



**MOUNT IDA
COLLEGE**

**Setting the Course:
A Plan for the Future of Mount Ida College
June 2013**

“... a plan that builds from areas of strength, promise, and opportunity to guide the future of the College.”

Executive Summary

More than ever, the potential for a person to succeed and prosper is determined by his or her ability to reason, communicate, collaborate, and adapt effectively in an ever-changing and increasingly global environment. For those who attend Mount Ida College, the educational experience should be truly transformative, preparing each graduate for work and providing an education for life.

The College will achieve this vision by focusing on a small number of initiatives that will clearly position it *vis-à-vis* the higher education marketplace and allow it to achieve measurable progress. The College will pursue four Strategic Initiatives over the next three years:

- **STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 1: We shall deliver career-relevant, experiential programs integrated with a foundation in communication, analytic and critical thinking skills**
- **STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 2: We shall focus on rigorous assessment of student learning and institutional outcomes**
- **STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 3: We shall be a diverse, engaged community focused on student success**
- **STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 4: We shall provide a sustainable campus environment that fosters engagement and pride**

These four strategic initiatives will guide the direction over the next three years to build a strong and sustainable future. These initiatives will also set the stage for growth and development over the next decade.

Overview of the Planning Process

In September 2012, the College's new President, Barry Brown, initiated a comprehensive strategic planning process in order to set a clear roadmap for the College's future. He emphasized that the plan must take into account the following drivers:

- Our institutional strength and distinctiveness
- Demographic and social changes
- Economic pressure
- Technology
- Competition
- Government and accreditation oversight

President Brown directed that the planning process be guided by the following principles:

- Diversity and comprehensiveness: all areas, all stakeholders
- Transparent, open and collaborative
- Respectful of views of all members of the community with a commitment to continue the core values of collaboration and commitment after the planning is concluded
- Objective, externally aware and data-driven decision making

- Efficient and effective, expedited but not hasty
- Bias for fewer, high-impact, actionable and integrated strategies versus many diffuse ones
- Student-centered and supportive of faculty
- Organization, culture, resource allocation and metrics will be core components

Context for the Plan

The strategic planning process was informed by external consultant analysis and extensive internal discussions to assess the viability and growth potential of academic programs. Mount Ida College, with its focus on professional preparation combined with a foundation in 21st century skills, currently offers a number of programs that are both attractive to prospective students and lead to careers that are projected to be in-demand through the decade. Continuing to offer programs related to industry trends and the needs of the economy will require the College to reassess its student market and its range of program offerings.

Declining college-age enrollments mean stronger competition

While demand for a college-educated workforce is expected to increase, there will be a decline in the number of traditional college-age students in Massachusetts and the entire Northeast. This will have a significant impact on local colleges since over 80% of students tend to enroll in a college in their home state or no more than one state away. Thus, Mount Ida will be in fierce competition with other New England colleges for a dwindling prospect pool. The College must encourage and assist this generation of college students not only to attend college, but also to attain their degrees. The data is consistent in demonstrating the lifetime value of a baccalaureate degree not in absolute economic terms, but in terms of improving the role of the graduate as a learned and informed member of the community.

Colleges will need to address a more diverse college population

In coming years, the profile of prospective students will be weighted heavily toward those who have different educational aspirations and different expectations of what a college education should provide; are more employment-oriented, and interested in majors that reflect their career goals; and are less *prepared* academically, with many coming from first-generation households in which English is a second language. At the same time, the number and percentage of minorities (particularly Latinos) and immigrants within the overall population is expected to increase. Although these groups typically have had historically lower levels of higher education attainment, recent trends show that many individuals, particularly minorities, often continue to obtain additional education and training over time as they age.

Adult and international students will increase

College enrollments in recent years have been impacted by more adult students attending undergraduate programs and more international students coming to the U.S. These trends are projected to continue. Although China has been the big driver of international students for several years, India, Vietnam, Turkey, Indonesia, and Brazil are among the countries that will likely drive *new* growth in international students in the U.S.

Shifting workforce needs and employment outlooks will require different programs

In the next several years, there is projected to be a mismatch between the skill set among the population and the needs of employers. The reduced role of the manufacturing sector, the increased importance of the professional service and knowledge sectors, advancements in

technology, and the spread of globalization are driving this change. Employers will need workers with more education and training at the Associate's or certificate level. The region is expected to see an increased demand from industry for workers at this skill level and demand for these types of degrees and programs.

At all skill levels, industries and occupations related to healthcare, personal care and social assistance, finance and insurance, professional, technical and scientific services and educational services are projected to have the fastest job growth between 2010 and 2020 across the U.S. Of the 20 fastest growing occupations in the economy, several are related to healthcare.

Current programs that can expect strong demand and present strong opportunities for Mount Ida College to enroll students, particularly locally, include veterinary technology, dental hygiene, funeral service, sport management and game art. A number of other programs such as criminal justice and applied forensic science should expect to see solid demand as well. A few programs will face challenges in fostering enrollment growth in areas where heavy competition as well as job opportunities are short of the number of program graduates, such as in some fields of design. Despite these challenges, niche programs offering specialization may drive increased interest from prospects, enabling growth within areas including web design (within the graphic design program), sustainable design (within the interior design program), and meeting and event planning.

While the location of Mount Ida College, in a suburban setting close to Boston, is a competitive advantage, the high concentration of higher education institutions in the area in the region translates into fierce competition for students. For Mount Ida College to move to the top of its competitive set, it will require deliberate, well-crafted strategic planning, and strong leadership.

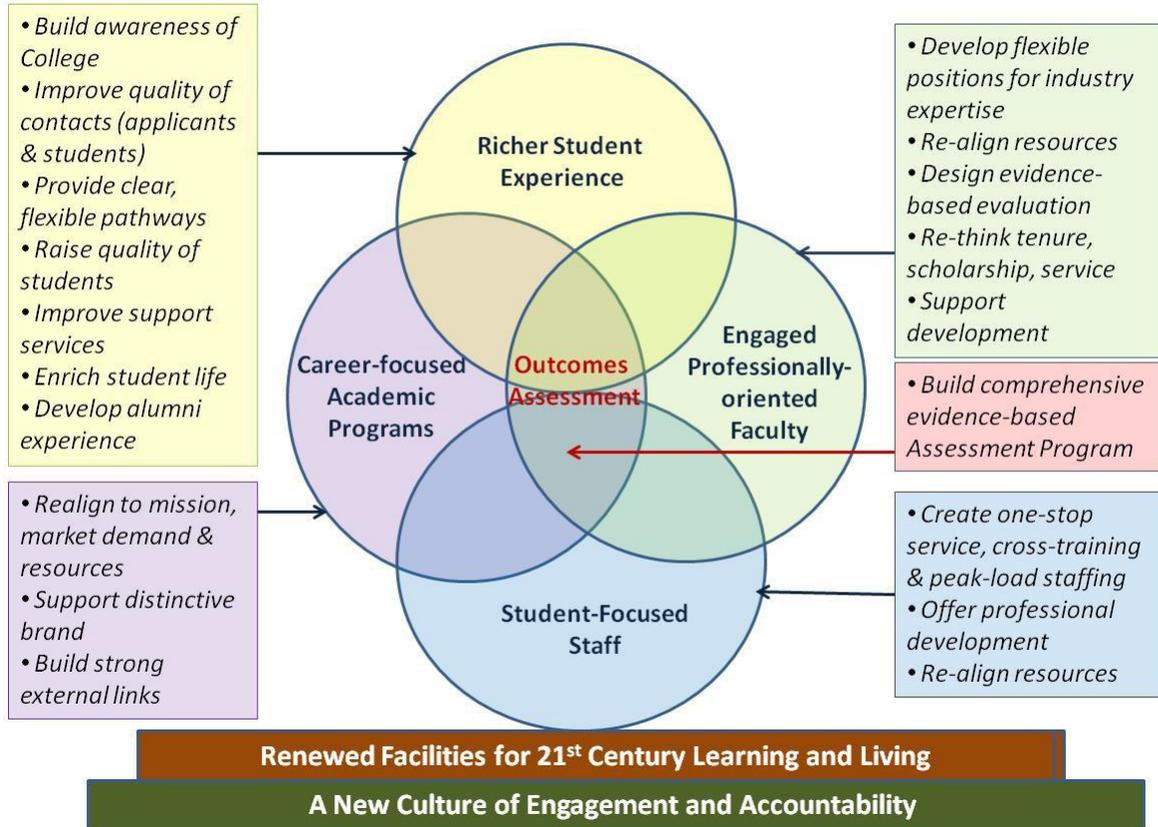
Key Findings

The Strategic Planning Committee reviewed external and internal research to identify key issues and findings as the basis for developing the College's Strategic Plan. The following issues were identified:

- The College must heighten its competitive differentiation by sharpening its focus on career-relevant academic programs and its success in graduate job placement.
- The College needs to re-align its faculty resources in line with its career-relevant teaching mission and provide greater opportunities for faculty development and engagement at the College.
- The College should target a population that is both academically and financially able to progress and succeed at the College.
- The College shall provide a richer student experience and more extensive programming for students on and off campus, particularly with respect to community engagement.
- The College should improve student support services to increase student satisfaction.
- The College must renew its physical facilities to support 21st-century models of learning and living.
- The College needs to increase its financial resources from traditional donors, corporate and foundation sources if it is to provide quality education to its students.
- The College must identify and implement a comprehensive assessment program across all areas that focuses on outcomes and supports professional development as well as individual, program and departmental accountability.

The chart below summarizes the issues and needs that were derived from analysis of the external and internal research.

Mount Ida College – Key Strategic Issues Summary from Research Findings



Vision and Mission

The Committee examined the College's current vision and mission at the beginning of the planning process and at key points throughout. At each point, the Committee re-affirmed the College's fundamental identity and mission as a teaching institution focused on preparing students for career success and lifelong learning.

Vision for Mount Ida College

Our vision centers on the following:

- Distinctive, career-centered programs
- Challenging and supportive educational environment
- Traditional residential college experience
- Transformative experiential education
- High-functioning learning organization

Mission of Mount Ida College

Mount Ida College blends career-relevant education with broad-based learning in the arts, sciences and humanities to prepare students to succeed in a changing world.

Key Strategic Initiatives

The College's strategic plan addresses four major areas of the institution: its people, its programs, its campus environment, and the quality and effectiveness of all of its activities. Each initiative contains a small number of actionable goals and specific action steps that will inform the College's annual planning.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 1: We shall deliver career-relevant, experiential programs integrated with a foundation in communication, analytic and critical thinking skills

The College's distinction will be based on its strength in educating students for successful careers and lives through academic programs that provide applied, experiential learning opportunities that reflect real-world skills and environments.

Goal 1: We shall focus on and support high quality and financially viable career-focused degree and certificate programs that leverage the College's market position.

Action Steps:

- Review all current academic programs to ensure each aligns with the College's mission, resources, areas of strength and competitive position and phase out any program that does not.
- Sharpen career focus of all programs by mapping clear professional pathways, incorporating experiential learning opportunities (including internships) and increasing external links to industry and community.
- Identify and pursue new career-focused degree and certificate programs to create competitive advantage, including Associate's degrees, degree completion, competency-based and graduate options.
- Develop plans for accelerated programs that allow students to complete degrees with less time and expense.

Goal 2: We shall provide strong foundational skills in communication, analytic and critical thinking skills through a new First-Year curriculum and revision of the All-College Curriculum.

Action Steps:

- Design and launch a first-year Core Curriculum to build foundational skills.
- Review and redesign as needed a sequence of courses that builds students' critical thinking, oral and written communication, and analytic skills.

Goal 3: We shall develop a vibrant learning environment both in and outside of the classroom.

Action Steps:

- Review organizational structures to optimize effective collaboration and effectiveness of faculty and students.
- Expand and reinvigorate the range, level and quality of student, faculty and staff participation in academic, athletic, cultural and social events and activities.
- Develop programming that celebrates a broader understanding of diversity.
- Expand the number of clubs and organizations that engage students with faculty and staff, and provide opportunities for creative expression.
- Encourage student participation in community engagement and service learning opportunities with a view to attaining recognition by national organizations for the benefit of our students.

Goal 4: We shall apply pedagogy and technology to prepare students for the workplace.

Action Steps:

- Review and update each academic program as necessary , implementing an internship or practicum as appropriate.
- Establish a Center for Curriculum Innovation and Teaching Effectiveness to support faculty and program efforts to increase use of technology in teaching and explore innovative delivery models.
- Align the Career Center with academic programs to connect learning outcomes to the workplace.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 2: We shall focus on rigorous assessment of student learning and institutional outcomes

The College will transform its structure, programs, policies and systems to ensure that measurable quality, continuous improvement and accountability for performance become central to all College operations, with a particular emphasis on the achievement of student learning as compared to appropriate benchmark institutions.

Goal 1: We shall review and revise all governance structures to reflect best practices and support institutional priorities.

Action Steps:

- Review and assess Board of Trustees roles and responsibilities to align with the College's mission and goals.

- Implement a faculty governance structure that fosters appropriate and substantive participation in decision-making related to its areas of responsibility.
- Review college committee structure and reconstitute a smaller number where possible.

Goal 2: We shall ensure that there is a consistent student learning assessment program in all academic programs.

Action Steps:

- Review to ensure that all academic programs and courses have clear and measurable learning outcomes and methods for assessing them and implement them where they are lacking.
- Systematize the review of assessment data to improve teaching and learning.
- Incorporate criteria pertaining to student learning assessment into annual faculty performance evaluations, Annual Reports, Five-year Program Reviews and Accreditation Reports.

Goal 3: We shall develop policies and practices that foster a culture of accountability, collaboration and excellence.

Action Steps:

- Revise the Faculty, Staff and Student Handbooks to ensure their compatibility with the mission and priorities of the College.
- Implement integrated planning and goal setting at the College, department, unit and individual levels and a system to assess performance against outcomes and objectives.
- Revise faculty and staff annual performance evaluations to incorporate achievement against goals, outcomes and standards.
- Develop manager training, share information, and promote and support collaboration across divisions.
- Define and measure customer service standards across all units of the College.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 3: We shall be a diverse, engaged community focused on student success

Mount Ida will continue to build on its heritage of providing an engaging community environment in which students can become the best versions of themselves, both academically and personally, in a challenging and supportive learning environment that fosters persistence and success.

Goal 1: We shall recruit a diverse student body that demonstrates high potential to persist and to graduate prepared for success.

Action Steps:

- Strengthen the College's brand among key audiences.
- Develop the strategy, staff, and systems to recruit a high quality and diverse student population.
- Improve the quality of contacts with applicants and students.
- Forge strategic partnerships with feeder high schools, community colleges, and international organizations.
- Tie merit aid closely to student performance.
- Redesign student orientation program.

Goal 2: We shall develop a comprehensive retention program that will produce a measurable and meaningful improvement in retention and graduation rates.

Action Steps:

- Designate authority and responsibility for retention goals and related initiatives, oversight, monitoring and reporting.
- Identify and develop specific steps to address key student risk patterns and behaviors.
- Create proactive student advising, monitoring and early warning systems to improve student performance and retention.
- Tie financial aid to academic performance and good citizenship.
- Evaluate and revise the curricular and co-curricular structure and programs to foster student engagement in college life.
- Create a one-stop model for student services.

Goal 3: We shall have a diverse faculty focused on teaching excellence and professional currency.

Action Steps:

- Develop and put in place multiple types of faculty appointments
- Recruit faculty that reflect diversity of our student population.
- Design an orientation for new and adjunct faculty that communicates performance standards and expectations for student engagement.
- Redesign the annual performance and compensation structure to provide accountability and incentives for faculty at all stages of their careers and benchmark against peer institutions.
- Revise tenure and promotion system to reflect the College's emphasis on teaching effectiveness, student engagement and career-relevance and professional currency.
- Align faculty professional development to support institutional priorities.

Goal 4: We shall recruit and retain high-performing, student-focused staff.

Action Steps:

- Recruit staff that reflect the diversity of our student population.
- Design an orientation and continuing education programs that communicate performance standards and expectations for student engagement.
- Cross-train staff in key service areas to problem solve outside of immediate areas of responsibility.
- Benchmark performance and compensation systems against peer institutions.
- Revise annual performance evaluation system to provide accountability and incentives.
- Align professional development to support institutional priorities.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 4: We shall provide a sustainable campus environment that fosters engagement and pride

The College will enhance its physical environment to better suit the needs of student living and learning, provide a robust technology infrastructure, increase environmental sustainability, and ensure fiscal strength to maintain and grow the institution.

Goal 1: We shall develop a College Master Plan that benchmarks against best practices and provides an esthetically pleasing and unified residential campus environment.

Action Steps:

- Update campus deferred maintenance and renovation plan.
- Improve student housing, dining and activities spaces and fitness and wellness facilities.
- Renovate and expand library, classroom and laboratory spaces.

Goal 2: We shall evaluate current technology resources, and develop and implement a comprehensive technology plan consistent with best practices.

Action Steps:

- Develop and implement a plan to train and support faculty and staff to use technology.
- Implement campus Wi-Fi network.
- Standardize learning technologies and equip all learning spaces.
- Provide flexible and integrated technology options for network access and printing across campus.

Goal 3: We shall increase our financial strength and flexibility.

Action Steps:

- Identify opportunities for operational efficiencies and cost-savings.
- Secure appropriate long-term financing for campus improvements.
- Analyze and adjust pricing and discount rates to remain competitive.
- Cultivate corporate and foundation support and leadership gifts.

Goal 4: We shall develop a plan to promote environmental sustainability.

Action Steps:

- Develop a plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Collaborate with local communities to develop and promote green practices.

Goal 5: We shall cultivate a sense of pride and attachment to the College by key stakeholders.

Action Steps:

- Establish customs and traditions that foster connection to the College.
- Create incentives and rewards for faculty and staff to become involved in co-curricular life of students.
- Increase alumni and parent engagement and giving.

Strategic Plan Outcomes

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 1: We shall deliver career-relevant, experiential programs integrated with a foundation in communication, analytic and critical thinking skills

- Be well known for its strong professional programs and effective foundational curriculum.
- Increasingly become a first choice college for students looking for a career-based education.
- Maintain or improve its strong job placement rate for graduates in jobs requiring a college degree within one year of graduation.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 2: We shall focus on rigorous assessment of student learning and institutional outcomes

- Demonstrate evidence of improvement in student learning outcomes resulting from regular review of academic programs.
- Complete the revision of the All College Curriculum based on assessment of student learning outcomes.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 3: We shall be a diverse, engaged community focused on student success

- Achieve a retention rate equal to or higher than schools of its type.
- Increase six-year graduation rate to be equal to or higher than schools of its type.
- Increase faculty and staff diversity.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 4: We shall provide a sustainable campus environment that fosters engagement and pride

- Grow enrollment to 1500 students.
- Increase operating surplus each year.
- Continue efforts to restore and improve physical facilities.
- Increase support from corporations and foundations.
- Increase alumni participation and giving each year.