, objectives, performance indicators, and means of assessing progress on an annual basis. The diversity plan’s goals and objectives were approved by the Strategic Planning Group in spring 2010; work continues on the plan’s other components. Once completed, this plan will enable the college to better coordinate and track the results of diversity initiatives.

**Technology**

Despite its limited budget, Geneseo has honored its commitment to the value of innovation through increasing use of technology designed to serve teaching and learning. At the same time, it has followed through on the objective in Planning Goal 7 to "enhance ... technology support systems to the level of our aspirational peers."

Geneseo’s Teaching and Learning Center (TLC) nurtures excellence in teaching through workshops and brown-bag discussions, many of which allow faculty and staff to learn about or share expertise in the use of innovative educational technology. The TLC opened in 2004 under the guidance of faculty on temporary loan from academic departments; in 2008, the college committed itself fully to the TLC’s mission by hiring a full-time director.

In addition, Geneseo has invested in the Angel learning management system — locally known as myCourses — enabling faculty to share syllabi, assignments, readings, and grades with students, but also giving them tools for high-impact learning, such as electronic forums for discussion and self-reflection. The Teaching and Learning Center works together with the Office of Computing and Information Technology (CIT) to offer training and support for faculty and staff using myCourses. In summer 2008, the TLC (in conjunction with CIT) hosted panels and workshops on developing online courses consonant with Geneseo’s mission as a public liberal arts college. Since then, the Office of the Dean of the College has offered incentive grants to faculty interested in developing online courses. Three faculty members have reported on the pilot online courses offered in the summer of 2009; additional online courses were also offered in summer 2011.

In 2007, Geneseo invested in Confluence, the software that powers the wiki in which this self-study report has been both written and published. Adopted originally to facilitate the collection, storage, and sharing of assessment data, and to host student collaboration within and across courses, Geneseo’s Confluence wiki has evolved into something like a campus intellectual/administrative network. As of January 2012 it was home to more than 60 individual "spaces," each a site for public or private coordination, collaboration, and publication — in a wide range of media — for some combination, large or small, of faculty, administrators, staff, and students. The Geneseo wiki continues to serve as the hub for all assessment activity. A dedicated space for the Six Big Ideas initiative enabled the campus community to join in, comment on, or simply follow the work of the president’s six task forces as the work took shape. When four faculty members in English used the wiki to engage students across their four sections of a single course, English 170, in an experiment called Participating Criticism, the experiment won a "community contribution" award from NITLE, the National Institute for Liberal Education. Physics, Anthropology, Mathematics, Business, and Political Science are some of the academic disciplines that have used the technology in the wiki most intensively to engage students in high-impact, team-based work and even undergraduate research, while spaces such as the Geneseo Food Network promote these same kinds of activities across multiple disciplines.

Finally, the wiki is where the Provost’s Advisory Committee on Technology conducts its work and shares documents such as its Ten-Year Vision Report with the campus community.

Other noteworthy technology initiatives undertaken in the past decade include:

- **Personal Response System (PRS):** First installed in 2002, PRS clickers were being used by 2005 to facilitate real-time quiz taking.
- **Student Notebook Computer requirement:** Since 2007, all incoming students have been required to attend Geneseo with a notebook computer.
- **Student Notebook Computer requirement:** Since 2007, all incoming students have been required to attend Geneseo with a notebook computer.
- **LCD Projectors in all teaching spaces:** These projectors give utility to other tools such as smartboards, syndops, document cameras, PRS, visualizers, and DVD players.

**Sustainability**

Over the past decade, Americans have increasingly recognized environmental sustainability as one of our most pressing national concerns. Sustainability is directly related to Geneseo’s mission and values and is addressed in several planning goals, including the seventh (physical environment) and fourth (relationships between the college and the wider community). The college’s Environmental Impact and Sustainability Task Force was established in 2006 to reduce the college’s environmental impact. Co-chaired by representatives from Academic Affairs and Administration and Finance, the task force
Currently comprises 24 students, faculty, and staff from all divisions of the college. The task force has been very active: each of its seven subcommittees has specific charges and collects data, writes reports, and coordinates and sponsors campus events. The activities of the task force are detailed in its annual reports and highlighted in the college’s 2010 Climate Action Plan.

In its 2008-09 annual report the Sustainability Task Force recommended that the College adopt the following policy:

It shall be the policy of the College to make clear the links between sustainability ideals and the College’s mission, goals and values. All of the College’s values are linked to sustainability, but the values of Innovation, Community, Diversity, Integrity and Service to Society clearly call on students and the College community as a whole to engage in sustainability through “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (sustainability definition of the Brundtland Commission 1987). This definition makes clear that sustainability is not only, or even primarily, focused on the environment, but on people and how our communities and economic systems will survive into the future.

In 2007, President Dahl signed the American College and University President’s Climate Commitment (ACUPCC). With this commitment the college agreed to achieve climate neutrality by calculating its greenhouse gas emissions, developing a plan to reduce them, and setting a date for carbon neutrality. The college resolved to take three further immediate steps to decrease its emissions: build new construction to a minimum LEED silver standard; purchase only energy star certified products; and increase access to the public LATs bus system.

In July 2010, the President submitted the final draft of the Climate Action Plan developed by the Sustainability Task Force. The Climate Action Plan fulfilled the college’s initial commitment to ACUPCC and set 2050 as the date to achieve carbon neutrality with no more than 20 percent coming from off-campus carbon credits. The Sustainability Task Force is a charter member of STARS, the Sustainability Tracking Assessment and Rating System, a group of institutions whose members do annual assessment to measure their sustainability performance. Geneseo’s plan will be assessed in five-year intervals.

Recent data from the HERS survey indicate the task force has work to do to infuse sustainability into the culture of the campus community. Asked about adopting “green practices” to protect the environment, only 54 percent of the respondents rated these practices as essential or very important; 11 percent rated them as not important. (At comparable institutions, 61 percent rating them essential or very important; six percent rated them as not important.)

The next phase of strategic planning

In 2008-09, with most of the original planning objectives successfully achieved and new financial pressures at work, the Strategic Planning Group considered whether to replace the seven planning goals. Instead, as described above, the college embarked on investigating “Six Big Ideas” that might use the current budgetary crisis to help the college meet its goals with new creativity and intelligence.

Sixty-six faculty, staff, and administrators formed six task forces corresponding to the different ideas; another 53 members of the campus community signed up to “follow” the work of the task forces and contribute to discussions. A dedicated space in the Geneseo wiki served as the task forces’ center of operations, where all members of the college community could track their progress, comment on their deliberations, and read their final reports, filed in December 2009. (After Geneseo launched its initiative, the term “Six Big Ideas” found its way into SUNY’s Strategic Plan, The Power of SUNY.)

The continuity between the original seven planning goals and Six Big Ideas is illustrated in the table, Six Big Ideas Advance College Planning Goals.

A common purpose of the six ideas, listed and briefly discussed below, was to save on operating costs, increase revenue, and advance the college’s core mission. The president allocated $200,000 to help implement the recommendations of the task forces, and this implementation is continuing. Significant progress has been made.

- **Bring Theory to Practice** in order to promote transformational learning, integrate disparate efforts to achieve synergy, and guarantee that all students will have at least one high-impact learning experience during their careers at Geneseo.
- **Create Innovative Five-Year Professional Programs** in order to move to the cutting edge of best practice and reinforce our distinctive identity as a public liberal arts college.
- **Expand Instructional Delivery** through innovative approaches to summer courses, graduate education, and non-traditional time slots.
- **Re-think the Course Load** in order to create new alignments between teaching and learning.
- **Create a Center for Collaborative Research** in order to secure funding for undergraduate research, multidisciplinary research, rural economic development, physical science projects, and more.
- **Create a Center for Strategic Community Partnerships** in order to support internships; action-based community research; projects such as Microenterprise, Livingston/CARES, Geneseo/South Wedge Revitalization; and joint work with organizations such as Rochester City School District (RCSD) and the Small Business Development Center.

As explained above, significant progress has been made on the recommendations from the task force on Bringing Theory to Practice. Chapter 2, below, describes efforts to implement recommendations from the task forces on Creating Innovative Five-Year Professional Programs and Expanding Instructional Delivery.

**Academic Affairs planning**

**Re-thinking the course load**

Of all the recommendations generated by the six task forces, those on re-thinking the course load have produced the most vigorous discussion.

The president charged the course load task force with exploring how comparable institutions had transitioned from a five-course to a four-course student load, identifying the benefits and challenges of such a move for Geneseo, assessing the impact that the move might have on faculty deployment and curriculum flexibility, and estimating the money-saving potential of a four-course load. In fall 2009, as part of their research into other institutions, task force members visited the College of New Jersey. In an effort to gauge faculty opinion, the task force conducted a survey revealing a mixed view of a four-course load’s benefits and drawbacks. Some faculty expressed concern that workload might increase and that the budgetary gains of a four-course load were unproven. In its final report, the task force made no recommendation, choosing instead to point out both advantages and disadvantages of the contemplated change.

In summer 2010, Provost Long invited a number of academic departments to prepare plans for the transition as a way to gauge its feasibility. Some departments concluded that the change would be very difficult, particularly those with external certification or a large number of requirements. In spring 2011, the provost held three open forums to discuss the possible change. A new faculty deliberative body met three times to do the same.
Several large campus programs, including History, Psychology, and English have embraced or expressed themselves open to the proposed change and have re-thought their goals, their learning outcomes, their requirements, and their course offerings. Ten curriculum innovation grants awarded for 2011-12 by the Office of the Provost have provided support to programs interested in exploring a range of curricular changes that would be compatible with a four-course student load. Moreover, the General Education Committee, charged by the provost with proposing new undergraduate and general education learning outcomes, is considering how a revised general education curriculum might look under the reduced student load.

In a spring 2011 e-mail, the provost pointed out several potential benefits of moving to a four-course load. According to the provost, our students are changing, and our understanding of student learning and of pedagogy are rapidly evolving. Curricular change would give us further opportunities to explore high-impact educational practice as espoused in the Bringing Theory to Practice project on our campus. Demographic changes are taking place in our communities, our student body, and our faculty. All of this means that the shape of our institutions, designed for a different time, must evolve to meet contemporary needs and to connect the values of our liberal arts core to new realities.

Yet several departments/programs were still unconvinced. They argued that the potential downside outweighed the purported benefits.

At the end of spring 2011, the provost said that all schools and departments would have the option of moving to a four-course load but that none would be required to do so.

Program de-activation

Responding to budget pressures, the members of the provost's and dean's offices and the Director of Institutional Research gathered and analyzed program information for the president's cabinet to use in considering program deactivation (see below). Summary information was shared with the Strategic Planning Group and Budget Priorities Advisory Committee.

Resource allocation and institutional renewal

Program deactivation: a response to financial difficulties

Although innovation has been Geneseo's main response to financial crisis, it has not been the only one. In spring 2010, the Budget Advisory Committee recommended to the Strategic Planning Group that deactivating programs would be preferable to holding unfilled positions vacant indefinitely or simply not filling them — responses that have served during past, short-term emergencies but that, in the present situation, could not be said to constitute genuine strategic planning or to serve the college's long-term interests. The committee sent the SPG a list of criteria for deciding which programs should be considered for deactivation. In intense discussions, the SPG compared these criteria to the mission and planning goals, reviewed data from ongoing assessments (including annual reports, five-year curriculum reviews from academic departments, and data from the Office of Institutional Research), and decided on the following criteria for judging programs:

- Centrality to mission
- Relative program cost
- Program quality
- Program sustainability
- Student enrollment trends
- Institutional interrelatedness

The criteria and data were forwarded to the president's cabinet, which decided to deactivate three major programs: Art Studio, Computer Science, and Communicative Disorders and Sciences.

Student needs were kept foremost in planning. In choosing to deactivate rather than discontinue the programs, the cabinet reasoned that the current students, including the graduate students in Communicative Disorders, could complete their degrees. New majors would not be enrolled. This approach allows the college three years to re-consider the decisions if conditions change; moreover, it recognizes that courses in Art and Computer Science, if not the major programs, remain necessary to Geneseo's curriculum. Finally, it acknowledges a difficult truth: savings from the program deactivations will be realized only after two or three years.

The challenge of changing enrollment patterns

Although the total number of majors, including double majors, has remained relatively constant over the past ten years (5,624 in 2001; 5,942 in 2009), the distribution of students among majors has changed significantly.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area (Percentage of Students)</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>24.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanities</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>18.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science and Mathematics</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>26.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicative Disorders</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Sciences</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Business</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Education</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The total number of students either in the education major or certificate programs (7-12 Adolescence/Secondary) has declined from 1,723 in 2001 to 1,015 in 2009, that is, from 30.6 percent to 17.1 percent of the student body. More students are electing majors in the traditional liberal arts areas of social sciences, humanities, and mathematics/natural science. Mathematics and science have seen the biggest increase (6.1 percent), with 26.3 percent of the student body now declaring majors in this area. These trends are also evident in the majors of interest to first-year students. The number of incoming students indicating an interest in mathematics or science was 32.3 percent in 2009, 35.2 percent in 2010, and 35.0 percent in 2011. Nearly one quarter of the first-year class plans to major in biology or biochemistry. Although this shift of enrollments from professional programs to the liberal arts resulted from changing student interests and was not planned by the college, it is consistent with the college’s overall vision of becoming the premier public liberal arts college.

However, the shift has consequences for the college’s mission and its adherence to the values of excellence and innovation. The regular academic program reviews that serve as one means to measure institutional effectiveness at Geneseo show that high enrollments and financial constraints have placed a particular burden on the social and natural sciences. For example, in 2011, external reviewers for biochemistry, biology, and chemistry all expressed concern about the sustainability of what they feel are high-quality programs. They strongly advocated the use of enrollment management to reduce the number of students taking courses in these areas to more workable levels.

Moreover, innovative, transformational learning experiences such as internships and undergraduate research may become more costly to fund as they become more common in liberal arts disciplines and as these disciplines simultaneously grow in enrollment.

The provost has begun to discuss enrollment issues with several departments. As the body that provides the link between program assessment and planning, the College Assessment Advisory Council (CAAC) will undoubtedly play a role in helping the college make sense of current trends and needs.

Conclusion and recommendations

Strengths and challenges

Geneseo publicizes its mission, values, and goals prominently and frequently, and it has been guided by them consistently over the past decade. The Geneseo community values the current mission statement’s main themes (for example, providing excellence in undergraduate education, a rigorous curriculum, and skills and values necessary for student success); the community also values goals essential to transformational learning, such as student intellectual development and social awareness.

The College has met the majority of the objectives in its 2002 planning goals. The deeper purpose of all these goals and objectives has always been to change students’ lives in lasting ways. However, in recent years the college has striven to define this purpose more clearly and to accomplish it more mindfully. It has increasingly cultivated the kinds of high-impact activities that George Kuh has associated with transformational learning, such as student research with faculty, study abroad, experiences with diversity, and learning that merges curricular and co-curricular experiences. It has developed initiatives to promote campus diversity, creative use of technology, undergraduate research, and sustainability.

Extraordinary budget pressures have played a role in bringing Geneseo itself to a moment of profound transformation. Institutional changes currently under consideration — reducing the standard student course load from five courses to four, for example, or re-configuring general education requirements — may provide an opportunity to make us better at changing students’ lives even as we reduce our costs.

Recommendations

1. Improve institution-wide communication of mission and values. Although faculty share many values associated with the current mission statement, for faculty to understand the relevance and importance of "tradition" and "co-curricular activities" will require additional communication, explanation, course incorporation, and/or self-reflection.

2. Continue searching for ways to provide transformational learning experiences in a context of constrained resources.

3. Formally incorporate selected recommendations from the Six Big Ideas process into the college strategic plan.

4. Develop an enrollment strategy to match student preferences in majors more closely to resources.

<< Preface
Chapter 2: Student Learning and Development >>