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Planning at Bates, 02-25-2008

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IV. Strengthening the Bates Community

The challenge for Working Group Four, given the breadth and complexity of our theme, is to identify a limited number of key concerns, to gather information and input, and to find ways to engage these issues creatively. Two key considerations quickly emerged in our discussions. First, Bates is

Working Group 4: Strengthening the Bates Community

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Mira David '09
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Elaine Dumont, Den Supervisor
Jen Koviach-Cote, Associate Professor of Chemistry
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Mary Main, Director of Human Resources
Sarah Potter '77, Bookstore Director & Contract Officer
James Reese, Associate Dean of Students
David Scobey, Director, Harvard Center for Community Partnerships
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a "community of communities," that is, the College is an internally diverse and complex network of sub-communities. Second, community should be understood as an ongoing activity of "community making" that fosters contact and connection at multiple levels and in many directions.

In light of these guiding ideas, we are grappling with several central questions.

What values and shared commitments help to define Bates as a community?

How, and among whom, does community form or fail to form at Bates? Can we identify an agenda of problems and challenges that must be addressed in building community?

What can be done to foster a campus climate in which community building (within and across our diverse sub-communities) is a broad-based and intentional part of our life together?

How does our community building engage Lewiston-Auburn and the wider social contexts to which we belong?

What values and shared commitments help to define Bates as a community?

It is essential to hear from a broad cross section of the Bates community on each of these matters, and we invite and welcome your comments. Questions about Bates values, identity, and community cut across the Working Group themes, and we anticipate seeking ways to integrate the ideas that emerge from all four strands of discussion.

STEERING GROUP

Terry Beckmann, Vice President for Finance & Administration and Treasurer
Pam Baker '70, Helen A. Papaioanou Professor of Biology and Director of Faculty Research and Scholarship
Dave Chirayath, Research Analyst in Advancement
(Selected by the Bates College Staff Association)
Matt Cote, Associate Professor of Chemistry
Meg Creedon '08
Sylvia Federico, Assistant Professor of English
(Member of the President's Institutional Planning and Advisory Committee)
Tedd Goundie, Dean of Students
Elaine Hansen, President
Ben Hester '10
(Selected by Bates College Student Government)

Leslie Hill, Associate Professor of Politics and Special Assistant to the President
Bill Hiss '66, Vice President for External Affairs
Bev Johnson, Associate Professor of Geology
(Member of the President's Institutional Planning and Advisory Committee)
Kevin McHugh, Director of Athletics
(Member of President's Council)
Wylie Mitchell, Dean of Admissions
Helen Regan, Visiting Professor of Education
Jill Reich, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of the Faculty
Tom Tracy, Phillips Professor of Religion
Gene Wiemers, Vice President for Information and Library Services and Librarian

Dear Colleagues,

Recently I attended a seminar at Harvard for presidents of colleges and universities. One of the instructors was Jim Honan, who related a new book by Atul Gawande to his own ideas about how to improve institutions of higher education. In *Better: A Surgeon's Notes on Performance*, Gawande identifies three components of improved performance—"diligence," "doing right," and "ingenuity." As Honan spoke, I found myself thinking of the essential aims and methods of our planning work.

As you may know, our planning is going forward now through the intense efforts of four working groups, and this issue contains reports by Helen Regan, Matt Cote, Pam Baker, and Tom Tracy, who chair the groups. In addition to those reports, you will find an essay by Margaret Imber, member of the Campus Facilities Master Planning Steering Committee, reflecting on the connection she too sees between diligence—as illuminated for Margaret by reading Cicero—and making the right choices for Bates' future.

I am pleased to see that not only diligence but also the commitment to doing right and ingenuity are alive and well in the planning process at Bates, as you will note throughout the working groups' reports. All four groups are working attentively and assiduously to explore "a sea of possibilities." They are committed to doing the right things—building a better community,

promoting high standards of personal conduct and civic engagement, developing pedagogies of inclusion, and approaching familiar issues with ingenious questions.

I encourage you to read the reports carefully, talk with colleagues about their ideas, and then **respond to the invitation to offer feedback**. Now is a good time for you to **contribute to the planning effort by sharing your comments, questions and suggestions**. To do so, please email your thoughts (preferably in 250 words or less) to president@bates.edu in the next week. Responses received by **Monday, March 3** will be printed in a special issue of *Planning at Bates* to be circulated the first week in March.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank Margaret for contributing to this issue and express our gratitude to all the members of our community who are working on the groups. We could not engage in this process without their commitment and hard work. It is truly wonderful to have so many talented people involved.

With best regards and warm wishes,



A NOTE FROM THE WORKING GROUP CHAIRS

The four working groups have been meeting weekly since the middle of January. The paragraphs that follow report on their work to date. Upon reading these reports, now is the perfect time to send your comments, questions and suggestions.

In addition, the working group chairs have also been meeting weekly to keep abreast of the related work of the other groups. The chairs plan to hold a four-group meeting in March for the purpose of enhancing the work of each group with ideas and comments from the others, and to discuss topics of common interest. An all-campus, open meeting will be held in the spring.

Best,

Helen Regan, Chair of Working Group 1
Matt Cote, Chair of Working Group 2
Pam Baker '70, Chair of Working Group 3
Tom Tracy, Chair of Working Group 4



I. Clarifying and Explaining the Bates Experience

Working Group One regards the two aspects of its theme “Clarifying and Explaining the Bates Experience” to be distinct issues. In other words, the group has taken the stance that the Bates experience cannot be explained until it is clarified. Group members began this task by answering the following questions with key words or phrases:

- What is the mission of Bates?
- What are the values of Bates?
- What are the distinctive program elements of the Bates experience?
- Wild card – What else is important for capturing the essence of Bates?

The group assembled all responses and then began a lively discussion that has extended over several meetings. Some interesting general points have emerged:

- Is there a distinction between Bates’ eternal purpose of providing a liberal arts education to undergraduate students in a residential setting, and a contemporary statement of its mission at this historical moment?
- Why is it that the group generated a much longer and more expansive list of Bates values than expressions of its mission or enumerations of its distinctive program elements?
- We recognize that although Bates shares many program elements with other liberal arts colleges (study abroad, for example), those elements interact at Bates in a way that distinguishes the college from others. How can we express this?

The group is also examining documents relating to the communications/media function at the College. Although this discussion is not complete, thus far the group has found support for its focus on clarifying the Bates experience. The function, structure and staffing for communications at Bates seem to have received ample analysis, but a new communications initiative awaits a restatement of a main message in order to get underway.

Next the group will write, making our initial attempts to clarify the Bates experience as an outcome of our discussions to date. **We WELCOME input from interested community members to help us express the essence of Bates clearly and persuasively. We suggest that you write your own answers to the four questions that we started with, or send along any other comments or suggestions that you believe will help clarify the Bates experience to others who do not live it each day.** We will be sharing drafts of our work with the campus community later in the spring at which point we will welcome further comments and suggestions.

Working Group 1: Clarifying and Explaining the Bates Experience

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Ryan Bavis, Assistant Professor of Biology
Czerny Brasuell, Director of Multicultural Affairs
Jared Cash '04, Assistant Dean of Admissions
Jay Collier, Web Communications Manager
Rebecca Corrie, Phillips Professor of Art and Visual Culture
Paul Gastonguay '89, Head Coach of Men's and Women's Tennis
Leslie Hill, Associate Professor of Politics and Special Assistant to the President
Kristofer Jonsson '08
David Miller '08
Kerry O'Brien, Assistant Dean of the Faculty
Gene Wiemers (ex officio), Vice President for Information and Library Services and Librarian
Kathy Arsenault (administrative support), Administrative Assistant to the Vice President for Advancement

II. Learning at Bates

Working Group Two, whose task it is to focus on learning at Bates, has adopted the working title “Advancing a Culture of Learning: Promoting and Sustaining a Community of Scholars.” We have grouped the related topics in a variety of ways, settling on three categories, which can also be thought of as aspirational goals:

- Maintain a distinctive, rigorous, and nurturing academic environment
- Connect classroom experiences to life outside the classroom
- Develop structures that promote learning

The first category includes defining and communicating standards of academic performance, personal conduct, and civic engagement. It also includes considering whether our academic credit and evaluation

Working Group 2: Learning at Bates

Matt Cote (Chair), Associate Professor of Chemistry
Mark Bessire, Director of the Museum of Art and Lecturer in Humanities
Elizabeth Eames, Associate Professor of Anthropology
Erin Foster-Zsiga, Assistant Dean of Students
Tedd Goundie (ex officio), Dean of Students
Margaret Imber, Associate Professor of Classical and Medieval Studies
Meg Kinney '08
Garrett Kopeski '11
Carmita McCoy, Associate Dean for Admissions and Student Transition
Kevin McHugh, Director of Athletics and Chair of the Physical Education Department
Ellen Peters '87, Associate Director of Institutional Research
Daniela Ritter '10

schemes are optimized, and looking for ways to encourage campus-wide discussions of faculty expectations for students and *vice versa*.

The second category includes, for example, fostering academic and intellectual discussions outside of the classroom, expanding the reach of service learning, teaching students “life skills,” encouraging a diversity of ideas and welcoming a diverse population on campus, and finding ways to take full advantage of both academic and extracurricular activities to support student learning.

The third category encompasses developing physical, organizational, and scheduling structures that promote learning. Physical structures might include new student housing configurations, space for a Learning Commons, a culture center, enhanced athletic facilities, and new spaces within existing structures that encourage informal intellectual conversations. The discussion of organizational structures has touched on topics ranging from the Learning Commons to the question of whether the Bates governance structure helps or hinders efforts to promote and sustain a community of scholars. There has also been considerable interest in considering whether the College’s scheduling structures could be modified to better suit our goals. We have talked about the possibility of extending the grid within which courses are scheduled so that it encompasses more of the day and accommodates extracurricular activities. Alternatives to our annual schedule---two twelve-week semesters followed by a five-week short term---have also been explored.

During the next phase of our work, the Learning Working Group will break into three subgroups, to concentrate on one of the listed categories and prioritize the topics within it. **As we move forward toward the goal of suggesting concrete projects designed to advance a culture of learning at Bates, feel free to direct comments and suggestions to president@bates.edu by March 3 or to any member of the working group.**

III. Teaching and Scholarship at Bates

Working Group Three is in the midst of a wide-ranging discussion of what we need to support today’s Bates College. We are also considering the impacts of the changing world outside of Bates on our teaching and scholarship in the future. We have now organized our work around a series of statements about teaching and scholarship at the college and have been formulating the questions that will guide our development of planning outcomes. **We welcome suggestions from faculty, staff and students of further statements, additional questions, our distinctive values and programs.**

Draft outline of Guiding Statements and Questions about Teaching and Scholarship at Bates

Bates is a college with a focus on excellent and dynamic teaching.

- Who are our students and how will this change in the next ten years?
- How will this change how we teach?
- What academic support do/will faculty need and what are efficient and effective ways to organize that support?
 - For understanding learning differences and for teaching students who have learning differences and different learning styles
 - For teaching students for whom English is not a first language
 - For understanding and developing universal pedagogies/ pedagogies of inclusion
- What are the effects of new media and information saturation on the academic lives of our students? How are students processing information?
- How can we use institutional assessment to self-examine the outcomes of what we do as a college? How can we use this information to move us forward?

Demographics show that our faculty and staff will change.

- How do we recruit and retain a diverse faculty and staff?
- How do we orient new faculty and staff?
- Will new faculty bring new views of teaching and scholarship, and how will we support this change?
- How do we negotiate differences in this shared community?

Faculty and staff careers go through life cycles.

- How do faculty balance their roles and responsibilities for teaching, scholarship and service?
- How do we maximize flexibility for faculty and staff lives while maintaining our focus on the education of our students?
- Do we need more faculty? What are the trade-offs?
- Is our academic schedule in line with Bates educational goals?

Scholarship is vital to faculty strength as teachers.

- How do we support faculty scholarship?
 - How do we make resources transparent so faculty know who to go to for support?
 - Staff get mixed messages about their roles in regards to faculty scholarship; how do we clarify this?
- How do faculty maintain their scholarship at all levels of rank?
 - We are not a research university.
 - Is there a model for faculty research/scholarship that avoids duplicating the research university model?
 - Scholarship can have an outward, external focus. How does this strengthen Bates rather than compete against our focus on students?
 - How do we make faculty scholarship visible and celebrate it?

Bates new General Education Plan encompasses our strengths.

- The General Education Concentrations reflect our strength in interdisciplinary and collaborative work and in work with the larger community.
- Student research is a hallmark of a Bates education.
 - How do we maximize the creativity “unleashed” by this new Education Plan without expanding workload?

Facilities need to reflect our goals for teaching and scholarship, for learning and being.

- How can facilities support Bates strengths in the context of shifting disciplinary boundaries?
- How can technology support our efforts?

Bates needs to communicate/publicize our teaching and scholarly strengths to audiences that do not already know us.

Our strengths include (and suggested additions to this list are welcome):

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|---|
| First Year Seminars | Morse Mountain | Civic Engagement |
| The Imaging and Computing Center | Study Abroad | Harvard Center for Community Partnerships |
| Thesis | Interdisciplinary collaboration | Creativity |
| Flexibility and ability to change | Faculty publications and creative work | |

Working Group 3: Teaching and Scholarship at Bates

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Ellen Anderson, Foreign Language Technology Manager
Matt Duvall, Manager, Imaging and Computing Center
Holly Gurney, Associate Dean of Students
Joe Hall, Assistant Professor of History
Laura Juraska, Associate College Librarian for Reference Services
Emily Kane, Whitehouse Professor of Sociology
Maggie Maurer-Fazio, Betty Doran Stangle Professor of Applied Economics and Associate Dean of the Faculty
Jill Reich (ex officio), Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of the Faculty
Krista Scottham, Assistant Professor of Psychology
Carole Taylor, Professor of English
Marty Deschaines '75 (administrative support), Assistant Director for Community Volunteerism and Student Development, Harvard Center and Office Coordinator, Chaplain’s Office