

Whitman College 2028

Transformative Learning for a Changing World

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Whitman College has long been a beacon of teaching and learning in the residential liberal arts tradition. Students learn from wonderful faculty in the arts, sciences, social sciences and humanities, taking part in small classes that call on each person to develop their voice, think deeply, and communicate effectively. Faculty are recognized scholars in their disciplines, adding to knowledge and understanding, and bringing students directly into the experience of exploring and discovering new ideas. An extraordinary and dedicated staff support our campus and the mission of the College. Building on their college experiences, Whitman alumni make an impact in every field of work, and in communities around the world.

Over the last decade, the College has made major strides: growing the diversity of the student population, significantly expanding funds for scholarships and financial aid, strengthening community-based learning, supporting students in preparing for life after college and substantially innovating the curriculum (revising the general education requirements and adding five new majors along with several minors and concentrations). The College has also begun important collaborative work with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, and made major investments in community and student life, including the central dining hall (Cleveland Commons) and Stanton Hall, which allows all sophomores to live on campus.

As we look ahead, it's clear that our College's mission is more important than ever. The challenges our society will face call for Whitman people - ethical leaders with a global perspective and an understanding of history, science, the arts, and the ways that societies and cultures evolve. We will need people who communicate effectively, innovate collaboratively, and act to make change.

The learning and growth that happens through the excellent liberal arts education at Whitman is powerful and timeless. At the same time, rapid technological, societal, environmental, and economic changes are profoundly affecting higher education, the ways that students live, and the world that they will enter after graduation. To meet our mission, we will need to continue to evolve - staying true to our values, understanding the change around us, and advancing new ideas that are right for students now and in the years to come.

The high-level objectives for our work build from [our College's mission](#).

- To inspire students holding a wide range of perspectives, identities and experiences to choose Whitman, and to provide the resources that enable them to matriculate and graduate.
- To provide a breadth of opportunities for learning and growth through a superb liberal arts education in a diverse and inclusive community, where students explore ideas, thrive and form lifelong connections.

- To prepare students for meaningful and impactful lives in which they discover their purpose, fulfill their aspirations, and make a difference in the world.
- To flourish as a leading college, so that we can realize our mission with distinction - now and for many years into the future.

Through discussions with students, staff, faculty, alumni and the board of trustees, we have developed six strategic themes for the coming five years. These themes are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. Advancing them will strengthen both the Whitman experience and the impact our students make in the world.

Strategic themes:

I. Academic Excellence and Distinction:

Whitman has a long history of academic excellence fueled by the dedication, vibrant scholarship and creative production of our exceptional faculty and staff. Students learn broadly and deeply inside the classroom and beyond it. Looking forward, we will build on these strengths, investing in a leading liberal arts curriculum and in dynamic academic programs - creating learning opportunities that inspire students to come to Whitman, broaden their horizons, support their interests and aspirations, and empower their futures.

We will support faculty in teaching, research and scholarship, which are so deeply connected, and also expand student opportunities for research, discovery, and connecting learning to action. We will advance inclusive teaching approaches and the diversity of voices represented in the curriculum. We will support all students in their academic success, strengthening and bringing together services for teaching and learning.

Areas for focused action:

- Find the curricular and pedagogical innovations in which to invest for the future. These may include new directions or deepening study in existing departments/programs, as well as new majors, minors or interdisciplinary opportunities that inspire students to come to Whitman and connect to the futures they are building. As we consider options, we will attend to opportunities for Whitman to build on our distinctions and strengths, advance inclusive excellence, and lead for the decades ahead.
- Explore ways to leverage our unique location to develop distinctive curricula and programs of study that will be compelling to current and future students. Our region is an extraordinary site for engagement with crucial emerging issues such as sustainable energy, intersections of technology and society, indigenous communities and lands, immigration, incarceration, entrepreneurship, and much more.
- Develop new approaches to support faculty research/creative production.
- Expand opportunities for student research mentored by faculty.
- Advance inclusive academic engagement - inclusive pedagogy, universal design, and expanded support for learning and teaching - so that all students have the fullest opportunity to learn and contribute in their classes.

- Update classroom spaces and technologies to enable new and evolving approaches to teaching and learning.
- Broaden experiential and community-engaged learning opportunities across the curriculum, so that every student can take their learning into action.
- Expand ways that interested faculty can include applied or career-connected components in classes and in their departments/ programs.
- Support faculty in their efforts to help students envision their next steps after graduation.
- Revisit and consider new opportunities for senior culminating experiences.

II. Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Anti-racism and Access:

We want our college to reflect the diversity of the nation and to be the truly inclusive, anti-racist community that every student, staff and faculty member deserves. Becoming a more diverse community and advancing inclusive excellence are moral imperatives. They are also necessities for preparing all students for lives of purpose and impact, and crucial to the College's thriving in a changing world. We will advance access to Whitman for all students by growing need-based and merit-based scholarship and financial aid resources. And, we will take actions that increase the diversity of staff, faculty and students along every dimension, and focus on ensuring inclusive and equitable working and learning environments so that Whitman is a place where all members of the community feel deeply welcome and can flourish and grow.

Areas for focused action:

- Strengthen affordability, meet full need, and lessen financial barriers to full access to the curriculum, to co-curricular opportunities, and to thriving life on campus.
- Cultivate an institutional culture, climate and community that increases and supports the diversity of staff, faculty and students.
- Focus on ensuring inclusive and equitable working/learning environments and on thriving and retention as well as recruitment.
- Improve the physical accessibility of our campus.
- Strengthen support for neurodiversity.
- Advance DEIA in the curriculum and co-curriculum.

III. A vibrant campus community that supports learning, thriving and lifelong relationships:

Whitman's community of learners is one of its greatest strengths. The learning that students do by living in community and making meaning together is powerful. It has a significant impact both during students' college years and long after they graduate, and forms a crucial part of Whitman's mission. The world into which our students will graduate requires more than brilliant individuals working with specialized knowledge to solve its most pressing problems. Our alumni tell us that the best innovation stems from teams with a diversity of voices and perspectives, collaborating. Faculty and staff seek to work in a community that is welcoming, engaging, and professionally rewarding.

At the same time, the pandemic has created isolation and challenge for a whole generation. And new technologies are playing an accelerating societal role, offering connection, but also

fostering extremism and division. In this time, it's crucial that we do more than just bring people together to share the same space. We will double-down on the importance of a thriving, safe and welcoming community for everyone at Whitman. And we will make the most of the extraordinary opportunity for connection and face-to-face learning on a diverse and international campus. We will elevate the importance of constructive civil discourse, where honest conversation from different points of view is valued, and leads to deeper understanding and creative collaboration.

Areas for focused action:

For everyone:

- Build and nurture a community of belonging, where all experience meaningful connection, deep welcome and the opportunity to thrive.
- Invest in activities that bring people together, engage our values and mission, and celebrate the Whitman community.
- Develop initiatives to support meaningful discussion, collaboration and learning across differences of opinion, perspective and identity.
- Actively support wellness - enhancing physical, spiritual and mental health resources.
- Build on inclusive opportunities to connect with our amazing outdoor spaces and landscape.

For students:

- Increase on-campus housing capacity, to strengthen vibrant residential community across all four years.
- Enhance options for engagement across many kinds of interests - supporting student clubs and organizations, as well as music, theater, athletics, outdoor programs, and community-engaged work, so that students can participate, both as beginners and at a high level, in co-curricular activities that interest them.

For faculty and staff:

- Make Whitman a great place to work and an employer of choice for staff and faculty; focus on welcoming culture, collaboration and shared governance, professional development, compensation, mission, flexibility, housing affordability.

IV. A strong launch into life after Whitman for all students:

Students come to college to learn, grow and expand their view of the world. At the same time, they (and their families) are very conscious of the need to prepare for their lives after graduation. Historically, post-graduate opportunities have been deeply inequitable, with some students able to “study what you love and the rest will take care of itself”, while students with more financial pressures had to focus on trying to obtain pre-professional credentials. At Whitman, we want every student to be free to develop and explore their intellectual passions, while also feeling confident that they will be well prepared to meet their aspirations after college, and to thrive professionally across their lifetime. We will build on the growing strength of programs that support students’ career exploration, and leverage alumni and community connections to provide new ways for students to learn and prepare for a rapidly evolving

professional landscape. Our intention is to create a robust and distinctive four-year program that begins with career coaching and builds each year thereafter, so that every student has the opportunity for an exceptional start to life after college.

Areas for focused action:

- Significantly broaden access to internship and mentored-research opportunities, so that we connect students with great options in every field of study. Expand partnerships with local businesses and nonprofits, activate networks with alumni & parents eager to provide opportunities of this kind for Whitman students, and consider ways that new technologies can facilitate opportunity. Consider offering a guarantee of internships or research opportunities for all students.
- Strengthen pathways for students to graduate programs, in ways that are recognizable to prospective students and helpful to those with a wide range of interests.
- Provide all students with opportunities to translate their competencies from the classroom to professional settings. Support faculty and staff across the College in fruitfully mentoring students around “what comes next”.

V. Connecting Whitman, Walla Walla, and the World

Connecting students beyond the campus - to the extraordinary learning opportunities in our region and around the world - provides students crucial opportunities for growth, exploration and ethical action. The biggest opportunities and challenges of our future go beyond national boundaries, and call for global perspective. At the same time, place matters, and Whitman College celebrates and seeks to make the most of the unique strengths of our region and communities, and to strive to act as an excellent citizen of our region. We will prioritize an education for all students that is both locally grounded and globally engaged, and that provides students excellent ways to expand their learning - here in the Walla Walla valley, across our region, and around the world.

Areas for focused action:

- Contribute actively and ethically as a partner in and around Walla Walla.
- Continue to build strong partnerships locally - with schools, businesses and non-profit organizations, leveraging opportunities through local alumni and friends of the College.
- Broaden opportunities for experiential and community-engaged learning in our region.
- Consider opportunities for students to connect and engage in curricular, co-curricular and pre-professional programs in major cities in the Northwest.
- Engage substantially with the College’s history in ways that are honest and reparative with those harmed, and fully realize the commitments in the Memorandum of Agreement with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation. .
- Broaden opportunities world-wide for immersive off-campus studies, and ensure that the range of offerings accommodates the diverse academic and co-curricular interests of our students.
- Support faculty in bringing local and global perspectives into their teaching
- Continue to internationalize the campus and connect the college to the world, with a strong and well-supported presence of international students, faculty and staff.

VI. Environmental Justice, Sustainability and Climate Action:

We live amidst the accelerating global and societal impacts of climate change and other forms of environmental crisis. The College has both unique obligations and unique opportunities to engage substantively and ethically with these issues. We have strong academic programs, and exceptional places for learning first-hand about the impacts of environmental change as well as societal and technological approaches for mitigation and repair. Student and community learning can facilitate justice-oriented engagement that uplifts the land, ecosystems and people, locally and globally.

On our campus, we have been advancing sustainability through a series of projects, and will accelerate that work, which now takes place in the context of new climate commitments by the State of Washington and a new climate adaptation plan developed by the CTUIR.

Areas of focus and action:

- Update the College's Climate Action Plan (approved in 2016) to take into account new challenges and opportunities, including the Washington state commitment to carbon-free electricity by 2035, and then make meaningful first strides to implementation, prioritizing transparency, and sharing regular updates on progress.
- Serve as efficient and effective stewards of natural resources; model and communicate forward-thinking sustainability practices; and develop and implement plans to reduce the College's carbon footprint (with a goal of carbon neutrality), waste, and water consumption.
- Explore possibilities for deepening curricular and co-curricular engagement with environmental sustainability and innovation, environmental repair, climate change, and climate justice, with attention to the particular opportunities for learning that our location enables (hydropower, wind power, climate change, water rights, fisheries, policy issues, conservation, public lands, agriculture, indigenous lands and foods, environmental racism, and environmental justice, for example) and to the student initiatives on which we can build.
- Set up collaborative committee structures for timely advising and action on priorities related to sustainability and environmental impact/health.

Conclusion:

While this is a five-year plan, we expect that this work will be evergreen. In a time of such rapid change, our strategies need to be both collaborative and responsive to evolving opportunities, challenges, and areas of interest. Together, we will ensure that Whitman has a transformative impact for students and their futures - now and for many years to come.