

2013-2018

Mills College Strategic Plan: Preparing Students for the 21st Century



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MILLS COLLEGE STRATEGIC PLAN PREPARING STUDENTS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Prelude Aurelia Henry Reinhardt returns to Mills

"Yesterday the simple curriculum, the small group of students, the isolation of campus life; today the diversified curriculum, the enlarging group of students, and the linking of all campus activities with the needs and opportunities of the great world."

Aurelia Henry Reinhardt (1927)

Imagine that Aurelia Henry Reinhardt were to visit Mills College some decades into this century. She would immediately know it to be her Mills --- the beautiful campus in the sunshine of Oakland, Mills Hall, the eucalyptus trees, the Littlefield Concert Hall, the Campanil -- but she would also see that her Mills had grown with time, had evolved to meet the demands of a new century.

The core values upheld during her tenure as president would be in evidence, but in a 21st century guise, including cultural and international exchange, environmentalism, civic engagement, and access to education. She would see examples of her liberal and progressive thinking and her passion for scholarship and creativity across the arts, humanities, and the sciences in a 21st century academic setting enhanced by emerging technologies.

She would experience the Mills she sought to establish not only as a women's college in the west equal in stature to its eastern counterparts, but also as an institution set apart by its forward-looking more inclusive educational philosophy.

She would see buildings new to her, built in the late twentieth century: the Lorry I. Lokey Graduate School of Business, the Betty Irene Moore Natural Science Building, the School of Education. She would see still newer buildings: a new student center, a new wing on the science building, a new classroom building replacing the Fine Arts Annex, a new performing arts center.

She would find people everywhere, and classrooms and studios and laboratories alive with students from early morning until late evening, seven days a week, summers and winters. She would see students and faculty members from across America and from around the world. She would meet students who would not have been at the Mills of her time, students from families in which college was unimaginable but for whom Mills now provides educational opportunity. She would see an undergraduate student body

of women, but women expressing a spectrum of gender identities. She would hear many languages around her, reflecting the diversity of cultures found both within the United States and abroad and languages taught at Mills.

President Reinhardt might step into a meeting of the Board of Trustees and hear the discussion of how to allocate the budget surplus toward renewing campus facilities, updating faculty and staff salaries, and investing in technology. She would talk with faculty and staff and hear that they feel valued as the most important asset of the college. She would see an award on a wall in Mills Hall recognizing Mills as one of the “Best Places to Work in the Bay Area.”

She would enter the heart and soul of the College as she visited classrooms. She would see professors with intellectual energy and depth: a dance professor who attends the Wittgenstein book club, and a philosophy professor who audits the Shakespeare course. She would find faculty worthy of the noble past of Jay DeFeo, John Cage, Lyonel Feininger, Alfred Frankenstein, Rebecca Fuller, Lou Harrison, Margaret Lyon, Darius Milhaud, Alfred Neumeyer, Elizabeth Marie Pope, and Marian Van Tuyl. She would see a curriculum that was, just as in her day, at the very edge of what students want and need to live able, worthy lives. That curriculum covers developing broad skills in communication, computation, and critical analysis, to providing more refined and deeper knowledge via liberal arts majors and minors, and ensuring awareness and access to still more specialized graduate programs, including programs in the arts and sciences and professional programs.

She would meet alumnae and alumni who say that Mills College changed the trajectories of their lives because they:

- found at Mills a new set of hopes and aspirations, new strength, a full voice;
- discovered new parts of themselves in leadership experiences and service opportunities;
- learned to ask questions that matter, to identify and solve real world problems;
- found a sense of self, ownership, identity, responsibility;
- were inspired and compelled to create a better world;
- learned how to create community institutions in order to foster a more just and peaceful world;
- found that Mills provided them with perspectives, allowing them to imagine a world that could be while operating successfully in the world that is;
- left Mills able to make their way in the world, to make a living, and to make a life.

Aurelia Henry Reinhardt would recognize her college in the Mills of the twenty-first century, and would be proud of both the continuity and the change it represents, as we will all be proud to work together to make this strategic plan a reality.

SECTION I Background and Financial Goals

The challenges facing contemporary higher education are significant. Technological, demographic, and economic changes raise questions about its purpose, its organization, and its content. In addition to these challenges, Mills must address its own structural budget deficits and marketing challenges.

Despite this environment, Mills has many reasons to be optimistic. In 2011, the College made important progress in addressing enrollment and financial issues. With these successes in place and an effort to gain a common understanding of the issues confronting higher education in general and Mills specifically, the President initiated a strategic planning process in fall 2012 to ensure a sustainable future for the College. The goals of the process were to:

- envision Mills in 2027, Mills' 175th anniversary;
- identify the strategic imperatives for the next three to five years;
- identify the actions needed to address each of those imperatives so that the financial sustainability necessary for realizing a longer-range vision for a vibrant and robust Mills College in the next 15 years is achieved.

By design, the strategic planning process has been an iterative and inclusive one involving the broad Mills community. The strategic planning steering committee, chaired by the President and co-chaired by David Donahue and Renee Jadushlever, coordinated the work of research, synthesis, and dialogue necessary for a viable plan. Dr. Susan Resneck Pierce, *president emerita* of the University of Puget Sound and president of SRP Consulting, facilitated the strategic planning process from August 2012 through February 2013.

The process began with the President and Cabinet laying out three factors against which all strategic imperatives were to be considered:

- increasing enrollment through greater numbers of new first year, transfer, and graduate students and improved retention and persistence of current students.
- developing within three to five years, a balanced budget grounded in financial best practices including: reducing the College's endowment payout to 5%, removing bequests from the operational budget, funding building, operation and capital reserves, increasing renewal and replacement allocations to reflect depreciations more accurately, and estimating new revenues from

added programs and increased utilization of the College's real estate assets, and

- developing a student-centered culture, where administrators, staff, and faculty promote students' academic success and overall satisfaction with the Mills experience.

Engagement of the entire community in strategic planning commenced with surveys of the Board of Trustees, faculty, staff, students and alumnae/i, in addition to individual and group conversations with the President. At open forums following the surveys, community members continued to share ideas about their vision of Mills in the future. The survey and forum data informed the creation of six working groups to investigate further topics central to that future including preliminary consideration of:

- new and enhanced undergraduate programs to increase enrollment (Working Group 1);
- new and enhanced graduate programs to increase enrollment (Working Group 2);
- athletics as a tool for recruitment and retention (Working Group 3);
- student services as a tool for recruitment and retention (Working Group 4);
- the place of social justice, civic engagement, and sustainability in a liberal arts college for women and in our co-educational graduate programs (Working Group 5);
- the importance of marketing, community partnerships, and establishing Mills as a leader in issues related to women and gender (Working Group 6).

In addition, a group of faculty investigated how to internationalize Mills. The Diversity and Social Justice Committee investigated gender equity, gender justice, and making Mills an inclusive environment for transgender and gender fluid students. During the fall semester, the working groups engaged with colleagues across campus to solicit information, synthesize ideas, and draft interim reports, which were posted online for the entire community. (Abstracts of these interim reports are included in Appendix A.)

As the strategic planning process continued to generate new ideas, the steering committee began to identify the most promising and powerful. The steering committee, working group facilitators, and Cabinet read all the interim reports with an eye for overarching themes and tensions. The faculty held a retreat at the start of the spring semester to consider four questions related to these themes and tensions. The retreat suggested which ideas resonated most with faculty. Synthesizing and sifting continued in February with faculty, staff, and student forums facilitated by Susan Pierce. These ideas were combined in a preliminary draft to which the steering committee and working group members responded with additional ideas and suggestions.

Implementing the ideas in this plan will require creativity and flexibility. Upon approval of the plan by the Board of Trustees, a detailed implementation plan will be developed, including a financial and marketing plan as appropriate for each strategic initiative.

SECTION II Mission

Mills College educates students to think critically and communicate responsibly and effectively, to accept the challenges of their creative visions, and to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to effect thoughtful changes in a global, multicultural society.

Mills encourages openness to experimentation in the context of established academic disciplines. We prepare students to understand important global issues, the natural world, and the value of cultural, racial, and ethnic diversity. We prepare students for leadership roles throughout society.

The cornerstone of a Mills education is the collaboration between dedicated students and distinguished faculty that goes beyond the classroom and into meaningful work and innovative research. We strive to develop the strengths of all students, preparing them for lifelong intellectual, personal, and professional growth.

SECTION III Guiding Principles

Mills College provides an educational climate of intellectual rigor and integrity, and offers an inclusive community of students, staff, and faculty that is collaborative and supportive. We are dedicated to the education of women at the undergraduate level and women and men at the graduate level for full personal lives and professional leadership, and for community and civic engagement.

SECTION IV Strategic Initiatives

At Mills, our aspirations are grounded in our mission and strengthened by our core values. As we look ahead to the College's 175th anniversary in 2027, we are dedicated to the following work over the next 5 years:

- developing curriculum with a purpose in a changing world: creating new educational programs that prepare students for success as scholars, in the workplace, and as citizens;
- creating more flexible ways to obtain a Mills education with the goal of attracting new populations of students and improving retention;
- strengthening the College’s commitment to an inclusive campus environment and to social justice, particularly the preservation and sustainability of global resources;
- internationalizing Mills through globalization of the curriculum, attracting more international students and enabling greater numbers of Mills students to study abroad;
- providing the programming, environment, and infrastructure for a vibrant campus life;
- developing and sustaining strategic community partnerships.

To do so, we will focus on achieving the following strategic imperatives over the next 5 years. Over the coming few months, we will develop the tactics to achieve each of these imperatives.

Strategic Imperative 1: Developing curriculum with a purpose in a changing world

To attract and retain students in the 21st century, Mills needs to continue to offer a curriculum that positions students for meaningful work in successful careers, prepares them to succeed in further academic and professional studies, and motivates them to become active and productive citizens. This imperative includes examining the existing curriculum and developing new programs.

Re-examining the Curriculum. Outstanding educational institutions must periodically evaluate and revise their curricula so that they will contribute and adapt to a rapidly changing intellectual and cultural landscape. Developing an exemplary 21st century curriculum at Mills is a critical component of our strategic plan, which will enhance Mills' national standing and reputation and increase enrollments. This effort must grow out of Mills' unique institutional identity as a progressive, forward-looking West Coast liberal arts college for women with graduate programs for women and men.

Periodic re-examination of standards and outcomes of good teaching and learning, of the repertoire of majors and minors, of the general education program, and the ways the curriculum is “delivered” are hallmarks of excellence in an academic institution. Re-examining the Mills curriculum will allow us to make explicit our commitment to the liberal arts and sciences and to ensure that the education we offer our students incorporates its core values.

Curricular re-examination will require continued dialog among the faculty, but some distinctive elements of a Mills education have emerged from the strategic planning process. One is engaged learning – students engaged with faculty in research, engaged with each other in collaborative learning, and engaged with the community to address societal concerns and learn by experience beyond the College gates. Another is connecting liberal arts education to careers through internships in which students connect theory and practice, experiencing how the habits of mind and ways of knowing they cultivated at Mills can inform decision making in the real world. Another is our culture of experimentation in the arts and creative writing. Yet another is our commitment to using education for creating a more just, equitable, and sustainable world.

The College’s current system of general education adopted in 2003 anticipated a recent trend in American higher education: to conceive of general education in terms of broad competencies rather than specific course requirements. Our system, based on skills, perspectives, and disciplinary experiences has mapped nicely onto the schema promulgated by our accrediting agency, the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). Since most colleges and universities revisit general education about once a decade, this strategic plan provides an opportunity to re-examine our practices in light of contemporary thinking about general education and how best to deliver it, and our own institutional strengths and core values.

Classrooms without Walls. The global interconnectivity that characterizes the Internet is a model for the way we think in the 21st century. Our curriculum must adapt to a world that is changing more rapidly than our disciplines, departments, and majors. Our students need to move easily from discipline to discipline, creating their own knowledge. “Classrooms without Walls” captures this exciting challenge in both a metaphorical and a literal sense.

The strategic plan can provide opportunities for faculty to create innovative interdisciplinary majors, minors, programs, and courses that draw upon the unique strengths of our faculty. Preliminary discussions have included Global Studies and forging cross-disciplinary connections between the arts and the sciences. Emerging technologies can play a key role in this initiative. Tele-presence can open up our classrooms to scholars and creative artists from around the world and establish Mills as a nexus that connects with other women’s colleges, liberal arts colleges, and universities.

We can build on the existing capacity of undergraduate students to design their own interdisciplinary “college major,” by encouraging more students to take advantage of this option. Fostering individual student initiatives and expanding the repertoire of curricular choices helps recruit and retain the most creative students and enlivens the intellectual life of the college.

Academic minors allow students to organize courses outside their major into coherent sequences that complement the major and “customize” their college education. Developing new interdisciplinary minors from existing course offerings increases Mills’ attractiveness to potential Mills students by making concrete the broad range of academic offerings available at Mills. In addition to recently established minors in queer studies and religious studies, the College could add new minors in areas such as urban studies, social movements, organizational studies, quantitative social science, or studies focused on a particular geographic area, environmental science, or sustainability.

New and expanded programs. Many of the problems Mills 21st century graduates will solve will be new ones. The preparation to do that will require both new academic programs and the review, expansion and evolution of existing programs. These curricular enhancements will enable Mills to increase its student body, build on traditional areas of strength and innovation, and expand the range of accomplishments our students achieve.

- *4+1 programs.* As a pioneer in the development of 4+1 programs, Mills has a proven track record of building programs in areas where blending an M.A. with a B.A. requires few additional resources and provides students with advantages in the job market or subsequent graduate study. Such programs are valuable options for existing students and a tool for the recruitment of both four-year and transfer students, as well as a source of enrollment in their own right. Possibilities for new 4+1 programs include child development and counseling.
- *Leadership and credential programs.* In recent years, the higher education market has expanded beyond undergraduate and graduate degrees to include a wide array of certificates and credential programs. Mills has many pedagogical resources that could meet this growing demand. At the graduate level, the School of Education, for example, might formalize a program in community college leadership to both expand enrollment and strengthen collaborations between the College and nearby two-year institutions. The School of Education and the Dance Department are exploring the possibilities of offering a dance teaching credential. The Department of Biology is contemplating a certificate in restoration ecology. There may be other areas, like these, where because no regional institutions offer a program, an opportunity exists for Mills to capture a niche market.

Connecting the curriculum to career paths. Student retention and positive educational outcomes will depend on the curriculum’s effectiveness in preparing students to succeed in their desired career paths. Whether enrolled in a classic liberal arts major, such as

English or art history, or a career-focused major, such as PLEA or public policy, Mills students will receive guidance and mentoring that enables them to discern and build upon the connection between their college studies and work opportunities.

Students will find this support through a network that includes faculty, career services staff, peer mentors, and alumnae. In their roles as classroom teachers and as advisors, faculty will play an especially critical role in bridging theory and practice, and raising students' awareness of the steps they should take outside the classroom to prepare for a career or advanced study. Career services staff can help equip faculty for this role while continuing to assist students with career counseling and networking, searches for internships and jobs, and graduate school research. Upper class undergraduates and graduate alumnae/i who have already held internships or pursued careers can serve as peer mentors to first- and second-year students. A strong alumnae network will become a source of internships and job leads, guest speakers on career topics, and advice and mentoring; it will also become a benefit that can be marketed to prospective students.

Strategic Imperative 2: Creating more flexible ways to obtain a Mills education

Technology, lifestyles, geographic mobility, and the ways that students finance higher education have all contributed to changes in how we think about "going to college." Even if the four-year residential model remains the core variant, flexible degree programs will increasingly be a part of mainstream higher education in the United States. Summer, January or weekend programs, part-time status, and remote-campus instruction, for example, can contribute to student recruitment and retention as well as a vital campus life throughout the year. These options represent a natural extension of the flexibility on which Mills has prided itself, for example, resumer students and transfer students.

Summer programs and January term. The College is set to launch a summer term in 2013 for undergraduate and graduate students, as well as alumnae and community members. The College has five courses set for its first January term in 2014. January courses will provide intensive opportunities to students, alumnae, and community members for in-depth study across the disciplines on topics ranging from "The Economics of Climate Change" to "Jane Austen: Sustainable Fictions." In addition to making better use of campus facilities, these two programs will provide options for students who want to accelerate or spread out course work.

Low residence and part-time programs. The College will also explore the possibilities of providing low residence M.A. programs blending online instruction with study on campus. The School of Education is already exploring such possibilities for its M.A. program

in teaching. In addition, Mills will explore the possibility of more part-time study to accommodate students with full work and family lives.

A presence in San Francisco. San Francisco is the home of cutting edge work in fields ranging from the sciences to the arts. It is also attractive to and the home of potential students. The College will explore the possibility of creating a presence in San Francisco to enhance our curricular offerings and make Mills more attractive and accessible.

Strategic Imperative 3: Strengthening our commitment to inclusion, social justice, and sustainability

Mills students are motivated by a commitment to an inclusive community, social justice, and a sustainable planet. Yet, data from the *National Study for Student Engagement* show that Mills students report fewer opportunities to participate in efforts toward such goals than they anticipated, creating concerns about retaining students who may not see the relevance of Mills to important life goals. Diversity, social justice, and sustainability are an underlying concern of all our strategic imperatives. While listed here separately, this underlying commitment has implications for re-examining the curriculum, internationalizing Mills, creating a vibrant campus, and developing partnerships.

Providing opportunities for students to connect Mills' experiences to interests in diversity, social justice, and sustainability. In thinking about this imperative, Mills can be a “living laboratory” to define and redefine social justice, build community, engage with communities beyond campus, and live in sustainable, climate-neutral ways. Mills is a campus full of intellectual and physical resources for our own learning about social justice and sustainability and for the larger Oakland community as well. Learning in this “laboratory” is not only extracurricular but also connected to the curriculum. The campus farm provides one possible means of building a “living laboratory” across the curriculum and co-curriculum. Programs in the Division of Student Life as well as the Living Learning Communities provide many other means.

Mills hosts a number of resources and individual initiatives on campus that can connect us to community and social justice concerns. There is an ongoing need to have some coordination of resources and initiatives for community engagement and connection to the curriculum. A point person, working in the Provost's Office and partnering with Career Services, to connect the curriculum with service learning, along with study abroad, paid and unpaid internships, and community partnerships, could provide such coordination.

Developing scholarships. The high cost of a private liberal arts college is another obstacle to students' engagement in social justice and the community. Tying scholarship money to students' work on issues of social justice, civic engagement, and sustainability could attract and retain students and donors. This might include "service" scholarships for new first year, transfer, and graduate students engaged in social justice and the community.

Creating an environment inclusive of all diversity. Creating a just, equitable, and inclusive environment for all students, while paying attention to diversity along many lines of identity including, for example, race, class, sexual orientation, ability, spirituality and religious diversity is ongoing work. As a women's college, Mills has a long tradition of challenging, in particular, gender stereotypes, inequality, and injustice. That tradition, which stretches from preparing women for the professions and civic life to providing opportunities for women to excel in areas of the curriculum and co-curriculum that were seen as more appropriate to men, has broken normative conceptions of gender. In the 21st century, the challenge to gender norms comes from students who identify as transgender or gender nonconforming. To stay in the vanguard of gender justice and equity and to build and retain an overall diverse student body, Mills needs to consider how it serves the transgender and gender nonconforming students already here and those considering a woman's college. These considerations include examining policies ranging from admissions and athletics to curriculum and housing. Towards that end, the College will continue the dialogue begun by the recommendations of the Diversity and Social Justice Committee in its report on Inclusion of Transgender and Gender Fluid Students.

Focusing on sustainability across campus. Mills has been committed to sustainability for years. However, learning to live it in every aspect of our working lives remains a challenge. While Mills can be a learning laboratory of sustainability, helping students learn through curricular and co-curricular work about social justice and equality in the world around them, it is imperative that the Mills community live and model the value we hold dear. Mills will pursue initiatives which enable us to be viewed as a 21st century college committed to sustainability with efforts including developing a campus farm, adopting energy savings measures, promoting food justice and participating in the American College and University Presidents' Climate Commitment to lessen our environmental footprint.

Strategic Imperative 4: Internationalizing Mills

Today's students live in an increasingly globalized environment, where work, family, and civic life cross international boundaries. Meaningful participation in this world requires greater global understanding and intercultural awareness than ever before. These

goals can be accomplished by creating a campus that attracts and retains students from around the world, developing curricular offerings that provide cross-national perspectives, and providing opportunities for Mills students to live and study abroad.

Attracting and retaining international students. Many colleges and universities expect 10 to 15 percent of their student body to be international students; today less than 2% percent of Mills' student body comes from outside the United States. To move Mills toward a higher level of international enrollment, we will develop a comprehensive program of enrollment and retention. Such a program would start with recruitment plans that strategically focus on specific countries and that could involve collaboration with alumnae and other colleges, as well as looking to immigrant and refugee students already living in the Bay Area and on the west coast. A second element would be a robust infrastructure focused on international student retention, including such things as advising students with personal cultural adjustment and expertise on legal and immigration questions. Finally, Mills might consider a program to prepare international students for the English-language and academic demands of college.

Globalizing the curriculum. As the College examines its curriculum, including general education and possible new programs, the place of international and transnational studies and the need for global literacy and international perspectives will be considered. International perspectives can be encouraged through new interdisciplinary majors and minors. Serious attention should also be paid to foreign language competency among undergraduate students.

Revitalizing study abroad. Opportunities for study abroad help attract undergraduate students. Currently, few students study abroad because their financial aid cannot be used for such purposes. Mills will seek strategies for helping students study abroad and, additionally, will disseminate information about areas related to a globalized curriculum ranging from Fulbright fellowships and course offerings with international perspectives to international cultural events on campus and in the community.

Strategic Imperative 5: Promoting a vibrant and inclusive campus life

Having a vibrant campus life with opportunities for student involvement in social, intellectual and recreational programs enhances the overall student experience and creates an institutional sense of community in addition to increasing students' chances for reaching their academic goals. Engaged students who meet with success in their curricular and co-curricular activities have better retention outcomes.

Opportunities for leadership: Leadership opportunities provide students with the requisite skills and experience to change the world. One such opportunity with a dual purpose of improving the vitality of the campus and engaging student participation is the idea of converting Suzie's Café into a student run coffee shop offering entertainment, beverages, and food to accommodate daytime, evening and weekend schedules. The campus farm could provide other opportunities for student leadership and engagement. These initiatives will be undertaken in conjunction with the Graduate School of Business and the Division of Student Life to create a viable business plan. Bon Appétit and Housing (HMDS) staff can provide valuable mentoring for these projects as well. Other opportunities for leadership might range from planning events to organizing community action campaigns. Building on the successful Division of Student Life Ambassador (DSL A) program, the Division will offer additional learning opportunities to coordinate with the College's academic programs.

Transportation options that facilitate student engagement: In today's hectic world, the College recognizes that students are involved in family, work, and other activities which take them to and from campus at varying times and that some Mills interactions or experiences might happen in different locations. Reduced cost student bus passes with AC Transit have resulted in thousands of usages annually. To accommodate the College's plans for more cross registration, internship and work opportunities off campus, students living off campus, and the interests of some faculty to offer cultural events as part of their curriculum, an audit of transportation will be undertaken to assure a robust, accommodating schedule. A successful and responsive transportation program will contribute to student satisfaction and engagement and, thus, campus vibrancy as well as retention.

Athletics and Wellness: Intercollegiate athletics at Mills have a tradition of providing transformative learning and a sense of belonging which supports student-athlete retention. By joining a conference with a number of women's colleges, Mills will be able to provide undergraduate student-athletes high quality intercollegiate competition. In addition, to teaching life skills to athletes, a comprehensive athletic program will infuse a sense of community pride which can have a positive impact on recruitment and retention.

Strong recreational and wellness programs are crucial to creating a vibrant campus. Healthy students are more engaged and are more likely to reach their academic goals. Mills will promote a holistic approach and create an integrated wellness plan to serve millennial needs, including a variety of recreational experiences, alternative break programs, expanded club sports, cyclone spirit programs, and wellness educational programs. A successful holistic wellness program will connect the Mills community, help students learn important life skills, and infuse an excitement among all Mills constituents.

Creating an active campus core: While Mills cannot build a new campus center in the span of this strategic plan, we can create an active center to the campus, through the revitalization and renovation of key buildings. Revitalizing Rothwell with a student run café is one step towards an active campus core. Another step is through the renovation of the Lisser Hall auditorium. A renovated Lisser would create a new laboratory of creativity at the heart of the campus, a proper performing space and home for the dance department, and will lead to the reinvigoration of the space and ushering in an interdisciplinary center than can be the springboard for innovation across campus. Undertaking this project would also generate greater activity in the adjacent locations, such as the Library, Rothwell Center and nearby meadows. Lecture series, literary readings, music concerts, conferences, and public performances also could be held in the campus core.

Promote a vibrant workplace

Appreciating that our most valuable resources are our faculty and staff, and understanding that nothing can be accomplished without a well-functioning team, Mills is committed to supporting and developing all our employees. Our faculty has a strong commitment to high academic standards as well as a firm commitment to our students' current and future success. Likewise, our staff plays an integral role in the student experience and has a demonstrated commitment to organizing and supporting student events and activities. For Mills to ensure continued student success and a vibrant and inclusive campus life, we must invest in our human resources. In order to recruit and retain top quality faculty and staff, we know it is important that Mills be both a thriving campus for our students and a flourishing workplace. We recognize that this involves offering activities that will engage employees; genuinely promoting work-life balance; encouraging and providing opportunities for professional and self-development; and ensuring fair and equitable total compensation. To ensure on-going sensitivity to change and challenges, and to sustain a working environment that is befitting the Mills tradition, a point person within Human Resources will be charged with assessing our campus climate, and developing a plan for enhancements.

Strategic Imperative 6: Developing and sustaining partnerships

Community partnerships are essential to the College's strategic efforts to raise its profile locally and nationally. It will be important to clarify and build consensus around the definition and importance of community partnerships for Mills.

Developing flagship and strengthening existing community partnerships: The College will work to create a signature community engagement program that features institution-wide "strategic partnerships" with a small number of prominent, local community

organizations. In addition, the Institute for Civic Leadership, the School of Education, the Lorry I. Lokey Graduate School of Business and other departments have created and sustained many interesting and important partnerships over the years. It will be important to provide support and coordination for the numerous partnerships that already exist between campus and community organizations to assure they are strategically aligned and in support of the College's goals. Recent discussions with Children's Hospital Oakland Research Institute (CHORI) illustrated that synergies can occur at the institutional as well as departmental level. Mills' relationship with CHORI might also lead to a possible presence in San Francisco with CHORI's upcoming merger with UCSF.

Partnering with other liberal arts colleges: Mills is in discussion with several local private colleges to find synergies and opportunities for cost savings and cost sharing, such as joint purchasing of supplies, sharing in transportation costs, pooling staff and faculty participation in an employee health care group, and joint bidding in a student health care consortium, among other options.

The curriculum offers another area for collaboration. Curricular collaborations might include a video conferencing classroom to provide instruction in a language not currently offered at Mills and to boost enrollment in Mills classes, such as Chinese, not offered at other nearby colleges. Another example might include collaboration in scheduling between a department at Mills and a department at another college so students could maximize the opportunities of cross-registration. Yet another example might include partnering with institutions outside the United States to expand and internationalize the curricular offerings available to Mills students.

Developing partnerships with community colleges. Approximately 35% percent of undergraduate students are transfer students, the vast majority of whom come from two-year colleges in California. In order to encourage more of the strongest students from community colleges, Mills will develop a variety of partnerships to increase its visibility and attractiveness with this population. Possibilities for partnerships have ranged from collaboration between honors faculty at community colleges and Mills faculty, Mills classes offered at community college campuses, and stronger connections between Mills and honors programs at community colleges. In addition, the College will develop more articulation agreements at the department level with local two-year colleges. Developing articulation agreements at the department level towards majors will help recruit transfer students who already know their intended major by providing them a more certain picture of their remaining academic requirements at Mills.

SECTION V Appendices

APPENDIX A: Working Group Summaries

The following are abstracts of research conducted by the strategic planning working groups during the fall of 2012. Also included are summaries of work done by an ad hoc group of faculty interested in internationalizing Mills and by the Gender Identity and Expression Subcommittee of the Diversity and Social Justice Committee.

Working Group 1 – Undergraduate Programs

Working under the premise that the goal is to make Mills a bigger, better, and more sustainable undergraduate liberal arts college for women (with co-educational graduate programs), Working Group 1 was driven by what will make Mills a better liberal arts college for the women who will study at Mills throughout the rest of the 21st century. They tested their ideas against two questions: “how does this make Mills a better College,” and “how does this increase enrollment?” Their ideas were organized into five categories:

- Improvements in existing programs and how we tell the world about them (e.g., cross-registration, study abroad, undergraduate research);
- Re-workings, re-imaginings, and re-combinations that, with modest support, will expand the menu of options prospective students see (e.g., faculty designed college majors, new combined majors);
- Expansions and re-tooling with potential for near-term net benefit (e.g., new “hot” minors, further streamlining transfer admission, expand public radio program);
- Technologies, tools, and practices that enhance effectiveness and productivity across the spectrum of institutional activities (e.g., blended courses, credit for MOOC work, faculty-centric technology adoption); and
- New mission – resonant programs that are potential net enrollment attractors (e.g., expanded nursing program, re-created communications major, honors psychology program).

Working Group 2 – Graduate Programs

Working Group 2 began with 3 principles that helped them begin to think through promising ideas. They are:

- Graduate programs should build on the strengths of current faculty and programs. They should enhance our undergraduate liberal arts curriculum and promote the College's mission.
- As the College develops new programs, it is important also to strengthen current programs through an increased focus on marketing and recruitment.
- Promote new or existing graduate programs that have an interdisciplinary focus, innovative programs that could benefit from creative and strategic investment, and programs that explore new and emerging technologies and pedagogies. Explore programs with lower residency requirements that use winter and summer terms, as well as weekends and also one-year master's degrees that connect to 4+1 programs and lead to doctoral degrees.

Ideas have been collected from each division and suggestions will continue to be solicited.

Working Group 3 – Athletics

The intercollegiate athletics program at Mills has a tradition of excellence. Sports provide undergraduate women with high quality intercollegiate competition, while teaching life skills that transcend athletics. Retention and graduation rates are higher among athletes than non-athletes. Therefore, we must support these sports adequately while fulfilling our obligations to PE, recreational programs (including intramurals) and total community health and wellness.

With this as context, Working Group 3 focused its efforts on finances, facilities, student wellness and creating a vibrant campus experience. In considering finances, they looked at replacing the outdated funding model and developing a capital improvement roadmap. They suggested the College identify which NCAA Division III teams would work best in the Mills environment and evaluate the financial impact. To meet the needs of all stakeholders, the group considered the importance of remodeling facilities. Realizing the importance of student wellness, the group considered how to enhance and expand the health and wellness programs promoting a holistic approach and creating a truly integrated wellness plan to serve the millennial needs. Having a vibrant campus experience

is essential to student satisfaction and retention. To create this kind of experience at Mills, the group researched how to expand opportunities for all students and community members to participate in the campus community through club sports, recreational programs, Cyclone Spirit programs, etc.

Working Group 4 – Student Centric Culture

This group considered how we can create a more student-centric culture to improve admissions, and particularly, retention. Key to enrollment and retention are issues such as: student satisfaction, academic readiness and causes of attrition, as well as persistence. Regarding admissions and recruitment practices, the group examined effective pre-orientation programs, the development of policies and practices to determine which applicants are a best fit for Mills and how the admissions offices can identify those students and best support them on their arrival and through their time as Mills students. The group examined how the College can be nimble enough to meet not only students accepted by regular admissions deadlines but those admitted late, including right up to the start of classes.

The group realizes that the ability to pay for a Mills education is related to the students' enrollment and retention. They explored various ways to help students meet these costs, including lower tuition, flat rate tuition, and enhanced scholarships. The group recommends enhanced "student service training" for high traffic departments, such as the M Center, using Noel Levitz's "student satisfaction inventory data" to understand students' expectations vs. reality, and developing a group to examine students of concern.

To engage student participation and create a center for 24/7 life on campus most immediately, there was a recommendation to create a student run café in the Student Union and the need for interim improvements to the Rothwell Center.

Working Group 5 –Civic Engagement, Social Justice, and Sustainability

This working group looked at civic engagement, social justice and sustainability, commitments that all good liberal arts colleges claim they share. In addition, the group noted that the National Study for Student Engagement data show that incoming Mills students profess a strong desire to change the world and connect with community but that their experiences on campus do not support this worthy goal.

To address this gap, the group sees potential in framing Mills as a “living laboratory” to define and redefine social justice, build community, engage with communities beyond campus, and live in sustainable, climate neutral ways. The metaphor of a living laboratory can extend to the classroom and extracurricular life.

The group’s research revealed that Mills is the only Bay Area college without a central center for service learning and civic engagement. There are many curricular opportunities to integrate social justice, civic engagement, and sustainability, such as: a January term, alternative spring breaks, core courses taken by all first year students, diplomas with distinction for community service, capstone projects, and a distributed minor or College minor in the mold of a College major that addresses problems important to learning in the disciplines, preparing for careers, and engaging in democratic participation.

Given the focus on social justice, this group was committed to connecting specifically with Oakland, while recognizing other working groups might define connections in broader Bay Area terms. Finally, the group noted how the high cost of a private college presents a challenge in working for social justice and the consequent need for “service scholar” scholarships for new students, and scholarships to encourage students to connect their work on campus to social justice.

Working Group 6 – External Reputation, Community Partnerships, Women and Gender

This group undertook three distinct topics, including: external reputation; women and gender; and community partnerships, and developed priority ideas for each topic.

Primary among their recommendations is the need to improve and build upon the College’s external reputation. They recommended launching a comprehensive branding initiative to develop a focused message for Mills and to engage faculty in building the College’s external reputation.

Community partnerships are essential to the College’s strategic efforts in raising its profile locally and nationally. It will be important to clarify and build consensus around the definition and importance of community partnerships for Mills. The group recommends creating a signature community engagement program that features institution-wide “strategic partnerships” with a small number of prominent, nationally recognized local community organizations. The group recognized the need to provide support and coordination for the numerous partnerships that already exist between campus and community organizations.

Regarding the topic of women and gender, the group recommended that it is important to consider gender diversity and justice rather than only “women’s issues” as an area in which Mills can distinguish itself. They suggested that Mills leverage its existing strengths in intersectionality (the study of gender in relation to other axes of difference such as race, class, sexuality, and national origin) and women and the arts. By creating one or more centers, they believe that Mills has the potential to increase its scholarly reputation and visibility as a resource. This group’s recommended possibilities for centers include:

- Center for Race, Gender and Sexuality Studies
- Center for Women and Politics
- Capitalize on the Women in Public Service Project

Internationalizing Mills

Globalization surfaced in several working groups, and several faculty members volunteered to examine two dimensions of internationalizing Mills College:

- Bringing more international students to Mills
- Providing a more global education for all of our students on campus

In order to make Mills a more global college, they recommended immediate and longer-term strategic actions and investments to address the issues of globalizing the curriculum; increasing student immersion and exposure; recruiting international students; and retaining international students. While internationalizing Mills would require financial investments, the financial benefits of a more global college might include: increased tuition revenues from higher international enrollments; increased tuition revenues if changes attract domestic prospective students; and increased tuition revenues from specialized programs we might create outside the regular curriculum, such as study tours or intensive summer programs.

Inclusion of Transgender and Gender Fluid Students

The Gender Identity and Expression Subcommittee of the Diversity and Social Justice Committee investigated best practices for the inclusion of transgender and gender fluid students. Recognizing the complex relationship that many Mills students have with the category of “woman,” while honoring Mills’ history and identity as a women’s college committed to challenging gender injustice in all forms, the subcommittee investigated inclusive policies related to campus and classroom climate, recruitment and admission,

curriculum, athletics, healthcare, and housing and other facilities. Fighting gender-based oppression is at the heart of Mills' mission as a women's college. Valuing and fostering diversity and supporting social justice are also central to Mills' mission. Including transgender and gender fluid students and ensuring that they have a positive educational experience at Mills is important not only to retaining students but to fulfilling the college's mission.

APPENDIX B Strategic Planning Steering Committee and Working Group membership

Steering Committee

Alecia DeCoudreaux , President, Chair
David Donahue, Associate Provost, Co-Chair
Renee Jadushlever, Chief of Staff, Co-Chair
Christie Chung, Associate Professor of Psychology
Dawn Cunningham, Senior Director of Advancement, Communications and Outreach
Sonya Delwaide, Associate Professor of Dance
Priya Kandaswamy , Assistant Professor of Women’s Studies
Alex Moses, Trustee
Anna Richert, Professor of Education
Deborah Merrill-Sands, Dean of the Graduate School of Business
Linda Zitzner, Associate Vice President of Operations

Working Group 1

Michael Beller, Head of Reference and Access Services
Sonya Delwaide-Nichols, Associate Professor of Dance
Beth Kochly, Assistant Professor of Chemistry
Brian O’Rourke, Vice President for Enrollment Management
Dan Ryan, Associate Professor of Sociology (facilitator)
Kiem Sie, Instructional Technology Administrator

Working Group 2

David Bernstein, Professor of Music
Troy Duster, Trustee
Tammi Jackson, Vice President for Finance and Administration
Martha Johnson, Assistant Professor of Government
Kathy Schultz, Dean of the School of Education (facilitator)
Juliana Spahr, Professor of English
Jared Young, Associate Professor of Biology

Working Group 3

Themy Adachi, Assistant Dean, Director of Athletics, Recreation & PE

Giulietta Aquino, Dean of Undergraduate Admission

Maia Averett, Assistant Professor of Mathematics

Kirsten Saxton, Associate Professor of English

Linda Zitzner, Associate Vice President of Operations (facilitator)

Working Group 4

David Gin, Associate Vice President of Student Financial Services

Laura Gobbi, Senior Director of Alumnae Relations

Lesa Hammond, Chief Human Resources Officer and Director of Career Services

Shari Keller, Director of Undergraduate Financial Aid

Mary-Ann Milford, Professor of Art History

Kathleen Rice, Interim Vice President for Student Life and Dean of Students (facilitator)

Priya Shimpi, Assistant Professor of Education

Working Group 5

Britta Bullard, Sustainability Coordinator

Dorothy Calimeris, Director of Auxiliary Services

Christie Chung, Associate Professor of Psychology

Michaela Daystar, Program Director, Institute for Civic Leadership

David Donahue, Associate Provost and Professor of Education (facilitator)

Kristina Faul, Associate Professor of Geochemistry & Environmental Geology

Mark Henderson, Assistant Professor of Public Policy

Sabrina Kwist, Director of Engagement and Inclusion, Student Diversity Programs

Cynthia Scheinberg, Dean of Graduate Literary Studies and Professor of English

Working Group 6

Cynthia Brandt Stover, Vice President for Institutional Advancement (facilitator)
Dawn Cunningham, Senior Director of Advancement Communications & Outreach
Jeanne Herrera, Director of Media Relations
Priya Kandaswamy, Assistant Professor of Women's Studies
Deborah Merrill-Sands, Dean of the Graduate School of Business
Judy Silva, Associate Vice President for Marketing
Debbie Woods, Associate Dean of Admission

Internationalizing Mills

Diane Cady, English
Audrey Calefas-Strebelle, Languages and Literature
Carlota Caulfield, Spanish and Spanish American Studies, Languages and Literatures
Hector Mario Cavallari, Professor of Spanish and Spanish American Studies, Co-Chair of the Department of Languages and Literatures
Chiuhung Chen, Languages and Literatures
Wah Cheng, History
Christie Chung, Psychology
Neha Dave, Economics & MBA
Eirik Evenhouse, Economics
Tomás Galguera, Education
Bertram Gordon, History
Nalini Ghuman, Music
Martha C. Johnson, Government
Kate Karniouchina, MBA
Edith Kinney, PLEA
Brinda Mehta, Languages and Literature
Ann Metcalf, Anthropology
Melinda Micco, Ethnic Studies
Zohreh Niknia, Economics
Julia C. Oparah, Ethnic Studies

Patricia Powell, English
Siobhan Reilly, Economics
Kathy Schultz, Education
Carol Theokary, MBA
Jared Young, Biology

Inclusion of Transgender and Gender Fluid Students

Skylar Crownover, Undergraduate Student and Vice President of Mouthing Off
Dave Donahue, Associate Provost
Laura Engelken, Director of Spiritual and Religious Life
Priya Kandaswamy (Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies)
Sabrina Kwist, Diversity and Social Justice Resource Center
Ajuan Mance (English)
Cole Moyer, Registrar's Office
Julia C. Oparah, Ethnic Studies (Chair)
Kehontas Rowe, Undergraduate Student
Neil Virtue, Athletics, Physical Education, and Recreation