

**Mary Hinton's Presentation
All Community Forum
August 19, 2014**



I am honored to have this opportunity to welcome you to the 2014-2015 All Community Forum. I feel privileged to have an opportunity to talk with you as we begin the academic year and launch a series of conversations in preparation for our next strategic plan. I would like to take a moment to welcome two special guests in our audience today: Terry Dolan, vice-chair of the board of trustees at the College of Saint Benedict is with us on behalf of Lynn Newman, and Joe Mucha, chair of the board at Saint John's University are with us today to witness our community's initial conversation. Their leadership and partnership, as evidenced by their presence, speaks to the importance of today's conversations. Even more, it signals that the future of CSB, SJU and our coordinate relationship depends on each and every one of us in the community. Please join me in welcoming Terry and Joe.

As Michael and I worked together to prepare our comments for today, I must confess that I did not share with him my major concern: that the presentation would be canceled due to a snowstorm. Luckily, the weather has cooperated and it is my distinct pleasure to ask Michael Hemesath to begin the conversation about our community's individual and shared strategic directions for the next five years.

MICHAEL HEMESATH'S REMARKS
MARY HINTON RESUMES HER REMARKS

CURRENT STATUS

Today I would like to report on the good news, the challenges and the opportunities ahead. Let's begin by looking beyond our campuses for a moment.



Headlines

- Creative Destruction: Reinventing the University (The Economist)
- Here We Go Again: Is College Worth It? (Time)
- The College Debt Crisis (CNBC)
- In Shifting Era of College Admissions, Colleges Sweat (New York Times)
- Can MOOCs and Universities Co-Exist? (Wall Street Journal)
- Tottering Ivory Towers (The-American-Interest.com)

The external environment in higher education is telling a story. A story that says we don't need liberal arts education; that we should focus on preparing students for jobs as if job preparation is somehow incompatible with the critical and creative thinking, problem solving, and communication skills for which a liberal arts education is known. The metrics that are being proposed to measure our success imply that if our students don't make vast sums of money in their first job post-graduation that we have somehow failed them. Parents and students are being lured with unsustainable offers of financial aid in order to woo students into institutions that are more focused on enrollment than retention and that are not willing to think about what it takes to help a student persist and graduate.



Headlines

- Higher Ed's Illusions: Academics think their students are prepared for the workforce (Wall Street Journal)
- Student Loans Make it Hard to Rent or Buy a Home (New York Times)
- The Hefty Yoke of Student Loan Debt (New York Times)
- Minnesota grads carry heavy student debt burden (Star Tribune)
- Is College Doomed? Traditional universities are in trouble. How for-profit insurgents are trying to tear down higher ed – in order to rebuild it (The Atlantic)

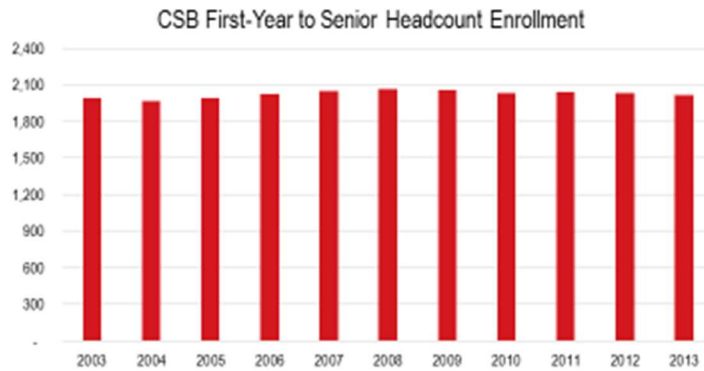
In addition to a disturbing external narrative, institutions across the nation - and we are not immune – face unprecedented challenges from the populace in general to very specific challenges on their own campuses. Students and parents are savvier than ever and are placing increasing demands on our institutions. Issues ranging from student debt to sexual assault - at times - seem intractable as we try to deal with them in ways that are just and that allow us to remain faithful to our mission and one another. The burden of compliance results in more reporting demands, leading to a diversion of resources from academic programs to reporting and administrative needs, all in service of an effort to try to have all institutions look the same. Higher ed is being held accountable to a nearly impossible standard.

Yet within that complex environment, CSB finds itself accomplishing a great deal.



Current Indicators

Enrollment Strength and Stability

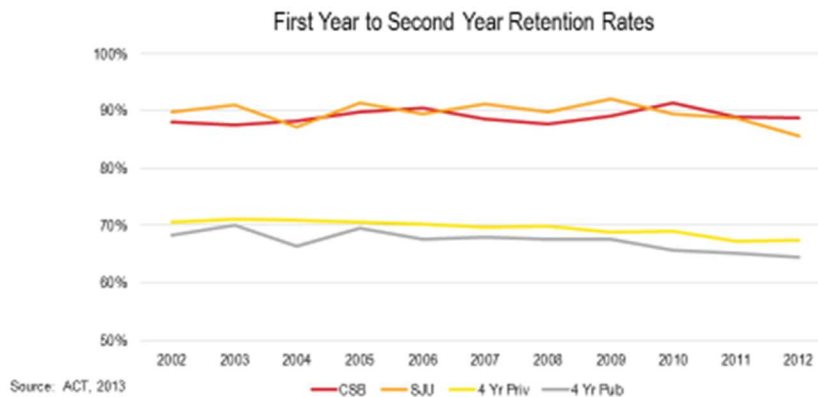


We have been fortunate to have consistently achieved our enrollment goals for a very long period of time. No other private college in Minnesota has had more stable new entering student enrollment than the College of Saint Benedict.



Current Indicators

Very High Retention (A Mark of Quality)



The students we enroll at CSB and SJU want to be here and they most often stay. Our retention rates are among the highest in the country, averaging nearly 90% over the last

decade, higher than rates at our peer institutions and significantly higher than national averages at private and public four-year colleges. Four-year completion rates at CSB have averaged 75% over the last decade, higher than first-to-second year retention, much less graduation rates, at most institutions. Having wrestled with retention issues at prior institutions where the aspirations did not meet CSB's reality, I think that is remarkable.



Current Indicators

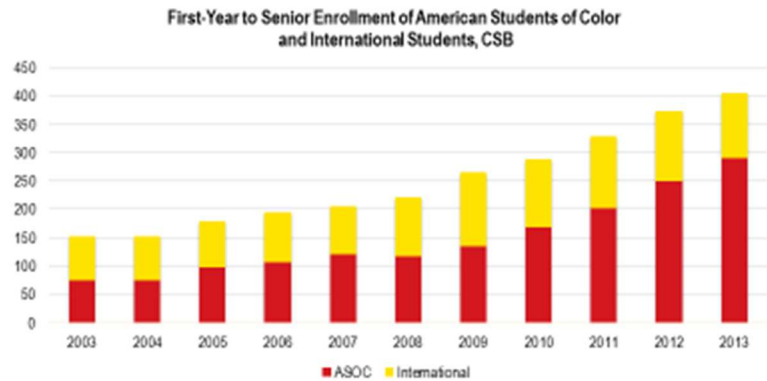
Strong outcomes for our students:

- **Four-year completion rates exceed averages regionally and nationally.**
- Fully **99%** of 2012 graduates reported that within a year of earning their degree, they were **professionally employed, pursuing a graduate degree or in a full-time volunteer position.**
- **More than 90% of alumnae described themselves as prepared for life after CSB** (including first job, graduate school, and career advancement), and **more than 90% say they would choose CSB again if they could start college over.**

Our overall completion, employment, and post-graduate education rates are enviable. As is our alums stated appreciation for their CSB degree. More than 90% of alumnae described themselves as prepared for life after CSB and said that they would choose CSB again if they could start college over. Recently, I met an alumna on an airplane trip who told me that her liberal arts education translates well even though her career has changed several times. That is a tremendous outcome.

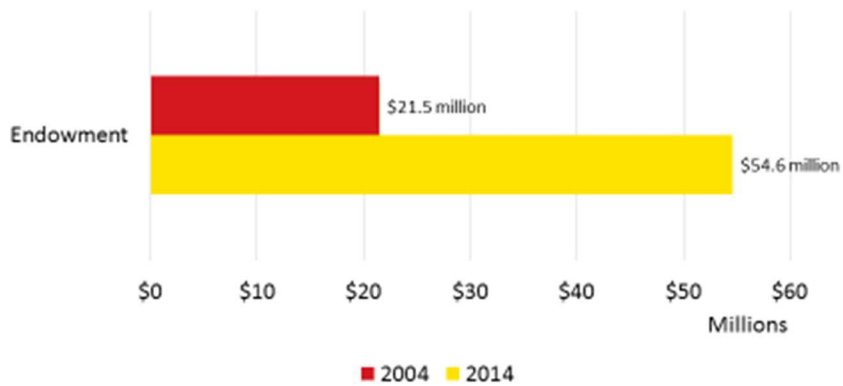
Current Indicators

Increased racial diversity



Reflecting changes in the nation and the world, we have increased our enrollment of American students of color and international students by more than two-and-a-half times in the last decade. Today, students of color and international students together comprise 1 in 5 CSB students, the highest in our history.

Endowment



We've also seen endowment growth and an increase in net tuition revenue over the past ten years.



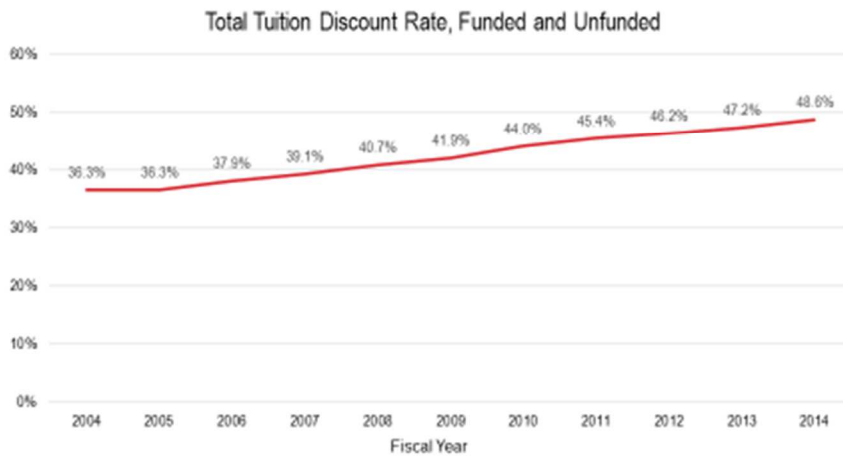
Our Campus



And while these accomplishments may help us breathe easier, it would be foolish to rest. We know that our margins are thin. We know that a single bad year can force us to make cuts that could bring anyone of these areas down.



Tuition Discount Rate



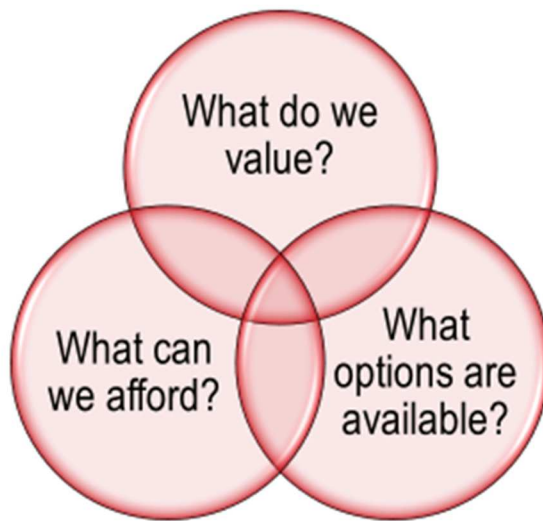
We may not always make our enrollment goal. We need to generate more net tuition revenue; reduce our significant tuition discount rate; invest in the endowment; and invest in our largest asset: our campus, both in terms of physical plant capital and instructional capital.



Investment in Physical Plant

CSB spends almost 75% less per square foot on facilities than our peers.

All of this needs to happen even while we strive to maintain and systematically improve our numbers around diversity; continue our emphasis on globalization; improve our national reach and welcome students from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds. The reality is we cannot do everything. So how do we determine what we focus on? We must ask ourselves what do we value; what can we afford; and what options are available.



In light of these challenges and choices, I guess it is not surprising that the most frequent question I am asked is why would I want to be a college president in this difficult external environment? I explain to people that it is because today – unlike almost any time in the history of higher education - people are demanding evidence of our value. At the College of Saint Benedict, in partnership with Saint John’s University, we have the capacity, the will and the power of our mission to demonstrate that value.

So while it is, without equivocation, a difficult season for higher education, we are fortunate to be able to enjoy our successes and to, at this time, be able to manage our challenges.

As I mentioned, CSB has managed to maintain enrollment and that’s a good thing. But every time Jon McGee says to me, “For 20 years we’ve had the most stable enrollment among the MPCC,” I hear a little clock ticking.



I share this because as great as this moment may be, a good planning process is not focused on this moment, it's focused on the future. A future that, given the challenges we currently face in higher ed generally, is in no way clear; stable; or even readily understood. Today's internal and external environment makes our upcoming strategic planning process that much more important.

INSPIRATION

As someone who deeply values strategic planning, this is a great moment wherein we get to look not only toward the future but to look toward the future **and** imagine our best selves. This is an optimists' ideal moment. At its best, a strategic plan does several things: it defines how, for a limited period of time (in this case five years) we will translate our mission into daily operations. A strategic plan is a very clear roadmap with the destination being the thoughtful and consistent implementation of our mission.

Our plan sets goals into motion to capitalize on our opportunities. And, it enables us to intentionally build our future as opposed to having a future that is de facto built for us by circumstances, many of which will be beyond our control. At its best, a strategic plan converts mission into daily activity.



For a community committed to mission and the future, today represents the starting point. We now look toward what we in this room want our legacy – our professional legacy and our shared institutional legacies – to look like. It is a moment filled with opportunity. A moment when our imaginations can wander and consider what if?

A frequently cited quote used to inspire personal change states, “It’s never too late to become who you might have been.” Well, the same sentiment is certainly true for organizations as well as us individuals.



Strategic Aspirations

What are we uniquely positioned to accomplish moving forward?

This is a moment for the optimists to ponder what is possible. As we approach crafting strategic directions 2020, I ask that we consider our internal strengths and those external opportunities that exist for us. Combined, these provide us with ***strategic aspirations***.



Strategic Aspirations

Internal Strengths + External Opportunities

But I think we also have to recognize and honor the less optimistic (more realistic?) among us. They would want me to acknowledge – as I did earlier and will continue to – that this is one of the most challenging moments ever faced in higher education.



Strategic Constraints

What challenges must we face in order to move forward?

As we consider our strategic directions, it is essential that we are, in fact, realistic about our **strategic constraints**: We must honestly assess our internal weaknesses and the very real threats that exist externally by acknowledging – and working around – our strategic constraints.



Strategic Constraints

Internal Weaknesses + External Threats

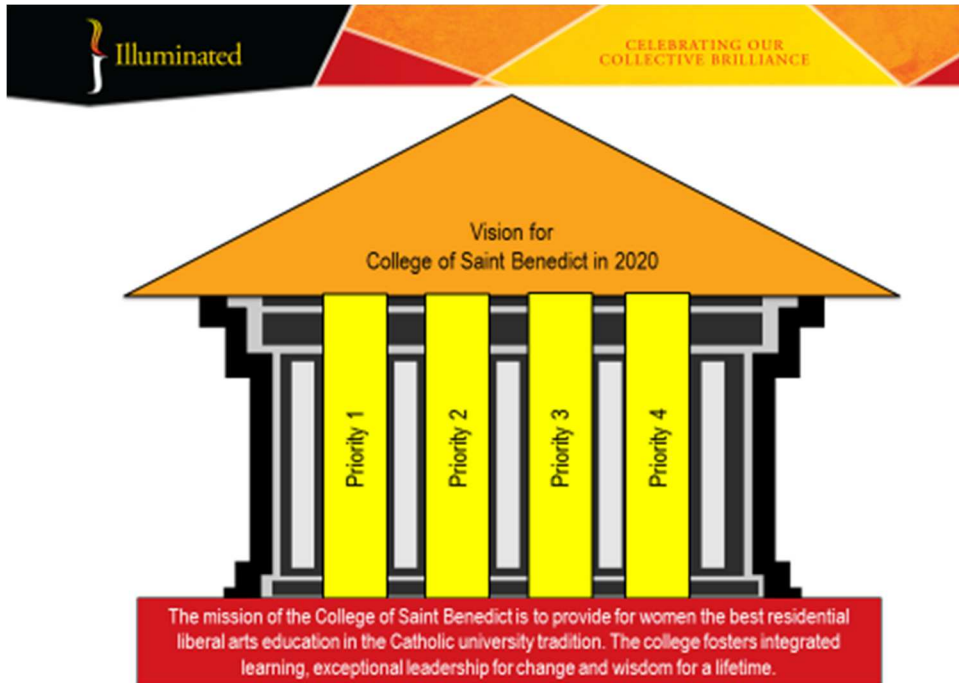
Therefore, we need to have clear agreement on what our non-negotiable elements are for CSB: Women's. Residential. Liberal arts. Catholic. Benedictine. Within the framework of the mission and these non-negotiable elements we can build anything.



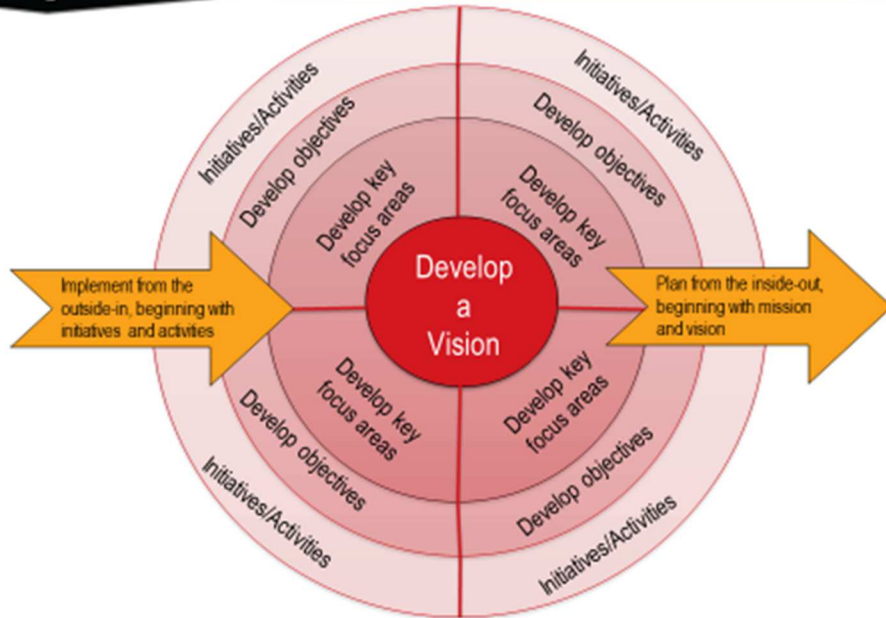
Who are we?

The mission of the College of Saint Benedict is to provide for women the best residential liberal arts education in the Catholic university tradition. The college fosters integrated learning, exceptional leadership for change and wisdom for a lifetime.

From my perspective, the vision for our future has to emerge from thoughtful, transparent, collaborative, and, at times, difficult dialogue. The vision has to reflect, honor and further our mission. The vision has to place students squarely in the center and allow us to establish priorities that enable us to accomplish our vision; priorities in service of our students. We have to ask what are we willing to sacrifice in order to achieve our vision, as the days of an additive plan are behind us in higher education.



So why do I say this is a special moment at the starting point of something great? Because we have an opportunity to engage in a planning process that takes the reality and challenges of today, to consider, examine, and discuss those challenges, and decide for ourselves what our future will be. We must develop a plan that will allow us to capitalize on opportunities if we maintain the most stable enrollment in the MPCC but also a plan that will sustain us should that status change. At this moment of confusion and chaos in higher education we have before us the opportunity to define who we are – at our best –and to develop a plan that enables us to capitalize and leverage that strength moving forward.



We cannot be blind to the challenges nor can we be stifled by them. Instead, with clear eyes, let us look at the challenges of today and the opportunities of tomorrow and decide the direction in which we want to travel and define ourselves in the midst of this chaos. Now is not the time to tweak around the edges. Now is the time to boldly proclaim our mission and to develop a plan that outlines how – over the next five years – we will boldly pursue and accomplish our mission.



From Others' Strategic Plans

Offer an unsurpassed undergraduate education that nurtures the formation of mind, body, and spirit

- excellent teaching,
- liberal arts core,
- study abroad,
- community-based learning, and
- undergraduate research.
- Diversity in all its forms is valued on our campus

(University of Notre Dame)

Enhance student participation in, and experience of, high-impact educational practices.

Increase the racial, ethnic, and geographic diversity of students, faculty, and staff and their participation in the full range of college activities.

(St. Olaf College)

If you read the strategic plans of colleges of any variety, and in nearly any location, you will find that they share much in common. Words and phrases such as preeminent, renowned, academically rigorous, diverse, financially sustainable, recognizable brand, etc. are nearly ubiquitous in their appearance.



From Others' Strategic Plans

Promote academic excellence. Promote academic excellence through quality programs, engaged learners and an innovative teaching and learning environment.

(South Dakota State University)

The College should strengthen its mechanisms for supporting faculty scholarship and creative work.

The College should purposefully invest in resources that foster innovation and excellence in teaching and pedagogical development.

(Amherst College)

Exemplify a learning environment of rich intellectual inquiry, insightful conversation, creative expression, and purposeful action in which students can develop their fullest capacities of body, mind, and spirit.

(Sewanee-University of the South)

We, too, will have some of those phrases (after all, who wants to be unknown and unsustainable). However, what we need to focus on and devote our time and energy to is

identifying those ideas and strategies unique to CSB, SJU and our special coordinate relationship. So as we begin the planning process, I think it essential that we ask ourselves a key question: if you redacted College of Saint Benedict from a strategic plan, what would you need to see in order to know it was a plan for our institution?



What makes us distinctive? To whom and for what? What is our footprint for distinction? In a world filled with choices, what are the essential choices we must make today to carry us into the next century for CSB?

As we think about the opportunities before us, it is essential that we not only articulate a vision but that we clearly identify clear, measurable steps we will take to implement that plan. We have to very carefully describe what we will do to accomplish the vision we place before ourselves. The next few months are critical to that planning process.



I need each of you in the room to share my optimism as we look at very real challenges and develop a plan for the next five years. Five years in which we will be counterfactual to the prevailing narrative, proving the value of our mission and the value of higher education to ourselves, our peers, and nation at large.

ACTIVITY

Rather than engaging in a standard question and answer session, we want to involve more people in the conversation by participating in an interactive activity. For that reason, we'll be asking the question, and you'd be discussing the answers. The question for discussion is: **It is 2020. What distinguishes CSB and SJU from our competitors?**



Community Discussion

It is 2020.

What distinguishes CSB and SJU
from our competitors?

We will each provide time during the coming semester and year to meet together and continue these discussions.