



EDUCATION THAT WORKS:
THE STRATEGIC PLAN OF
HIRAM COLLEGE





INTRODUCTION – THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

Hiram College believes passionately in the tradition of liberal arts education, which has endured for centuries and thrives today because of its time-tested value. Liberal arts graduates learn habits of mind and heart that are essential to success in today's world -- critical thinking, curiosity, ethical awareness, ability to write and speak clearly, ability to draw and synthesize knowledge from diverse sources and apply it to diverse uses, insight into the human experience, a life-long love of learning.

At the same time, Hiram believes students in today's increasingly competitive world also need skills that lead directly to success in their chosen professions or graduate studies. Our students seek a college experience that will prepare them for good jobs, advanced study and/or professional advancement.

Some have argued that career preparation and the liberal arts are incompatible. To the contrary, the compelling beauty of a liberal arts education under the new Hiram plan is that it serves equally well as preparation for a first job after graduation and for advanced study in a professional or scholarly field. The liberal arts curriculum is unmatched in the depth and breadth of its content and in the exposure it provides to systematic thought and analysis. With the appropriate curricular design, active counseling support and mentoring, and focused on-campus and off-campus experiences, liberal education and personal aspiration are easily blended. Hiram intends to stand out as an innovative, national liberal arts college that delivers on its promise to educate uncommonly well, and to do so in ways that best prepare students for and help connect them to the life choices they have made.

This strategic plan will guide a collaborative process through which the Hiram College community will unite to pursue this vision for all of Hiram -- the traditional undergraduate college, the Weekend College, and the graduate program -- over the next two years.



CORE OF STRATEGIC PLAN

Hiram will be a leader in weaving the liberal arts together with preparation for careers or advanced study in a college experience that uniquely prepares our students for fulfillment in both work and life.

HIRAM'S MISSION

The mission of Hiram College is to foster intellectual excellence and social responsibility, enabling our students to thrive in their chosen careers, flourish in life, and face the urgent challenges of the times.

HIRAM'S VISION

Hiram's students will be among those called to address the urgent problems facing our era. Answering this call will require timeless intellectual capacities for critical thinking, imaginative problem-solving, and reflective decision-making. Cultivating these skills in the foundational knowledge of humanity, nature, and their relationships, has been the essential core of the liberal arts tradition since its beginning in antiquity.

Hiram College commits to continuing the rich legacy of liberal learning for students, developing the knowledge, skills, and habits of mind acknowledged for over two millennia as both valuable in their own right and conducive to success in any endeavor. Throughout its rigorous core curriculum and specialized academic programs, Hiram College will emphasize the ability to think critically and communicate effectively, to engage in disciplined inquiry and autonomous learning, and to recognize the essential connectedness of all knowledge.

Liberal education has been traditionally concerned not only with developing the intellect, but also with educating the whole person. To this end, Hiram College attends to the emotional and ethical lives of our students throughout both the curricular and co-curricular life of the campus, promoting respect for diversity, understanding of cultural difference, ethical reflection, and the ideal of engaged citizenship.

We believe in addition that learning by doing and knowing through experience are critically important preparation for the complex challenges that our students will confront in their lives and careers. Hiram College therefore commits to providing students, not only with rigorous and relevant preparation in their chosen areas of major study, but also with opportunities to prepare themselves to meet the challenges of their future careers through experiential learning, application of their new skills and knowledge to real problems, and attentive mentoring during the transition into their careers by both faculty and staff.

Because success will require rigorous preparation and superior effort, Hiram College expects the same of itself. Because our world sorely needs tolerance, civility, understanding and respect for diversity, Hiram must insist upon the same. Because solutions to the problems of our times can only be achieved through innovation, creativity, and boldness of vision, the College will continue to encourage and practice these, as it has since its founding in 1850.



STRATEGIC GOALS

Goal One: Deliver a unique education that fully integrates the liberal arts and preparation for success in work and life

A Hiram education equips our graduates to be anything they want to be. This has always been true, but today we are enhancing this traditional strength by actively linking our liberal arts program to an explicit focus on preparing students for work and graduate study. We will optimize the work-relevance of course work where appropriate; assure that each student graduates with a portfolio of practical experience and job-related skills; build robust relationships and interchange with employers and graduate schools; and foster international study that prepares students to work in the global community.

Goal Two: Focus on recruiting and serving students who will thrive at Hiram

Students who thrive at Hiram have diverse ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds but have certain common traits, including solid academic preparation and ability, motivation, and desire for the benefits of a small residential college – access to professors, strong sense of community, and active involvement in campus life. Hiram will focus on recruiting these kinds of “target” applicants and optimally serving their specific needs and wants.

Also, Hiram has always excelled as a “college that changes lives,” especially in serving people who benefit from a “crucible” experience at college. These are students who arrive unsure of their full potential and discover it during their time with us. Hiram’s special strength in this area derives partly from our historic niche serving first-generation college students. Helping such individuals progress from “good to great” benefits both them and the larger society. It also brings particular fulfillment to Hiram’s faculty and staff. We will continue to nurture this focus in our recruiting and educational program.

We will also develop formal plans for assuring a very high quality of student life, including excellent facilities and social and recreational activity, both on and off-campus.

Goal Three: Help graduates of Hiram College pursue successful careers or advanced study

Hiram’s mission is not just to educate our students, but also to put them on the path to success in their chosen work lives or graduate study. Accordingly, we will invest in highly effective career counseling and job placement services; use internships and research assignments to help students build post-college ties; and create ongoing relationships with major employers, graduate schools, and alumni to help our students to move directly into meaningful jobs or graduate study.



Goal Four: Differentiate Hiram by building our distinctive strengths, tying them to core strategy, and marketing them effectively

Hiram has distinctive programs and areas of true superiority that support our core strategy and are highly valued by students, parents, graduate schools, and employers. To differentiate Hiram in the higher education marketplace, we will identify the strongest of these qualities – those that are real differentiators and have widespread appeal – through self-evaluation and research. For each of these key strengths, we will develop a strategic plan to make it even better and more distinctive over time. These plans will include researching market demand for each key strength, identifying needed investment and targeted fundraising opportunities, networking with other colleges and private sector partners, and developing compelling marketing to appeal to target audiences.

Goal Five: Assure excellence in Hiram’s physical facilities and technology

A key to attracting, retaining, and serving our target students is to assure high quality facilities and technology. Hiram will develop formal short and long term plans for our facilities and real property, addressing needs for construction, renovation, and ongoing maintenance. We will also plan for technology that fully supports the evolving needs of our students, faculty, and staff.

This process will include evaluating and determining an optimal size for Hiram and aligning facilities plans to that goal.

Goal Six: Assure a sound financial foundation for Hiram’s future

Achieving the preceding five strategic goals will assure Hiram’s financial future, provided also that we establish an uncompromising foundation of rational business practices and financial discipline. Such a foundation must be the first initiative of any strategic plan. Failure to secure this foundation would put Hiram’s bright future at risk and would be an abrogation of trustee responsibility.

Accordingly, Hiram will strengthen its financial footing by both increasing revenue and improving cost management and productivity. We will expand our endowment to \$120 million over the next three years and \$175 million over the next five years and will balance our budget on an ongoing basis. We will raise funds specifically for the key distinctive programs identified as differentiating Hiram from other colleges.

We will also streamline costs, improve cost management, and improve productivity.

This process will include evaluating and determining an optimal size for Hiram and aligning financial plans to that goal.



PLANNING ASSUMPTIONS

Hiram must do six things to thrive in the new century.

1. Adapt to our changing world

Hiram today confronts growing competition for a pool of applicants that, in our traditional niche, is static or shrinking. The greatest challenge we face is to summon the will and consensus to change – to alter what we offer and whom we serve – so as to meet this challenge. Hiram will maintain its essential character as a national, mainly residential liberal arts college and will preserve its many strengths. However, remaining static or settling for incremental change is not an option. Rather, we must unite the college around our strategy for change, confident that we can work together to make Hiram better than it has ever been.

2. Differentiate Hiram in the marketplace by intensifying our distinctive strengths

Given the over-supply of educational providers in relation to demand in our traditional niche, Hiram will have to reach new markets and build market share by making itself truly distinctive. This means we must identify and build on programs and qualities that are unique or markedly superior to our competitors' and are valued by our students. We must invest in these areas of strength, align all our marketing to "selling" them, and retool our education program to deliver them optimally to the students we serve. We must avoid the error of trying to be all things to all people.

3. Focus tightly on serving our target students

Hiram must concentrate on attracting, retaining, and educating students who fit our college. We must define our target students better, reach them better in the admissions process, and deliver better on our promises to them. Our students will be diverse, drawn from every socioeconomic and ethnic background, but must be well-suited to thrive at Hiram. We must avoid diluting our efforts by trying to recruit and serve students who are mismatched to Hiram's program and standards.

4. Place Hiram on firm financial footing by both increasing revenues and containing costs

Higher education faces daunting challenges as costs and tuition rise and productivity lags behind. These trends are especially acute for Hiram, which has a tradition of serving many students from lower socio-economic backgrounds and must find ways to keep its degrees affordable. We also must build the college's endowment to assure a sound and stable financial footing. These challenges call for a combination of measures to manage costs through lean operation and high productivity, and to enhance revenues through effective fundraising.



5. Make other strategically critical improvements

Hiram has many areas that need to be strengthened as we face the challenges ahead. These include improving the admissions process, facilities and quality of student life, faculty compensation, and cultivation of alumni, as well as ongoing enhancement of the academic program. We also should explore innovations that could improve effectiveness and efficiency, such as sharing back-office functions and perhaps key educational programs with other colleges.

6. Maintain and enhance our current strengths

All the above changes must be pursued without diluting Hiram's tremendous strengths. These include the quality and dedication of our faculty, our commitment to delivering an excellent liberal arts education, our ability to provide "intimate learning," our focus on international study and education with "global reach," and many specific aspects of our curriculum, culture, people, and program.