

Think Anew, Act Anew: Strategic Directions for Monmouth College (Updated July 2018)

Mission Statement

As an undergraduate liberal arts college we recognize the close relationship of faculty and students to be fundamental to our learning environment. As a community of learners we strive to create and sustain an environment that is value-centered, intellectually challenging, aesthetically inspiring, and culturally diverse; and we hold as central our commitment to liberal arts education and to one another. We integrate a four year program of general education with in-depth study in the major and a rich array of co-curricular activities in order to foster the discovery of connections among disciplines and larger patterns of meaning. Through these experiences, we help our students explore multiple perspectives on the human condition and prepare ourselves for rich personal and professional lives...for leadership, citizenship and service in the global community. Monmouth College was founded in 1853 by pioneering Scotch-Irish Presbyterians. As a campus community we honor that heritage and value religious diversity as we explore the spiritual dimension of human existence and the relationship between faith and knowledge. As both observers and participants we seek to deepen our understanding and appreciation of the creative tension that exists among the principles of democracy, pluralism, equality, and freedom in our nation and beyond.

The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present. . . As our case is new, so we must think anew and act anew.

Abraham Lincoln

Introduction

This document seeks to capture this exciting moment in the history of Monmouth College and the College's place in our nation and world. It draws on the best of the good work done in recent years. It evaluates that work through new perspectives on the College's internal development and the external social, cultural, economic, and political conditions that shape our work and that form the world in which our students will live. That evaluation has led to an even greater sense of possibility for the innovative, empowering experience that Monmouth College can—and will—provide to its students.

This greater sense of possibility rests on two main factors.

- Many Americans question the cost and relevance of the residential liberal arts college experience. At the same time, however, American—and, indeed, global—society yearns for people with the breadth of intellect and creativity, with the courage and depth of character, to succeed, thrive, and lead in a time of extraordinarily rapid change. These are the very attributes that a residential liberal arts college is best suited to nurture. Yet

many residential liberal arts colleges are unwilling or unable to embrace the special nature of this experience.

- Monmouth College is not one of those institutions. Monmouth is particularly well poised to realize the highest potential of the residential liberal arts experience. The people of Monmouth College understand that our task is not merely to monitor our students in the completion of a checklist of requirements. Rather, they understand that our calling is to mentor young women and men as they draw from a wide array of opportunities that, together, help them to examine their lives in the richness of the human experience. Through this experience, they will develop the attributes and skills that will empower them to lead lives of work service, and leadership. By creating this cohesive, concrete demonstrable experience of human development, Monmouth College will help to lead the evolution of the residential liberal arts college.

Creating a Culture of Planning

Effective strategic planning rests on successfully answering four questions:

- What does society need?
- How can our work address those needs?
- How can we perform that work as effectively and creatively as possible,
- How can we portray that work in a way that attracts others to the exciting and compelling present and future of Monmouth College?

As a community of faculty, staff, students, alumni, and trustees, we have been engaged in a thorough and more inclusive process of strategic planning at Monmouth College. That work has been done in several steps.

- We first established an on-campus Planning and Priorities (P&P) Committee. This group represents faculty from across the disciplines and ranks, staff from all areas of the College's operations, and student leaders. This broad representation is important for several reasons. First, effective planning work needs a rich range of perspectives. It also needs to have the confidence of all elements of the campus—each member of the community needs to look at the committee and see someone whom they are confident represents them. The Committee's membership is listed in Appendix A.
- The P & P Committee began with an examination of core commitments, those characteristics and beliefs that are fundamental to our identity. We then discussed which of those commitments are particularly powerful for the College, establishing current or potential points of distinction as we move to advance the College's place among residential liberal arts colleges. We also examined which of those points of distinction spoke to developments and issues in society at large, for if no one else cares, it doesn't matter how distinctive some element of our work might be. The Committee then turned next to an examination of four documents—*Fulfilling the Promise*, the vision statement, the campus master plan, and the business plan. Each of these documents contained solid ideas, resulting from thoughtful work, regarding the College's future. The Committee drew upon the strongest and most relevant of these to inform the College's direction.
- The Committee's next step was to assess the recent internal development of the College, looking especially at its current strengths and weaknesses.

- The Committee then turned to the external environment, examining the trends in larger society that provide opportunities for and threats to the College.

The Board, both in full and in the Executive Committee, has also participated in these steps. The compilation of the core commitments, the strongest elements of the four planning documents, the internal assessment, and the scan of the external environment are found in Appendix B.

This process has been both deliberate and placed on a fast track. First, it is fair and accurate to say that some measure of skepticism existed on campus and even among the Board regarding the concept of planning. While strong ideas had been generated, the process by which those ideas would be implemented was not as robust. The sentiment existed, especially on campus, that effort would be invested, ideas presented, with little mechanism for follow-through. There was also the sense that the previous planning discussions were not as open or inclusive of the broad campus community as is desirable. If good ideas are to take life, the process that produces them must have the confidence of the women and men who will make them happen. And if good ideas are to take life, they must be supported by a clear operational plan—specific action steps, timelines, responsible parties, costs, and an assessment process. For the goal is not only to develop these directions and these operational plans for this particular moment in the College's life. It is also to develop a culture of planning that will shape the College's thinking and action long after anyone here at this moment has left the scene.

However, even as this process has moved forward, and the seeds of this culture sowed, much action has been taken to address clear strategic needs and opportunities.

- Developing a new focus in enrollment management was the highest priority. The College had encountered some measure of turbulence in the on-campus leadership of this area. Also, the focus on head-count at all costs was clearly unsustainable. The class that entered in the fall of 2014 had a discount rate of 70.7 percent. Also as a part of this approach, the College pursued applications and matriculation from some students who were clearly not prepared to succeed and persist here, which had negative effects on retention. Finally, our financial aid consultant's analytical approach was less thorough and sophisticated than needed.

We immediately moved toward an enrollment management philosophy that emphasized improving per student net revenue and the preparation of our incoming students, all while maintaining our historic commitment to being a place of high opportunity. We engaged Bill Hall and Applied Policy Research as our new financial aid consultants. Bill and APR bring a much more sophisticated analytical approach to maximizing the effectiveness of our financial aid policies. In making this shift, we knew that we would need to “right-size” our incoming class for at least this year as we worked to strengthen the other two elements. and we are achieving clear progress in them. We are up a clear bit in ACT score, to take that as a handy if incomplete measure. We are up significantly in per student net revenue—over \$2,300 as of this writing. And we are achieving that increase NOT because we have chosen to move away from being a place of high opportunity. We are achieving that increase in per student net revenue because rather than leading with a message of “how much is it going to take to get you to come here,” we are leading with a message of quality, a message of “you really want to be here

because of the difference that this faculty, this staff, can make in your life.” In other words, those families with the capacity to pay more for this experience are hearing that message and are *willing* to pay more for it.

We have also made other moves to strengthen our enrollment management efforts. We have brought greater focus to our name-purchases of prospective students. We are completely revamping the communications flow with prospective students. We have re-done our print materials and are adopting a much more robust use of social media and video. Some four or five years ago, we purchased a prospect management software that was already being eclipsed, and we did not have in place a plan to implement the use of that software fully. We have just completed the process of selecting a new system, with a clear plan to bring it fully on line. We are developing an aggressive plan to recruit in targeted out-of-state markets, and are also bringing greater focus to our recruitment of international students. We have added a new scholarship/leadership opportunity to our mix—the James and Sybil Stockdale Fellows Program is now our most prestigious scholarship award, and will help us to attract strong students from a broader geographical range. We have added men’s and women’s lacrosse for the same purpose, and our energetic young coaches have hit the ground running. Most important, we have been able to attract Trent Gilbert as our Vice President for Enrollment Management and Nick Spaeth as our Associate Vice President for Admission join Jayne Schreck, Associate Vice President for Financial Aid, as a true all-star team.

UPDATE: Our concerted efforts to increase net tuition revenue per student while also increasing enrollment have had mixed and less than desired results. Forces at play within the external environment, and the Illinois budget crisis in particular, have created strong headwinds that we have yet to overcome. While per student net tuition revenue has increased, we have given some of that increase back, especially to help build positions out-of-state. Our yield rate has increased, especially among students with stronger estimated family contributions and academic profiles. We have seen encouraging results from out-of-state, and are intensifying our efforts in our first two new out-of-state targets, Colorado and Texas.

We knew that we would be a smaller college as we moved to an approach that would address all three legs of the student recruitment stool—per student net revenue, academic profile, and new student enrollment—but the challenges have been even greater than we anticipated, challenges shared by almost every college in the country. Working with Applied Policy Research we have revised our aid leveraging plan and our enrollment plan in order to provide more accurate projections for purposes of all planning and budgeting. The most significant issue is building demand in the face of a shrinking pool of high-school graduates. We welcome applications from students at all high schools, but we purposely shifted our focus away from schools that produced relatively high numbers of applications but did not produce similar numbers of deposits and matriculants. However, the drop-off in the number of applications must be turned around.

We are working to improve our enrollment management results through a variety of means:

- First, members of the faculty responded well to a challenge to develop and propose new academic programs that would keep the College current with emerging fields of inquiry, position our students to enter and succeed in new areas of endeavor, be attractive to prospective students, and do all of this informed and energized by the College's tradition in the liberating arts. We received several good ideas, and chose three of them for initial exploration—neuroscience, data science/informatics, and “renaissance” engineering (i.e., engineering informed by the perspectives of a liberal arts education). Hanover Research, which assisted us in the identification of new out-of-state markets of opportunity, conducted market-testing, both of employer demand and student interest, in all three of these fields, and the results confirm their potential to make the College more attractive to prospective students.
- We are increasing our efforts to build out-of-state sources of new students. Through geodemographic analysis performed by Hanover Research Associates, we have identified the Atlanta suburbs, additional locations in Texas, and markets in Florida as next targets.
- The College has significantly strengthened its marketing and communications operations, with an emphasis on supporting student recruitment. To facilitate this closer coordination, the Office of Communications and Marketing was moved from Development to Enrollment Management. While there are many measures of reputation, rankings are a part of our landscape, a first filter that many families employ in the college search. Over the previous two years, Monmouth has jumped up 20 positions in the *U.S. News* rankings of national liberal arts colleges, a move made by fewer than five percent of the ranked schools. The rise in the reputational ranking among other national liberal arts colleges leaders and, especially, among high school counselors is especially encouraging. The College also rose 89 positions over the last two years in the *Washington Monthly* rankings, which focus on the impact that the institution has on the social mobility of its students.
- In the late fall of 2014, an anonymous donor and her spouse approached the College with a challenge. If the Board of Trustees would make \$2.5 million in new commitments by December 31, 2015, this couple would donate \$5 million. The total of new commitments reached \$3 million on April 2, and the couple made a gift of \$5.25 million a few days later. Some of the new commitments are unrestricted, while others are designated to a variety of purposes. The \$5.25 million is divided equally. One-half is providing the initial endowment for the College's new marquee scholarship and fellowship program, the James and Sybil Stockdale Fellows Program, which will help us to attract high-achieving students from a broader geographical reach. The other half will be used to make strategic investments in current and new initiatives to accelerate the College's forward movement in key areas.

UPDATE: This effort enabled us to complete the *Fulfilling the Promise Campaign*. We have just completed the feasibility study for a new capital campaign, *The Light This Candle Campaign*. The focus of the Campaign will be endowment, in particular, endowment for scholarships, faculty development, and for facilities through the Capital Improvements Fund. The College has already received a \$20 million commitment toward the Campaign from a very generous lead donor. Other commitments received toward the Campaign already put the total gifts received and commitments at over 50 percent of the goal of \$75 million.

- Some of the most important investments will be made in the teaching and learning process, and action has already begun.

For example, the Triad concept is taking root (pardon the pun) in its first iteration focusing on Food Security. We have all three faculty positions in place now, and the Triad is yielding benefits across the board, especially in providing concrete evidence of our key themes—multidisciplinary teaching and learning, experiential learning and undergraduate research, the power of the liberal arts to address issues in the world, and a global experience. Monmouth is a charter signatory of Presidents United to Solve Hunger (PUSH), an international group of schools working to organize teaching and learning opportunities around the theme of food security. Monmouth was the first, and remains one of only two, true liberal arts colleges in the organization. Our commitment to food security, and our innovative organization around it, has drawn positive attention in the group and is opening great opportunities for our students, faculty, and staff. A subcommittee of the Planning and Priorities Committee has framed a call for proposals for a second Triad, and we anticipate some exciting ideas. Selection will be made later in the fall.

Another subcommittee of P&P is studying the creation of a short term. When the College moved from a five-five to a four-four model, a four-one-four model was a close second. A short term offers many advantages in fostering different teaching and learning experiences, including providing opportunities for a much more robust and varied study-abroad and study-away program.

Three groups are coordinating their work on enhancing retention at the College—two funded by grants from the Mellon and Teagle foundations, and the other as our Quality Initiative, part of our reaffirmation of accreditation. All three of these groups are working with the theme of supporting a coordinated process of mentoring a seamless experience of human development.

Also, a group led by Teri and Dan Ott is working under the auspices of the NetVUE grant to examine the role of “vocation as calling” in our teaching and learning process.

The faculty is also leading the development of a more thorough and consistent process of assessing effectiveness of teaching and learning. This process clearly defines learning objectives and desired outcomes for students, creates assessment tools, and ties the results

of assessment into improvements in the program. This process will be informed by and inform the larger strategic planning and implementation effort.

All institutions are managing the generational change of faculty; Monmouth is doing so very well. The twelve new tenure-track faculty joining us in the fall takes us to near 50 percent of the faculty having been hired in the last five years. These new faculty join our veterans in an energized group of teacher-scholars. Monmouth is also working to develop a faculty that reflects the diversity of the society from which our students come and in which they will work. For example, we are participating in an \$8 million grant from the Mellon Foundation to the Associated Colleges of the Midwest focusing on faculty diversity.

- **UPDATE:** A spirit of innovation has always been present within our faculty, and that spirit has grown broader and embraced even more fully by the faculty.
 - Significant changes have been made in the College's approach to advising, moving to a more holistic philosophy of mentoring—creating a team of support for each student that will address all aspects of the student's development, not solely academic advising.
 - As noted above, members of the faculty responded well to a challenge to develop and propose new academic programs that would keep the College current with emerging fields of inquiry, position our students to enter and succeed in new areas of endeavor, be attractive to prospective students, and do all of this informed and energized by the College's tradition in the liberating arts.
 - The faculty is also leading an effort to re-energize the College's Integrated Studies Program. Implemented in 2006, this program provides a thread running through the student's four year academic program, with courses arrayed around a theme each year—introduction to the liberal arts in the first year, followed by global engagement, reflections, and citizenship. We have been encouraged by the Mellon Foundation regarding our proposal to support this work through a grant of \$200,000.
 - We have added a second Triad focusing on Global Public Health and will be reviewing options for additional Triads.
 - During the 2018 spring semester the faculty formally adopted a short term. Known as "ScotsTerm," this educational experience will be approximately two to three weeks in length occurring in January between semesters, and in May following the end of the spring semester. Travel experiences and special courses will be the focus of the new short term.
 - We established the "Retention Moonshot Group" led by Institutional Research, Student Life, and Academic Affairs that has conducted a great deal of solid survey research aimed at identifying critical retention concerns. Their work has

recently been subsumed into a larger working group led by Student Life and Academic Affairs that is developing a comprehensive plan for improving retention. The Quality Initiative plan focusing on retention has been submitted to the Higher Learning Commission and has received favorable reviews.

- We have created a much more robust system of institutional research. Data was being collected, but was held in silos, with little to no coordination across areas of the College, and providing limited support to strategic or management decisions. Christine Johnston has assumed the role of Special Assistant to the President for Institutional Research and Planning, and has made great strides in creating a true institutional research function. We have created a set of key indicators that will provide ready reference in important areas of the College's operation. The IR function collects and analyzes data from across the College, builds an historical record of such data to provide us the basis for trend analysis, and is developing a set of peer and aspirant institutions for comparative and positioning purposes. We will have a much stronger base from which to make data-informed decisions.

UPDATE: The creation of an annual Fact Book and a type of data warehouse are nearing completion and will greatly aid all planning and assessment efforts, including the preparation and monitoring of "Think Anew, Act Anew" benchmarks.

- We are moving to have the quality and creativity of the marketing and communications efforts reflect the quality and creativity of our larger experience. A first step was to achieve greater coordination across the College through the creation of a "Marketing Gang" that includes administrators and faculty who can see both their areas and the whole College. New standards for the graphics and logos have been developed and brought on line. The website is undergoing a major renovation, with a cleaner, more up-to-date look and greater functionality. Video is becoming a more consistent and higher quality part of our efforts, largely through a relationship with a talented local videographer. As noted above, our printed admissions materials are being completely revamped. We are soliciting proposals for a broader review of our marketing, branding, and communications efforts.

UPDATE: We have hired an experienced journalist and higher education marketer as our Executive Director of Communications and Marketing. The staff of the department has been expanded and the department is now a key part of the Enrollment Management division. The College has revamped its communications efforts across the board. A few examples include:

- a much stronger social media presence;
- a greater volume of news stories celebrating the achievements of our students, faculty, and staff;
- a much expanded and higher quality use of video;
- a much improved College magazine that is published four times a year, compared to two times a year previously.

As noted above, many measures of reputation exist, but the College's significant improvement in the *U.S. News* and *Washington Monthly* rankings of national liberal arts colleges are one important indication.

- Information technology is also receiving significant attention. The College's broadband capacity has tripled since last year through our cooperation with McDonough Communications. We have engaged in an outside assessment of IT, looking at both systems and staffing, and we have just received that draft report.

UPDATE: Significant improvements have occurred in IT, but in this realm, there is never "enough." Our broadband capacity has just increased by another 2.5 times, at no additional cost. By moving to the cloud, we have also dramatically increased storage capacity. The biggest challenge in this area at this point is succession for the long-time Director.

- Effective new approaches to financial management are also being instituted. For example, this year marked the first step in creating a rolling five-year financial model that represents the strategic directions of the College, including enrollment management, in one place. New approaches to financing policy are also being examined.

UPDATE: The College has refinanced its long-term debt, moving away from multiple types of public and private debt placed with one of the nation's largest banks to private debt that is exempt from state and federal taxes and is placed with regional banks. In the process we also reduced our variable interest rate exposure from over 90 percent to approximately 25 percent.

The College also created a Capital Improvements Fund, or CIF. The CIF is a portion of the College's quasi-endowment devoted to servicing debt in support of capital projects. Tax advantages available to non-profit organizations make the use of this mechanism much more attractive than the usual practice of raising funds directly in support of a major building project. As a result of early gifts to the Capital Improvements Fund, we secured new long-term debt that will be used to finance the renovation of Grier Hall. The new debt tied to the CIF and Grier Hall project is privately placed with two community banks and has a fixed term.

- Similar steps have been taken regarding capital projects. A rolling ten-year plan of capital maintenance, replacement, renovation, and construction is being developed, with the first two years in place. This process is supported by a newly-established Capital Projects Committee, comprised of the Dean of the Faculty, the Dean of Students, the VP for Enrollment Management, the Special Assistant to the President, the Executive Assistant to the President, the chair of the Faculty and Institutional Development Committee, the head of facilities management, the head of information technology, and the President, chaired by the CFO. This process allows the College to identify and prioritize capital needs across the institution and into the near-term future.

UPDATE: The first iteration of a comprehensive assessment and ranking of our capital maintenance needs has been completed and is beginning to be used to guide our capital budgeting and facilities work.

This process is supporting first steps in addressing some facilities opportunities, including a possible repurposing of H-T, or its demolition, to construct a new campus center. First steps are also being taken to develop a comprehensive plan of grounds management.

The Internal Environment

The P&P Committee's work produced a thoughtful and thorough assessment of the College's current situation, both strengths and weaknesses.

Some of the College's more significant strengths include:

- New academic, residential, and student life facilities
- A core group of dedicated faculty and staff, including a dynamic mix of veterans and recent hires
- A clear commitment to the liberal arts
- A distinctive curriculum, including the Triad
- Strong student support programs
- Commitment to student growth
- A size that supports close and caring relationships
- Strong Board leadership and alumni commitment
- A growing endowment and base of philanthropic support
- The opportunity to explore diversity and spirituality

The Committee also identified some significant impediments to the College's progress:

- A negative attitude that manifests itself in several ways. It causes a "hunkering down" that creates a silo effect, limiting opportunities for creative approaches to challenges and opportunities. It also creates a reluctance to consider and attempt change, a limited sense of institutional possibility and ambition, variously referred to as the "Eeyore Complex," "the Curse of Low Expectations," or "The Monmouth College Way."
- A lack of resources to invest in innovation, especially in the teaching and learning experience, including instructional technology
- Information technology, especially in supporting and enhancing operations
- Uneven rigor and energy among programs
- Shortage of operational staff in key areas, e.g. facilities staff for an expanded plant
- Cumbersome faculty governance; for example, create three division chairs to streamline processes
- An outdated campus center
- Student recruitment and revenue
- Lack of professional programs that appeal to today's students
- Several outdated residence halls, including outdated fraternity housing

These internal limitations, especially those regarding resources, are real. However, they can be addressed if we can create a greater sense of personal and institutional possibility and ambition, for the internal assets of the College far outweigh its liabilities.

The External Environment

If Monmouth has never been stronger, the external environment has rarely, if ever, been more challenging or complex. Understanding and responding to this external environment is essential to the College's continuing strength and progress. Even more important, preparing young women and men to serve, lead, and succeed in that environment is the essence of Monmouth's mission.

Several issues in American and global society touch on the vitality, and credibility of that experience:

The Relevance of the Liberal Arts Experience

The purpose of higher education is being called into question. For many people, higher education means getting a piece of paper that tells the world you've acquired a body of information that qualifies you for a particular job. They regard that piece of paper as a commodity, one largely indistinguishable from the other. So if you can buy that paper at Wal-Mart, or on line from Amazon, why pay more and exert more effort for it at the neighborhood boutique or bookstore? Some observers contend that, in a changing economy, a college degree is no longer necessary for or the guarantee of a good job. As a result, the college experience is no longer seen as relevant by some critics, or, at the least, not worth the cost. Colleges focused on the liberal arts and sciences, like Monmouth, are subject to particular scrutiny. The traditional residential liberal arts college is seen by some as especially out of touch with the demands of the current job market and the challenges of today's society, as well as being the province of the socially and economically privileged.

UPDATE: The Value Proposition and the Great Recession. Such skepticism was present well before the Great Recession, but that economic crisis only exacerbated that thinking. Students and their families are even more concerned, and rightly so, with how their investment in a college degree will prepare them for their careers. They are understandably focused on securing that first job.

However, they—and we—should also be concerned with the ability to adapt and thrive in this rapidly changing economy and society. At a time when artificial intelligence and machine learning are taking over many careers once thought to be untouchable by technology, our students must develop both the skill-sets and the mind-sets that will make them as “robot-proof” as possible. To that end, we must keep our educational program current with a changing society, and thus attractive to prospective students and employers. We must also join that with an even deeper commitment to nurturing and supporting the life-long learning, intellectual curiosity, adaptability, and ethical grounding that have long been the great focus of liberal arts education, and of Monmouth College in particular, timeless characteristics that will allow our students to evolve, lead, and thrive in a time of great change.

Many of these critics—ranging from political figures to leaders in business to parents—grow justifiably louder in demanding that colleges and universities demonstrate that they prepare young people to assume productive places in the economy and society at large. Those voices also demand that colleges and universities explain and control their rising costs. If higher education cannot do so on its own, those same voices threaten to impose their own standards and methods. For example, President Obama has proposed a ratings system based on such factors as tuition, graduation rates, student debt, earnings of graduates, and the percentage of lower-income students who attend. The Council for Aid to Education has developed an instrument called CLA+, a test to be administered to entering students and graduating seniors to assess a series of competencies such as critical thinking, writing, analysis and problem solving, and scientific/quantitative reasoning. Yes, some of these standards and methods are ill-advised, but the imperative to demonstrate positive outcomes for our students cannot be ignored.

But, at the same time, the values and characteristics that the residential liberal arts and sciences nurture best are more important than ever. America and our world need young people prepared to address complex problems and opportunities in many settings. Such people have an intellectual grounding in the human experience, can apply that background to their own lives and the world around them in a creative fashion that enables them to adapt to new challenges and opportunities, and possess the moral depth and social commitment to make a difference in the world through lives of work and service.

How can Monmouth answer the criticisms of the residential liberal arts college that it costs too much and is out of touch? What can we do to articulate our purpose more clearly and to focus our energies and resources most effectively on it? How can Monmouth demonstrate even more powerfully how well it fosters the characteristics so important in a world where new information, new challenges, and new possibilities emerge at light speed? How might such a process invigorate and renew this experience for ourselves, for our students, and for liberal arts colleges in general? How do we attract, support, and retain the women and men who will bring this vision to life?

UPDATE: Much of what the plan directs seeks to harness two important elements to each other. First is a spirit of innovation aimed at keeping our educational program current with a changing society, and thus attractive to prospective students and employers. Second is an even deeper commitment to nurturing and supporting the life-long learning, intellectual curiosity, adaptability, and ethical grounding that have long been the great focus of liberal arts education, and of Monmouth College in particular, timeless characteristics that will allow our students to evolve, lead, and thrive in a time of great change.

The Cost, Accessibility, and Value of the Liberal Arts Experience

From the end of World War II through the end of the 20th Century, higher education helped to drive the advancement of the American Dream. Our colleges and universities, as teaching and research institutions, enabled the United States to help the world recover from World War II, to meet the challenges of the Cold War, and to assist peoples around the globe as they have sought to develop their own societies. This role was made possible in large part by investment in that system of higher education, both public and private, that greatly expanded its capacity and, most important, enabled dramatically greater access than ever before.

But for many Americans, the socioeconomic progress of the post-WWII years has stagnated. Since the early 1970s, real income growth for much of the American population has flattened. Social mobility in the U.S., especially compared to other wealthy nations, has also declined. As a result, many families find it more difficult to provide a college education for their children; many of those families look toward an educational experience that they believe will guarantee immediate employment.

The current model for financing higher education, for families and institutions alike, is broken. The broad access to higher education that so enriched individuals and society is no longer assured. One of the most disturbing trends is the difficulty of students from even comfortable means—much less those at lower income levels—to afford higher education, especially private higher education, without incurring debts that sharply limit the life options that higher education is intended to open. Studies have shown that poorer students rarely consider the stronger liberal arts colleges. (Caroline Hoxby and Christopher Avery, “The Missing ‘One-Offs’: The Hidden Supply of High-Achieving, Low-Income Students”).

The cost of higher education continues to climb; the criticism that colleges and universities have not worked hard enough to control costs is not without justification. In the case of public institutions, much of this higher cost is driven by declining support from financially-strapped state legislatures. For years, many institutions depended upon significant annual increases in comprehensive fee charges, but all of American higher education has hit a ceiling terms of such increases—they will have to be limited, for the marketplace, if not moral responsibility, demands it. Also, financial aid provided by the federal and state governments has failed to keep pace with these increasing costs. The current budget challenges in Illinois, which put at risk the MAP grants that are so important to our students, demonstrate this point dramatically.

UPDATE: This challenge was aggravated for Monmouth and all other Illinois colleges and universities by the fact that Illinois did not have a state budget for over two years, and during that time the future of the Monetary Award Program (MAP) grants was uncertain. Despite serious strains to our cash flow, we did not hold students responsible for the state’s failings and continued to factor the MAP Grant into the financial aid awards of our students. The budget crisis was resolved in 2017 and MAP grants were honored, but the cost of the crisis upon the Illinois higher education community has been extensive. Perhaps the greatest fallout for Monmouth College has been an acceleration of the trend of high school students leaving the state; Illinois is now the number one exporter of high school students to other states for college and university attendance.

This situation emphasized two points made in the plan. First, while Illinois will always be our home, we must recruit more students from out-of-state to be less dependent on a state in which the number of high-school graduates is declining and a high proportion of them are leaving the state to attend college. Second, we must increase our endowment devoted to student financial aid and scholarships so as to be less dependent on uncertain state and federal funds. Our out-of-state enrollment strategy and *The Light This Candle Campaign* serve these ends.

Confronted with this situation, many liberal arts colleges have made a choice—either to turn away from being places of opportunity or to sacrifice quality and a commitment to high achievement. Such a choice, while understandable, is no less regrettable. To choose the former path means making it more difficult, if not impossible, to serve talented students of limited means, empowering them to assume their places as leaders. It also means turning away from a socioeconomic diversity that enriches the experience of all students. To choose the latter path means beginning a slow but sure decline into mediocrity and, for some, non-existence.

Monmouth cannot solve the puzzle of cost and access for all liberal arts colleges; Monmouth's own long-held commitment to being a place of opportunity has grown dramatically more expensive. But if we judge that this commitment remains worthy—in fact, is even more important now and in the future—what do we do to sustain it while also serving other institutional goals? How do we make the value of the liberal arts as preparation for a life of successful and fulfilling work, especially in a rapidly changing national and global economy, more understandable to those young people rightly concerned about earning a living? How might a growing distinction as a place of both high achievement and high opportunity strengthen the student experience, and therefore the College's place in the market?

Attracting and Serving a Changing Population

Changing demographics present clear challenges and opportunities:

- Competition for students will become even fiercer, as the growth in traditional college-age students—the pool from which residential liberal arts colleges draw—has flattened. The number of high school graduates grew by 32 percent between 1996 and 2008, but will decrease three percent through 2021. Enrollment in postsecondary degree-granting institutions, which increased 43 percent from 1995 to 2009, is projected to increase 13 percent through 2020. Enrollment by 18-24 year-olds will increase by only nine percent. Research indicates that within this more competitive environment, a “re-sorting” of students is taking place, as student choice is driven increasingly by the resources and quality of the college, especially among higher-aptitude students. As a result, stronger colleges can become more selective, while weaker institutions are forced to become less selective. The stronger institutions will be better able to determine their own fates, while the weaker institutions will struggle to ever greater degrees. (Caroline Hoxby, “The Changing Selectivity of American Colleges” and Daniel H. Weiss, “Challenges and Opportunities in the Changing Landscape” in *Remaking College*).
- The U.S. population is also growing more diverse. Between now and 2060, the growth in the traditional college-age population will take place in minority groups; the 18-and-under population of the U.S. will be “majority minority” in 2019, with Hispanics and Asian-Americans comprising the fastest-growing groups. Between 2008 and 2021, the number of white students graduating from high school will decrease by 11 percent, and the number of black students graduating from high school will decrease by two percent. The percentage of Hispanic students graduating from high school will increase by 27 percent, and for Asian-American students will increase by 46 percent. In the same period, enrollment in postsecondary institutions will increase one percent for white students, 25 percent for black students, 46 percent for Hispanic students, and 25 percent for Asian-American students. (Data from National Center for Education Statistics).

- In the same way, our students will live in an increasingly interconnected global society. Cultures, politics, and commerce will more and more ignore national boundaries; the people who will lead and succeed in this environment will be comfortable in such an environment.

What can Monmouth do to strengthen its competitive position, with the resulting benefits of greater control over the size and composition of its student body? How can Monmouth connect with these emerging populations, serving them and creating a richer educational experience for all its students? How can we prepare our students to be at home in the world, wherever in the world they may be?

UPDATE: As students become more concerned about affordability and more aware of their greater ability to negotiate aid packages given declining demographics, the importance of the financial aid award and demonstrating the value of the experience—including career placement following graduation—has significantly increased. This has prompted us, like many colleges, to review and revise our enrollment plans and aid leveraging strategies.

It is also the background to our efforts to keep our curricular and co-curricular programming current with a rapidly changing economy and society. These include the new market-driven academic programs rooted in the liberal arts and sciences and more effective approaches focused on student retention, growth and success. Examples include the new model for advising and mentoring mentioned earlier, and a one-stop “Success Studio” that brings key functions such as the registrar, counseling, the career center, and academic support services together in one prominent location.

The concerns regarding affordability and value also underlie the need for increased endowment for student financial aid and scholarships. This is essential for the College’s sustainability and success, but it is also a moral obligation—access to higher education is more than ever the great determiner in American life.

In regards to changing demographics, the College has taken several steps:

- First, as previously noted, we have targeted new student recruitment markets in areas where the number of high-school graduates is increasing.
- We have held increases in tuition, room and board, and fees to modest levels.
- We have made increased endowment for student financial aid and scholarships the highest priority in *The Light This Candle Campaign*.
- With almost all of the growth in high-school graduates taking place among Hispanic students, we have taken steps to engage that population more effectively—for example, creating a Spanish-language option on the admissions website, ensuring that we have Spanish-language capability on the admission staff, and becoming a member of the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities.
- The College’s ethnic diversity has increased in recent years, with some 30 percent of the student body comprised of domestic students of color. Depending on how one defines “first-generation college,” somewhere between 40 and 50 percent of our students are first-generation. Nearly 40 percent are eligible for federal Pell Grants, which support students from low-income backgrounds. All of these factors mirror the populations in

that are coming to comprise a greater portion of the high-school population. This has moved us to take actions to better support these students. The even better thing is that these steps will help us to better support ALL of our students.

The Threat and Promise of Information Technology

Information technology has become as natural a part of our students' lives as turning on the lights. However, higher education—liberal arts colleges in particular—still struggles with that fact, with firmly held perceptions and assumptions across a wide spectrum. Some observers fix on technology as the cure to many, if not all, of higher education's ills, especially those dealing with cost and access. They criticize the model of the faculty member in a classroom with a small number of students as terribly inefficient, and contend that the transfer of content, of information, can be achieved more cost-effectively through technology. Others fear information technology as a threat to the rigorous and personal nature of residential undergraduate education. Some fear it as a threat to their own employability. But in all cases, information technology represents an innovation with profoundly disruptive effects on the learning environment.

We must see information technology not as the end-in-itself, but as a tool that facilitates our core mission. We must also place instructional technology in the larger process of encouraging and supporting innovations in teaching and learning.

How can Monmouth ensure that this disruption does not dilute the power of our educational enterprise? How do we use it to unleash the energies of our faculty, staff, and students in the quest for a richer teaching and learning experience, focused not just on the transfer of information and knowledge, but rather on the broader goal of human development?

UPDATE: The College has created the position of Instructional Technology Manager, giving us a capacity to use technology in support of creative teaching and learning methods that we have not previously had.

A Broader Concept of Sustainability

As competition for students has sharpened, many institutions have engaged in an arms race regarding facilities. Some critics of higher education, and especially of private liberal arts colleges, enjoy describing residential campuses as resorts, pointing out what they regard as frivolous amenities. These critics blame these extravagances for the rising cost of higher education. Others also see such facilities as yet another indication that the residential liberal arts college is a bastion of the socioeconomically elite, who demand such facilities as their due.

Some institutions have indulged in facilities that are not supportive of their educational mission, and many of these institutions have put themselves into precarious financial positions in doing so. Other institutions, because of financial limitations, have deferred needed new construction and maintenance to the point that their core missions are compromised and their competitive positions are eroding.

Many colleges and universities have also become more sensitive to issues of sustainability, usually using that term to speak of environmental issues—LEED certified buildings are featured prominently on college websites.

But how can we be sure that it is valued for more than bragging rights? How can we correct the conception of some that “sustainability” means only “environmentalism” or “climate concern?” How can we define sustainability more broadly, in financial and social terms as well as environmental? How can we act on all of these senses of sustainability in the development and management of the physical plant and in all aspects of the College’s operation? How do we articulate sustainability, defined in this way, as a fundamental value to be nurtured in young people throughout the educational experience?

The Challenge of Resources

As described above, higher education faces great challenges, and almost all of them have financial aspects or implications. A recent survey of 457 college and university chief financial officers provides insights. For example, only 27 percent responded that they were strongly confident about the sustainability of their institution’s financial model over the next five years; only 13 percent were strongly confident when looking out ten years. Only 22 percent were confident that new spending at their institutions would come from additional revenue, as opposed to reallocating existing funds. (“The 2013 Inside Higher Ed Survey of College and University Business Officers”).

How can we focus our existing resources most effectively on a vision of the College’s future, and develop new resources to advance that vision?

UPDATE: In these challenging times, the College has worked to use existing resources with care AND to increase those resources. While we have made strategic investments in key positions and initiatives, along with providing compensation increases, we have done so within what have been essentially flat budgets over FY2017 through FY2019, and the same will be true for the coming year. We have worked to realize any number of cost reductions or increases in service at the same cost that have been achieved, but let us highlight one here. We have held several faculty positions open over the last three years, achieving some \$924,000 in savings over that period. We will save some \$396,000 in the coming year, and anticipate similar savings over the next several years.

As noted earlier, the College is on stronger ground regarding long-term debt. We have a very healthy long-term debt/net assets ratio. Our low long-term debt is financed at quite favorable rates. We have created the Capital Improvements Fund as a mechanism to anticipate and finance capital needs in ways advantageous to the College.

At the same time, we have taken steps to strength our development efforts to generate a stronger base of gift support:

- We have greatly increased our engagement efforts with alumni through a variety of means, including more frequent and effective communications, a stronger program of alumni events around the country, a stronger Alumni Board, and a better effort at engaging our alumni in career counseling and student recruitment.
- We are creating a Parents and Family Council, analogous to the Alumni Board, to more effectively engage the families of our students.

- We are creating a President’s Advisory Council to create another means of significant involvement for alumni leaders, families of current and former students, and others not directly connected with the College but who have the potential to support the mission of the College if properly engaged.
- We have revamped our annual giving efforts, seeking to engage young alumni as donors and to move current donors more systematically into higher levels of support.
- Our major gifts program has been re-focused, with a much more robust system of moving prospective donors along a continuum of cultivation, solicitation, and stewardship.
- *The Light This Candle Campaign* captures much of this. The Campaign has four objectives:
 - Increased endowment for student financial aid and scholarships;
 - Increased endowment for academic innovation and faculty support;
 - Increased endowment for facilities through the Capital Improvements Fund, and;
 - An even stronger culture of philanthropy built around a stronger program of annual giving at the \$1,000-per year and up levels, along with a larger register of deferred and planned gifts.

Strategic Directions for Monmouth College

American higher education is now in a period of concentrated change, and no college or university is immune. This is especially true for residential liberal arts colleges. Over the next decade or so, a great sorting-out will take place among these institutions. Some, lacking the resources and/or will to respond positively, will hunker down and hope to survive; in doing so, they set themselves on a path to stagnation, to declining quality, and, in some cases, to extinction. Other colleges are responding by dramatically changing who they are, trying to be all things and adopting short-term fixes that dilute or abandon a commitment to the liberal arts. A much smaller group of colleges, those with the largest endowments and deepest applicant pools, feel no sense of urgency, no real need to innovate.

If we are to bring order and progress from this turmoil, if we are to fulfill the potential that lies within each of us and in our societies, education is the key. But if we are to help free our country, our world, of the dogmas of the quiet past, we as educational institutions and those who lead them must start with ourselves. We must think anew, and act anew.

Monmouth is distinctively positioned to define another path—creating a more intentional, purposeful, and coordinated program of human development, and ensuring that this experience is responsive and available to a changing American and global society. This path represents the next stage in the evolution of the residential liberal arts experience. In this time of dramatic change for higher education, Monmouth has not just the opportunity, not just the necessity, but the duty to lead. As the external environment becomes more challenging and our enrollment results fail to meet projections, we realize that we must accelerate all of our planning while finding ways to further enrich the educational experience we provide and increase the value of a Monmouth College education.

The analysis of the College’s core commitments, of its internal strengths and weaknesses, and of the challenges and opportunities presented by the external environment point us toward four strategic directions, mirroring the four pillars of Wallace Hall.

Strategic Direction One:**The Experience—Lives Examined, Lives Empowered through the Liberating Arts**

We start by thinking not of the liberal arts, in the traditional sense. Rather, let us think of the liberating arts, an experience that frees our students from the particular moments of their births. Our enterprise possesses great power. That power resides in the process of human development—not just in the transmission of a body of knowledge, not just the preparation for a job, but in the guided growth of young women and men as intellectual, social, moral, and physical beings. Such an experience will allow them to answer challenges, seize opportunities as yet unimagined. Such an experience will include, but go beyond, what columnist David Brooks recently described as the “resume virtues”—those that we bring to the marketplace—to include what he called the “eulogy virtues—those talked about at our funerals.” Brooks continued, “Our culture and educational systems spend more time teaching the skills and strategies for career success than the qualities needed to radiate an inner light. Many of us are clearer on how to build an external career than on how to build inner character.” Our national and global society yearns for such people as leaders, and no educational experience fulfills this purpose better than that which Monmouth and other strong residential colleges offer.

But as strong as that experience is, it is not adequate to the moment at hand. We must imagine and create an environment that prepares our students for the world in which they will live, work, thrive, and lead. If we were gathering today to found a college from scratch, would its curriculum, its organization, look like ours, or that of hundreds of other liberal arts colleges? Most likely not.

Breaking Down Walls

The issues that our students will confront in their own lives and as leaders in society will all have many facets; the challenges cannot be met, nor the opportunities seized, solely with the knowledge of any one academic discipline. These issues exist within a complex web of human experience, and those who will best lead us to solutions will be grounded in the breadth of that experience.

Our experience should be truly integrative and multidisciplinary. Our students will not approach their careers, much less their personal or civic lives, solely from the perspective of any one discipline. Monmouth can achieve a balanced approach to this interdisciplinary imperative, one that draws on the strengths of the disciplines while energizing them as scholarly and teaching tools through the new perspectives derived from closer connection with other disciplines. This balanced approach will provide more and stronger opportunities for students to make connections among the disciplines, to approach questions from a variety of perspectives, and to craft an experience focused on their intellectual and personal development goals.

Combining different ideas, different methods, in new ways to address old problems and problems yet unknown—this attribute is increasingly desired and demanded. Let us mirror that experience now.

Doing the Discipline

Our experience should be truly experiential, achieving the true understanding that comes from doing. Each of us had inspiring lecturers in our college days, but the strongest of them also

created opportunities for us to employ the methods that they themselves had mastered, allowing us to “do the discipline,” not just observe it.

Monmouth has a strong foundation in this area. Programs such as SOFIA, the *Midwest Journal of Undergraduate Research*, and the Educational Garden exemplify the place that undergraduate research and other forms of experiential learning already have in our approach. Another example of community-based teaching and learning is the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program, directed and staffed by our students to serve low income members of the area community. This service to the area is a part of a course called “Taxes and the Citizenry,” demonstrating the great power that comes from engaged and experiential learning. Also, the Monmouth College Coffee Project uses the roasting and marketing of varieties of coffee as a medium to investigate topics ranging from agriculture to economics to cultural anthropology to marketing. We have the opportunity to enhance this aspect of our experience, to make it a point of distinction for our students and for the College.

The Power to Act

In consort with “doing the discipline,” our experience should demonstrate the power of the liberating arts in the world—the power to create a vibrant career, the power to effect positive change, the power to lead a rich and fulfilling life.

Monmouth demonstrates this understanding through programs such as the Triad, which identifies issues in the wider world as “centers of gravity” around which to organize innovative teaching and learning opportunities. Likewise, our Citizenship courses move students to act upon their educations and beliefs, whether by addressing Midwestern politics, working with richly diverse immigrant communities in the area, developing sustainable agriculture in our organic farm, studying water scarcity in our green initiatives, or thinking about how voluntarism is an extension of a liberal education itself. We also demonstrate this idea by maintaining our commitment to our Presbyterian heritage while promoting interfaith literacy and dialogue—a commitment that nurtures our students to be interfaith leaders, equipped to address the challenges and opportunities of growing religious diversity.

Again, we have the opportunity to strengthen this aspect of our experience, make it more central to the growth of our students, and to place them, and the College, in a stronger competitive position. Through possible measures such as enhanced opportunities in research, community-based learning, community service, and greater linkage between the traditional curricular experience and campus life activities, Monmouth students will have the opportunity to succeed—and the opportunity to fail—and, in both, to grow in the courage to lead and serve. “We were not put in this world to sit still and know,” Woodrow Wilson said to his students at Princeton. “We were put in this world to act.”

The World is Ours

As journalist Thomas Friedman famously wrote, “the world is flat.” Our students already live in a global society, in which ideas, commerce, opportunities, and challenges leap beyond political boundaries. This will become ever truer in the future.

To prepare our students to thrive, lead, and succeed in such a world, we must create more opportunities for greater engagement in our global society. We will do this through a campus experience more global in all its aspects—our curriculum, our student life programs, our faculty and staff, and our student body. We will also create a more varied and vigorous program of study abroad—one conceived and directed more fully by Monmouth faculty and staff. We have already taken a step, both symbolic and practical, in this direction through the creation of the “Monmouth—Your Passport” program. Beginning with the class entering this fall, the College will facilitate the application and pay the fee for any new student who does not already have a U.S. passport.

UPDATE: We have taken several steps to increase our students’ exposure to global society, including the establishment of the Monmouth-run semester-long residential program in Merida, Mexico, completion of several January and May travel experiences, planning for increased travel experiences during our new short ScotsTerms, and reviewing options for new travel experiences in Europe and the British Isles. A very important step forward is the creation of the Office of Global Citizenship, which will support the faculty in bringing greater consistency and quality to our current programs and in expanding the variety of our programs. This position will also help to bring an enhanced global perspective to our on-campus academic and student life programs.

The Monmouth College Way

All of these elements support the articulation of a coherent, concrete, intentional, and demonstrable program of human development. In this experience, our students do more than complete a checklist of course requirements. Rather, they develop and can demonstrate a set of attributes, competencies, and characteristics that will serve them throughout their lives.

Monmouth has long believed in this idea, but we have the opportunity to better serve our students, to better serve society, and to create a more distinctive experience, by making it the organizational and philosophical foundation of what we do.

We must first recognize, and act upon, the fact that our students are not comprised of little silos—one part academic, one part residence life, one part athletics or arts or student government. Each of these shapes our students’ development. No matter what our particular titles may be, we are all teachers—and we are all learners.

This holistic approach has deep roots, the strongest of them in Illinois. In the late 19th Century, Chicago, like other growing urban centers in America, had many residents facing a whole range of challenges—poverty, lack of access to education, substance abuse, domestic violence, and crime. Jane Addams realized that these issues could not be addressed in isolation, that they created a vicious circle, preventing these people from reaching their full potential as workers, as citizens, as human beings. In 1889, Addams founded the Hull-House on Chicago’s Near West Side to bring this new approach to practice. Her philosophy has been replicated many times in the years since. If this all-encompassing process of human development can achieve great results for groups facing severe challenges, think how much more powerful it can be for young people with the strengths that our students possess.

Both the external environment and the internal development of the College make this THE moment to adopt and pursue this direction. As stated above, at the same time that some elements of American society question the relevance of our experience, our society calls for the very attributes that our kind of experience best provides. As a community, we understand this, and have begun to act on it through such efforts as the Teagle and Mellon initiatives on the first- and second-year experiences, through the NetVUE initiative, and through the adoption of a move to a true mentoring model as the topic of our Quality Initiative for reaffirmation of accreditation.

We have the opportunity to better serve our students, better serve society, and position ourselves more strongly, by fully realizing the power of the residential liberal arts experience. Every aspect of this experience will be woven into a seamless and mutually reinforcing program of human development. We should ban the term “extracurricular,” for nothing is outside or extraneous, if properly conceived and executed. We all know the Type A student who creates, indeed demands, this experience for herself. We will create a concrete process that makes such an experience the norm for all of our students. Students, guided by faculty and staff mentors, will from their matriculation develop a plan that seeks not just the completion of a set of course requirements, but rather a range of experiences that helps the students to grow in intellect, character, responsibility, and confidence. This plan will evolve as the student evolves, demonstrating and reinforcing the ability to reflect and adapt that will make them more attractive to prospective employers and graduate programs. Most important, it will lead them to success and fulfillment in their professional, civic, and personal lives.

This experience should be called “The Monmouth College Way.” This has been a derisive term over the years, signaling for its users a range of sentiments—resignation to or satisfaction with less, a rationalization for standing pat, and not considering new and better ways of serving our students. Some members of our community have seen the College endure difficult times, and that those times may have created some portion of this mindset.

But those times are past, and we are not that college anymore. Monmouth truly is among a small handful of colleges that are both strong enough and hungry enough to lead. The Monmouth College Way will become a unifying theme, a point of pride, for the special nature of our experience. It will also provide a compelling way to describe that experience and attract others to it. Most important, it will nurture in our students the skills and attributes that will empower them for the rest of their lives. If we do that as creatively, as effectively, as passionately as possible, we will more easily realize the other possibilities before us.

UPDATE: While the term “The Monmouth College Way” did not gain traction, the ideas behind it have. As noted elsewhere, the Retention Moonshot, the move to a holistic approach to student mentoring, the reinvigoration of the Integrated Studies Program, and the creation of interdisciplinary opportunities such as the Triads are just some examples of the efforts to make this a coherent, seamless experience for our students that nurtures and guides their growth in all aspects of their lives.

The Continuing Revolution

It is truer than ever before that change is the one constant. As we empower our students to anticipate and adapt to change, to thrive and lead in such a world, we must also prepare ourselves

as an institution to do the same. We can do this by adopting a mindset and processes that encourage and implement continuing innovations and improvements in how we pursue our mission.

Two examples present themselves. First, we should create a Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) to serve as an in-house think-tank to support our teaching and learning process through the enhancement of current approaches and the development of new methods—including a much more robust use of instructional technology.

Second, and more broadly, we will fully implement a new approach to strategic planning. The standard method is an episodic one—committees formed, discussions held, research conducted, documents drafted, plans sometimes implemented, sometimes not. Some years pass, then the cycle starts all over again.

The Monmouth approach will be different. Rather than a start-and-stop method, the planning process will become the framework for our collective management of the College. Strategic directions will be set, implementation plans will developed and followed, with defined action steps, clear timelines, responsible parties, resource needs, and assessment methods. These implementation plans become the basis of the College's strategic and day-to-day decisions. Distinctive to this approach is a regular re-assessment of the assumptions and conditions that informed the strategic directions themselves—a regular and full refreshing and refocusing of the plan. This process will help maintain a culture based on well-informed self-awareness and commitment to continuing improvement.

UPDATE: The College has taken great steps to create and sustain this culture of planning. The College's statement of strategic directions, *Think Anew, Act Anew*, continues to guide our work as a Board and campus community—providing us a basis for action and for adjustment as necessary. The plan informs all that we do, and the Board receives regular updates on our pursuit of those directions in the normal course of our work. In that way, strategic planning becomes strategic management—not some stand-alone enterprise, but rather woven into the fabric of the College's work every day.

That said, we can and will do a better job of reporting within the structure of the planning process. The Planning and Priorities Committee, originally formed to the guide the setting of strategic directions and action steps, will be re-constituted. The Director of Institutional Research and Planning will take on the direct management of that process. The Committee will meet at scheduled intervals to discuss updates on activity and to consider any change in circumstance, internal or external, that might necessitate modifications. The Committee's discussions will be shared with the campus community. The Board will continue to receive updates on activity in the normal course of its work, and will receive a more formal update in a form similar to this each summer, following the end of the fiscal year.

Several new or reinforced efforts are described throughout this updated document. For example, recognizing the need to offer our students a full mix of professional programs and career opportunities, we have worked with Hanover Research Associates to identify three new majors that we will be working to implement—neuroscience; data science, and engineering.

Another action to increase the value of our educational experience is *The Monmouth College Commitment* (U=MC2) that guarantees incoming students who meet the College's academic and social expectations, and seek them, the opportunity for an internship, graduation in four years, and a study abroad experience.

Vice President for Student Life and Dean of Students Laura Hutchinson joined the College a year ago, and in that time has led thorough conversations about the student experience at Monmouth. A summary of those considerations follows:

Retention and the transition experience:

The student experience at Monmouth College is one that flourishes when students feel a sense of connection with their faculty, their academic studies, and with one another. Like many small residential liberal arts colleges in the Midwest and elsewhere, retention work is valued not solely for financial reasons but out of concern for college completion and the return on investment that graduates receive over the course of their lifetime through overall higher earnings and more diverse opportunities for career trajectory. Retention is complex, multi-faceted, and the responsibility of every member of the community but is led jointly by the College's chief academic officer and chief student affairs officer.

Laura Hutchinson, the current chief student affairs officer, began at Monmouth College in the fall of 2017. She led, with co-facilitators, a day-long retention retreat that included the chief officers from academic affairs and enrollment management, members of the faculty, athletics and staff from student affairs, and the president and vice president of student government. The goal was to identify initiatives that support student engagement and learning as part of improving the first-to-second year retention rates. Initiatives related to logistics (how "business" gets done), academics (advising, gateway course completion, policies), campus culture (how we treat one another), and engagement (co-curricular life) were compiled and by September 30, 2018 will be formally adopted into a retention strategic plan with individual areas and staff/faculty members identified as responsible for particular tasks, with metrics and timelines. In the immediate term, Student Life staff have focused on the first six weeks, beginning when students arrive early for immersive academic experiences and fall sports. Review of how we open our campus and welcome new students resulted in changes to orientation, training for resident assistants and orientation leaders, and a commitment to improving the transition to the first year of college. Data supporting this was drawn from NSSE and other assessments that indicated incoming students of all backgrounds needed more support in feeling welcome to campus.

Monmouth College benefits from an attractive campus (also a retention point) and faculty who care about students and their experience. We learned that students make a decision in the first six-to-eight weeks whether they will stay at a college, leave or transfer. They may not always consciously articulate this decision until later in the academic year but their transition matters. We concluded that along with the addition of first year peer mentors in fall of 2017, a revamped orientation that will include an additional day beginning fall of 2018, and numerous initiatives around the retention plan that the experience of the first six weeks will improve, and more students will "decide" to stay at Monmouth College into their second year.

Student Life will develop a divisional strategic plan beginning in late September 2018 that will more fully flesh out goals, metrics for success, and that will align resources with the College's strategic plan and the critical ways that student affairs contributes to student retention and graduation as well as student engagement in co-curricular life. In preparation for this, all departments within Student Life are now working with information from the Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS) to begin aligning their work within a framework that supports their mission. The year will also include a retreat in January, following consultation with faculty, other staff members and students, and the plan will be ready to share with the Board of Trustees in July 2019, with annual reports provided each fall board meeting in October.

Experiential education: partnering with faculty:

Another goal in Student Life is to continue the guidance from the College's 2008 reaccreditation visit to have closer partnerships between academic and student affairs. Monmouth College has a history of highly collaborative engagement between the two deans that continued with a new Dean of Students who is equally committed to this same relationship with a new Dean of the Faculty, expected to begin in the Spring of 2019. Currently student affairs partners with faculty in three experiential initiatives : the Lux Summer Theological Institute, the Monmouth Educational Garden, and SOfiA, all of which have residential components. Staff from our Religious Life office work with faculty from religion and philosophy on a two-week term for high school youth, several of whom apply to the College, with robust learning and activities related to studies of the Bible, theology, worship and social justice, all of which are part of the Presbyterian Church identity of the College. The Monmouth College Educational Garden is also residential; students have internships, live on campus, and work under the direction of a faculty member on an actual farm, with "U pick" days for faculty and community members to come and pick various vegetables and fruit crops at cost, and they also manage the farm as a small business. The SOfiA program, also residential, offers incoming first-year students the opportunity to do research with a current undergraduate and a faculty member, which they then present during welcome week. SOfiA began as a week-long residential program, after which the students moved into their permanent fall housing assignments. Beginning in July 2018, SOfiA will become a living-learning community. These students will stay housed together, with RAs that were part of the program, into the new academic year. The program will have a joint assessment from Residence Life and the participating faculty to gauge academic and co-curricular engagement as well as satisfaction. Residence Life will also be providing co-curricular activities for the participants this coming fall. The directors of Residence Life and Student Success are actively seeking faculty partnerships for two additional living-learning communities and will base that process on what is learned from these current immersive experiences as well as the SOfiA program.

Co-curricular engagement:

Monmouth College has three full-time professional staff in Campus Events and Student Involvement. The area is led by a highly experienced and capable Associate Dean/Director, and also includes a student organization, ASAP, which plans numerous activities for students. As the division has focused on greater outreach and involvement with students, more programs will focus on connecting students with one another in ways that students often did not need or want a generation ago. Students are often attracted to a small college because of the relationships; however, another aspect of students not transitioning well is that they experience loneliness and a

sense of isolation despite the fact that they are surrounded by others. They may be recognized, but not known. Ways to mitigate this include a robust offering of different organizations, in addition to fraternity and sorority life, and opportunities for community service.

Students have club and intramural sport offerings, interest group opportunities as well as participation in student government. As the student body grows more diverse, identity groups are also active and welcoming. However, some students may feel so overwhelmed early on that they want to wait for spring before getting more involved. Campus Events and Greek life staff are engaged in various communication strategies to increase connection and involvement. Fraternities at the College have seen a downturn in membership over the past several years. Focus groups indicated that members struggle with communicating the value of fraternal membership. Staff members have responded by adding recruitment training sessions and moving men's recruitment back in the fall to allow incoming students more time to consider membership.

A number of initiatives from the retention retreat also focus on adding spontaneous activities during lunch and passing periods that are simple but allow students to stop for free ice cream or hot chocolate. Intentional planning will also result in having partner activities to a number of athletic contests to draw students to a lively event where they can meet others who might not otherwise attend. Residence Life does a number of programs throughout the year, but more time will be spent in the first six weeks helping students connect to their floors and identify ways to get involved. The College also has diverse religious activities and a robust chapel program. The Stockdale Leadership program and Religious and Spiritual Life both sponsor alternative spring break trips, and our student athletes participate in Scots Day of Service at a high rate.

A welcoming and diverse community.

The work of inclusion within the Division of Student Life is grounded in the work of Sherry K. Watt, Ph.D., of the University of Iowa, who has published significantly in student affairs/higher education peer-reviewed journals and other publications. Her work focuses on privilege and on developing practical tips to help guide our work in ensuring that under-represented students feel not just a part of the community but also see themselves having agency and influence within the community. The new Vice President of Student Life brings experience from a highly diverse campus with a number of initiatives that are helping develop deeper capacity within student affairs to understand white privilege, intersectionality and draw more students into the conversation—and decisions—about the construct of community. Beginning with the senior team, she has added structured meeting time around timely articles on free speech, identity and privilege, and led a group of staff to attend trainings at other institutions. Several members of the division participate in faculty book clubs around books by international and domestic authors of color as well as those focused on diversity in higher education.

In a good example of robust diversity programming outside of the Office of Intercultural Life, the Religious Life staff led a reading of Mujerista theology with a diverse group of women, predominantly Hispanic and Latina. This focused on Latin perspectives of faith, Christianity, and spiritual experiences of Latina women. Intercultural and International Student staff members work with faculty on programs as well as trainings throughout campus. In September, for example, Jane Elliott, who famously taught about diversity in primary education in Iowa, will be

on campus for a lecture, but will also be visiting classes and having conversations with students about teaching diversity.

Monmouth College has actively moved to increase diversity in admissions, which has helped students of color feel more empowered and “safer” at Monmouth as they see more students of color coming to the College. Where the College is challenged is in attracting and retaining faculty of color who can be mentors, provide academic role modeling and a sense of belonging. An Associate Dean in Student Life has led a committee (“All of Us Together”) for the past year following various demonstrations by students of color asking for more resources and attention to national-level issues of bias, racism, and violence. Beginning in September 2018, the associate dean will work within the committee structure (which includes the chief academic and student affairs officers, faculty, staff and students) on a strategic plan for diversity that will include recommendations for hiring. The Dean of the Faculty has been successful in obtaining grant money from the Associated Colleges of the Midwest (ACM) in order to hire post-doctoral faculty for two-year terms, who might then choose to make the College their professional home.

Another outcome of the retention retreat was the initiative for a “20 foot Rule”—Student Life staff members will be expected to greet students and others within 20 feet as they are enroute to meetings, events, or other activities on campus beginning in August 2018. As part of the six week focus, staff will also wear name tags during that entire period so that students can learn their names, and they can be easily identified as a source of information and support. Specific questions will be added to short, “walking” surveys of an informal nature as well as to the Student Satisfaction Inventory the College uses as part of its partnership with Ruffalo Noel-Levitz to measure students’ sense of belonging. The “walking” surveys will take place during the six week period, and again in November 2018, with notes gathered for assessment. The Student Satisfaction Survey will be scheduled by the Director of Institutional Research in the fall.

Strategic Direction Two:

The People—Bringing Excellent Faculty, Staff, and Students Together

The experience described here is focused, of course, on students—challenging them to meet a high standard of quality, and at the same time providing the individual attention that will help each one reach his or her fullest potential. But it is our faculty and staff who create, sustain, and renew this experience. Our students are guided by faculty members who, in addition to “professing” knowledge of their disciplines, act as guides and mentors. Staff members play similar roles, for we are all educators. Monmouth College must develop and sustain a faculty and staff—in preparation, backgrounds, number, compensation, and creative and continuing growth—that is empowered and committed to pursue such a model.

Monmouth has long prided itself on making a challenging educational experience available to students from all socioeconomic backgrounds, and in recent years has become much more diverse in terms of ethnic and national origin. The College will enhance its commitment to being a place of high opportunity. But to do so, we need to increase the resources available to serve bright and deserving students of limited financial circumstances. We will also make the College more attractive to students of greater financial means so that they are willing to pay more for this

experience, enabling us to focus financial aid resources on those more truly in need of them, and to enhancing the overall quality of our experience.

We have already adopted a more strategic approach to enrollment size. As has been discussed, the quest for headcount at all costs was unsustainable, both from financial and quality-of-experience perspectives. We are working to stabilize and enhance per student net revenue and student quality. We will determine appropriate targets for measured, strategic growth in the size of the student body within that context. Such growth in enrollment serves two purposes. First, it will continue to be the main source of new revenue to advance the College, even as we work to grow the endowment in significant ways in the next few years. Measured, strategic growth in the student body will also serve us in a programmatic sense, allowing us to increase geographic diversity, achieve critical mass in certain programs, and establish new opportunities.

The College will also take advantage of changing demographics. First, Monmouth will become more geographically diverse. We will always serve Illinois, but we will best serve our Illinois students by attracting more students from across the country and around the globe, bringing their perspectives and experiences to the mix. The College must also broaden its geographic base because the traditional college-age population in Illinois is stagnating. We will target those areas in which those populations are growing for greater emphasis, all the while maintaining our commitment to Illinois. Second, the College will seek to position itself more effectively with those populations that are growing within American society, most specifically the Hispanic communities.

UPDATE: Using data from several sources, including trustees, alumni and work by Hanover Research Associates, we have greatly expanded our out-of-state recruiting efforts and have increased our number of non-Illinois new full-time freshmen from 27 in the fall of 2013 to 61 in the fall of 2017.

As noted above, with almost all of the growth in high-school graduates taking place among Hispanic students, we have taken steps to engage that population more effectively—for example, creating a Spanish-language option on the admissions website, ensuring that we have Spanish-language capability on the admission staff, and becoming a member of the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities.

Strategic Direction Three:

The Place—An Environment that Empowers Great Teaching and Learning

Primarily through the leadership of the Board of Trustees, the College has over the last several years made dramatic improvements in its facilities across the board—curricular, residential, and athletic.

If Monmouth is to distinguish itself by offering an educational experience that develops the whole person, we must continue to develop facilities that support that experience in all its facets. The planning discussion identified the lack of an effective campus center as our greatest need. However, other needs and opportunities demand our attention.

- Our residential facilities on the east side of campus are showing their age.

- Our fraternity housing also needs serious attention
- While the Center for Science and Business has created excellent spaces for the faculty in those areas, we need to enhance the office and classroom spaces in other areas of the campus, both disciplinary and physical.
- Our campus has great curb appeal, but we should engage in a more systematic approach to landscaping and grounds management to enhance that appeal further—both for prospective members of our community and for those already here.
- We need to continue work to complete the Greek Initiative with the development of new space for Kappa Kappa Gamma and an examination of facilities for men’s fraternities.
- We should also develop a plan to preserve and enhance our legacy buildings, such as Marshall and Wallace.

As we do this, we must design, construct, and maintain those facilities in ways that are financially, environmentally, and socially sustainable. The College should also remain prepared to acquire property adjacent to campus that can serve the College’s needs. The College can define sustainability not just in environmental terms, but also as a social and financial value, and apply that definition to the renovation of existing facilities, the development of new ones, and, indeed, all of the College’s management practices.

UPDATE: We have worked to establish a more systematic and coordinated approach to facilities planning and management. The first iteration of a comprehensive assessment and ranking of our capital maintenance needs has been completed and is beginning to be used to guide our capital budgeting and facilities work. The creation of the Capital Improvements Fund is a major enhancement of our ability to plan and fund capital projects. We also have a much stronger director of facilities management.

Other steps include:

- The generosity of friends and alums has allowed us to construct a grand new home for the women of Pi Beta Pi, and purchase and renovate a home that is now being used as the Chapter House for Kappa Kappa Gamma.
- We also negotiated an extension of our food service contract with Aramark, and as a condition of the extension they have made a \$750,000 investment in the Stockdale Center that rebrands and renovates the food court on the lower level and the main dining room. Students have responded positively to these changes.
- A working group met with architects from Hastings and Chivetta and reviewed several scenarios for the construction of a new campus center. Their work has identified a number of significant planning and fund-raising issues that are still being examined.
- A new campus center remains a priority, but we determined that renovation of our older residence halls on Ninth Street was a higher priority. We have also worked with Hastings and Chivetta and Pepper Construction Company to draft and review plans for the renovation of our three most outdated residence halls: Grier, Cleland, and Liedman. Gifts to the Capital Improvements Fund have been leveraged to provide the funding needed, via a long-term loan, for the renovation of Grier Hall. This \$6.5 million project

is underway with an anticipated completion date of October 1, 2018 and occupancy in the 2019 spring semester.

- Maintenance of the grounds and landscaping has also improved significantly.

Strategic Direction Four:

The Resources—A Stronger Financial Foundation and a Stronger Presence in the Marketplace

A Stronger Financial Foundation

The College has three sources of income—endowment, annual gifts, and student revenue, with the latter by far the largest. Student revenue net of institutional financial aid comprises some 75 percent of our operating budget, with the portion contributed by endowment earnings at 6.5 to 7.5 percent, and annual giving at 7 to 8 percent.

As discussed earlier, we have taken steps to strengthen our income from student revenue, and those steps are already seeing results. Our per student net revenue is up significantly over last year. The number of new first-time students is down largely because applications were down, due to a decision not to pursue a cadre of students who were clearly not prepared to persist and succeed and who brought no resources to the College. Applications were also down because of some issues in the development of a pool of prospective students and our communications with that pool. With new leadership and new approaches in admissions that trend will reverse itself. This will be a long-term endeavor, but it is headed in the right direction.

We have also seen progress in annual gifts for current operations. While we will seek to increase this stream, both through growing the size of the average gift and the percentage of alumni participation, given the size of our donor base, annual gifts will carry us only so far.

Growing the endowment best serves the College's future, both near- and long-term. While certainly subject to fluctuations of its own, endowment remains the best guarantor of a stronger College in the years to come. Monmouth College has seen significant growth in the endowment in the last ten years, even with the Great Recession in the midst of that period. As of June 30, 2015, market value of the endowment stood at approximately \$98.5 million. A truer measure is endowment per student—just over \$76,000 for the College. However it is measured, our endowment must continue to grow significantly, and sooner rather than later. While all growth in endowment is welcome and needed, more endowment for student financial aid and scholarships is the highest priority. For us, and for almost all residential liberal arts colleges, endowment for this purpose is tantamount to unrestricted endowment. At present, only five percent of our \$24 million commitment to institutional financial aid and scholarships is funded by endowment restricted for that purpose. The more of that commitment that is funded by endowment, the more other dollars can be released to other purposes. And, of course, growing that portion of the endowment will help to secure the College's commitment to being a place of high opportunity. The Board had earlier established a goal of \$130,000 per student. We will

update the projections on how far market growth will take us in the near term, and then study the feasibility of closing that gap through gifts, also in the near term.

Monmouth has also begun a process of examining its financing/debt policies. The College has a low debt burden, in what is still a very favorable credit market, allowing us to consider opportunities to secure our current debt and to address facilities needs through the creation of a Capital Improvements Fund (CIF).

A Stronger Presence in the Marketplace

Monmouth College is indeed a hidden gem among the nation's liberal arts colleges. We will remove the adjective from that phrase. As we all know, and as has been described again in this document, Monmouth has many strengths. But we can and will articulate and celebrate those strengths in a more comprehensive, creative, and assertive plan of marketing and branding. Work is underway to solicit proposals from outside firms who can assist us in the creation and execution of such a plan.

Constituent Relations

In support of both of these efforts, the College will strengthen its already effective development and constituent relations program. We will create venues for greater involvement by alumni, parents, and friends through a closer involvement of the Alumni Board, the creation of a President's Advisory Council, and a Parent Association. We will also strengthen our alumni and parent involvement in student recruitment and career development.

UPDATE:

- We will work to systematically review the critical aspects of our financial condition and our allocation of operating and capital resources to insure that we are doing all we can to meet the College's strategic goals while conducting operations in a sustainable and cost-effective manner.
- As previously mentioned, we have revised and expanded our capital budgeting processes and have also worked to make our operating budget processes more decentralized. This work will be continuous and subject to periodic review and refinement.
- In regard to student revenue, however, while some aspects of our revised recruiting efforts are moving in the right direction, the results to date fall below projections and are not sustainable. As a result we are carefully monitoring our enrollment planning and aid leveraging strategies and will adjust, on an annual basis, as needed. The ever-increasing concern by student family's about cost and debt undergird the need for increased funded aid and a larger scholarship endowment. We should also work with APR to insure that affordability is as accurately as possible factored into our aid leveraging model. This ever-increasing student and societal concern was a major factor in structuring our new *Light this Candle Campaign*, whose primary focus is increased endowment for student financial aid and scholarships.
- Improvements in our broader constituent relations and fundraising work have been noted earlier in this document, as have our enhanced communications and marketing efforts.

Development of Implementation Plans: “Operationalizing” the Plan

This draft document will continue to be shaped through conversations with the Board, the campus community, and through the Alumni Association. However, the broad strategic directions are clear enough that we will proceed with the development of implementation plans through which to pursue these directions. As noted earlier, these plans will contain specific action steps, timelines, responsible parties, resource needs, and assessment methods. These plans will be developed by working groups comprised of trustees, faculty, staff, students, and alumni.

Such working groups are already underway regarding the consideration of a short term, the development of a new Triad, the study of “vocation as calling,” and improving retention. The following list is not to be inclusive or exclusive, but other working groups will most likely focus on:

- The Experience, with sub-groups on multidisciplinary teaching and learning, experiential learning and undergraduate research, the global experience, The Monmouth College Way, and continuing innovation—in the teaching and learning process, to be sure, but all across the College.
- The People, with sub-groups on faculty and staff development, faculty and staff diversity, and student recruitment, especially in developing a stronger position in new markets and emerging demographics.
- The Place, with subgroups on a campus center, on academic facilities, on information technology, on sustainability, and on campus beautification.
- The Resources.

UPDATE: Operationalizing the plan is taking place in three primary ways:

- First is the fact that the plan has woven itself into the fabric of our operations across and at all levels of the College’s operation, thus becoming strategic *management*, which is the goal of any good planning process. Assessment, adjustment, and implementation occur and are reported in the normal course of conducting the College’s business.
- As stated earlier, we can and will do a better job of incorporating the framework of the planning process. The Planning and Priorities Committee will be re-constituted, and the Director of Institutional Research and Planning will take on the direct management of that process. The Committee will meet at scheduled intervals to discuss updates on activity and to consider any change in circumstance, internal or external, that might necessitate modifications. The Committee’s discussions will be shared with the campus community. The Board will continue to receive updates on activity in the normal course of its work, and will receive a more formal update in a form similar to this each summer, following the end of the fiscal year.
- The four strategic directions—The Experience, The People, The Place, and Resources—have directly informed the four objectives of *The Light This Candle Campaign*—endowment for student financial aid and scholarships, endowment for academic innovation and faculty support, endowment for facilities, and an even stronger culture of philanthropy.

Conclusion

“Get Together,” a 1967 song by The Youngbloods, was an anthem of the 1960s. The closing stanza goes:

If you hear the song I sing,
You must understand,
You hold the key to love and fear,
All in your trembling hand.
Just one key unlocks them both,
It’s there at your command.

The key that we hold is not just to “love and fear.” We hold the key to intellectual curiosity. We hold the key to creative thinking. We hold the key to integrity. We hold the key to responsibility for self and others. We hold the key to moral courage. We hold the key to wisdom. We hold the key to the grace that comes from a life examined, a life empowered.

Conflict and challenge confront us at every turn. Yet, the promise of peace and prosperity unprecedented in human history lie within our grasp. Our opportunity, our obligation, is to raise our sights, to envision, create, and sustain an educational experience that nurtures the people who will unlock that future. Let us seize this opportunity, and carry it out to the best of our abilities, with determination and joy. Our only limits are imagination and energy.

Appendix A

Planning & Priorities Committee Members

- Amber Berge - 2015-16 President, Associated Students of Monmouth College
- Stephen Bloomer – Vice President for Development and College Relations
- Daryl Carr – Chief Information Officer
- Marti Carwile – Acquisitions Manager
- Jackie Condon – Vice President for Student Affairs
- Michael Connell – Professor, Political Economy and Commerce
- Stacy Cordery – Professor, History
- Marsha Dopheide – Associate Professor, Psychology
- Zachary Erwin – Assistant Professor, Modern Languages, Literatures and Cultures
- Jim Fry – Assistant Director of Campus Events
- Trent Gilbert – Vice President of Enrollment Management
- Sara Gorchoff – Assistant Professor, Psychology
- Farhat Haq – Professor, Political Science
- Christine Johnston – Special Assistant to the President for Institutional Research
- Tim Keefauver – Vice President for Strategic Initiatives
- Ashwani Kumar – Assistant Professor, Physics

- Stacy Lotz – Professor, Art
- Richard Marshall – Vice President for Finance and Business
- Teri Ott – Chaplain
- Emily Rollie – Assistant Professor, Theatre
- Jayne Schreck – Associate Vice President for Financial Aid
- Kari Shimmin – Instructor, Kinesiology and Head Volleyball Coach
- Audra Sostarecz – Associate Professor, Chemistry
- David Timmerman – Dean of the Faculty
- Joan Wertz – Professor, Psychology
- Mark Willhardt – Professor, English
- Ronda Willhardt – Executive Assistant to the President

Appendix B

Core Commitments Summary: Faculty, Staff, and P&P: Fall 2014

The following is a list of core commitments and/or characteristics of Monmouth College that are integral to the institution's identity.

- Develop students from a range of starting points to their highest potential as learners, thinkers and global citizens
- Campus family environment created by nurturing and respectful relationships between students, faculty and staff
- Liberal arts education with an integrated, interdisciplinary approach
- Residential campus with first-rate facilities
- Strong traditions based on our Presbyterian and Scottish heritages
- Connected to the local community through shared events and volunteering
- Diverse group of supportive alums which provides a network of lifetime connections for graduates
- Engaged, experiential learning with research and off campus opportunities
- Close mentoring by the faculty which supports the holistic development of the student

Core Commitments Summary: Board Executive Committee, February 2015

- Create extraordinary outcomes for students through a value-added experience
- Engage and empower students
- Graduate students who are able to adapt; prepare ordinary students for unexpected lives and careers
- Be nimble, flexible, and entrepreneurial as an institution; aspire to be more
- Maintain a safe, residential campus community with a strong moral compass

The Best Elements of *Fulfilling the Promise*, the Vision Statement, the Campus Master Plan, and the Business Plan

- Commitment to improving retention/graduation rates
- Active learning as an organizing principle
- Focus on the student experience—developing the whole person
- A place of opportunity for a diverse student body
- Celebrate and communicate the power of the liberal arts
- A close, caring community based on mutual respect
- Developing a coherent story for the College
- Developing better capability in data analysis/institutional research to drive planning
- Student center

Assessment of Our Internal Strengths and Weaknesses and the Opportunities and Threats that Exist in the External Environment [Updated June, 2018](#)

Strengths

- Facilities
- Distinctive curriculum
- Core group of dedicated faculty and staff
- Location
- Strong student support programs
- Engaged and supportive staff
- Size—overall and classes
- Real commitment to growth; a value-added experience
- Alumni commitment
- Metrics of success
- Clear commitment to the liberal arts
- Strong Board leadership
- The Triads
- The opportunity to explore diversity
- Spirituality
- Involved and eager students
- Good town-gown relations

Weaknesses

- Humble to a fault; the Eeyore Complex; the Curse of Low Expectations
- Shortage of operational staff in key areas; for example, Facilities staff too small for expanded campus
- Information technology; especially instructional technology
- Communication among offices—the Silo Effect
- Lack of resources to invest in innovation
- Uneven rigor/energy among programs
- Student Center

- Study abroad program
- Reluctance to change; need for more open-mindedness
- Cumbersome faculty governance—need for division chairs
- Declining enrollment
- High in-state enrollment
- Low net tuition revenue and excessive discounting
- Ninth Street Residence Halls
- Location
- Weak market position
- Inconsistent advising with cumbersome processes

Opportunities

- Leadership as a progressive, church-affiliated college
- Younger faculty can bring new energy; change the culture of humility and limited possibility
- New staff brings new ideas
- International students as a cultural and revenue asset
- More foundation funding
- Stronger alumni relations
- Stronger retention
- Better use of social media
- Technology-enhanced teaching and learning
- New professional and market-driven programs
- Stronger pipelines to stronger graduate and professional programs
- Clearer pre-professional programs
- Expanded internship and practicum programs
- Partnerships with community colleges
- Explore greater cooperation with area institutions
- Hispanic student population—build on current base
- The Common App
- Exploit our sense of place more effectively; broaden and deepen the town-gown relationship
- The immigrant communities in our area
- Stronger and deeper experiences in multi-disciplinary teaching and learning; experiential learning/undergraduate research
- Take better advantage of ACM relationship
- Strategic innovations to demonstrate the power of the power of the “liberating arts”—Think Anew, Act Anew
- New Triads

Threats

- Changing demographics
- Location
- Economy/recession/stagnant middle class with increasing income inequality

-
- Student debt crisis—accessibility/**Affordability**
 - On-line education
 - Weak/ill-defined market presence and identity
 - Lack of diversity of faculty and staff
 - View of college as solely career preparation—establishing the value of the liberal arts experience (**commodification of higher education**)
 - **Increased uncertainty by the public of the value of a college education**
 - **Potential changes to federal financial aid programs**
 - **Potential changes in Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, affecting federal student aid programs**
 - **The condition of the state of Illinois' finances**
 - **Illinois' record high exporting of high school students to other states**
 - **Potential changes to the Illinois Monetary Award Program**
 - **Potential increased state aid to Illinois public institutions to help keep in-state students in state**