



The Strategic Plan for Wilson College: 2010 - 2015

Approved by the Board of Trustees
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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

History of Comprehensive Strategic Planning at Wilson

Since 2001-2 when Wilson's first comprehensive strategic planning process began until the present day, the College has made strategic planning a high priority, revising and updating the Plan at regular intervals. Strategic Planning is an integral part of the annual and long range assessment, planning, and resource allocation cycle, with the faculty, administrator, student and trustee members of the Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) and its Data Committee (DC) playing lead roles in the process.

In accord with the highest standards in the field of strategic planning, our planning is:

- Mission-driven
- aspirational in its Vision
- ongoing, recognizing that strategic plans are fluid, must be reviewed regularly to assess progress, respond to changed opportunities and the environment.
- cognizant of the short and long-term internal and external environmental factors affecting us
- based on data that provides evidence that change is needed and success is possible
- grounded in knowing that plans cannot be realized without necessary resources – human and financial, but that sound and innovative plans are necessary to capture support and resources
- paced over the five-year period in keeping with plans for attracting new resources

Each time the Plan was formulated or has undergone major revision (2002, 2004, 2010), the Strategic Planning Committee reached out to engage all campus constituencies in shaping the Plan. The President and the Strategic Planning Committee led the campus in discussion about the future of the College and scheduled a regular series of small and large forums in which ideas were exchanged. Among the forums were faculty and staff meetings, all-college forums, mini forums, late-night meetings with students in the residence halls, and surveys to alumnae, which brought campus constituencies together to challenge assumptions and exchange ideas. Communication between constituencies and SPC members was facilitated through a strategic planning web page, email, and an electronic message board.

Development of the 2010-2015 Strategic Plan

While Wilson has one of the highest endowments per student when compared with other colleges our size and our current fundraising efforts are very successful, our primary source of revenue is and will always be student tuition and fees. Increasing student enrollment is one of the greatest challenges we face. Therefore, as this plan was developed, the underlying assumption is that the goals, objectives and strategies contained herein have great potential for increasing enrollment. In order to achieve our programmatic goals and achieve financial equilibrium, we *must enroll a minimum of 1,000 students, including minimums of 400 full-time, residential students and 600 adult degree and graduate students. These are the enrollment assumptions built into the Enrollment Plan and the five-year Strategic Financial Planning Model.*

In fall 2009, with the above noted purposes in mind, President Edmundson revitalized the membership of the Strategic Planning Committee, re-clarifying its charge. Immediately after the October Board meeting, the SPC started meeting bi-weekly to plan for and engage the campus community in developing the Strategic Plan for 2010-2015. (See Appendix A).

The SPC began its work with several advantages:

- A number of major strategic initiatives designed to propel Wilson forward had already been determined as part of the Leading with Confidence Capital Campaign that began in 2007. While

construction of the first – the Brooks Complex for Science, Mathematics and Technology – was complete, the new facility presented excellent opportunities for strengthening Wilson’s distinctions in science in other ways. The background research, evidence, and concept for the Global Citizenship Initiative had been developed into a full-blown proposal, identifying another strategic opportunity to advance in the new Strategic Plan. Endowments for faculty, staff and technology development and a more robust Wilson Fund were two more approved, clear directions for planning.

- Actions and recommendations by the Middle States Commission during the Wilson’s spring 2009 reaccreditation visit gave clear direction for revising the Mission Statement and developing significant strategic improvements in assessing Student Learning.
- Completion of the Branding Research, conducted under the auspices of the Leading with Confidence Campaign, offered rich information for clarifying the Vision and lay the groundwork for the formulation of the Strategic Integrated Marketing Committee and its work on an Integrated Marketing Plan.
- Trustees offered their best thinking and support regarding holding to the core mission as a women’s college, following their fall 2009 retreat. Before doing so, they reviewed the literature on single sex and coeducational institutions, considered Wilson’s strengths and prospects, and expressed their beliefs about Wilson’s best opportunities for successfully delivering on its mission. Trustees also were supportive in the development of a 2010-2015 five-year financial model that meets the strategic goal of financial equilibrium at Wilson.

Planning Assumptions

While all of the factors noted above helped to shape assumptions and directions for planning, the College also commissioned SEM WORKS to complete a Situational Analysis. The Strategic Planning Committee, with the help of its Data Committee, compared best practices with peer and aspirant colleges, also contributing to identifying planning assumptions. Considerable detail on this topic can be found in the SEM WORKS document (Appendix E) and in the Assessment Plan/Evidence (Appendix J).

Following are the key planning assumptions:

- The effects of the recent recession are unlikely to ease quickly. For the foreseeable future, many students and families will have great difficulty paying for College;
- Even when the recession eases, trends in student demographics indicate that more first-generation students, students of color, and students with decreasing ability to pay will be coming to the nation’s colleges;
- Colleges whose core mission is to educate women draw from a small fraction of the U.S. population of high school girls. However, the market is cluttered with small, private coeducational colleges with few ways to distinguish themselves in the marketplace;
- In order to distinguish Wilson in a very competitive higher education environment, Wilson will have the best opportunities if: it preserves the core, undergraduate, residential women’s college; strengthens and expands the undergraduate, adult degree programs; and establishes additional graduate programs and graduate and undergraduate articulation program that address student interest, the trend to on-line and hybrid learning for adults, and identified long-term needs of the marketplace, such as health care.

- Wilson is at a tipping point. Some of the indicators of this include:
 - strengthened and expanded numbers of faculty, administrators and staff
 - s strong and engaged Board of Trustees;
 - a reputation for offering a rigorous, transformative educational experience;
 - a number of distinctive, innovative academic and co-curricular programs upon which to build;
 - sound financial and investment policies, systems and ratios;
 - a greatly improved physical plant;
 - a growing endowment that is largely unrestricted;
 - a remarkable record of 100% employee and trustee giving to the Wilson Fund;
 - a rising donor base, including individuals, foundations, and federal sources of funding;
 - the projected success of the \$45 Million Leading with Confidence Campaign in terms of funds secured, donor aspirations rising, and a lasting infrastructure of talented and trained staff and volunteers who will continue to steward and solicit donors even when the campaign is over.

To take advantage of being at this tipping point in order to achieve our ambitious but realizable goals, everyone in the College community must play a whole-hearted role and take responsibility for accomplishing the goals, objectives and strategies in the Plan that pertain. We must be entrepreneurial, innovative, and nimble. We must consider all good ideas carefully – “staying in the question” – rather than dismissing ideas as a result of past experience. We must, and will succeed in order to serve the generations of students who deserve to have the benefit of a Wilson education.

II. MISSION

Wilson is an independent college with a proud history of educating women since 1869 through rigorous study of the liberal arts and sciences. Today, Wilson's mission also includes women and men enrolled in adult degree and graduate programs. Guided by the Honor Principle and distinguished by its commitment to transformative student growth, Wilson College prepares all of its graduates for fulfilling lives and professions, ethical leadership, and humane stewardship of our communities and our world.

III. VISION

Wilson College will gain national recognition as a small, independent college known for its academic strength, distinctive pedagogy, innovative programs and well-prepared graduates.

Transforming Educational Experience

Wilson will build on its proud heritage of rigorous, women-centered education and distinctive pedagogy by providing all students with opportunities to develop a stronger sense of self and the capacity to become confident, articulate leaders in and outside of the classroom. Academic rigor and support for student learning will be demonstrated through evidence established by outcomes assessment.

Distinctive Innovative Programs

Wilson will engage its students in a liberal arts education that is distinguished by themes that are threaded throughout the curriculum. Preparing students for global citizenship in a dynamic society, programs will be interdisciplinary and address the need for environmental, cultural and economic sustainability. Programs and services will meet the needs of different constituencies of learners.

Strong, Integrated Planning and Assessment

Wilson will make strategic, evidence-based decisions designed to fulfill its Mission, increase efficiency, enhance its programs, and strengthen its financial base to support personnel, programs, technology and facilities. Such decisions will reflect the fundamental value that student learning is at the core of the institution's purpose. The College will gain the capacity for an agile yet data-driven response to new initiatives.

IV. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

A. TRANSFORMING EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE

GOAL

To strengthen student learning by creating and articulating integrated programs of study that begin with a revitalized and extended first-year experience, move through increasingly complex experiences in the liberal arts and sciences, major fields of study, leadership development, cross-cultural study, service learning, career development, student/faculty research, internships, and capstone courses.

Objective 1: Respond to the national trend of increasing numbers of underprepared college students to ensure success for these students in Wilson's rigorous learning environment.

Strategies:

1. Identify and integrate best practices for under-prepared students, strengthening academic skills, study habits, and support structures.
2. Identify and implement curricular and co-curricular practices that will continue to support at-risk students during their subsequent years at Wilson.
3. Enhance the first-year experience in the CFW that builds on the existing first-year seminar model and other best practices. Create a more interactive and supportive first-year experience.
4. Establish a more thorough and extended orientation experience for ADP students that is appropriate for them, integrating elements of the existing first-year seminar and other best practices whenever appropriate.

Objective 2: Consider programs that bridge the curriculum and co-curriculum to deeply engage students in their own learning, such as programs that involve high impact, experiential components. Examples include internships, leadership education, service learning, undergraduate research, global learning, and capstone courses.

Strategies:

1. Strengthen the academic value and availability of internships and provide internship options to students in more majors.
 - i. Establish College-wide standards for internships; establish procedures to ensure consistency of oversight. Link internship experiences to Institutional Learning Goals.
 - ii. Extend required or recommended internships to additional majors and integrate the internship experience with coursework in the major in keeping with the Institutional Learning Goals.
 - iii. Strengthen partnerships with businesses and organizations to create a larger pool of internship sites that offer relevant, high quality learning experiences for our students while also offering the external organizations the benefit of working with Wilson students.
2. Substantially increase the number of courses in which service learning is a required element.
3. Substantially increase the number of courses in which a cross-cultural experience is a required element.
4. Develop and implement a plan that builds on work in place to integrate leadership development skills in appropriate academic programs, and also co-curricular programs, such as WCGA, Orchesis, *Billboard*, Theater, Honors Program, and First Year Seminar Peer Teachers.
 - i. Implement intentional leadership development opportunities in work-study and other on-campus work opportunities.
 - ii. Implement opportunities for formal mentoring of students in the CFW by alumnae.
5. Enhance and/or adopt a culminating experience in all major programs of study.

6. Increase the vibrancy of the campus environment, fostering a stronger intellectual and social environment, and enabling personal fulfillment.
 - i. Convene focus groups to consider and recommend a plan to reorganize Lenfest Commons to highlight the facility as a student center; implement changes based on available funding.
 - ii. Implement a Speakers Series that highlights Wilson's distinctions by bringing well-known scholars to invigorate the academic climate and intellectual discourse.
 - iii. Expand opportunities for students, faculty and staff to organize and participate in social, co-curricular, and academic events and activities.

Objective 3: In keeping with the vision of the Global Citizenship Initiative (see attached) and its potential for increasing enrollment and deepening student learning, establish an integrated, distinctive cross-cultural education program that fosters civic engagement here and abroad.

Strategies:

1. Raise an endowment to support the Global Citizenship Initiative.
2. The GCI steering committee will develop a long-range plan for implementation and assessment that sets priorities for implementing the GCI as the endowment builds, supports existing cross-cultural study courses and programs, builds on our new partnerships in South Korea, Japan and China and integrates the objectives articulated in the GCI vision statement.
 - i. Strengthen customized cross-cultural orientation and re-entry programs that address the potential challenges and elucidate the learning objectives of study in a different culture, within the U.S. and abroad.
 - ii. Ensure that all students, including students who are low-income or in the Women With Children or Adult Degree Programs have the appropriate support needed to participate in the cross-cultural opportunities offered through the GCI.
 - iii. Determine what program improvements, if any, are needed to fully support our international students.
 - iv. Foster more interaction among American and international students on the Wilson campus and in experiential learning projects.
 - v. Sponsor faculty/staff/student cross cultural study/travel groups and exchanges, engaging employees in keeping with the Global Citizenship Initiative.

Objective 4: Provide opportunities for faculty, administrators, and staff to participate in intensive ongoing professional development opportunities that assist them in serving students effectively.

Strategies:

1. Develop and implement a plan that meets these objectives for each group.
2. Develop individual professional development goals for all employees.
3. Develop a comprehensive plan to annually fund professional development and seek additional financial resources to implement the plan.

B. DISTINCTIVE, INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS

GOAL

To offer a distinctive array of high quality, innovative academic and co-curricular programs (graduate and undergraduate) that enable us to fulfill our mission and vision, respond to trends in student interest, feedback from current students, and the needs of the marketplace, and assist in achieving financial equilibrium.

Objective 1: Determine the ideal, mission-driven, strategic array of academic and co-curricular programs and program formats to offer, using institutional financial and administrative support.

Strategies:

1. Involve the faculty, with administrative support, in a discussion that defines the characteristics of a distinctive Wilson College curriculum and pedagogy.
2. Using a variety of data as well as proposed ideas for academic program growth from faculty, consider which existing academic programs have clear potential for enrollment expansion and recommend investing in those.
3. Members of the campus community will review research trend data and information from the situational analysis, other surveys, assessment information to determine which fields, such as healthcare, offer best growth opportunities.
4. Conduct a feasibility study of each proposed program.
5. Organize and implement a process, using carefully established criteria, to prioritize academic and co-curricular programs and reallocate resources for the purpose of advancing our mission and increasing enrollment. ¹ See also Goal C, Objective 1, Strategy 2, and Objective 2, Strategy 2.
6. Determine which new formats should be added, such as on-line, hybrid, and accelerated programs and implement them.
7. Stimulate and support program development through awards, such as Strategic Innovation Grants, summer research stipends, etc.
8. With the benefit of the new integrated marketing plan, showcase program innovation, demonstrate the accomplishments of students, faculty, and alumnae, and the college's mission, including an improved College website.

¹ The understanding is that the purpose of the project is to redirect energies and resources and not to reduce the size of the faculty and staff.

Objective 2: Establish additional partnerships and programs with undergraduate and graduate schools that build on Wilson's strengths.

Strategy:

Explore and build on opportunities for 3-2-and other types of agreements with partner universities in the U.S. and abroad. Use the Vermont Law School partnership model to develop articulation agreements with other institutions in and outside the United States

Objective 3: In keeping with the vision and objectives of the Global Citizenship Initiative, build on existing academic and co-curricular programs and develop new ones that leverage opportunities provided by our growing number of international partnerships.

Strategies:

1. Internationalize the curriculum by reformulating existing courses with an international focus where possible and provide incentives for faculty to create new courses and internationalize existing ones.
2. Strengthen the International Studies major and language offerings and work with international partner colleges or colleges in our region to leverage our resources.
3. Strengthen faculty, staff and student exchange agreements with partner colleges abroad and facilitate involvement of Wilson community members in the available opportunities.
4. Acquire and use technology in support of distance learning to connect Wilson to institutions and learning abroad and in other U.S. regions.
5. Develop an array of study abroad opportunities, beginning with distinctive models for short study abroad experiences (10 days to 2 weeks) in order to provide students-with a supportive experience as a first step toward longer study abroad opportunities. (The Costa Rica, Belize and UK trips are examples.)

Objective 4: Help students to connect to the college by strengthening programs that are integral to the mission. Programs involving sustainability, women, and the liberal arts are examples.

Strategies:

1. Capitalize on the combined strengths of the Fulton Center for Sustainable Living, the Brooks Complex for Science, Mathematics and Technology, and the Environmental Studies program to integrate sustainability across the curriculum. For example, using the strengths of the FCSL, develop courses/curricula to integrate sustainability into appropriate courses across the disciplines.
2. Form a campus task force for sustainability, including student members, to examine common themes identified in the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education's self-study, [the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment and Rating System} (STARS), to prioritize projects and recommendations, and to disseminate information regarding Wilson's sustainability initiatives to the campus and beyond.
3. Develop a plan to build on the Luce tour to South Korea/China by establishing a summer environmental program with Shanghai Jiao Tong, Ginling and Nanjing Agricultural.
4. Build on Wilson's status as a College for Women and recent branding research to highlight Wilson's distinctions and the accomplishments of students, faculty, staff, and alumnae.
5. Develop and implement a plan for the expanded vision and objectives for the Hankey Center as a center for study on the education of women and girls, building on Wilson's distinctions.
6. Develop and implement a plan for the use of the Archives as an academic resource for student research about historical documents and to teach students how to conduct oral histories to capture and preserve the College's history.
7. Continue to offer one conference and two programs annually through the Institute for Women in Science, Math and Technology (WISMaT) for women and girls from surrounding communities.
8. Highlight accomplishments of alumnae, staff, faculty and students in media, on College website, and in all Wilson publications.

C. STRONG, INTEGRATED PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT

GOAL: Complete a strong, integrated strategic plan that sets optimal enrollment numbers for undergraduate and graduate students (residential, commuters, on-line students), moves toward meeting the goals and priorities for a transforming educational experience and distinctive, innovative programs, as described above, builds on our mission and strengths, responds to the market, and creates a revenue base that enables Wilson to offer competitive compensation packages, maintain long-range financial equilibrium, continually assess progress.

Objective 1: Strengthen Wilson's financial operations and endowment, achieving financial equilibrium through increased enrollment, continued best practices in financial management, astute investment practices, strong integrated marketing, and vigorous fund-raising.

Strategies:

1. Establish revised long-term enrollment goals.
2. Identify and strengthen all existing administrative programs; determine if programs should be adjusted, reduced, eliminated, or resources re-allocated. *See also Goal C, Objective 2, Strategy 2, and Goal B, Objective 1, Strategies 3 and 5*
3. Identify all key strategic financial indicators and ensure that they are linked to resource allocation decisions.
4. Increase resources provided annually by fund raising to the Wilson Fund and endowment and actively managing investment decisions.
5. Meet the goals and objectives of Wilson's Climate Action Plan, in keeping with our membership in the American College and University Presidents' Climate Commitment program.

<http://acupcc.aashe.org/cap/429/?id=429>

6. Develop and implement a strong integrated marketing plan.

Objective 2: Ensure continuous, college-wide assessment of student learning, employee performance, academic and administrative programs, and overall institutional effectiveness.

Strategies:

1. Ensure a state-of-the-art administrative and staff evaluation process is conducted annually and that faculty evaluations are performed and reviewed per the faculty by-laws.
2. Conduct academic and administrative program reviews, covering all main administrative functions and academic programs on a five year rotating schedule. *See also Goal B., Objective 1, Strategy 5*
3. Establish and regularly update a comprehensive plan for data collection and assessment that informs strategic decision-making
4. Maintain an electronic database of such information that is available to for easy internal reference.

Objective 3: Strengthen technology as a means of increasing enrollment, operational efficiency and academic quality.

Strategies:

1. Meet the goal for establishing a technology endowment during the Leading With Confidence Campaign to provide additional technology resources.
2. Successfully complete the new integrated administrative systems evaluation process currently underway and establish an agile, expandable, reliable, and secure academic and administrative computing infrastructure.
3. Improve our technical computing infrastructure, addressing the data center, network, instructional technology, residential and administrative needs.
4. Strengthen information technology staffing, and train and hire student employees to supplement full time staffing.
5. Develop an improved replacement and renewal plan for technology equipment and software.

Objective 4: Improve infrastructure of the College through facility enhancement.

Strategies:

1. Reduce deferred maintenance to address deteriorating campus infrastructure and improve operating and energy efficiency.
2. Make needed improvements in our facilities to enhance the campus environment for our current and prospective students.
 - i. consider student recommendations for improvements in the residence halls and implement improvements as funds become available.
 - ii. develop a plan for improving athletic facilities, even before it is possible to consider constructing a new athletic and recreation center.
3. Provide accessible services to meet present and future student and employee needs.

V. STRATEGIC FINANCIAL PLAN: OVERVIEW/FIVE-YEAR BUDGET MODEL

The strategic financial plan has been constructed to allow formulation of a five-year plan in conjunction with the strategic plan to strengthen the overall financial position of the College, while providing funding for key initiatives within the plan. The financial plan utilizes historical trends in forecasting revenues and expenses, as well as strategic decisions about key financial drivers, such as use of unrestricted bequests, compensation expenses, endowment draw percentage, and tuition discount percentage. It is intended to be updated annually based on three sets of information: actual results of the current fiscal year; refinements in assumptions and plans; and desired changes in the key drivers.

The strategic plan contains a number of initiatives whose costs will need to be identified and quantified as additional planning and implementation timelines are refined by the responsible individual or group. For a number of these initiatives the funds will be derived from reallocations within the College's existing operating budget rather than new money. However, it is recognized that additional funding will be needed to fully advance the new strategic plan.

Therefore, the strategic financial plan has incorporated several sources of funding that will be available for these initiatives, even though the costs are not fully known at this time. These sources are:

- **Budgeted Funds for Strategic Planning:** The FY11 operating budget contains an expense line of \$75,000 specifically identified for strategic planning. This line is incremented by \$25,000 per year so that, by FY15, \$175,000 is being funded annually through this line, and the total funds available over the five years represented by the plan will have been \$625,000 cumulatively. The intention is to continue to augment this line by at least \$25,000 each year as the model rolls forward.
- **Strategic Initiative Grants:** For FY11 an additional \$30,000 is being made available through a competitive grant application process to fund initiatives that demonstrably contribute to advancing the goals articulated in the new strategic plan, with a particular emphasis on those that will have a positive impact on enrollment growth.
- **President's Discretionary Funds:** By Board policy, all unrestricted bequests that are received by the College that fall between \$25,000 and \$199,999 are made available to the President's Discretionary Fund in the year following their receipt. The policy stipulates that the purpose of these funds is to fund strategic initiatives. The unspent portion of these funds rolls forward and is available in future years, allowing amounts to accumulate and fund larger strategic projects if desired.
- **Undesignated Net Surplus:** The strategic financial plan purposely leaves a portion of the annual net surplus that is generated as undesignated with the intention that it would be available for the purposes that management and the Board believe most appropriate for the College. In most cases, it is believed that this will be for the purposes detailed in the strategic plan. The amount projected to be undesignated continues to increase each year of the plan from approximately \$20,000 in FY11 to just under \$500,000 in FY15.
- **Comprehensive Campaign Funding:** In addition to the funds shown within the strategic financial plan, some initiatives outlined in the new strategic plan will be funded through gifts made to the current Wilson Campaign - *Leading with Confidence*. We are highly likely to surpass the campaign goal of \$45 million, since – with a year to go – we've already raised over

\$43 million, including more than the \$25 million goal for the Harry R. Brooks Complex for Science, Mathematics and Technology. Other priorities to be funded from the Campaign proceeds include: the Global Citizenship Initiative; an endowment for faculty, staff and technology, and an increased Wilson Annual Fund.