

Hamilton College Strategic Planning Subcommittee Report, Summer 2008
Resources, Facilities, and the Environment

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The subcommittee on Resources, Facilities, and the Environment recognizes that defining who we are and what we do guide any decisions regarding how we allocate our resources, use our facilities, and honor our environment. We also understand that Resources, Facilities, and the Environment are broad and complex categories that have overlapping implications with other areas of the Strategic Plan. For example, Facilities includes classroom spaces, which are linked to Academic Programs; Resources includes preservation and expansion of the glen, which is linked to Athletics and Academic Programs; the Environment includes housing and general land use, which are linked to Residential Life; and all three categories are integral to Student Recruitment and Retention, and Faculty and Employee Recruitment and Development.

The subcommittee gathered information from students, faculty, staff, and administrators. Among many documents, we reviewed the 2002 Strategic Plan, the 2002 Accreditation Report, the Hamilton Sustainability Webpage, the 2005 Buildings and Grounds Master Plan, a 2005 Biodiesel Proposal, a Custodial Purchasing document, and an Employee Commuting Poll. Among many conversations we consulted representatives of the Student Assembly Food Committee, the Student Assembly Facilities Committee, and the Hamilton Green Coalition.

Our key findings are that Hamilton should commit to becoming a 100% residential campus; preserve and enhance the Glens to more fully reveal their natural beauty and features, and improve their educational value to the curriculum; expand summer use of the campus; and provide teaching and living spaces adapted to contemporary learning styles and life choices.

100% Residential

The college currently advertises itself as a residential college, yet not all of the students live on campus. To be a true residential college in this sense, the entire student body should live on campus. To achieve the mission of the residential life program, to ensure that students can learn from their residential situation, the college must provide diverse residential options affording students the ability to live in different residential situations (dorm rooms, apartments, the co-op, etc.).

The college must also do a significantly better job of providing the opportunity for faculty-student interaction beyond the classroom. Increasing the percentage of faculty and staff residing on campus would help achieve this. The college should secure high quality, desirable faculty and staff residential options. This housing could be used as a tool for recruitment and retention. Increasing the number of faculty and staff on campus would have the added benefit of reducing our carbon footprint by decreasing the gasoline consumed by commuting employees.

Hamilton's most obvious feature is its natural beauty and landscape. By using our grounds as a physical classroom and demonstrating good stewardship of our land we can lead the way in making a healthier planet through liberal arts mission.

The Environment and the Glens

Learning in the 21st Century must be extended beyond the indoor classroom space. Hamilton's most obvious feature is its natural beauty and landscape. By using our grounds as a physical

classroom and demonstrating good stewardship of our land we can lead the way in making a healthier planet and connecting conscious use of the environment with the liberal arts mission.

We must find ways to expand and accentuate use of the Glens and open spaces, recreationally and academically. See Summer Use.

We applaud the impending composting program, and encourage other ways to reduce our impact on the planet.

Hamilton should find creative and cost effective ways to become carbon-neutral in seven years. Power from wind turbines, geothermal sources and solar panels should be used, even if there is a slight premium attached. Thermostats in each room will keep more mid-winter windows closed. Waste reduction and recycling will save us money and reduce our carbon footprint. College vehicles can be run on crops from our own land.

Summer Use

The campus is under-utilized during the summer months when classes are not in session. The college needs to amend and expand our current summer programs in order to further the college's academic goals and allow for unique opportunities for faculty and student scholarship that are not readily available at our peer institutions.

Summer Research. This program is particularly strong in the sciences and we would like to see similar programs across all disciplines. It is imperative that participation in these programs be viewed as an aspect of faculty scholarship (rather than service) that should be evaluated accordingly during the tenure and promotion process.

Summer Residency. These programs could be offered in the arts and humanities, e.g. visiting artists, writing institutes. Several important issues need to be considered as these types of programs are implemented.

Would students earn credit, pay tuition, or receive payment for participating in these types of programs? Is it possible to offer students a combination of both, given the flexibility of moving beyond the 8am – 4pm academic day in the summer?

Would faculty earn additional salary, teaching credits, or receive funding to pay for student help in exchange for contributing to or organizing these types of programs? Would participation in these programs be required for tenure and promotion?

Summer research and residencies need to be integrated with the college's other goals for summer activities (i.e., community service via summer camps). Any summer use of the college's facilities needs to be balanced with practical logistics of building maintenance and construction. These programs should not interfere with our ability to have the campus ready for the start of the fall academic semester.

Classroom Spaces

Hamilton has many superb facilities that are advertised heavily to prospective students and employees. It is important to ensure that all of the college's facilities are up to the advertised standard. In particular it is essential that academic spaces around campus are adapted to the teaching methods used by faculty. Classrooms on campus should feature flexible layouts and furniture so that they can accommodate lectures, discussions, and small group work. To this end, the college should be certain that classrooms incorporate the following features:

Breakout Spaces. This could be either small corners of the classroom or small exterior study spaces as in the science center. These spaces promote use of collaborative group work, a major feature of the current curriculum. Furthermore, these small spaces can be utilized after hours and during the reading period by students looking for a place to study or work with their peers.

Increased Electrical Connections. Technology-based work continues to increase. The college has already made wireless access available throughout the campus. However, many spaces, e.g. the library lack adequate power outlets.

Outdoor Classrooms. One way is to construct a few outdoor classrooms around the campus that can be used in the spring in fall. These classrooms would consist of tables, chairs, a board and an electrical connection for a projector.