

Report to the
Faculty, Administration, Trustees, Students
of

JUNIATA COLLEGE

Huntingdon, PA 16652

by

An Evaluation Team representing the
Middle States Commission on Higher Education
Prepared after study of the institution's self-study report
and a visit to the campus on March 16-19, 2003

The members of the Team:

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This report represents the views of the evaluation team as interpreted by the Chair; it goes directly to the institution before being considered by the Commission. It is a confidential document prepared as an educational service for the benefit of the institution. All comments in the report are made in good faith, in an effort to assist Juniata College. This report is based solely on an educational evaluation of the institution and of the manner in which it appears to be carrying out its educational objectives.

AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT:

Founded in 1876

President: Dr. Thomas R. Kepple, Jr.

Chief Academic Officer: Dr. James J. Lakso

Preamble

The Visiting Team expresses its gratitude to the entire Juniata College community. We were received with real warmth and appreciate the extensive preparation and the quality of all of the arrangements. We were impressed by the people with whom we met; they were thoughtful and willing to respond forthrightly to our many questions, offering their insight and sharing their experiences. We were also impressed by the campus and the pride people feel. Juniata is a college that people truly treasure. All of us on the Visiting Team greatly enjoyed our visit and want to express our sincere thanks to every person who contributed countless hours and enormous energy in the many months of work leading up to our visit, and to those who arranged and participated in the activities that were a part of our visit. We recognize that we have met only a relative few of the scores involved, and that the work in this report involved many more than can be officially recognized; our gratitude extends to all of these people equally. Our visit was both productive and enjoyable.

The College's "selected topics" Self-Study was extensive and impressive. The process itself was inclusive with high levels of involvement and many opportunities for input and reaction; it involved faculty, trustees, students, administrators, and staff. We found the report to be honest and extensively documented. We commend the Steering Committee for their high-quality work, and all of the participants on the many committees, and the editors of the document, for the result represents Juniata College honestly and accurately.

What we found during our visit largely confirmed the Self-Study and documented the importance of Juniata in the lives of students, faculty, and staff. The members of the Juniata community are deeply and personally committed to this college, and give of their time and spirit.

Recent years have been impressively positive for the College with progress on many fronts: clear increases in quality of faculty and staff; ever more involved students; a major and successful fund-raising campaign; important enhancements to the campus including the creation of a campus green distinguished by an impressive new science facility; and many new faculty who have continued the educational traditions that Juniata holds dear. In a time when stresses on many campuses are running high, the trusting and respectful relationships among the faculty, administration, and students are noteworthy. The Self-Study has taken the results of the National Survey of Student Engagement very seriously in identifying challenges that relate to the students' first year. It is important to note, however, that the Juniata experience as reported by seniors is well above other liberal arts colleges nationally. The Juniata experience works!

Brightly illuminated by these successes, the Self-Study has been relentless in lighting the College's challenges and relative shortcomings. The result has been a long list – indeed too long a list – of recommendations to improve Juniata. The most important task now is to step back and view these items as part of the bigger picture of the College, identifying those that cluster together into patterns of significant importance to the future of this already superior institution. It is our hope that our comments are helpful to this community as follow-up processes are designed and work begins on creating an even brighter future for Juniata.

The First Year

The Team commends Juniata for taking seriously the development of its first-year students. The Task Force studied whether, to use the words of *Characteristics of Excellence* (1994), Juniata's first-year students are the beneficiaries of "programs and courses which develop general intellectual skills such as the ability to form independent judgment, to weigh values, to understand fundamental theory, and to interact effectively in a culturally diverse world" (p. 4). This chapter of the Self-Study stems from results of the spring 2000 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and the spring 2001 Freshman Experience Survey administered through the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Pennsylvania. Juniata first-year students score lower than comparison groups in certain key respects.

The Team commends Juniata for considering the impact of both the academic program and support services on apparent shortcomings disclosed by outcomes assessment of the type Middle States institutions should perform. The Task Force has focused on the academic impact of the College Writing Seminar (CWS) and its related Extended Orientation (EO) and Information Access (IA) components, required of all first-year students, as well as the Organic Chemistry sequence, the advising system, and student support programs. It also asked whether first-year students enter the sophomore year adequately prepared for the two required Cultural Analysis courses.

While the Team commends the Task Force for asking the right questions, its answers leave us with some concerns. The Team is especially concerned that CWS faculty and administrators have not decided what types of writing are most important to prepare first-year students for later course work. We also must agree with the Task Force that outcomes assessment of CWS has not proceeded far enough to offer a clear picture of how to address the potential problems that the Self-Study has identified. We were informed that assessment studies are underway to collect adequate outcomes information on CWS and that the Academic Planning and Assessment Committee (APAC) will be looking at the entire general education program, probably next year. We comment further in the section on Assessment.

The Task Force also argues that "the [first-year Organic Chemistry] course likely has far-reaching implications for the first-year experience for many students" (Chapter II/B/4). Here and in the chapter on Student Engagement, the Steering Committee argues that these implications are largely negative, though it makes no explicit recommendation to force a change in the course. After evaluating written evidence and talking with faculty, the Team concluded that the current Organic Chemistry program is largely beneficial and offers the following benefits to Juniata:

- The course is part of a nationally known science program that attracts a large number of Juniata's students at a time when the College is heavily dependent on science students. Reducing the number of science students by dropping an innovative component of its program would erode Juniata's financial picture.
- The high attrition in Organic Chemistry to which the Self-Study refers has not affected the institution's comparative freshman retention, which is at the 74th percentile of *U.S. News and World Report* 2002 rankings for Tier 2 liberal arts

colleges. Unusually large numbers of students at Juniata also continue to pursue Programs of Emphasis (POE) in the sciences.

- The main effect of the attrition in Organic Chemistry is that first-year students who are not likely to realize their dreams of becoming physicians (or in some cases, even science majors) begin to take exploratory courses earlier. Thus enrollments in other first-year courses outside the sciences must, mathematically, be higher, not lower, a benefit to non-science departments.
- Given the POE system, this early attrition means that this large group of first-year students will help non-science departments pick up and advise POE students earlier, not later, in their Juniata careers.

Given these benefits, and inasmuch as the Organic Chemistry sequence is a nationally known educational innovation, we believe the current practice has many benefits. We suggest that Juniata assess whether students who begin but do not complete Organic Chemistry are more likely to have reduced self-confidence or need more student services support than other first-year students.

We strongly endorse the Self-Study recommendation to "ascertain the courses freshmen select, particularly the number of courses by division, by enrollment size, and by reading and writing assignments and report its findings to the faculty" (Chapter 2/D/2/A). These data are necessary for informed discussions of the effects of various curricular changes on first-year students, especially because every decision to reduce course size in some classes is likely to increase course sizes or reduce course offerings elsewhere.

Although it comes in the sophomore year and junior year, the Self-Study discusses the Cultural Analysis sequence first in this section. While the Team endorses the need for more assessment of the type described in the Assessment chapter, it found the Cultural Analysis sequence a fruitful and useful interdisciplinary undertaking that has significant benefits for the College.

After reviewing the Extended Orientation component of CWS, the Team concludes that there are substantial benefits to continuing it. Given that this component is useful but not much connected with writing competence, the Team suggests that Juniata consider disconnecting it from CWS. For example, the course might continue to carry one academic credit but could be graded Pass/Fail and placed under the control of the Office of Student Services.

The Team applauds Juniata College for its wide-ranging efforts to study and improve the first-year experience for its students. We believe it has made significant progress apart from the Self Study in its use of institutional research and several innovative concepts, including Organic Chemistry and the POE.

Internationalization

Juniata College has set laudable goals for itself in terms of the internationalization of its student body, with focus on the curricular, the co-curricular, "importing" international students and "exporting" Juniata students. These goals fit well with *Characteristics of Excellence* for

“programs and courses which develop general intellectual skills such as the ability to . . . interact effectively in a culturally diverse world” (p. 4). The goals are especially laudable given that first generation students from a 60-mile radius, an area that is, according to one administrator, “99.5% white,” make up the largest percentage of the student body. Exposing these students to other cultures through study abroad and the enrollment of international students serves to expand their worldview beyond the beautiful mountains of Central Pennsylvania.

The College has committed significant resources in support of this goal, including:

- a fully-staffed Center for International Education
- “portable” institutional aid, allowing students to bring their Juniata College aid with them to nearly every international program

Support for these goals permeates the campus, starting with the President and Provost. Nearly everyone with whom the Visiting Team spoke, including trustees, was enthusiastic about the inclusion of this emphasis in the Self-Study and, more importantly, in the strategic plan of the College.

The College is to be commended for developing a comprehensive definition of internationalization. Exchange programs and recruitment of four-year international students bring richness and diversity to Huntingdon and the campus. In the same way, student participation in full year, semester and summer international experiences helps them learn to understand and appreciate other cultures. When they return to campus, they share this understanding with other students, which in turn encourages those students to pursue international experiences, perpetuating an important College goal. The Intensive English program provides valuable assistance to current students, allowing the College to attract and serve some internationals well who might otherwise struggle.

While the Visiting Team read and heard much in support of these goals, the College needs to work to improve actual support for internationalization to supplement structures and policies that are already in place. For example, all faculty departments need to make sure that the POEs within their control are constructed in such a way as to permit a student to study overseas as a part of the typical eight semester baccalaureate program. Curricular change needs to be accompanied by enthusiastic encouragement, though, if students are to understand the critical role that such an experience could have in their Juniata College education.

Chapter five of the Self-Study discusses the College’s assessment efforts in detail, including a recommendation to evaluate administrative offices and personnel as well as academic departments. *Characteristics of Excellence* states that “there must be a demonstrable relationship between the stated mission of the institution and the goals and objectives of the educational program” (p. 12). Given the importance of internationalization as mentioned in the Mission Statement and the significant investment in staffing and other resources that the College has made, the Visiting Team suggests that the Provost consider making the Center for International Education (CIE) among the first administrative units to be evaluated.

Achieving the 8% international enrollment goal will take cooperation between the Enrollment Office and the CIE. The initial conversations about making international recruiting part of the overall enrollment/marketing plan and involving CIE staff in overseas recruitment efforts are commendable and need to continue. It appears to the Visiting Team that the primary issue with regard to achieving this enrollment goal is one of coordination and joint effort, not budget and staffing.

Student Engagement

This Self-Study chapter stems from the observation that “our students believed they had fewer ‘enriching educational experiences’ than did students at other colleges” (Chapter IV/A) as measured by results of the 2000 NSSE Survey. In fact, this difference is most noteworthy for seniors. Focusing on this issue is not merely a comparison with the competition. Rather, such enriching experiences fit well the *Characteristics of Excellence* (p. 4) and Juniata’s own mission statement.

The Team applauds the Self-Study members for their detailed study of the problem and for the forms of assessment, including NSSE, referred to therein. The chapter covers a full array of “enriching educational experiences,” as they play out in curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular activities. The Team quickly focused, however, on a few of these that an examination of the NSSE data by Institutional Research discloses.

Juniata students’ scores are lower with respect to the study of foreign language coursework and culminating senior experiences. After discussion with Institutional Research and others on campus, we offer the following thoughts on addressing the problem framed by this chapter of the Self-Study.

It is clear to the Team that Juniata will not expand its language faculty significantly ahead of demand, and we understand why. New money is scarce, the demand might not materialize, and extra language enrollments might come at the expense of terms abroad. The best strategy for increasing language enrollments in the long run is to succeed at internationalization, but this will take some time.

By contrast, instituting a “culminating senior experience” (NSSE’s term) for all POEs would be extending a practice that is relatively common in the College. There may be financial implications of this but the Self-Study does not detail them. The Team endorses the recommendation that the Curriculum Committee “investigate the desirability of a mandatory senior experience and bring their findings to the faculty for discussion” (Chapter IV/F/M).

We also believe that this study has strong implications for the maintenance of the POE as opposed to a standard approach to majors. Juniata seniors score above the average for both all colleges and peer institutions in independent study or self-designed majors and practicum, internship, field experience, co-op experience, or clinical assignments, and they consider the quality of their advising better. The Team believes, from its discussions with students and others,

that these advantages go hand in hand with the flexibility and creativity of the POE system and the intensive advising it requires. We urge the faculty to take this into account before considering a return to a more conventional system of majors.

Assessment

This chapter summarizes the current state of assessment by Juniata College, including academic programs, liberal arts requirements, physical facilities (both buildings and grounds), administrative services, and employees. According to *Characteristics of Excellence*, "Procedures should exist for systematic review and assessment of courses and academic programs" (p. 13). Systematic procedures for evaluating administrative units and personnel are also critical (*Characteristics of Excellence*, p. 20). Juniata College has improved markedly since the 1992 Self-Study in this regard, as evidenced by a strong assessment inventory of currently used assessment tools. There is the apparent desire to improve the assessment process, with a number of recommendations designated as "works in progress." The Visiting Team is pleased to see plans for periodic, systematic review of administrative departments as well as academic programs. The Team applauds the College's efforts and has included some suggestions for consideration, especially regarding assessment of academic programs.

It does appear that Juniata has, in general, made progress towards developing a culture of assessment on campus. The College is to be commended for putting into place the Academic Planning and Assessment Committee to oversee academic assessment on the campus and to assure its continuity. The new procedure for self-study and external review deserves commendation as well. The College is also to be commended for developing the assessment inventory of tools used to assess academic outcomes. The Team was impressed by the range of assessment tools used by different academic departments at Juniata College.

To quote from *Characteristics of Excellence*, "Outcomes assessment involves gathering and evaluating both quantitative and qualitative data which demonstrate congruence between the institution's mission, goals, and objectives and the actual outcomes of its educational programs and activities" (p. 17). As Juniata College moves towards a culture of effective assessment on campus, the Team suggests that the administration and faculty develop a formal statement reflecting a philosophy of assessment as a reminder of the College's commitment to its mission and to the concept of using appropriate assessment to effect positive change.

Effective strategies of assessment involve a sharp focus on the desired student outcomes (Self-Study Chapter V/B/3/c) that are included in the mission statement. The Team agrees with the College's suggestion that it is time to develop and implement an institution-wide Juniata Student Academic Outcomes Assessment Plan, to ensure that all academic departments are assessing their programs appropriately. In addition to departmental assessments of curricula, the Team suggests that Juniata College develop strategies such as (1) assessment of cross-curricular components and their relationship to each other and the mission (e.g., POEs, liberal arts requirements and study abroad opportunities), (2) longitudinal studies to determine if students develop desired skills over time (e.g., college-level writing skills), and (3) student assessment of

their learning gains at the end of each course. The Team further encourages use of data already being collected in the Office of Institutional Research for assessment purposes.

Given the importance of the liberal arts requirements in the overall curriculum, the Team suggests that the Assistant Provost, who oversees general education curriculum, should also serve on the Curriculum Committee.

The team endorses the administrative review regarding the assessment of facilities, administrative services, and employees. The Team supports the Self-Study's recommendations that (1) "the president should direct each administrative department to perform a self-study regularly," and (2) "a process analogous to the periodic review of academic programs" be put in place for administrative departments (V/E/1).

Student Development

Faculty are the primary guardians of college teaching and research mission. According to the *Characteristics of Excellence*, "The faculty are responsible for devising and developing an institution's academic, professional, research, and service programs within the framework of its educational mission and goals" (p. 11). Juniata is fortunate to have highly competent, well-trained faculty who practice student-centered learning techniques. Faculty take their responsibilities seriously and value their association with the College.

Faculty play an active role in governance of the institution. There is strong trust between faculty and administration. Equally important is the mutual respect that faculty have for each other. They describe enthusiastically the collegial environment at Juniata. Representative of this enthusiasm is the opportunity, occasioned by recent retirements and new hires, to put forward new curricular ideas. More importantly, their excitement about developing new courses is fueled by their ability to present them within the context of the institution's mission and special characteristics.

Students who met with members of the Visiting Team praised faculty for their caring interest in them. Although some students did not value or appreciate fully the intentions of College Writing Seminar (CWS), Information Access (IA), and Extended Orientation (EO), they did acknowledge that these programs are examples of the institution's nurturing of their academic success. Although there is support for CWS, there still remains some confusion among students about its relative importance. The College is encouraged to integrate more purposefully the CWS with CW courses and with content courses.

When queried about the reasons they chose to attend Juniata, the students mentioned educational excellence, opportunity to participate in athletics, the College's reputation as a caring community, the College's strength in pre-med education, individual attention by faculty and staff, and opportunities for studying abroad. Some students expressed frustration about not being able to take advantage of study abroad opportunities because of POE restrictions; others felt that students only needed the will to accommodate the experience in their POE. The College is encouraged to provide more pro-active advising of students regarding the international

semester/summer. In lieu of a language course requirement, the College is encouraged to consider language/study abroad immersion as a substitute.

Students felt there were many possibilities for engagement in campus life. Among the nearly one hundred co-curricular student activities, they cited conferences, movies, clubs, cultural events, service learning, volunteering in the local schools and Habitat for Humanity.

Juniata offers students a unique approach to discipline specialization, the POE. Students choose a designated POE or the individualized POE. Students view this approach as one of Juniata's strengths. Another of Juniata's strengths recognized by the students is the required two-faculty advising system. Faculty speak excitedly about their role in advising and, like the students, view it as one of Juniata's special qualities. The campus is to be commended for its early intervention program for students in academic difficulty. Faculty routinely refer students with academic and/or social problems to staff in the Student Support Services Center.

The College has achieved success in attracting more students while maintaining academic quality. This has been accomplished through good planning, hard work on the part of the Enrollment Management staff, the cooperation of the entire campus community and an aggressive financial aid leveraging model. It appears that the College has committed adequate resources to this task and has talented people in place to lead these efforts.

The Team encourages the college administration to recognize and fully support the concept of maximizing net tuition per student rather than focusing on the size of the discount rate. A lower discount rate might result in more net revenue, but it might not. It appears that the tuition discounting model is effective. It is not accurate to assume that less financial aid discount equals more money to spend on other important campus priorities. Less financial aid, especially when it is allocated as carefully and strategically as it is at Juniata College, may equal fewer students and less net revenue. As long as the per student net tuition revenue increases each year according to budget goals, additional concern about the discount rate is not warranted.

Among the faculty, there appears to be support for enrollment growth. Some expressed a preferred growth in domestic diversity while recognizing the tremendous value in the diversity that international students bring. The College also values the diversity among its current students who bring differences in socio-economic backgrounds, religion, gender, and life experiences.

Finance and Advancement

Juniata College, like most colleges, is continually faced with the challenge to have in place the financial, facility, and other resources necessary to achieve its mission and goals. Like its peers, Juniata College is dependent primarily on tuition revenue and the generosity of its donors.

Characteristics of Excellence identifies "financial resources sufficient to assure the quality and continuity of the institution's programs and services" (p.18) as a standard for accreditation. As the Visiting Team has observed throughout this report, Juniata College is true to its mission and has been successfully pursuing its mission. The College allocates its resources intentionally and

the Visiting Team commends the College because it has managed its financial and facility resources prudently, and it has allocated its resources to pursue its mission.

The College has had to choose carefully where it would direct new funds. The College reported and the Visiting Team confirmed that replacements and additions to the faculty and staff have been intended to bolster specific areas and maintain others. In recent years the College has also invested in renovated and new facilities, such as the Museum of Art, the Oller Center for Peace and International Programs, the Raystown Field Station, and the von Liebig Center for Science. The College has also replaced and upgraded components of its central heating and utility distribution system. This illustrates the College's ability to recognize the importance of mission-related goals – the importance of critical infrastructure – and the importance of facilities and grounds that are attractive and contribute to the atmosphere of an appealing small college campus.

Juniata College announced the “Uncommon Outcomes” comprehensive fundraising campaign in April 2000 with a goal of \$70 million. The College reports that the campaign has raised in excess of \$85 million to date. Juniata College has exhibited considerable momentum with the recent construction of the von Liebig Center and other visible investments on campus, and the Team encourages the College to continue to work to maintain the excitement generated by this facility for a wide range of internal and external constituencies. Nevertheless, the Team also encourages the College to exercise prudence and caution during the nation's current uncertain economic times. Budget assumptions should continue to be conservative and commitments that increase ongoing operating expenses, such as compensation for employees, depreciation expense associated with investments in capital, and interest expense when borrowing is required to fund capital expenditures, should be made with care.

Characteristics of Excellence describes a sound budget as one that “accurately reflects institutional resources, needs, plans and priorities” (p. 19). The College reported in the Self-Study that its Budget Team “has assumed a growing role in setting budget parameters and in determining priorities for special funding” (Chapter VI/B/2). The members of the Budget Team are selected from the faculty and administration. Through various presentations the administration has also communicated with the faculty about the financial opportunities and challenges facing the College. Especially during the current period of increasing financial constraint, when resources are increasing at a slower rate or decreasing, it is important that the administration continue to keep the Juniata community informed. The Team suggests that the College consider the role that the Budget Team, in cooperation with senior administrators, can play to help the Juniata faculty and staff understand the financial position of the College and the relationship between the allocation of resources and its goals.

The current version of the facilities master plan appears to have served Juniata College as resources became available for renewal and new construction. The existing facilities plan is becoming obsolete to the extent that it does not reflect the current status of the campus. Several renovation projects have been planned and will be undertaken pending completion of fundraising. In anticipation of future fundraising campaigns, the Team encourages the College to consider updating its facilities master plan as part of its planning process. An updated master

plan would provide the College with a framework to assist in establishing priorities for the next round of renewal of the existing buildings, grounds and infrastructure and options for the siting of new facilities in support of its mission.

Information

Information is a critical component of every educational institution in the 21st century. Through their libraries and other learning resources, colleges and universities take responsibility for gathering, organizing, and sharing the information essential to their educational programs. *Characteristics of Excellence* states that “the services, resources, and programs of libraries, broadly defined, are fundamental to the educational mission of an institution and of the teaching and learning process” (p. 15).

The staff in Beeghly Library take their responsibility to serve Juniata’s mission and support its curriculum very seriously. This is no small challenge in the information environment of today, where user expectations for current, scholarly materials in both print and digital formats often strain budgets and test the technological expertise of staff. Under these circumstances, this staff has much to commend it.

Above all, they are a highly competent and dedicated staff, a small team of professionals who exhibit uncommon dedication to serving the students and faculty of Juniata. They have developed collections in a range of formats to serve the breadth of disciplines represented in the curriculum, while giving exceptional representation to the leading, costly resources essential to researchers in the sciences. In the estimation of the librarians on the Visiting Team as well as the faculty and students queried at Juniata, the database offerings are truly impressive. Furthermore, staff have developed and implemented a multi-faceted instructional program, by participating in the College’s Information Access course and, in addition, giving individual help as well in course-specific research classes.

While conversations with students and the findings of the 2002 Beeghly Library Survey of Students show a high degree of undergraduate satisfaction with collections and services, faculty comments and survey responses express reservations about the Library’s ability to serve their research needs, and comments from both groups reinforce the shortcomings in the library facility noted in the Self-Study.

After careful study, the Team confirms many of the observations made in the Self-Study and suggests the College undertake a comprehensive assessment of research requirements and existing library resources with the intent of devising a plan to accommodate demands for a more functional and aesthetically-pleasing facility; finance regularly-increasing library materials’ costs; and provide staffing levels appropriate for the research endeavors of an increasingly sophisticated population of scholars. In addition, with the understanding that regular technology replacement is an economic burden for higher education institutions, but recognizing the need for remaining current, the Team suggests the Library work with Campus Technology Services to plan for upgrading library technology on a regular basis.

Another essential component of Juniata's learning resources is Campus Technology Services, which in the description of *Characteristics of Excellence* is a unit that provides "tangible support for an institution's instructional program" (p. 22). Reorganized in 2001-2002 under the new position of Vice President and Chief Information Officer, this department has shown commendable performance.

Team meetings with the highly skilled and well organized staff in its Technology Solutions Center, including an impressive team of students, confirmed reports of its responsive service and support for faculty and students. Conversations with students reinforce this observation and, further, laud the state-of-the-art hardware and software available for student projects and community service in the Teaching and Learning Technology Center. Both faculty and students recognize the benefits to teaching and learning that derive from this center.

While the Team applauds the generous array of technology available to Juniata faculty and students, it also recognizes its costs. It suggests, therefore, that staff in Campus Technology Services collaborate with the administration to find a workable plan for funding technology replacement at intervals that are affordable without sacrificing functionality.

Two other areas with responsibility for producing and managing information critical to campus initiatives have been given careful attention in recent years. The office charged with the production of print materials has revamped campus publications to present a consistent, accurate and attractive image of the College. In another area, the Office of Institutional Research proved its competence to the Team by supplying credible data and the expertise of a knowledgeable professional. The Team commends both accomplishments.

Shared Responsibility

Mission, Goals, and Planning

The College's clearly written mission statement was recently reaffirmed (2000-2001) prior to the beginning of an inclusive strategic planning process. The Self-Study and conversations with the campus community indicate that there is widespread support for this mission statement as a guide for internal planning. While the mission meets the standard of "clear expression and active pursuit of its mission and goals" (*Characteristics of Excellence*, p. 6) in relation to its students and staff, it is not used as much with its supporters and the community-at-large as an active or particularly characteristic document. Rather, the highly individual and successful tag lines used in fundraising and recruitment – "Expect the uncommon" and "Think. Evolve. Act." – demonstrate more of Juniata's character to external audiences.

The Visiting Team commends the College on its ambitious "Strategic Plan for Juniata, A College of Uncommon Vision and Uncommon Commitment." The plan sets forth clear and honest goals that were adopted by the Board of Trustees and have been incorporated into the annual planning of the Cabinet. Although the goals are not uniformly quantifiable and responsibility was not

assigned to each goal by the Strategic Planning Committee, measurable objectives have been established by the units with timetables for completion.

The College has begun to review its progress toward its goals as it reaches the end of this strategic planning cycle. We understand that the strategic planning and resource allocation process will be more closely related and more regularly reviewed going forward. The Team suggests that the College explore a way to tie together all planning activities on campus to focus efforts and reduce overlap. *Characteristics of Excellence* reminds institutions that “provisions for implementation and for evaluation of the results of planning should be built into the process” (p. 18). The Team suggests that Juniata follow planning through to assessment, reflection and realignment of resources as needed.

Governing Board

The governing board of Juniata College is the Board of Trustees. The Team commends the College on its committed, involved, informed and responsive Board members who take seriously their role as stewards, supporters and advocates for Juniata.

Characteristics of Excellence calls for board members who are, consistent with the college’s mission and sponsorship, representative of “diverse points of view, interests, and experiences as well as diversity in characteristics” (p. 22). While the Board is currently at its size limit according to its bylaws, as members complete their terms of office, the Board recognizes that new members will need to be added that represent diversity, including occupation, year of graduation, and geographic area.

Organization, Administration, and Governance

Juniata is to be commended on its administration and governance. *Characteristics of Excellence* indicates that “their importance is measured by the degree to which they facilitate excellent teaching and successful learning” (p. 19). The Self-Study and our conversations on campus indicate that strong leadership is not only evident but well-respected. The level of trust between faculty and administrators is exceptionally high, as noted in the introduction. A caring, dedicated, and well-informed group of faculty members elected to governance committees share in a process of transparent policy setting and budgeting for the College. The Team finds the administration and governance of Juniata to be functioning remarkably well in support of its mission.

Conclusion

Juniata stands out in so many ways: true to its mission, adhering to its values, ever-improving in quality, and fiscally sound. While most of these attributes are typical criteria in the assessment of a college, the second attribute is worth noting. This College has a powerful and deep culture which represents long-held values – a culture of involvement, a culture of service, and a culture

of caring and respect. Every student with whom the members of the Visiting Team had conversations spoke about the many groups and activities of which they are a part, for the Juniata experience is an education that is characterized not only by academic involvement but by involvement in the life of the community. It seemed nearly invariable that at least some of this involvement was in service to others, service driven not by some sense of external expectation or requirement, but by a sincere desire to make a difference for others. Finally, in this age of hurry and anonymity and self-serving concern, we found a remarkable level of caring and respect. Faculty do care about their students and want the right things to happen for each of them; students and faculty alike spoke of the important personal interactions day and night, week day and weekend; faculty and administrators, while not always agreeing, work respectfully toward common goals. While most colleges speak with conviction about the importance of all of these values, it is the opinion of this Visiting Team that at Juniata the rhetoric and the reality are the same.

Juniata is a truly student-centered college. There is a remarkable cohesiveness in this, commitment – faculty, students, trustees, staff, and alumni, each from their own vantage point, describe a community in which the growth of the student is central. In accomplishing this, the College has combined prudent and efficient management with innovative approaches to the academic experience, and this unusual combination of fiscal conservatism with educational risk has paid off in creating a strong, effective, and distinctive college.

The progress of the College during recent years is remarkable, and the people of this College have ample reason for pride. The attractive and well-maintained campus, with its pleasingly coherent architecture, is a tangible symbol of the quality and care that underlies all that happens at Juniata. We commend the trustees, president, faculty, the administration, and the staff for their wisdom, values, and hard work on behalf of the College.

In the view of the Visiting Team, the timing of this Self-Study may well be fortuitous, for we believe that there is a historic opportunity before the College. This opportunity comes from a truly unusual combination of factors: the high level of trust between the faculty and administration; rapidly growing strength and continuing dedication of the faculty; the active and visionary leadership; an able and effective staff; the high level of support from the Board of Trustees; the spectacular success in fund raising; and the commitment of the alumni. There are few colleges that can claim this combination, particularly at this very challenging time in higher education, and this creates a strong foundation upon which Juniata's next important actions can be based.

What actions should now follow? It is the Team's observation, in the face of the many identified priorities in the Self-Study, that the College begin by focusing: using the mission statement as the frame of reference, prioritize all possible goals and actions. Then, using quality data, decide which goals are truly most important and what types of actions will most effectively accomplish these goals. In addition, those involved in the process need to consider the financial implications of the alternatives being considered.

To be successful, a planning process must be developed to create the College's next strategic plan, a plan based on this Self-Study and informed by an evaluation of the effectiveness of the last strategic plan. The appropriate College constituencies must be involved in this process, and the Team agrees with the Self-Study themes which focus the attention of the College community on central educational issues of importance to the future and which require substantial faculty involvement in analysis, planning, and action. In developing your plans and priorities, we encourage you to continue your tradition of innovation and creativity in academic program. It is natural to move toward the average, the typical, but we believe that you gain much from your distinctive approach to so much of what you do, including your constructively different way of thinking about the academic major, your approach to internationalization, your thinking about the study of culture, and so much more.

Given the mission-based importance of preparing students to lead useful lives in a global setting, we also encourage you to be vigilant in implementing the current internationalization/diversity plans, for we believe that this is critical to your fulfilling your own sense of purpose.

Parker J. Palmer is a noted writer and speaker on the life of the teacher. He believes that, in this outcomes-driven world we are too often driven from the central purposes and passion of teaching and learning. He states:

Reduce teaching to intellect and it becomes a cold abstraction; reduce it to emotions and it becomes narcissistic; reduce it to the spiritual, and it loses its anchor to the world.

Intellect, emotion, and spirit depend on one another for wholeness. They are interwoven in the human self and in education at its best. (*The Courage to Teach*, 1998, p. 4)

Juniata is a powerful symbol – indeed a landmark – to this interwoven sense of learning. It has never deviated from this commitment and represents, as Parker Palmer says, “education at its best.”