

# **Muhlenberg College Mission Statement**

*October 2007*

Muhlenberg College aims to develop independent critical thinkers who are intellectually agile, characterized by a zest for reasoned and civil debate, knowledgeable about the achievements and traditions of diverse civilizations and cultures, able to express ideas with clarity and grace, committed to life-long learning, equipped with ethical and civic values, and prepared for lives of leadership and service. The College is committed to providing an intellectually rigorous undergraduate education within the context of a supportive, diverse residential community. The members of our community are also committed to educating the whole person through experiences within and beyond the classroom. Our curriculum integrates the traditional liberal arts with selected pre-professional studies. Our faculty are passionate about teaching, value close relationships with students, and are committed to the pedagogical and intellectual importance of research. Honoring its historical heritage from the Lutheran Church and its continuing connection with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Muhlenberg encourages, welcomes and celebrates a variety of faith traditions and spiritual perspectives.

# Fundamental Institutional Values<sup>1</sup>

*October 2007*

A Muhlenberg education develops each individual's capacity for a life of leadership and service by challenging and strengthening mind, spirit, character, and community. We believe the College's faculty, students, staff, trustees, and alumni share and contribute to the following values. Accordingly, these values should guide and inform those engaged in the College's strategic planning process as we identify goals, develop strategic initiatives, and set priorities.

## **I. Commitment to the Life of the Mind**

- We believe that liberal education integrates experiences both within and beyond the classroom, and provides students with the passion and tools for self-initiated and self-directed life-long learning.
- Muhlenberg demonstrates an unusually strong dedication to teaching. This is reflected in the faculty's rigorous intellectual standards, pedagogical expertise, and close relationships with students, and in the balance of academic challenge and personal support that we offer our students.
- We value vigorous and open-minded debate within the context of civility.
- We insist upon intellectual integrity and personal accountability.
- We value critical independent thinking and reject intellectual orthodoxy.
- We believe in the fundamental importance of research and the creation of new knowledge for the intellectual vitality of both faculty and students.
- We believe that the life of the mind embraces both analytical and creative effort.
- We believe that liberal education should nurture both the capacity for independence and the ability to work collaboratively with others.

## **II. Commitment to Spirit and Character**

- We acknowledge the value and power of spiritual life, as well as our individual limitations in achieving absolute understanding of truth. Accordingly, we respect and show active interest in and concern for both our own and other faith traditions, and we respect the views of those who do not identify with any faith.
- We believe that honesty, integrity, and truthfulness should characterize both our public and private behavior, and that the development of ethical standards is an important component of liberal education.
- We value the physical well being of ourselves and others, as well as the important life lessons that can be learned from healthful physical activity.
- We are committed to self-improvement and strive openly and actively for ever higher standards of excellence in all areas of endeavor.
- We realize that pushing ourselves to stretch our personal limits of knowledge and understanding will sometimes result in failure and that failure provides opportunities for personal growth.

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<sup>1</sup> This document derives from "A Covenant of Values, Principles and Behaviors for a College of Character" developed by the Campus Climate Committee of the Muhlenberg College Board of Trustees (April, 2003), and subsequent suggestions from the President's Staff and the President's Planning Group (October - November 2003).

### **III. Commitment to the Life of the Community - On Campus and Beyond**

- We treasure a distinctive campus climate characterized by warmth, friendliness, a strong sense of community, and close relationships among students, faculty, and staff.
- We demonstrate mutual respect for differing ideas, perspectives, experiences, and personal identities.
- We strive to function as a caring community, demonstrating concern for and offering support to each other, while challenging each other to excel.
- We reject as unacceptable behavior characterized by violence, malice, disrespect, indecency, or contempt for others.
- We are committed to developing a campus culture in which fairness, equality, human diversity, and justice are successfully integrated with the healthy clash of ideas and beliefs.
- We acknowledge our obligation to be good neighbors and good citizens, particularly in the Lehigh Valley, and to improve the lives of those inside and outside our community who have less access to education and political power, fewer privileges and resources, and who bear the burden of discrimination.
- We are committed to being good citizens of the Earth, and to making institutional decisions that are mindful of our complex relations with the ecosystem

# Muhlenberg College Strategic Planning Principles

*October 2007*

1. To continue Muhlenberg's impressive progress in recent years, the plan must give highest priority to the quality and distinctiveness of the academic program, while addressing other aspects of the student experience that enhance undergraduate education and the lessons to be learned from participation in a tolerant, nurturing, and ethical community. The most promising strategic initiatives will attract and retain talented students while increasing institutional visibility.
2. The College's plans, while ambitious, will require the discipline of a balanced budget. No initiatives will be undertaken without a thoughtful analysis of their financial impact on the College within the context of a comprehensive budget and staffing model. Though facilities and priorities will undoubtedly claim our attention, a key element in the plan must be to strengthen the College's overall financial position by growing the endowment. Because the financial future is unpredictable, the Strategic Plan must be flexible in its ability to respond to changing fiscal realities.
3. The plan should reflect Muhlenberg's core values and focus on Muhlenberg's traditional mission and strengths, refining, improving, and building upon these distinctive aspects of the College, rather than seeking new programmatic directions outside the scope of our current mission. (That is, we do not intend to launch new schools, or graduate degree programs, or reinvent the College as a technology-based distance- learning institution, etc.).
4. The plan will recognize the importance of Muhlenberg's location in Allentown and the Lehigh Valley, and will seek to improve the advantages of this location through cooperative relations with the community. We will also seek to capitalize on our location in the middle Atlantic region and the opportunities presented by our proximity to the resources of major metropolitan areas, such as New York City, Philadelphia, and Washington DC, as well as natural resources in the region.

# **Muhlenberg College Strategic Planning Goals**

*Original Strategic Planning Process, 2003-2004*  
*January 2004*

## **Ultimate Goal**

At the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, Muhlenberg will be nationally acknowledged as a distinguished, intellectually rigorous private undergraduate institution that integrates liberal arts with pre-professional studies in the context of a supportive, diverse community. The Muhlenberg experience will reinforce the importance of character and ethical decision-making, the beneficial power of spiritual life within a variety of faith traditions, and the obligation of graduates to lead lives of leadership and service.

## **Strategic Goals**

1. Strengthen the academic program through significant, targeted investments in faculty, staff, and facilities that build upon existing strengths and capitalize on the most promising opportunities for further development of the curriculum within the parameters of our mission statement, fundamental values, and planning principles.<sup>2</sup>
2. Enrich the Muhlenberg experience by further developing and more closely integrating co-curricular and extra-curricular programs with intellectual and curricular life.
3. Further develop Muhlenberg's distinctive identity as a caring community focused on the development of character, individual potential, and engaged citizenship.
4. Support the integration of the liberal arts with selected areas of pre-professional study and leadership development by expanding opportunities for service learning, internships, and international education.
5. Position Muhlenberg as an increasingly attractive option for gifted college-bound students from diverse backgrounds by increasing financial aid resources, strengthening co-curricular programs, and utilizing the unique advantages of our location.
6. Significantly strengthen the financial position of the College through careful management of debt, superior investment performance, endowment growth, aggressive and successful expansion of fund-raising efforts, and the development of stronger relationships with constituents.

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<sup>2</sup> These three documents are posted on the Strategic Planning Website and will be referenced in the final draft of the plan.