BC 2020

The Strategic Plan for Bridgewater College

BRIDGEMEAT COLLEGE
Bridgewater, Virginia
MISSION

Bridgewater College educates the whole person by providing a challenging and supportive learning community that fosters the growth of its students and empowers and motivates them to live educated, intelligent, healthy, purposeful and ethical lives in a global society. The College embraces the core values of integrity, equality, service and community, which have been inspired by its history with the Church of the Brethren. The College is a welcoming, diverse and vibrant community, committed to understanding and respecting individual differences and actively engaging all of its members.
STUDENT SUCCESS

The goal of this strategic plan is student success. To achieve this goal, the College will continue to build upon its significant strengths and be a strongly competitive regional, diverse, residential liberal arts college, with a deep and broad reputation for quality and value. The Bridgewater student experience (The Bridgewater Experience) will be known for its superior learning and growth outcomes; strong career, graduate and professional school placement records; and the satisfaction of its graduates.

The College also will explore opportunities to offer graduate (master's level), post-baccalaureate and other educational opportunities that fulfill the College's mission and leverage the College's unique capabilities and competitive strengths.

The strategic priorities to achieve these goals, in a manner consistent with the College's mission and values, are set forth below under the following categories:

1. The Bridgewater Experience;
2. Enhanced and New Programs;
3. Access and Affordability;
4. Alumni and Community; and
5. Facilities and Finances.
The Bridgewater Experience

The Bridgewater Experience is unique and transformative. It is a personalized, active educational experience creating lifelong learners and critical thinkers. The College will work to enhance the student experience even further. The central focus is on the students: their learning, reasoning development, character and ability to fulfill their aspirations in a global society. To ensure the effectiveness and appeal of The Bridgewater Experience, the College will focus on the following priorities:

a. Freshman Experience

The College will provide a freshman experience that fosters engagement, perseverance, achievement, confidence, friendships, social responsibility and an active role in learning; enhances critical thinking, communication skills and intellectual curiosity; provides the basic knowledge and skills necessary to transition to and succeed in college as well as to live independently and within a community; and affords sufficient opportunities for exploration. The freshman experience should take into account the unique characteristics of the current generation of students and the College’s freshman class. Freshman retention rates will be measured annually with appropriately challenging goals set for annual improvement.

b. Advising, Mentoring and Career Counseling

Student-faculty relationships are core to The Bridgewater Experience. Effective, personalized advising, mentoring and career counseling will be prioritized, recognizing that retention, positive student outcomes, institutional effectiveness and competitive advantage are highly dependent upon excellence in these critical areas of student engagement, learning and achievement. At Bridgewater, the classroom has no walls: learning and development are...
interdisciplinary and extend fully beyond the classroom into the students’ residential, co-curricular, service, community and social experiences. The faculty, coaches, staff and administration will pursue an integrated, collaborative and holistic model of educating and developing the whole student, and, with the support of the College, will continue to be encouraged to interact with students frequently in diverse settings. Students should grow to see themselves as learners wherever they are—in the classroom, in the residence hall, on campus and further afield—and they will demonstrate this identity in measurable ways.

c. General Education Curriculum

The Bridgewater Experience will continue to be anchored by a liberal arts general education curriculum. The College will develop clear and measurable learning goals for this curriculum and ensure the coherence of the curriculum to facilitate achieving those learning goals. The curriculum will improve retention and four-year graduation rates and will facilitate the transfer of community college students to the College. An assessment protocol will be designed and implemented by the faculty to ensure the curriculum is achieving its goals and to enable refinement of its content and delivery. The new general education curriculum will be developed as soon as practicable.

d. Critical Thinking and Communication Skills

Enhanced emphasis will be placed on developing students’ critical thinking and communication skills, particularly writing. Specific learning goals and assessments will be developed by the faculty to ensure students’ mastery of these critical competencies. While critical reasoning will be measured in part by the assessments put in place to measure communication skills (since good writing and speaking are based on solid reasoning), critical reasoning also will be measured by the College.

e. Personalization of the Student Experience

The College remains committed to providing a personalized educational experience, one that maximizes the distinctive value of a small, residential liberal arts college and constitutes a significant competitive advantage over many universities and colleges. The College will continue

1882
The College was relocated to the town of Bridgewater and named the Virginia Normal School. It was located in a building that still stands today on the corner of College and Main Streets.

1889
The school’s name was changed to Bridgewater College. The College owned its first building, which was destroyed by fire eight months after it was built.

1890
College Hall was built. It was renamed Stanley Hall in 1904 and Memorial Hall in 1928.

1899
The “Alumni Association of Bridgewater College” was formed.
developing its Quality Enhancement Program (QEP), Personal Development Portfolio (PDP) program, and faculty review of the general education requirements to enhance the impact of the personalized liberal arts education on all students.

f. Technology-Assisted Learning

The effective use of information technology inside and outside the classroom is a strategic imperative. The College will become known as an institution that employs technology-assisted learning environments and techniques. The quality of the learning experience will be enhanced by continuing to improve the combination of online and face-to-face education. Bridgewater students and graduates will be equipped to use technology effectively in their respective disciplines and careers, thereby enhancing their competitiveness and potential for achievement and contribution. The College will model the effective use of technology by utilizing a technologically proficient workforce.

g. Community-Based Learning

All students will be provided with community-based learning opportunities that connect their academic work to the wider world, such as internships, practica, fieldwork, student teaching and service-learning experiences. The College will take advantage of its proximity to the government and business centers of our nation’s capital, Washington, D.C., and Virginia’s capital, Richmond, and make them foundations for distinctive community-based learning experiences. The faculty will integrate community-based learning opportunities throughout the curriculum and promote participation in these experiences. Most if not all graduates will have had a significant community-based learning component to their education.

1902
The College song, “Bridgewater Fair,” was premiered during a program of the Virginia-Lee Literary Society, a group devoted to College history. The song is still sung at special events.

1903
Crimson and gold were selected as the College colors and first worn by the baseball team.

1923
The Bridgewater College Athletic Association voted to adopt the nickname “Eagles” for its athletic teams. Clarence E. “Tiny” May ’24, a catcher on the baseball team, suggested the designation.

1925
The College received accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, an accreditation that has been continuous since that time.
h. Sustainability and Environmental Stewardship

The College takes seriously its responsibilities to the environment, society and future generations. Construction, renovation, maintenance and landscaping will continue to be designed and completed in cost-effective ways to reduce energy and resource consumption. Appropriate cost-effective renewable energy sources and operating techniques will be utilized by the College. Principles of sustainability and stewardship will be part of the student experience and will be promoted within the entire College community.

i. Global Context

Curricula will reflect a global context, and opportunities for interactions with people from diverse backgrounds will be provided, both on campus and through robust community-based learning and study abroad programs. Bridgewater graduates will be equipped to excel in multicultural and international situations. Student participation in multicultural and international programming and experiences will be measured and meaningful efforts to continually improve such participation will be implemented.

j. Careers

A liberal arts education prepares students for a lifetime of career development in a dynamic and frequently changing workplace. The College will maintain its commitment to the liberal arts and will enhance its emphasis on integrating career preparation with its curriculum in order to ensure that its graduates are prepared to succeed throughout their entire careers. Learning outcomes and post-graduate success will be tracked as measures of institutional effectiveness and will inform the design and continuous improvement of the academic programs. Departments should strive to achieve superior student outcomes after graduation, in part by collaborating with career services and the alumni office to build a network of alumni for students to access.
2. Enhanced and New Programs

a. Faculty Development

Effective teaching, advising and mentoring are central to the College’s success in fostering student learning and strong outcomes and distinguishing itself from other colleges and universities. Therefore, support for faculty development will be a priority and strategic imperative for the College. In addition, departments will be encouraged to develop and implement mentoring programs. Faculty innovation will be encouraged and supported. Innovative educators who are passionate about learning, teaching, advising and mentoring will be given priority in the hiring process and appropriately recognized. Available resources will be directed to faculty compensation, workloads and development to ensure the College is competitive in attracting, retaining and appropriately rewarding superb teachers, advisors and mentors.

b. Pre-Professional and Graduate School Preparation Programs

The College will enhance its focus on pre-professional and graduate school preparation programs strongly grounded in the liberal arts. Increased emphasis will be placed on building enrollments and enhancing student outcomes in liberal arts-based pre-professional and graduate school preparation programs, including increasing the number of graduates admitted to professional and graduate schools. The College’s admissions and financial aid strategies and practices will be tailored to help achieve these objectives.

c. Expanded Programs and Review of Undergraduate Programs

The College will assess the opportunity to add graduate programs that are consistent with the College’s mission and meet a demonstrated need, such as in education and accounting. The College also will continue to review its offerings of undergraduate majors and minors to assure their relevancy, effectiveness, competitiveness and sustainability.
3. Access and Affordability

Access and affordability are important to the College. Socioeconomic diversity on campus enhances learning and is consistent with the College’s ethic of social responsibility. Therefore, the College will strive to keep the cost of The Bridgewater Experience affordable. To those ends:

a. Degree Completion in Four Years or Less

One of the most effective ways of preserving access to a Bridgewater undergraduate education (and enhancing price competitiveness) is to ensure all students are able to graduate, and nearly all students in fact do graduate, in four years or less. All undergraduate programs shall be designed to enable fulfillment of graduation requirements in four years or less. Gains in the four-year graduation rate will be achieved.

b. Community College Transfers

Recognizing that many students begin their higher education at community colleges for financial reasons and that transfer students can enhance the student population and student learning, the College will prioritize the recruitment and enrollment of community college transfer students. Agreements will be entered into with community colleges to facilitate and encourage transfers and improve the College’s competitiveness for this key group of students.

c. Commitment to Socioeconomic, Geographic, Racial and Ethnic Diversity

The Bridgewater learning environment will become more diverse, evidenced by a socioeconomically, racially, ethnically and geographically diverse student body, faculty and staff. The College will continually measure and promote its diversity.

d. Student Debt

Many college graduates enter the workforce burdened by debt, in many cases far exceeding their annual incomes. The College will endeavor to keep its net price as competitive as possible to reduce the financial pressure on students and to avoid situations where students incur debt disproportionate to their ability to repay. To assist in this effort, the College will maximize its use of federal work-study funding and seek other sources of funds to expand the on-campus employment opportunities for students and more thoroughly integrate campus employment into the institutional financial aid package. Student work experiences should facilitate learning, résumé development and job prospects.

1995

The McKinney Center for Science and Mathematics opened. The 75,000-square-foot building replaced Bowman Hall as the center of science education on campus.

The campus was fully wired with fiber-optic cable to network computers campus-wide, giving students access to the Internet from their dorms.

1999

Bridgewater College moved from a traditional 3-3-1-3 term system to a semester system. Interterm has been maintained and currently is held in January.

2000

The Carter Center for Worship and Music was dedicated. The former home of the Bridgewater Church of the Brethren, the Carter Center recognizes Daniel Lee and Anna Mary Watts Carter, students at...
4. **Alumni and Community**

Excellent measures of the effectiveness of any college are the achievements and satisfaction of its alumni. The College desires a lifelong relationship of mutual support with its alumni, to encourage a lifetime of learning and to integrate alumni into the life of the College for the benefit of alumni, current students and the institution itself. Building stronger connections with alumni and having a dynamic alumni relations program are priorities of the College. In addition, the College embraces its role as an integral member of the central Shenandoah Valley and Bridgewater communities. The College’s mutually beneficial relationships with the surrounding community, as well as with the myriad of employers who provide internships, practica, field experiences and jobs to the College’s students and graduates, are of utmost importance to the College and will be nurtured and developed.

5. **Facilities and Finances**

The College will preserve and enhance its financial position and competitiveness through the following initiatives:

- **a. Build Enrollment**
  
The College will increase undergraduate enrollment, along with commensurate staffing and services, to the maximum permitted by current residential capacity—approximately 1,800. If new enrollment demand supports additional quality growth, the College will consider a variety of options to accommodate such growth, including housing alternatives for qualifying students that will be consistent with the College’s mission and values.

- **b. Diversification of Revenue**
  
The College will take advantage of its strengths and prioritize its recruitment of out-of-state students, including qualified students from other countries. The College will
endeavor to maintain its current level of in-state enrollment while relying on out-of-state recruitment to build its overall target enrollment so that increasingly more of the freshman class will hail from out of state. Simultaneously, the College will explore new educational programs with the potential to provide additional revenue to support its mission.

c. Increased Philanthropy

Resource development, including growing the endowment of the College, is essential to the long-term financial health of the College and is a strategic priority. The support and generosity of alumni and friends of the College not only support endowment development and capital projects, but also provide necessary operating income. Therefore, increasing financial support from alumni, the community and friends of the College, as well as grant funding from foundations, is essential to achieving this strategic goal.

d. Enhanced Competitiveness and Improved Reputation

Through its focus on student learning outcomes and student success, and a strong commitment to quality and excellence in every program, project and activity, the College will strengthen its reputation, thereby enhancing its ability to recruit and enroll students for whom the College is their first choice and otherwise develop more financial resources. The College will promote its distinctive programs and strengths and will enhance the effective communication of its value to its constituencies.

e. Facilities

Maintaining the condition and relevance of the buildings, grounds and other facilities of the College is essential to fostering competitiveness. The renovation of Nininger Hall and the Alexander Mack Library will be priorities. The College also will explore appropriate uses for the old gym, and will promote the goals of this plan by continuing to protect, update and enhance the physical assets of the College, as needed.