

STANDARD ONE MISSION AND PURPOSE

Overview

This section summarizes the advancement of the college community's interpretation and expression of the Wheaton College mission since the 1999 reaccreditation process. It includes a description of the process by which the community arrived at this evolving sense of mission and how this understanding has shaped the institution's activities and objectives.

Description

Wheaton defines itself through a set of core values that are rooted in its founding, even as the enactment of these principles evolves to meet the changing needs of our students and of our global society. The college's historic ideals begin with our belief in the power of a rigorous liberal arts education as the best foundation for a lifetime of learning and growth. A commitment to providing an individualized and comprehensive education in which students are challenged to achieve their full academic potential as well as nurtured in their personal development is a second, and critical, foundation of Wheaton's ethos. The college community's intensely personal nature goes well beyond the classroom, fueling the unique and creative collaborations that have animated Wheaton throughout its history. A commitment to equality, and an appreciation of the learning that can happen through the respectful consideration of multiple perspectives, has long been a dominant part of the campus culture. Finally, Wheaton has a long record of innovation—a willingness to be creative in meeting the needs of its students. Despite changing expressions of these values, they have been a constant throughout the college's history.

The pace of institutional change accelerated greatly following our 1999 NEASC reaccreditation. The myriad accomplishments that have been powered by Wheaton's completion of its transition to coeducation—the achievement of financial equilibrium, the strength of student and faculty recruiting, and vigorous fundraising efforts, to name just a few—account for the rapidity of this change. These factors enabled the college to expand programs and services strategically, in order to enhance the institution's strengths. In addition, the past decade saw the development and implementation of a pioneering new curriculum, a presidential transition and the recruitment of several college officers. Each of these events has inspired community-wide reflection on the college's mission and its vision and goals. In addition, the college engaged in two cycles of strategic planning initiatives that elicited broad-based participation from the entire college community.

The first strategic planning process undertaken during the past decade was led by President Dale Rogers Marshall shortly before she announced her retirement. Standing committees across the campus were charged with rethinking and sharpening the college's strategic direction, addressing enhancement of academic life, diversity on campus, student retention and satisfaction, the role of technology, and with developing financial plans to support the community's objectives.

The outcome of this work, *Wheaton 2005: Connections to the Future*, was designed to position the college to build on the success of the Campaign for Wheaton, which concluded in July 2000. President Marshall also intended for the process to provide a foundation from which a new president could build. The plan reaffirmed the mission statement adopted by the Board of Trustees in February 1994. This mission statement attempted to present an accurate and concise statement of Wheaton's character in its new iteration as a co-educational liberal arts college. Notably, it referenced the college's core values: personalized education, rigorous liberal arts study, appreciation of diverse perspectives and commitment to equality.

The Mission of Wheaton College

The mission of Wheaton College is to provide an excellent liberal arts education in a small, residential coeducational learning community, enabling students to understand and participate in shaping the multicultural interdependent world of which they are a part. Collaborations with faculty and staff challenge and transform students into lifelong learners with skills to become problem solvers committed to justice and the global community. Wheaton teaches women and men to live and work as equal partners by linking learning, work and service in a community which values equally the contributions of women and men.

The Wheaton community embarked on a second round of strategic planning under its new president in 2004. President Ronald A. Crutcher convened a group of faculty, students, staff and alumnae/i to work with him during his first year on campus. The President's Coordinating Council met with the president bimonthly and joined the President's Council for two retreats during that first year. The Board of Trustees also participated in the process through formal discussions of the Committee as a Whole, and through conversations among the college officers and the board's Executive Committee.

This planning process resulted in the strategic plan, *Wheaton 2014: Transforming Lives to Change the World*. The plan reaffirmed the overall values, traditions and mission of the college. The final document articulated the college's values under three broad themes: distinctive community, high standards and innovative spirit. In addition, the college's mission was sharpened and combined with a vision statement that formalized the community's aspirations for the year of its 180th anniversary, 2014.

The Mission of Wheaton College

Wheaton College provides a transformative liberal arts education to intellectually curious students in a collaborative, academically vibrant residential community that values a diverse world.

Vision 2014

Wheaton College will develop global citizens prepared to lead in a complex world. Its transformative learning environment prepares students to live a purposeful life, be engaged in their communities, be scientifically and technologically literate, and act effectively to promote change.

Appraisal and Projection

The mission and vision are clearly understood by trustees, faculty, students, staff, administration and alumnae/i. The college's mission and vision statements appear in the college catalog, in other publications and on the college's web site. The web pages that served as resources during the planning process, linked from the president's website, include an executive summary of the strategic plan and the college's values (<http://wheatoncollege.edu/planning/>). The site also includes a set of milestones for 2014, which were developed as part of the strategic plan. These milestones are linked to the goals and objectives of the strategic plan, and progress toward achieving them is monitored on a yearly basis. While there are, to be sure, differing opinions about how best to achieve our mission and vision, the majority of the members of the community understand that Wheaton is building on historic strengths as it progresses toward the future. Inscribed on the Wheaton College seal are the words: "That they may have life and have it abundantly." The Wheaton mission and vision provide a framework for preparing students for "abundant" lives of consequence and purpose in the 21st century.