

**SARAH LAWRENCE COLLEGE
STRATEGIC PLAN
2010 – 2017**



May 25, 2011

EMBRACING THE OPPORTUNITY IN THE CHALLENGE

In an era marked by economic dislocation and uncertainty, Sarah Lawrence confronts urgent challenges unique to its very costly but most effective faculty-intensive, student-centered operating model. These challenges in turn present us with a pivotal opportunity to renew the College's leadership role and strengthen our capacity to deliver on our mission.

Some of the challenges we face, such as the extremely turbulent economic climate, shifting demographics and emerging student expectations, are global and affect the higher education community generally. Even the best endowed institutions are experiencing financial pressures, and, like society at large, are recognizing and working to respond to the needs of an increasingly diverse population of students, faculty and staff. At the same time, the very premise of a liberal arts education is undergoing intense scrutiny. Colleges and universities are being called upon to examine their education models and to assess whether their long-cherished, much-defended traditions are adequate to the task of preparing young people for a world of permanent change and uncertainty; they are being asked to demonstrate that a liberal arts education is worth the cost.

Other challenges are specific to the College: a time- and labor-intensive education model; a small endowment; low awareness and recognition of the benefits of the Sarah Lawrence model; below-average alumni engagement and giving due to inconsistent attention to development and alumni relations; under-investment in facilities; our location in one of the most expensive geographic markets in the nation, and the physical limits of College's footprint, situated as it is in the midst of a suburban community.

We take these challenges as a defining opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to our core teaching model, and build our reputation, while at the same time innovating for our future and strengthening our capacity to deliver on our mission.

Building on our traditional strengths in student-centered and practice-based learning, we will re-assert our leadership by raising awareness of the benefits of our model and the achievements of our faculty, students and alumnae/i. Through curricular developments, new cross-disciplinary programs built on existing academic strengths, institutional partnerships and innovations in student assessment, we will extend our reach while managing the costs and risks of expanding our offerings.

By more effectively communicating the benefits of our distinctive model to a wider group of students who would thrive at Sarah Lawrence, and by addressing affordability issues, we will increase our applicant pool, achieve greater diversity and balance our financial aid mix. By cultivating a vibrant student community that promotes social and intellectual development and is responsive to the needs of individual students, we will enhance retention and long term attachment to the College.

We are committed to sustaining and enhancing a diverse and inclusive learning, working and living community. Diversity enables a genuine liberal arts education, in which the presence of people with different experiences and ideas, engaged in critical dialogue, overcomes ignorance and builds trust and knowledge.

The college will strengthen our foundations through initiatives that fortify the distinctive attributes of our educational model, with an emphasis on the First Year Experience, Donning, the Conference System and our unparalleled commitment to faculty-student contact and Practice-Based Learning.

We will build our capacity to deliver on our mission through enhanced fund-raising and revenue generation, an emphasis on sustainability, more effective management practices that support our faculty and staff, and through the strategic realignment of resources to sustain core activities while realizing emergent priorities.

By taking on the opportunity in the challenge, we will bring Sarah Lawrence to new levels of prominence and put the College on a solid footing for further achievement.

Our Mission

At Sarah Lawrence College our mission is to graduate world citizens who are diverse in every definition of the word, who take intellectual and creative risks, who cross disciplinary boundaries, and who are able to sustain exceptional academic discipline within a framework of humanistic values and concern for community. Our unique educational practices provide our students with the opportunity to study intensively in small classes, to engage in independent research, and to spend unparalleled amounts of time working one-on-one with an exceptional faculty of scholars and artists, creating a tailored academic program of students' own design. Our goal is to instill a lifelong intellectual curiosity and nimbleness, as well as the confidence and entrepreneurial spirit to embrace a broad range of personal, professional and creative pursuits. We thus prepare students to think and act independently so that they will tackle the problems of, and thrive in, a complex and rapidly evolving world.

Our Vision

Build on Our Strengths

to renew Sarah Lawrence College's leadership as a unique and influential model for 21st Century Education

- ❖ ***The college of choice*** for a diverse group of intellectually ambitious, passionate, and creative students, undergraduate and graduate, who are engaged in their communities and want to make a mark on their world.
- ❖ ***The professional gold standard*** for outstanding scholars and artists who are committed to teaching, learning and the development of their students
- ❖ ***Internationally known and admired*** for its unique educational approach that produces graduates whose creative problem-solving abilities and enterprising spirit make an impact that is vastly greater than their numbers
- ❖ ***Financially sustainable***, with the depth of resources and professional staff to sustain its mission and expand its impact
- ❖ Whose proud, affiliated alums participate in ***a supportive network that contributes value*** to one another, and to their communities, locally and around the world.

The Value of a Sarah Lawrence Education

For creative and intellectually motivated students who want to make their mark on the world, Sarah Lawrence offers a unique approach to learning and teaching designed to produce capable, confident, creative 21st Century citizens with the imagination, drive and skills to make a difference in their own and others' lives.

Sarah Lawrence's approach inculcates the entrepreneurial habits of exploration, risk-taking and invention that graduates will need to find solutions for which no models currently exist. A Sarah Lawrence education imparts the skills -- as well as the courage -- to think both creatively and analytically; work both independently and collaboratively, and act with both confidence and sensitivity in a complex and ever-evolving world.

Because

We cross disciplinary boundaries, give equal priority to the arts, sciences and humanities and integrate theory and practice

Students design their own course of study and choose which classes to take with guidance from their Dons

We require that students design a personalized study project for each seminar

Our model is built around small seminars, studios and workshops

Our model is built upon direct faculty participation with students

Faculty put teaching and student development on equal footing with their scholarship and creative work

Faculty teach the subjects of greatest interest to them while assuring a dynamic and varied curriculum for students

We embrace the importance of diversity in all dimensions of college life

Our graduate programs are embedded in, and take full advantage of, our distinctive interdisciplinary pedagogy

We go beyond the traditional liberal arts model of majors and minors, instead guiding students while they construct rigorous, hand-tailored interdisciplinary programs

Students are able...

To explore topics in a deeper and more expansive way, incorporating creative and expressive modes into their learning, and developing deeper insights into the complex connections between the subjects they are studying

To feel more personally invested in an education they can link to their interests, experiences and capacities. Students become independent learners.

To more deeply explore an area that most interests them and take intellectual and creative risks

To work more intensively and interactively with their professors and fellow students; engage more deeply and personally with the material

To have more profound and rewarding faculty interactions

To study with faculty who value working with students and devote their considerable professional skills to teaching

To study with faculty who are highly engaged with their scholarly and creative work and energized by what they are teaching

To encounter peers from different backgrounds and gain the ability to work constructively with and learn from diverse colleagues

To pursue specialized training while enjoying broader intellectual growth

To graduate confident in their ability to adapt to, and thrive within, a world requiring new and fluid combinations of skills

And as a result...

Students become creative problem-solvers in the world, outside-of-the-box thinkers, who approach problems in innovative and substantive ways

Students graduate with the capacity to be accountable for their own development

Students develop skills in envisioning an endeavor and managing their time and resources to produce results, allowing them to become practical and effective agents in the world

They become skilled at crafting and managing complex projects that produce rich results.

Students become persuasive presenters, and skilled collaborators.

Faculty enjoy a continuously challenging and changing teaching environment, and the rewards of playing a primary role in student development

Students have a vital personal model for intellectual inquiry and growth.

Students leave with a fresh, continuously renewable sense of the value of critical thinking and creative inquiry.

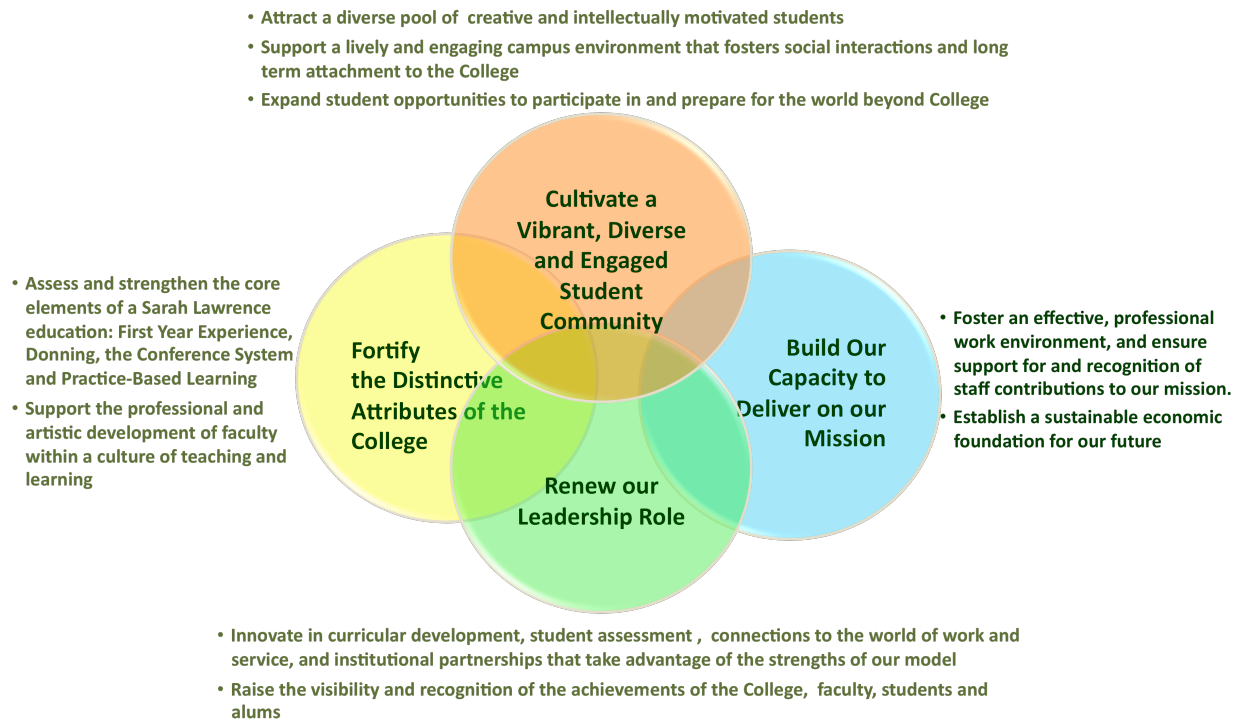
Students are prepared to be engaged citizens and vital contributors in the highly mobile context of contemporary global society.

Students acquire professional skills while assimilating, if they so chose, an enriched liberal arts education

Students have the capacity to achieve success in a continuously evolving post-college environment

The Strategic Plan

Our Plan is built on four interconnected Strategic Goals, supported by nine Strategic Priorities that, executed together, will achieve our vision for Sarah Lawrence



Goal: Renew our role as a leader in 21st Century education

Strategic Rationale

To renew our leadership role in education, we must **take the lead** in innovating for our times, building on existing strengths to respond to new student needs and intellectual developments across the disciplines. Furthermore, we must **demonstrate** the value of our model, and in so doing, create a new assessment methodology that will enhance our authority and influence in the academic community. Our integrative, cross-disciplinary approach is the ideal basis for creating new curriculum clusters and interdisciplinary courses that respond to new student and societal needs. Recent gifts and grants have positioned the College to make major strides in the areas of Environmental Science and Technology in the Arts, among other opportunities. We are also well positioned to pioneer new partnerships and concentrations with sister institutions in the United States and abroad, and leveraging our connection to New York City.

By raising our profile and reinforcing our leadership role, we will expand our intellectual and cultural influence. In doing so, we will attract and support excellent faculty and a larger pool of qualified students, whose accomplishments will in turn burnish our reputation further.

Strategic Priorities

- ❖ **Innovate in curricular development, student assessment, technology application, service-learning, and institutional partnerships built on our unique strengths in student-centered and practice-based learning**
 - Develop a robust, innovative and multi-disciplinary 21st Century curriculum that takes advantage of our model to respond to diverse student needs and new academic developments across the disciplines
 - Create a new model for assessing student outcomes, built on our inherent culture of student learning assessment and evaluation, and export this model for broader adoption in the higher education community
 - Apply new technology for instruction, collaboration, research and assessment
 - Build bridges to the world of work and service beyond the college
 - Create new kinds of institutional partnerships that expand our portfolio and increase access to areas of student interest.
- ❖ **Raise the visibility and recognition of the achievements of the College, its faculty, students, alums, and staff**
 - Define and develop Sarah Lawrence's institutional identity to ensure that internal and external communications are concrete, consistent, and sufficiently compelling to raise visibility of the College and enhance its reputation
 - Pursue national and international media coverage of SLC's unique educational model and its benefits
 - Develop media opportunities for the President to position the College
 - Expand opportunities for faculty to pursue subject-matter expert roles in the media
 - Increase the number of faculty scholarly and creative achievement citations in key national and international media and
 - Highlight alumni achievements of note in developing promotional and media material
 - Expand communications reach to a diverse group of high school students through print, electronic, social and other media

Critical Milestones	
Success Indicators	Target by 2017
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater recognition by influential authorities (eg: guidance counselors, thought and opinion leaders) 	Regularly cited in public discourse as a leading , national, liberal arts college
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved profile and standing in national sources of consumer information about colleges 	Consistently positive descriptions and feature articles in major college guides
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SLC model, innovations, faculty and alum achievements receive national media coverage 	Baseline and outyear surveys of HS guidance counselors demonstrating increased appreciation of our mission

Goal: Cultivate a Vibrant, Diverse and Engaged Community

Strategic Rationale

We are committed to cultivating a community of students, faculty, staff and alumnae/i that produces graduates with the skills they need to make a difference in their own and others' lives.

To sustain a learning environment that promotes intellectual challenge, diversity and a positive social dynamic on campus, the College aims to achieve an undergraduate and graduate applicant pool sufficient to ensure student selectivity and yield.

In addition to addressing students' academic needs, we must also support their social and physical well-being through graduation, and help them to prepare for the world beyond college by connecting with and contributing to the larger community -- locally, nationally and globally.

Strategic Priorities

❖ **Attract a diverse pool of creative and intellectually motivated students**

- Enlarge the pool of applicants to enhance selectivity and diversity by refining the focus of recruiting efforts, and increasing our direct outreach to guidance counselors, prospective applicants and parents.
- Improve our external communications and associated admissions recruiting materials to better articulate the value of a Sarah Lawrence education, including our preeminence in creative fields.
- Achieve a greater co-education balance
- Identify and emphasize key disciplines that support recruitment by more clearly demonstrating the depth and value of a Sarah Lawrence education.
- Increase affordability while responding to institutional financial priorities.

❖ **Support a lively and engaging campus environment that fosters social interactions, diversity, student satisfaction and long term attachment to the College**

- Create and re-design campus spaces to promote social interactions among students, facilitate student-faculty connections, and provide student services
- Enhance campus social life
- Continue to foster and promote a campus climate that respects and cultivates diversity in all of its forms; ensure that diversity initiatives across departments (Admission, Student Affairs, Human Resources, curricular development) are coordinated and overseen by a senior member of the College's administration.
- Pursue NCAA Division III membership to ensure that intramural and intercollegiate athletics remain integrated into the core mission of the College
- Integrate graduate students into college life
- Improve intramural communications about College activities and events

Critical Milestones	
Success Indicators	Target by 2015 or 2017
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in actionable applications 	25% by 2015
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in yield of accepted students; increase in selectivity 	Sustained increases in yield in line with our peer group. Sustained increase in selectivity in line with our peer group.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-educational balance (M/F) 	65%/35% of first-year class, v. 71%/29% in 2010
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major Diversity and Inclusion Initiative 	<p>Create administrative structures to support the work of the standing Diversity Committee, including a Diversity Office and Chief Diversity Officer</p> <p>Regular, measurable increases in the enrollment and retention of underrepresented students</p> <p>Demonstrated commitment to diversity in faculty and staff recruiting, hiring and retention</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6-year graduation rates 	Ensure levels of completion competitive with our peers and substantially above the national average.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student involvement in the community 	Significant increase from current levels (2010) in students enrolled in courses with practice-based learning components, or participating in volunteer activities.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student satisfaction 	Matches levels reported by students (HERI survey) at peer institutions

❖ **Expand student opportunities to participate in and prepare for the world beyond college**

- Enhance co-curricular community engagement
- Create new undergraduate and graduate programs

Goal: Fortify the Distinctive Attributes of the College

Strategic Rationale

Unlike many other liberal arts colleges, Sarah Lawrence offers a genuinely distinctive educational experience, grounded in a firmly held philosophy and approach to learning and teaching.

To deliver on our promise, we must nurture and fortify those distinctive attributes that are at the heart of our purpose, and create the unique value in our education: our First Year Studies experience that prepares students for the rigors and pleasures of a Sarah Lawrence education while it introduces them to a field of study; the Donning system that goes well beyond traditional academic advising to build students’ capacities to direct their educations and make life choices; the Conference system, in which faculty have standing, one-on-one appointments with each of their students, and which gives full scope to each student’s interests and passions, while

providing a disciplined framework for these explorations, and Practice-Based Learning that allows students to apply and test the theories they discuss in the classroom, and develop new models grounded in experience.

The distinctive features of our model must work with a high degree of efficacy and consistency in order to provide a successful intellectual and personal experience for students; we know that the quality of these experiences contribute significantly to student satisfaction and retention, as well as to alumnae/I engagement after school.

The effectiveness of our system depends on our ability to support our unique faculty – accomplished scholars and artists who teach subjects of their choice and who put teaching and student development at the heart of their work. These actively engaged scholar-teachers are present on campus and work with students throughout the day, at least four days a week. This paradigm is divergent from other colleges and universities, where full-time faculty often spend half that amount of time on campus, and while it exacts a higher level of engagement from our faculty, it also creates a more cohesive sense of community that affects the functioning of the entire school.

Strategic Priorities

❖ **Assess and strengthen the core elements of the Sarah Lawrence educational model**

- Ensure the first year academic experience meets the needs of new students
- Review and enhance Donning, Conference System and Practice-Based Learning
- Implement faculty training, enhance communication regarding expectations
- Preserve and, when finances permit, enhance our low student-faculty ratio, an essential component of Donning, the Conference System, and institutional support for faculty development.

❖ **Support the professional and artistic development of the faculty within a culture of teaching and learning**

Critical Milestones	
Measurements	Target by 2017
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First year students successfully completing and returning for a second year of study 	By 2013, achieve 90+% second-year enrollment, compared to 85.5% in Fall 2010.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Donning experiences meet/exceed established standards for student development • Quality of Conference Work 	Middle States endorsement of SLC educational approach and its focus on student learning outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty-led innovation 	Creation of a program innovation endowment funding new, high-impact academic offerings.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional recognition for faculty 	Increase in number of independent or collaborative faculty engagements outside (but complementary to) regular College responsibilities.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty satisfaction 	As measured through HERI Faculty Satisfaction survey

- Strengthen support for artistic and scholarly work
- Strengthen opportunities for collaboration
- Encourage faculty-led instructional and curricular innovations to bolster and advance our educational approach, and invest in the depth of academic offerings
- Improve physical working environment, including dining facilities and offices

Goal: Build our capacity to deliver on our mission

Strategic Rationale

Our capacity to deliver on our mission relies on a sustainable strategic approach to managing our operational and financial resources as well as on maintaining enrollment at capacity while managing the tuition discount to sustainable levels.

The commitment, creativity and energy of all our staff will set the tone and drive the pace of implementation. We embrace the importance of developing a supportive, high-performance culture, characterized by the confidence, optimism, pride and enthusiasm of all who work at the College at every level.

In an increasingly demanding environment, we must also ensure that the College achieves the financial capacity to sustain and fund the core instructional mission of the college; faculty-led curricular innovations; the accessibility goals of our student recruiting efforts, and the upgrade of our facilities.

As Sarah Lawrence moves to establish a sustainable economic and operational foundation, we have set as one of our highest priorities a return to a policy of annual increases at or above inflation beginning in 2011-12. The College is also strongly committed to improving faculty and staff compensation, with the goal of bringing compensation to the median of our peer institutions, taking into consideration the cost of living in the New York metropolitan area, by the year 2020. Generating the resources needed to support this will be dependent on the success of the planned capital campaign. Alongside our ambition to increase our fundraising and revenue generation capacity, we are equally committed to managing our cost base, and making most efficient use of space and other resources. We will seek out organizational and structural changes that enhance our capacity to deliver on our mission even as they reduce expenses.

Critical Milestones	
Measurements	Target by 2017
• Annual fundraising capacity	\$30 million/yr in gifts & pledges
• Successful capital campaign	\$200 million
• Alumnae/l giving participation rates	40% annual giving rate
• Endowment payout levels	=5%
• Faculty and Staff Compensation	Compensation at the median for for SLC's peer group
• Plant reinvestment	Minimum of 2% of capital spending
• Additional revenue streams	Minimum of \$2MM annually from new revenue sources/programs
• Sustainability practices	Campus in compliance with industry best practices

Strategic Priorities

❖ Foster an effective, professional and diverse working environment and ensure support for and recognition of staff contributions to our mission.

- Engage faculty and staff in SLC strategy and values
- Streamline internal communications and policies
- Create professional training and career development opportunities for staff
- Leverage the professional skill sets of staff by encouraging cross-training of staff whenever possible
- Improve staff-faculty communication through shared participation in governance and college planning activities
- Celebrate staff's contributions to the development of SLC; create opportunities to build staff esprit d'corps.

❖ Establish a sustainable economic and operational foundation for our future

- Upgrade annual fundraising capacity
- Achieve financial aid balance
- Add new revenue sources
- Develop new graduate, undergraduate and non-credit programs

- Improve space utilization
- Launch Capital Campaign
- Re-engage alums through strong alumni networks
- Embed sustainability principles into all college operations