



Bucknell

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MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 8, 2007

TO: The Faculty Council,
c/o Professor Marty Ligare, Chair of the Faculty

and

The Committee on Instruction,
c/o Professor Katharina Vollmayr-Lee, Chair

FROM: Deans Jim Orbison and Chris Zappe,
Co-Chairs, Academic Planning Group

SUBJECT: Bucknell University Strategic Academic Vision

Colleagues, in accordance with its charge received from the Faculty and University Councils this past summer, the Academic Planning Group is pleased to transmit to you the attached Bucknell University Strategic Academic Vision for your review and comment. The Academic Planning Group sought to develop an academic vision that is both comprehensive and robust, incorporating the best elements of a Bucknell University academic experience with a coherent vision for the future that will incorporate institutional learning (educational) goals currently being defined by the Learning Goals group constituted by the Committee on Assessment within the Committee on Instruction.

The Academic Planning Group would be pleased to assist you in any way that you deem appropriate, and will plan to disseminate the Strategic Academic Vision to the university faculty later this fall semester.

Bucknell University Strategic Academic Vision

October 8, 2007

Bucknell University Mission Statement

Bucknell is a unique national university where liberal arts and professional programs complement each other. Bucknell educates men and women for a lifetime of critical thinking and strong leadership characterized by continued intellectual exploration, creativity, and imagination. A Bucknell education enables students to interact daily with faculty who exemplify a passion for learning and a dedication to teaching and scholarship. Bucknell fosters a residential, co-curricular environment in which students develop intellectual maturity, personal conviction and strength of character, informed by a deep understanding of different cultures and diverse perspectives. Bucknell seeks to educate our students to serve the common good and to promote justice in ways sensitive to the moral and ethical dimensions of life.

The Bucknell University Strategic Academic Vision, founded upon the Mission Statement, serves an essential role in defining the broad educational purposes of our academic programs and informing their evolution. This complete academic vision consists of four elements: an academic vision statement, an articulation of that statement, a description of the means by which the academic vision is achieved, and a description of the processes used to ascertain, or assess, achievement of that vision.

Academic Vision Statement

Bucknell has long been dedicated to providing outstanding educational opportunities to a predominantly undergraduate student body of great potential. The institution's ***academic vision statement***, arising appropriately from the university vision statement, is:

To provide students with the premier undergraduate experience in American higher education, founded upon the finest educational experience of contemporary and enduring value.

The University must strive to prepare its students for a future of rapid change and challenge, a future that cannot be fully anticipated. A 2007 report from the National Leadership Council for Liberal Education & America's Promise¹ states that "the ground has shifted for Americans in virtually every important sphere of life – economic, global, cross-cultural, environmental, civic. The world is being dramatically reshaped by scientific and technological innovations, global interdependence, cross-cultural encounters and changes in the balance of economic and political power." Our central focus must be on the values, knowledge, and skills necessary to meet these future challenges.

¹*College Learning for the New Global Century*, The National Leadership Council for Liberal Education & America's Promise, Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2007.

Bucknell is an institution in which effective teaching by dedicated, highly qualified faculty is the expectation and the norm. The professoriate cares about their students, as both students and individuals, and interacts frequently with them both within and outside of the classroom. Students can explore a wide range of educational experiences through both academic and co-curricular offerings. Bucknell also possesses experienced and dedicated academic affairs and student affairs professionals who deliver excellent co-curricular, extra-curricular and residential life opportunities that further enhance the educational experience of the students. It is within this context that an education of both immediate and enduring value can be achieved.

Articulation of the Academic Vision

For the academic vision statement to be meaningful, it must be articulated not simply through a series of inputs to and processes within the educational enterprise such as degree programs, curricula, and other supporting educational opportunities, but through a description of the broad educational goals that together define the phrase “the finest educational experience of contemporary and enduring value.” Hence, definition of the academic vision statement is to be found in the answers to the following question:

“What knowledge, capacities, and attributes should Bucknell University graduates possess that will sustain and distinguish them in a future of heightened challenge and uncertainty?”

This question addresses, at its core, the development of a set of institutional educational (learning) goals consistent with Bucknell University’s Mission Statement that will ensure our students have the opportunity to develop a sophisticated educational foundation of both contemporary and enduring value. The last comprehensive articulation of Bucknell’s institutional educational goals is found in the document “*Foundations for the Future: A Strategic Plan for Bucknell*,” adopted in 1991. Since that time, the world economic, political, social, and technological environment has changed, and the body of knowledge in all areas continues to expand. It is clear that a new set of educational goals is warranted.

Bucknell University Educational Goals:

Bucknell University’s students will:

Learn and integrate in-depth disciplinary knowledge obtained through study in the major with knowledge and multiple perspectives gained through broadening educational experiences as demonstrated through application to new settings and complex problems.

Demonstrate intercultural competency, working and living constructively with others having a range of backgrounds, interests, abilities, perspectives, and perceptions.

Engage meaningfully in the significant challenges which may influence humankind and the natural world.

Learn and demonstrate the principles and importance of social responsibility.

Engage in personal reflection and self-assessment, and develop the capacities necessary for life-long learning.

Engage in ethical reasoning and action, and moral discernment.

Engage in creative thought and expression.

Access, assemble, analyze, and evaluate information from multiple sources in critical thinking, problem solving, and interpretation.

Articulate ideas meaningfully and effectively in oral and written form, and in other media as appropriate.

Develop an understanding of science, and how its methods of inquiry can address contemporary and enduring questions.

Understand and apply quantitative reasoning to solve problems and to evaluate quantitative information and arguments.

The educational goals presented above are responsive to this institution's fundamental mission to prepare its students to become contributing members of our society and humankind, to enable them to succeed in a future that will offer opportunity but few assurances. These learning goals should be supported and further defined by specific sets of learning goals and objectives for each college and academic discipline, for the general education programs, and within the student affairs/residential life division.

Achieving the Academic Vision

“How will Bucknell University provide its students with the knowledge, capacities, and attributes they will need in ways that are demonstrable, enduring, and distinctive?”

It is in the answer to this question that many of this institution's strengths and much of its distinctiveness are to be found. Bucknell University has long championed, and demonstrably acted upon, a commitment to undergraduate education and to the needs of the whole student. It is only through this commitment, stated unequivocally by the University Vision Statement and manifested in every facet of the university, that robust educational quality can be assured, sustained, and advanced.

The Bucknell University faculty and staff are dedicated to the students and the university, and are uniformly of high quality. Our students are very talented, curious, and energetic with great potential, enabling the institution to implement complex and sophisticated

educational programs in which students achieve high levels of success. Bucknell University also enjoys a financial foundation that makes possible substantial investments focused on educational quality, as well as fostering and sustaining a wide range of creative learning opportunities at the undergraduate level that are distinctive and of great value.

Critical practices, priorities, and opportunities necessary to achieve the institutional learning goals and to place Bucknell in a position of distinction in higher education include:

- Outstanding faculty who are dedicated to instructional and educational excellence and to the intellectual and personal growth of students, and institutional support and rewards for that excellence;
- Faculty who are experts in their fields and are actively engaged in scholarship throughout their careers ;
- Opportunities for students to interact closely and work directly with faculty, opportunities for student participation in research and independent study, and a faculty who offer those opportunities frequently, consistently, and effectively;
- Disciplinary curricula that are appropriately challenging and offer opportunities for study in greater depth through a set of elective courses and the honors program;
- The presence of strong professional degree programs that embrace the liberal arts;
- Facilities and programs that effectively support student learning both in and outside of class;
- Opportunities for interdisciplinary study, integrating information from multiple disciplines through both coursework and programs;
- Opportunities for students to increase their understanding of different cultures through effective study-abroad and on-campus educational experiences.
- A range of educational enrichment opportunities, that will increasingly result from collaborative efforts between faculty and student affairs personnel, including but not limited to:
 - a wide range of cultural and fine arts performances,
 - outside speakers who bring to campus perspectives beyond academia,
 - opportunities for off-campus learning through field study, field trips, internships, and externships,
 - service-learning and civic-engagement opportunities integrated into coursework and as co-curricular offerings, and

- student participation in professional societies, national conferences, meetings, and competitions.
- Integrated academic and residential life programs, currently manifested through the residential college program but with significant potential for growth in many other facets.

Assessing Achievement of the Academic Vision

To ensure that the academic vision is being achieved, and to further ensure the academic vision itself is responsive to needed change over time, the definition and implementation of systematic assessment processes is required. Academic assessment seeks to answer fundamental questions about the achievement of student learning:

- **To what degree are students *achieving the educational goals that we have established*?**
The answers to this question allow us to refine our programs and curricula, and should be used in setting priorities for the support of existing programs as well as in the identification of new initiatives. Both direct and indirect assessment methods will be employed, and assessment will take place at many levels, but assessment at the course and programmatic levels will be of special value and importance.
- **Are we demonstrating *improvement over time in the degree to which our students achieve these educational goals*?**
This question entails a commitment to continuous improvement and to the longitudinal tracking of student achievement over time.
- **Does the performance and achievement of our students *compare favorably to appropriate peer institutions*?**
This question entails a commitment to appropriate benchmarking and the acquisition of normative data.
- **Does the performance of our students meet or exceed external standards and public expectations?**
While the expectations for higher education are many and varied, the requirements of our regional and specialized accrediting agencies may be regarded as a proxy for public expectations.
- **Does our academic vision, and the student learning goals contained within it, remain forward-looking and responsive to the educational needs of a changing world society?**
The academic vision is not intended to be static; it must respond dynamically to changing external conditions and requirements for an education that will continue to provide enduring value for students. This academic vision and institutional

learning goals (and corresponding sets of learning goals at the level of the colleges and the degree programs.) must be re-evaluated at intervals by the faculty and academic leadership, linked with regular environmental scanning practices of the University, and will employ information from multiple sources that will include students, faculty, staff, employers, alumni and parents.