

II

The Goals of Beloit College

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II

The Goals of Beloit College

Beloit's 1846 Charter called simply for a college "erected on a plan sufficiently extensive to afford instruction in the liberal arts and sciences" and, as "the interests of the country require," providing for "any or all of the different departments for the study of the arts, sciences and liberal professions."

Over the years, this basic purpose has been elaborated in many versions of the College Catalog, and in statements drafted by faculty, presidents, and trustees.

Early catalogs usually reprinted only the charter itself, letting readers make their own interpretation. But later versions devoted anywhere from several paragraphs to several pages to an articulation of Beloit's institutional goals. The 1942 Catalog, for instance, stated that "Beloit College seeks to arouse the student's mind to an active and intelligent interest in the absorbing problems which his generation is facing, and to give him a foundation of enduring principles on which to build the structure of his own life and the life of his community."

Later catalogs reprinted a more formal Trustee-approved statement of "Aims and Tenets," which included such goals as making Beloit's graduates trained in accurate survey and inquiry, at home in the world of thought and also the world in general, and inspired with noble ideals.

A. The Beloit College Mission Statement

Beloit College engages the intelligence, imagination, and curiosity of its students, empowering them to lead fulfilling lives marked by high achievement, personal responsibility, and public contribution in a diverse society. Our emphasis on international and interdisciplinary perspectives, the integration of knowledge with experience, and close collaboration among peers, professors, and staff equips our students to approach the complex problems of the world thoughtfully and ethically.

B. The Goals of Beloit College

As a learning community, we value

the pursuit of knowledge through free inquiry

the pursuit of personal, social, and intellectual development through multiple paths

a spirit of collaboration, civility, and respect creativity and innovation

the educational benefits of engaging diverse perspectives, backgrounds, and identities

active, responsible citizenship
integrity of purpose and performance

As members of this community, Beloit College students develop

a passion for learning within and beyond the classroom
depth and breadth of knowledge
an understanding of the significance of human accomplishments across cultures and times
an understanding of the ways in which human communities operate and interact
an understanding of scientific perspectives and processes
an understanding of diverse cultures and the effects of culture on behavior
an appreciation of aesthetics and the power of creative expression
an awareness of the ways in which disciplines interact and overlap
a core of essential skills for productive, meaningful engagement with the world:

- effective written and oral communication
- logical thinking
- quantitative reasoning
- information literacy
- problem-solving
- judgment

We accomplish these goals through a rigorous, coherent curriculum and coherent cocurriculum that emphasize

engaged learning
collaborative learning
experiential learning
interdisciplinary and integrated learning
international/global perspectives

Over the years the Trustees and faculty have made many efforts to restate the basic goals of the Beloit educational experience. Several examples are included as attachments to this chapter of the Policy Manual as representative of faculty and trustee deliberations over the past two decades.

Attachment A
Excerpts from A Plan for Beloit College
(adopted by the Board of Trustees on July 30, 1994)

Introduction and Summary

As part of an extensive 18-month planning process, we have sought to define Beloit College's strengths and its weaknesses, and to make suggestions regarding the future mission of the College. As part of this process, we have determined that Beloit is on the right track in the students it seeks to attract, the instruction it seeks to give, and the environment it seeks to create. For nearly 150 years, the College has sought to provide a rigorous, undergraduate, liberal arts education for residential, full time students.

We consider our greatest strength to reside in the personal attention and commitment each faculty member gives to student instruction. Attracting and retaining high quality students remains the College's greatest challenge. The College's faculty is its greatest resource. International studies remain a hallmark of the Beloit curriculum, as well they should in the rapidly shrinking world in which we live.

We cannot be complacent with our success. The College must renew its efforts to improve all aspects of its programs and to prepare for the challenge of changes in technology, demographic shifts, and the rising cost of education. In order to remain an institution that emphasizes teaching in a small, personalized learning environment, we must remain flexible in our ability to meet the needs of a changing world.

Since its founding, the College has consistently been, and been perceived to be, a fine liberal education institution. Over the decades, its reputation has grown from local, to regional, to national, to global. This growth should continue so that, by the end of this decade, Beloit College will be, and will be seen as, one of the finest liberal arts colleges in the U.S. To achieve this goal, the College must vigorously pursue the following six guidelines and objectives:

1. The College must increase the pool of qualified applicants because the quality of an educational institution is largely defined by the quality of its students. In pursuing this objective, the College must remain true to its consistent practice of selecting students on the basis of the potential it sees in them to become contributing citizens who will advance the commonweal and, by doing so, bring credit and distinction to their alma mater. The carefully considered selection of motivated students who will best benefit from the Beloit experience is paramount.

The Beloit learning experience is not limited to the classroom. Students learn from each other as well as from faculty. It is, therefore, essential that Beloit students be characterized by broad talent and diversity, as well as by commitment to learning.

2. The quality of the Beloit faculty and staff also defines the College's quality. It is profoundly in Beloit's interest to do all those things possible to attract and hold the best faculty and to support their growth and development as teachers and as scholars. It is also

important to attract the best staff and to support their commitment to the College's student centered approach.

Beloit will succeed in enhancing its quality only if its faculty and staff are both directly and indirectly the beneficiaries of the College's success, taking an ownership interest in the progress of the College as a whole, as well as in personal and departmental advancement.

3. We are pleased that the College's academic program stands firmly on a strong disciplinary foundation and emphasizes interdisciplinary approaches, a global focus, and experiential learning.

For nearly 150 years, the College's academic goals have remained constant: to provide students with a broad grounding in fact; the experience of mastering an area of knowledge; the ability and inclination to integrate, assimilate, and evaluate; a continuing concern for values; enthusiasm for personal creativity; an aesthetic sensibility; a global perspective, and, most importantly, the desire to continue learning. The Beloit curriculum and pedagogy, however, have changed, and must continually change, to meet new learning challenges.

4. The College does not exist in isolation. It serves and is served by its alumni, its trustees, and members of the community in which it exists. Strengthening each of these bodies and their ties to the College will strengthen the College.
5. Good facilities and resources and technologically advanced capabilities create an environment for learning. Supporting the Beloit faculty, staff, and students with such facilities and resources is, therefore, an important objective.
6. To achieve each of the objectives set forth above, the College must carefully husband its financial capabilities, expand its endowment, and regularly review its position and progress.

Beloit College is a learning community in which each of its constituent members is inextricably related to and dependent on the others. The success of each of them is essential to the success of the College. The College's success, in turn, will be measured by the quality of the citizens it produces.

Attachment B

A Concept of Beloit College (1973)

In 1973, The Board of Trustees of Beloit College adopted a statement of institutional philosophy which reaffirmed the basic principles expressed in its 1969 statement of institutional responsibility, aims, and guiding commitments (see following section). The Trustees' 1973 document stated: "in particular, we support the need for Beloit to maintain its traditional emphasis on the study of the systematic, verifiable dimensions of the liberal disciplines. At the same time, the College must continue those supporting emphases on the spiritual, ethical, and aesthetic dimensions of learning that will develop within its students a personal ethical commitment and prepare them for lives of responsible action in the world." The Trustees' statement, developed primarily as "a working guide" for the use of current and future Board members, was also viewed as a useful reference for other members of the College community. The statement follows:

The purpose of Beloit College is to provide the opportunity for a limited number of highly qualified students to achieve the best possible undergraduate liberal arts education, both in their own interest and for the benefit of society in general. To this end we, as trustees, view the following as essential characteristics of Beloit:

An undergraduate liberal arts college. The College should leave to other institutions other forms of learning activity such as graduate and professional research and narrow vocational and professionally oriented training.

An innovative college. Beloit should always be concerned with better ways of carrying out its mission. Our concern must embrace the need constantly to review our teaching, our administration, and our trusteeship, and a willingness to try new ways of carrying out our tasks.

A place for learning rather than merely instruction. The College should provide a climate which encourages learning, one which encourages students to conduct vigorously their own search for truth, goodness and beauty. We believe that learning is a life-long undertaking. The world changes, and Beloit must instill in its students a dedication to learning as a continuing process if they are to remain effective members of society.

A college committed in purpose to the ultimate nobility of mankind. The total enterprise of the College is seen as meaningless if it does not contribute in a significant way to human progress, spiritual insight, and mankind's quest for ultimate meaning.

A small college. Beloit should be of adequate size to justify a varied educational program and yet small enough for close individual relationships. We think in terms of an optimum size of approximately 1,200 students on campus at one time. This number will enable the College to make most productive use of the teaching faculty and facilities, to provide broad and varied course selection, and to help assure a diverse mix of students and faculty—all while being faithful to the premise that learning is an individualized process.

An institution interested in students who are potential leaders and the decision-makers of the future. Beloit should limit its student body to those who have both the intellectual capacity to take full advantage of its educational opportunities and the character and leadership potential which will enable them to take maximum advantage of their lifelong learning opportunities, for the benefit of themselves and those whom their actions affect. Beloit thus seeks to develop individuals who can think independently and work well with others in an intellectually creative and productive way.

A college which provides a superior faculty. We think that the attraction and retention of the superior teacher must always be of primary concern. We believe that the College must continuously search for ways to improve its early recognition of superior teacher-scholars, to provide them with a good teaching environment and support facilities, and to reward them appropriately.

A community of learning having particular concern for the diversity of cultures in the world and the ultimate need for mankind to find a means of peaceful coexistence on this planet. A truly global view is demanded by the advancing communications technology, the interdependence of all peoples in preserving the viability of their common planet, and the all-encompassing nature of the liberal arts themselves.

A college which is adequately financed. In order to accomplish these objectives, there must be adequate funding (both capital and current expense) to provide the facilities and the operating funds necessary. Enough of this funding must come from sources other than tuition and fees so that the expense of attending Beloit does not become a barrier to attracting students who fully meet our requirements.

A college fully supported by its trustees. We think that Beloit is important enough to us to warrant our informed concern, and our time as well as our financial support.

Attachment C

The Responsibility, Aims, and Guiding Commitments of the College (1969)

In 1969, the faculty and Board of Trustees approved the following statement summarizing Beloit's institutional responsibility in the fulfillment of its educational goals. The statement was the product of an extended study by a special "Committee on Aims and Tenets" including in its membership trustees, faculty, administrators, and students. (For interpretation and background relating to this institutional policy position, see Board of Trustees' minutes for April 18-19, 1969 and January 26, 1973, and also Attachment D, "The Shared Commitments of the College Community.")

The Responsibility of Beloit College

Beloit College is a private, independent, liberal arts college. As such it maintains from the past and fosters for the future a tradition which regards the undergraduate college experience as the most significant phase of higher education and considers the liberal arts its most appropriate curriculum. As an independent institution it has both the right and the duty to determine, according to its own best judgment, the most suitable means for attaining its goals at each stage of its history.

The College recognizes that the explosion of knowledge and the demand for expertise in an urban, technical, organized society require it to put great emphasis on the systematic, specialized, verifiable dimensions of the liberal disciplines. In this emphasis the College is committed to the tradition of scholarship in all the disciplines as a worthy tradition in its own right.

Equally, however, the College recognizes that participation in the modern world demands more than ever an education in which knowledge and reason are united with feeling, commitment, and responsibility in a relation of mutual criticism and support. Thus, such an education must embrace, in addition to the study of systematic and verifiable knowledge, the development of moral and aesthetic criticism, creativity and imagination, an attitude of reflection and feeling of spiritual commitment, and a disciplined yet passionate concern for a responsible relationship to persons, history, and nature. The College is convinced that these qualities are properly part of every liberal discipline.

The College believes that a balance between the acquisition of systematic knowledge and the development of a personal ethical commitment and responsibility is the key to a humane atmosphere in which true education can best flourish.

A Summary of the Aims of Beloit College

Beloit College seeks to make its* students at home in the world of thought. Through studying the history of ideas and by quickening the interest in creative thinking, it* enables young men and women to deal responsibly with the problems encountered in everyday living. Beloit College trains its* students in accurate survey and inquiry. It* would have them be scientific in the sense that they learn to understand and to face squarely the facts of the world, and respect intellectually all truth insofar as we now know it.

Beloit College aims to inspire its* students with noble ideals by providing an environment that encourages development of and critical reflection upon personal ideals. Recognizing that many truths include not only factual content but also the hopes and faith that contribute to the wholeness of life, Beloit seeks to have its* students committed to their personal ideals while being open to the ideals and religious convictions of others.

Beloit College encourages participation in a changing world. With the increasing interdependence of communities and nations, Beloit believes that the truly educated person,* regardless of his or her* academic specialty, must be increasingly sensitive to and have understanding for the concerns and currents of diverse cultures. To this end Beloit seeks to make its students* aware of and prepared for their responsibilities in the world.

The Guiding Commitments of Beloit College

The following list of guiding commitments attempts to make clear those beliefs about life and society which underlie the existence, responsibility, and aims of Beloit College:

- I. A dedication to free inquiry and commitment, as exemplified by the College's own tradition of Protestant Christianity.
- II. An integrity of purpose and performance steadfast against expediency or exploitation.
- III. A tolerance of spirit that will perpetuate freedom, whether of work, worship, speech, press, or academic research.
- IV. The concept of government by consent of the governed, constitutionally expressed.
- V. The ideal of a progressive social order based upon equal opportunity and equal justice under the law.

* Gender-neutral language has been substituted throughout. The original language is on file in the College Archives.

Attachment D

The Shared Commitments of the College Community (1969)

Portions of this background statement, written by the ad hoc "Committee on Aims and Tenets," helped shape the formulation of the 1969 statement of "Responsibility, Aims, and Guiding Commitments of Beloit College."

The task of the College is to initiate its students into the total life of the mind, including not only the learning and creating of new knowledge but also the use of reason in relation to feeling and commitment in the continuing quest for the good life.

The Grounding of Beloit College's Educational Mission

The concept of higher education at Beloit College is grounded in a humanism which takes seriously those qualities and possibilities—intellectual, moral, spiritual—that give people a special place and destiny. It is not a romantically optimistic or pessimistic humanism; rather it recognizes both the heights and depths of human lives. Its emphasis is not on moral codes as such nor on anarchistic concepts of freedom, but upon individual and social responsibility. It recognizes the finitude of people and their tendency to view their* own private or group interests as central. At the same time, it proclaims the freedom to take the world and history seriously, to accept responsibility for action while simultaneously accepting the ambiguity of the world and one's self.

This rich and complex humanism is the most widely shared basis of agreement at Beloit College. Many strands of thought and experience have contributed to it. For the first century of the College's existence the Christian faith, particularly the Reformed Protestant tradition, was the main source. From its foundation, however, the College has possessed a growing openness to other serious stances. Today, the living reality is pluralistic. Many members of the College community find ultimate meaning in terms of Christian faith, others in terms of Jewish faith; others in a theism not linked to any organized religion, and yet others in nontheistic views.

The continuing dialogue among those representing the various systems of belief produces interaction from which the College gains much of its vitality. Moreover, experience demonstrates that though individual members of the College community may diverge in their ultimate commitments, they are substantially united in the humanism which shapes Beloit's vision of education.

Out of this shared humanism, the College derives a set of principles which serve to indicate and clarify its direction. It is therefore on the level of the following guiding orientations that the College gratefully commits itself. In so doing it makes no claim that it fulfills the orientations completely; rather the College pledges itself to regard the orientations as ideals toward which it should constantly direct its efforts.

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Guiding Orientations

1) Academic and Intellectual Freedom

The College respects and protects intellectual freedom for learning and teaching; fosters a climate in which its members may believe and think for themselves; encourages its members to express their beliefs and understandings at all levels, from empirical hypotheses to ultimate personal commitments; and promotes the maximum vigor of dialogue and debate.

The College confronts its students with a diversity of understandings of people, * their* destiny, and the world, and aims to foster the knowledge, skills, and insights necessary to decide wisely among them.

As a private institution, dedicated to free inquiry, the College undertakes to defend its intellectual and academic freedom against political, economic, religious, and other pressures from the outside. Of equal importance, it not merely permits but actively promotes debate and diversity within the College community. Recognizing that academic orthodoxies within particular disciplines or a whole school can be as stifling as political or religious orthodoxies imposed by state or church, the College constantly seeks to introduce greater variety and openness of dialogue into its life by aiming at a variety of viewpoints within each department, by creating courses that transcend departmental lines, by bringing to the campus lecturers who represent the growing edge of modern thought, and above all by seeking to create an atmosphere of intellectual excitement in which each member of the community stimulates and challenges the others to rethink their own presuppositions.

2) Academic Responsibility

The College insists that its academic freedom must be accompanied by academic responsibility. In the intellectual life, the College's freedom is shaped by the standards of inquiry, expression, and accountability accepted in the tradition of the academic community. In the interaction between the College and society, the College plays the role of responsible and creative critic, as well as transmitter of culture. It best serves the broad society by refusing either to accept its values blindly or to wage blind war against them. A part of society, the College is favored with a freedom permitting it to evaluate, to work toward strengthening the positive values of society and remedying its deficiencies. It does this not as a corporate entity but as a community motivating its members to take their responsibilities seriously throughout life and to act with knowledge, intelligence, good will, and a passion for justice.

3) Personal Commitment

The College's primary mission and capability is to educate and liberate the intellect; the vocation of student correspondingly requires primary emphasis on learning and searching rather than practical action. The College nevertheless recognizes that learning ought not to be separated from doing, nor freedom from commitment. It encourages the students, and indeed all members of the College community, in their quest for personal commitments illuminated by disciplined

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intelligence, and supports them in responsible concern for themselves, their fellow persons, * and the world.

The College community facilitates appropriate experience with various life styles, patterns of behavior and models for action. However, the behavior of members of the College is necessarily limited by standards based on the conditions which make possible a community of living and learning, on consideration of the laws and ultimate tolerances of the civil society of which the College is a part, and on the College's concern to limit the risk of serious damage to the student's future.

The encounter of persons holding diverse commitments and systems of belief makes education at Beloit richer and livelier. The College fosters the continuing vitality of a variety of faiths, confident that different ultimate commitments support the educational goals shared by its members.

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