

Refining a Vision for Academic Affairs at Bucknell

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Executive Summary

This report outlines Academic Affairs' vision for realizing the objectives and aspirations identified in *The Plan for Bucknell* as it enters its tactical phase of implementation. This vision focuses on two areas of transformation and change: *A New Organizational Model for Academic Affairs*, and *Curricular and Programmatic Innovation and Review*.

The report offers a new organizational model for the Office of the Provost that addresses the integration of Student Services, as well as the expansion of other areas of responsibility under the Provost, by re-structuring staff functions and consolidating direct reports. The model also addresses the management of the College of Arts & Sciences through a transformation of existing associate dean positions into "divisional associate deans," with singular focus on and support for the Arts & Humanities, Natural Sciences & Mathematics, and Social Science divisions—with a fourth position dedicated to student advising.

The report's second area of focus relates to curricular innovation and review and addresses: a) the tactical initiatives being generated across campus designed to meet the goals of the strategic plan and inform the next capital campaign; b) the creation of interdisciplinary centers with themes addressing: the environment, the arts & humanities, innovation in engineering, civic engagement, globalization studies, and neuroscience; c) the further integration of residential life with the academic mission through an expansion of the residential college system; d) the current review of the *Common Learning Agenda*, e) aspects of the *Campus Master Plan* that strengthen the distinctive elements of the academic program, and f) assessment and accountability. The report concludes by noting the "watershed moment" at which Bucknell finds itself in its history, and by emphasizing the necessity of a commitment to the future that is shared by all of the University's constituents.

Refining a Vision for Academic Affairs at Bucknell

Introduction

This report addresses how Academic Affairs at Bucknell can best realize the specific objectives and aspirations identified in *The Plan for Bucknell*. *The Plan's* first strategy “Strengthening the Academic Core” outlines a series of general initiatives that inform as well as provide a context and framework for the programmatic and organizational recommendations herein:

- *Strengthen the individualized student learning experience.*
- *Ensure the relevance of the University’s curricula and identify opportunities for innovation, cross-disciplinary studies, and creative expression, within a student centered learning environment.*
- *Develop areas of programmatic excellence that build on Bucknell’s liberal arts and professional programs and the University’s emerging strengths.*
- *Increase the opportunity, time, and resources for faculty to engage in new developments in their own fields of scholarship, instructional technology, or pedagogies.*
- *Encourage and support student participation in academic activities representing high levels of challenge, engagement, and close interaction with faculty.*

In response to the priorities implicit within these initiatives, this recommendation targets the following areas of emphasis as Bucknell continues the tactical phase of a planning process that will inform both the development of the University’s next capital campaign as well as consideration of organizational changes within Academic Affairs:

- 1) *A New Organizational Model for Academic Affairs, and*
- 2) *Curricular and Programmatic Innovation and Review*

These recommendations are offered in the hope that the University’s commitment to sharpening its vision for strengthening in multiple ways the quality of our undergraduate experience will be matched by Bucknell’s stakeholders in the next capital campaign—an endeavor through which we collectively seek to secure the financial resources resident at peer and aspirant institutions. In refining this vision, the recommendations that follow address both process and programmatic issues: the process is reflected in a thoughtful restructuring of academic offices and operations; programmatic changes reflect an effort to build upon the best ideas emerging across campus through the continuing tactical phase of implementing *The Plan for Bucknell*.

I. A New Organizational Model for Academic Affairs

The following model for a reorganization of Academic Affairs at Bucknell—based upon planning discussions generated by the Provost’s office as well as tactics submitted to and ideas generated by the Academic Planning Group (APG)—offers a re-visioned organizational model for the support of the teaching and learning that is central to our University’s mission. This model seeks to consolidate the University’s traditional operating strengths while offering a more efficient and effective structure to enhance student learning and to accommodate change and innovation within our scholarly community. Toward that end, the model addresses two areas: 1) a reorganization of the Office of the Provost, 2) and a reorganization of the office of the Dean of Arts & Sciences.

1) The Office of the Provost

With the expansion in recent years of Academic Affairs at Bucknell, the number of direct reports to the Provost has grown to more than 15 individuals at the dean or director level and above. In order to accommodate this expansion and to create a more efficient organization to serve both Colleges at Bucknell, the Provost will institute a reorganization of her office that will address: a) the integration of Student Services into Academic Affairs, b) the addition of the Chief Officer for Diversity and Equity, c) the creation of an Academic Affairs Business Mgr. position, d) the creation of an Office of Sponsored Research, and e) the consolidation of other direct reports to the Provost.

2) Arts & Sciences – Strengthening Divisional ¹ Identities

As reflected in conversations undertaken by the Academic Planning Group and elsewhere on campus regarding Bucknell’s future challenges, a corresponding need to address how the office of the Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences can be more effectively organized has also been identified. This model focuses on strengthening the College’s divisions (Arts & Humanities, Social Sciences, and Natural Sciences & Mathematics) through:

- the creation of Divisional Associate Deans who would each have a singular focus on and responsibility for increasing support and resources for the faculty and curricula of each division of the College; a fourth associate dean would be dedicated to student advising issues and initiatives; and
- creation of new or an expansion of existing divisional curricular and co-curricular programs (e.g., *Humanities Institute, Science, Technology & Society*)

¹ It is noted that endowed “naming opportunities” emerging during a capital campaign could well include the creation of other organizational entities and identities, e.g., “School or College of...” in lieu of “division.” Along these lines, the administration expects a preliminary proposal establishing a College of Management to be completed by September, 2007.

Colloquium, Social Science Colloquium) and/or other departmental and division-based programs in support of enriching students' classroom experience, faculty research, faculty development, undergraduate research, and strengthening the link between the "academic core" and the University's efforts to "build bridges" to the communities outside of Bucknell.

II. Curricular and Programmatic Innovation and Review

In addition to the organizational changes outlined above, the following second set of recommendations addresses five elements of Academic Affairs' planning for future curricular and programmatic innovation and review: 1) The Tactical Phase of *The Plan for Bucknell*, 2) Highlighting Distinctiveness by Strengthening Interdisciplinarity, 3) Integrating Residential Life with the Academic Mission, 4) the Review of the *Common Learning Agenda*, 5) the *Campus Master Plan* and 6) Tactics Development, Support, and Assessment.

1) The Tactical Phase of *The Plan for Bucknell*

The Academic Planning Group (APG), composed of faculty representative of both Colleges as well as administrative representatives, has completed the first phase of its review of all tactical proposals submitted from academic departments and programs. The criteria established by APG for evaluating proposals has purposefully privileged the examination of an initiative's cost benefit/effectiveness as understood within a fiscal environment that demands close critical analysis of how future academic programming and resources can be most effectively and efficiently shaped and managed. The result presents, in the aggregate, a testimony to the high level creativity and commitment our community has brought to bear in anticipating Bucknell's future. The following quote from the APG's recent report highlights that commitment:

"...In the report provided by President Mitchell on the January 2007 trustee retreat, he identified the need for creating "a strategic plan for the academic core that can guide us in achieving Plan goals, selecting among tactics, and strengthening academic programs." In a very real sense, the over 90 proposals received by the Academic Planning Group are the strategic vision within the academic core, or at least a major part of it. Although not a truly comprehensive survey, the proposed tactics represent the initiatives about which individual faculty members, groups of faculty, departments, programs, organizations, as well as entire colleges feel mostly strongly. The conceptualization and writing of the proposed tactics required significant faculty time and effort, and that effort represents a strong indication of faculty sentiment for the growth and evolution of the University."

The APG has grouped the over 90 tactics thus far received into the following categories:

Group 1 ~ New Program, Department, or Credential

Group 2 ~ Enhancement of Existing Program, Department, or Credential

Group 3 ~ Interdisciplinary Academic Centers
Group 4 ~ Facilities
Group 5 ~ Special Initiatives

Emerging from these groupings, the APG has identified a distinct set of themes within which tactic proposals fell—themes that have informed the development of initiatives described in this report:

- Globalization and Internationalization
- Energy and the Environment
- Revitalizing Liberal Arts Education
- Civic Engagement/Service Learning
- Technology and Management
- Culture and the Arts
- Ethics
- Diversity
- Interdisciplinary Studies

As the process of evaluating tactical proposals is completed, the collective task facing the campus community is to insure that future resource allocation—human and financial—is well-grounded in the intersecting institutional priorities of a) the continuing commitment to augment faculty compensation to insure the relative level of fifth among eleven peer and aspirant institutions, b) the implementation of the reduced faculty course load, c) the academic objectives of *The Plan for Bucknell*, and d) the necessity of defining accurately specific goals of the next capital campaign. The programmatic initiatives which follow in this report were developed with that strategic commitment of resources as a fundamental specification.

2) Highlighting Distinctiveness by Strengthening Interdisciplinarity

Bucknell has long prided itself as an institution within which substantive interdisciplinary study and discourse can flourish in ways unable to be realized on traditional liberal arts campuses. In order to take greater advantage of this capacity, and building upon the initial work of the APG in evaluating curricular and co-curricular tactical proposals, the creation of the following six interdisciplinary centers is recommended; these centers will serve as venues to support—at strategic curricular “intersections:”

- ~innovative faculty and student collaborative research,
- ~special curricular and co-curricular programming,
- ~visiting scholars-in-residence, and
- ~community and regional outreach.

Consideration of these initiatives highlights the critical need for increased faculty development and student scholarly engagement resources such as raising sabbatical

support to academic “industry standards,” the expansion of faculty curriculum and scholarly development grants, travel, and undergraduate research fellowships.

The six interdisciplinary themes of existing and possible future centers are:

~ *Environmental Center*

- Susquehanna River Initiative (SRI)
- Campus Greening

Over 40 faculty members in both Colleges at Bucknell participate in the newly re-formed Environmental Center (BUEC). The Center has embarked upon two major initiatives: 1) The Susquehanna River Initiative (SRI)—an ambitious longitudinal research project designed to monitor the water quality, biological diversity, and the overall environmental vitality of the Susquehanna River and its tributaries; and 2) the Campus Greening Project, which will sponsor a comprehensive environmental audit of the University in ways that will offer a series of rich, ongoing instructional opportunities for Bucknell students to engage in creating and monitoring an environmentally sustainable community on campus through experimental solar energy facilities projects, recycling campaigns, and energy-related design projects in a variety of disciplines. The Environmental Center faculty, working with the President, Provost, and the Office of Corporate & Foundation Relations, has already aggressively pursued and secured external funding from such sources as the Luce Foundation (\$450,000 grant awarded in March, 2007) and have submitted proposals to the Federal Government in support of these initiatives.

~ *Institute for Innovation in Engineering*

- Nanotechnology
- Energy Studies/Sustainability
- Systems Engineering
- Institute for Leadership in Technology and Management (ILTM)
- Globalization of the Engineering Profession

The Center for Innovation in Engineering will serve as a resource for interdisciplinary research and teaching within the Engineering College in areas recently identified by faculty as key “intersections” of new technologies: nanotechnology—focusing on micro- and nano-scale engineering and science; Energy Studies/Sustainability—focusing on an interdisciplinary approach (inclusive of faculty interests in economics, management, international relations, geography, and environmental studies) to the technical, environmental, and social issues relating to increased global energy demand/consumption. A strengthened Institute for Leadership in Technology and Management (ILTM) could serve a particularly salient role as a venue for interdisciplinary work between the College of Engineering and a new College of Management being considered by the University.

~ An Integrated Arts & Humanities Center

- Charles H. Watts Humanities Institute
- The Weis Center for the Performing Arts
- The Samek Gallery
- The Stadler Poetry Center and Bucknell University Press
- The Campus Theatre

Bucknell has long valued the central importance the fine and performing arts play within the overall undergraduate experience we aspire to provide our students. This commitment to interfusing the arts and humanities—our appreciation of cultural production in its aesthetic and humanistic forms—into our scholarly community is evident in the many facilities and programs we have on campus that seek to expose our students to the best in performance, production, and scholarship within the arts and humanities—facilities and programming ranging from the Weis Center to the University’s underwriting of the Campus Theatre in downtown Lewisburg; from new curricular proposals in Film and Media Studies to the poets-in-residence of the Stadler Center. In order to complement and enrich the teaching and learning of our fine and performing arts departments in Theatre and Dance and Art and Art History, as well as other humanities majors, Bucknell supports a spectrum of ongoing co-curricular programs such as those sponsored by the Watts Humanities Institute, the Stadler Poetry Center, and the Samek Gallery. As the University looks to the next capital campaign and the need to replace antiquated arts facilities on campus, new, exciting potential has emerged through the prospect of *integrating* our programs and resources both physically through new facilities (see “The Campus Master Plan,” below) as well as through the better and more efficient coordination of arts programming and communication by existing entities.

~ Center for Teaching, Learning, and Civic Engagement

- Teaching and Learning Center (TLC)
- Service Learning

The Center for Teaching, Learning, and Civic Engagement will house the current Teaching and Learning Center which focuses on providing support for the pedagogical development of our faculty as well as the program for Service Learning—which seeks to infuse, when appropriate, out-of-classroom community service experiences into Bucknell’s curriculum—thereby strengthening Bucknell’s capacity to achieve a real integration of residential and out-of-classroom experiences with the academic mission as detailed in the second strategy of *The Plan for Bucknell*. The Service Learning Program has already established an impressive record—across many disciplines, on- and off-campus—of providing Bucknell undergraduates with real world opportunities to work, learn, and serve in community-based venues in ways that significantly enrich their overall learning experience. A third dimension of the

Center will be the consolidation of other student volunteer services on campus within a single location. In the aggregate, this combination of curricular and co-curricular programming and services will significantly strengthen Bucknell's mission to instill in our undergraduate experience meaningful encounters with our nation's democratic values, institutions, and responsibilities as citizens.

~ Center for Globalization Studies

The Center for Globalization Studies will provide a venue within which scholarship, teaching, and services relating to study abroad can be consolidated and strengthened on campus. Faculty inclusive of almost every discipline on campus have in recent years broadened and deepened their scholarship and teaching relating to the various dimensions of our increasingly "globalized" lives: recent developmental work in international relations, environmental studies, language programs, and new study-abroad initiatives (ranging from courses created in the College of Engineering to expansion of programming being considered in Asia and Africa) in the aggregate create a compelling rationale for a University-wide consolidation of energies, services and resources within this Center. As the University continues to review its off-campus programming, it seeks to maximize connection and interaction between study abroad sites and the Center for Career Development and alumni support through international corporations and organizations that hire Bucknellians world-wide; the Center could also play a role in nurturing and expanding these intersections of interest in ways that can benefit the Bucknell undergraduate experience.

~ Center for Brain and Behavior/Neuroscience

Faculty from both Colleges recently sponsored the creation of a new undergraduate major in Neuroscience. Neuroscience is an interdisciplinary domain of study that integrates the areas of biology, psychology, animal behavior, chemistry, linguistics, philosophy, and biomedical engineering. The Center will allow faculty to concentrate their teaching on the core element of their research efforts: understanding how the brain relates to behavior. It could also significantly strengthen interdisciplinary scholarship and teaching within philosophy and bioengineering. Thus defined, the Center and its programming will serve as an important catalyst for potential new programs in Cognitive Sciences by offering a range of programming including special curricular and scholarly resources in support of interdisciplinary teaching, scholarship and publication; undergraduate research fellowships; special on-campus colloquia and speakers series; focused support for externally-funded sponsored research; visiting scholars-in-residence; and inter-institutional relationships. One such relationship holding great potential in the area of neuroscience is Bucknell's rich history of collaboration with the Geisinger Medical Center—a collaboration that could serve as a model for partnerships between a growing and evolving nationally-recognized health care leader and excellence and innovation in undergraduate science and social science education.

3) Integrating Residential Life with the Academic Mission—A Comprehensive, “vertical” Residential Colleges System

The *Plan for Bucknell’s* second strategy is “To deepen the residential Learning Experience” by providing Bucknell students with “...an integrated, close-knit residential learning and living experience that complements the academic program...” For some time a hallmark of the Bucknell experience, the Residential College program has flourished as a venue within which the in- and out-of-classroom lives of our students can be more fully and richly integrated. As a program, the residential Colleges were designed to be “horizontal” in the sense that they were open to all first-year students regardless of major, expressed or otherwise, but limited to the first year of study. Focusing on often interdisciplinary themes, Bucknell’s faculty now seek to expand the program “vertically,” that is, beyond the first year, in order to offer students the opportunity to continue their residential college learning experiences in ways that will enrich their entire college careers. Such an expansion may also include the possibility of a comprehensive approach to Bucknell students’ residential lives—with further elements to be identified within a tactical vision/plan to be completed by the incoming Dean of Student Services within the next year—that would expand the system in ways that could provide a deeper, more engaged, and more coherent experience to all entering first-year students.

4) The Review of the *Common Learning Agenda*

As the University continues its strategic planning process through the identification and evaluation of those tactical proposals generated across campus that will realize the specific goals and objectives of *The Plan for Bucknell*, the Curriculum Committee of the College of Arts & Sciences will also be reviewing the College’s general education core, the *Common Learning Agenda* (CLA). The last comprehensive review of the CLA was completed in 2001 and the Committee plans to issue a report with recommendations to the College in spring 2008.

Included within the Committee's expectations and goals for the review are a need to specify the purposes of general education at Bucknell, the role of the major and general education within the context of the degree, the relationship of the curriculum to co-curricular activities and other degree components (e.g., the writing program, information literacy, etc.), and the relationship of the curriculum to the mission and vision of the University, particularly with respect to *The Plan for Bucknell*. To complete the initial analysis of the review, the Committee was divided into the following four subgroups which are currently working on tasks related to the review:

Transcript Analysis: The Committee developed a series of questions about how students in the classes of ‘05 and ‘06 completed degree requirements and satisfied CLA requirements. Data from those two classes in terms of courses taken, when various degree requirements are completed, and similar data have been compiled and are

currently under review by this group prior to further discussion by the Committee as a whole.

Benchmarking: This group has been reviewing general education, major, and degree requirements of 32 frame-of-reference and aspirant colleges and universities across the country for comparison purposes. This group has distributed a document to the Committee that summarizes their findings across institutions and compares the CLA and Bucknell degree requirements to those found at these schools.

National Conversation: This group has been charged with reviewing trends in general education across the country, with particular attention to curricular discussions in the liberal arts colleges constituting or within Bucknell's peer and aspirant institutions

Local Conversation: This group has been charged with soliciting, compiling, and interpreting the attitudes and opinions of faculty, staff, and students regarding the CLA and undergraduate education at Bucknell. The first faculty survey will be distributed during the Spring 2007 semester. Survey data and focus group discussions, as well as written surveys will follow with faculty, staff, and students. This group will also consider data compiled from the first-year and senior surveys completed annually.

The work of the subgroups will continue throughout the Spring 07 semester. The Committee hopes to develop a draft report with recommendations in the Fall 07 semester, with review and deliberation by College Faculty in the Spring 08.

5) The Campus Master Plan

As the University continues Phase II of the *Campus Master Plan*, several key ideas have emerged that will greatly impact the future vitality of our academic programming and services:

a) The Academic Quadrangles

With the acquisition of property that now more fully extends the University's historic campus boundaries to the Susquehanna River, a new vision taking greater advantage of Bucknell's rich physical setting and environment has emerged, focusing in part on existing and imagined quadrangle groupings of academic facilities:

- *Humanities and Social Sciences:* consisting of the existing "Quad" configuration of Coleman Hall, Marts/Vaughan Lit, and the Bertrand Library
- *Science and Engineering:* consisting of the existing complex of Olin Science, Dana Engineering, the O'Leary Center, and the Carnegie Building.

- *The Fine and Performing Arts*: located in the southeast corner of the campus the possibility exists of placing a new Center for the Arts and other complementary academic buildings in a site that would take advantage of a river vista while strengthening the “uphill” attraction of campus activities and life.
- b) Re-purposing of the Elaine Langone Center, Marts Hall, and Taylor Hall

The Langone Center is long overdue for a physical and functional transformation designed to serve more effectively our students’ need for a usable and relevant “commons space.” As plans evolve for future siting of administrative offices as well as planning relating to the need for increased faculty offices as the University converts to a 3-2 teaching load, Marts Hall would naturally serve the humanities departments’ presence in the academic quadrangle described above. Should a new College of Management become a reality, it is anticipated that an expansion of Taylor Hall will be needed to address that eventuality.

6) Tactics Development, Support, and Assessment

In order to best respond to opportunities emerging from the strategic planning process, Academic Affairs will form a review and support process to address the many tactical proposals emerging from our academic community as implementation of *The Plan for Bucknell* evolves. In order to support and strengthen the development and implementation of tactics after they have completed their review by the APG, each College will form an *ad hoc* faculty advisory group—with the coordination of the Office of Strategy Implementation—that will provide reaction, support, and advice to the authors of those proposals generated within or relevant to the college, targeting the four following areas:

- *Identifying key areas of redundancy, overlap, or direct relation to another tactic*

In this case, individuals will be asked to contact colleagues who have submitted closely-related or over-lapping ideas, with the objective of combining efforts when possible and/or integrating or re-conceptualizing areas of inquiry or activity when appropriate. These areas of overlap and interaction may also include tactics submitted from other (non-academic) divisions of the University.

- *Strengthening the identification of a tactic’s innovative or strategic value*

In this case, a tactic proposal may, for example, appear to fall more into the category of an initiative that a department or program may be expected to undertake or develop as part of its routine annual operation or purview. Tactics must also address the need for assessment measures/metrics needed to evaluate the initiative’s effectiveness.

- *Strengthening the detail of a tactic's budgetary impact or requirements*

In this regard, many tactic proposals will benefit from a move from a purely conceptual stage to a more detailed plan for implementation. That plan should also identify future resource options after initial funding is approved.

- *Anticipating governance issues and processes*

Particularly in the case of new curricula or credentials, discussion of how consensus and approval will be secured both within the college and within the University governance process will be initiated.

Assessment

An important dimension of the University's evaluation and possible implementation of tactics and initiatives emerging from the strategic planning process is the necessity of measuring the effectiveness of each specific endeavor. Thus, each tactic that reaches the implementation phase must have explicitly defined:

- 1) the specific near and long-term objectives of the initiatives;
- 2) how successful completion of those objectives will be measured; and
- 3) the specific evaluative criteria that will be applied in future decisions regarding the initiative's continuance.

The issue of a tactic's cost effectiveness and cost benefit to the University has been central to the process of evaluating proposals submitted through the strategic planning process thus far; as the University now shapes the curricular and co-curricular programming and services that will insure observable and measurable improvement in the quality of the undergraduate experience at Bucknell, that commitment to fiscally responsible and sustainable programming will continue to drive the tactical phase of *The Plan for Bucknell*.

Conclusion

Bucknell finds itself at a "watershed moment" in its history as the planning, commitment, and creativity of the entire campus community through its strategic planning process can now inform the character, dimensions, and eventual success of the next capital campaign. The University has engaged this process from a position of strength, but with the collective ambition to realize—through sustainable, integrated programming and initiatives—the promise found within the *Plan for Bucknell* in both its strategic and tactical phases.

Bucknell has a rich history of innovation and programmatic excellence and the University's faculty are prepared to position Bucknell for higher levels of achievement through interdisciplinary and progressive initiatives targeting a continually increasing improvement in our core identity and mission—the Bucknell

undergraduate experience. The faculty's commitment is matched by an administrative willingness to adapt the University's operating structure and processes in ways that insure the full realization of that mission. The supposition underlying each recommendation and tactic described herein is that *it will be the aggregated linkages between the University's constituencies and stakeholders in sharing this common goal that will secure Bucknell's future for generations of students to come.* It is in fulfillment of that shared stewardship that these recommendations are put forward.

April, 2007