

DEFINING MISSION WITH MEANING:

A CASE STUDY OF GEORGIA COLLEGE & STATE UNIVERSITY

by

EUGENIA MARIE SNYDER

(Under the direction of Dr. Ronald D. Simpson)

ABSTRACT

A case study of Georgia College & State University (GC&SU) was conducted to examine the processes taken to create a change of institutional mission at a public university. Prior to 1996, the institution was designated as a regional comprehensive university. In 1996, a new liberal arts mission was adopted by GC&SU. This study gives an overview of the background leading to the mission change decision. The findings focus on how the university began to make changes in academic and operational aspects of the institution to implement the mission in meaningful ways, evidenced by numerous changes on the campus. The alignment of institutional functions was a critical component of this study. The findings emerging from interviews and focus groups underscored the importance of campus-wide communication, visionary leadership, and collaborative planning for implementation of a pervasive change of mission. It was concluded further that before a liberal arts education can be claimed fully, the spirit of liberal arts must be manifested in the core curriculum, as well as in the major courses. It was also concluded that a public liberal arts institution is limited in curricular change by transferability issues among other state system institutions. Also, a liberal arts campus today must incorporate professional courses into their curriculum to provide broad professional options for students. Obstacles associated with the change of mission, as well as recommendations for other institutions or higher education policy makers desiring to study mission implementation are included.

INDEX WORDS: Mission, Institutional mission, Liberal arts, Institutional change, Strategic planning, Colleges and universities, Liberal arts curriculum

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by  
EUGENIA MARIE SNYDER

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M.Ed., The University of Georgia, 1986

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by

EUGENIA MARIE SNYDER

Approved:

Major Professor: Ronald D. Simpson

Committee:

Libby V. Morris  
Larry G. Jones  
Patricia L. Kalivoda  
Peter J. Shedd  
Scott L. Thomas

Electronic Version Approved:

Gordhan L. Patel  
Dean of the Graduate School  
The University of Georgia  
August 2002

## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my family without whose encouragement and love, I could have never come this far in this endeavor or any other.

I thank my mother, Betty Sanders Snyder, for sharing her creative genes, for continuing to teach me how to question, and take a stand in life.

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The driving force toward academic success and development of a distinctive culture for a college or university is the implementation of its mission. A clear mission guides the leadership, faculty, and staff of an institution to concentrate on what they do best in higher education (Resneck Pierce, 1994, Tucker, 1996). Pearce (1982) stated that an institutional mission is a distinguishing statement of purpose. A mission states the reason for existence of an institution. An institutional mission statement should not only describe what an institution is, but also it should determine what it is not (Caruthers and Lott, 1981). A mission statement helps a college or university to develop an intentional sense of purpose (Peeke, 1994). It offers an unambiguous expression of an institution's goals, values and aspirations within the context of higher education (Pierce, 2000; Keller, 1983; Tucker, 1996).

To clearly identify and subsequently articulate a college or university's mission may be the greatest challenge for an institution's leadership (Pierce, 2000). No single process exists for determining the right mission for any campus (Ikenberry, 1997). An institutional mission is created to lend direction for the faculty, staff and administration for a specific campus. Cowan (1993) emphasized that a university in pursuit of growth and academic achievement must have a sound and consistent mission.

An institutional mission, in its purest form, serves as a blueprint on which all future institutional decisions are based. Peeke (1994) stated that a mission statement is a

standard that assists college and university leadership in addressing institutional priorities, making institutional decisions, and measuring accomplishments. A clearly defined institutional mission is critical for the long-term progress and endurance of a college or university. Alternatively, Caruthers and Lott (1981) suggested that if institutional decisions are not evaluated according to the mission, academic purpose and that sense of purpose may erode.

Davies (1986) proposed that many institutional mission statements are shaped by “philosophical idealism,” meaning that a college or university tries to achieve an ideal form, such as a comprehensive state research university or a liberal arts college (p. 85). However, Davies suggested that most mission statements rarely define, in detail, the expectations of the institution and that the mission would not be discernible from observing the everyday operation of a college or university. A disconnect sometimes results between mission statements and the actual functions of an institution of higher education (Davies, 1986).

To fully implement an institutional mission in all areas of a college or university can require extensive organizational change (Peeke, 1994). Even so, the point that mission statements often do not match current institutional function is seldom discussed in the body of higher education literature related to institutional mission (Davies, 1986). A mission that is integrally tied to the academic and operational aspects of an institution of higher education is a rare occurrence. The adoption and implementation of an institutional mission requires deciding what activities in which a university should be engaged and those programs that it should not pursue.

A college or university should handle with care the claims it makes as to how it educates students (Delucchi, 1997). A mission taken seriously, therefore, calls for input sought from participants throughout the campus to gain eventual consensus. Peeke (1994) continued that campus leadership should agree also on the indicators that are used in assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of activities and programs, both academic and functional. The mission, if applied purposefully, also offers students the opportunity to be a participant in the development of their search for academic excellence (Delucchi, 1997). As the mission process involving people across the institution, it creates a sense of ownership among the faculty, staff, administration, and students. Even so, Delucchi, (1997) and Fincher (1997) cautioned that the intentions declared by a university mission statement are sometimes disregarded by some who lead the campus in the pursuit of educational excellence. However, with people on campus being involved in implementing the mission, a college or university can then be distinguished by the type of academic courses and educational services it offers to its students, and therefore it can be distinctive in its mission (Peeke, 1994).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate an institution's development of a new mission and the ensuing strategic processes that have developed throughout a five-year period in the life of a public liberal arts campus. The research was instigated to examine and analyze the decision-making procedures and organizational outcomes that have resulted over the past five years related to the intentional implementation of a new mission. Conclusions from this study may be applicable to other institutions of higher

education that are contemplating a mission change, as well as for colleges or universities recommitting to a sense of mission. Conclusions also will be drawn from the review of the unique perspective of public liberal arts institutions.

### A Brief Description of the Study

This case study documents how the mission of a single public university has changed since a new institutional mission was developed in 1996. This particular college, recently turned university, has had multiple name changes and mission changes that provided a rich background for this research. However, the key components for this study are related to a public university's emphasis on its current mission and the pursuant developments and decisions that evolved from its new implementation. The research outlines how an institution of higher education moved from focusing on a regional emphasis to a statewide perspective in both recruitment of students and as a distinctive liberal arts arm of the University System of Georgia. The University also returned from focusing on a comprehensive range of academic offerings in multiple locations to acting as a central campus with a liberal arts focus, much like in its earlier years.

The University faculty and staff created a series of progressive modifications throughout every aspect of the institution that are documented in this paper. Within this study, the researcher concentrated on the influence of the campus leadership, identifying both administrators and faculty as change agents. These leaders developed new strategies to implement the mission in both visible and tangible ways, often producing intangible outcomes. The intangible outcomes, as is the challenge in higher education, are more difficult to document and measure as they are realized through the individuals'

involvement and their learning experience. However, the researcher identifies the results of change as described in the verbatim passages recorded from focus group and interview participants' accounts.

This study was conducted to focus on how an institution of public higher education gives meaning to its mission in distinctive ways. This research focused on both the planned changes and the unexpected developments that surfaced during the period from 1996, when the new mission was implemented, to 2001, just before the research was conducted.

This document was written to show a case study of how one university approached the continuing process of making its meaning meaningful, in ways that have become progressively evident on the campus. The researcher did not purpose that one university was the model liberal arts institution, but attempted to show how one institution approached strategic change under a new mission. Therefore, this study offers recommendations to other institutions as to how they might approach a similar challenge.

However, the essence of this research is not to emulate one institution or create the perfect strategic plan for higher education. The study identifies some aspects of the study that are evident because this liberal arts university is public, rather than private, therefore some of the findings may offer insight only from the state institutional perspective. The outcomes of this study were the lessons learned from both the successes gained and the obstacles faced by an institution, its administration, faculty, staff, and students that may be applicable to a number of other colleges or universities. The strategic implementation of a mission change did not hinge on the announcement of a

new institutional mission, but on the continuing daily approach to mission implementation and assessment that this university continued to take.

At the time of this study, the intensive implementation of strategic campus changes was included from a span of time just under five years. In this relatively short part of University history, the researcher did not attempt to state that full change is completed, but did emphasize the importance of charting the strategic processes that continue to move a university closer to its goals.

### A Brief History of Georgia College & State University

Georgia College & State University (GC&SU) is a public, state institution that adopted an entirely new mission in 1996, following a charge by the University System of Georgia Board of Regents to become the state liberal arts University. The change from a regional comprehensive college, to a liberal arts university has affected numerous aspects of the institution. The dedication of the faculty, staff, and administration not only influenced their own roles in the mission development process, but also it created an internal dependency on the mission for academic and intellectual leadership among students.

Through an intentional strategic planning process, Georgia College & State University has been focusing on transforming itself into a liberal arts campus since 1996. This study examined the process taken by GC&SU administration, faculty, students, and staff to create a distinctive approach to teaching and learning in higher education.

Through individual perspectives and group reflection, this study offers the reader a look



at one university's course in developing a pervasive change of culture and implementation of campus-wide goals.

### **The Institutional Mission**

As reflected in the introduction of this chapter, the mission of a college or university can be a meaningful guide for the institution's direction. Institutional leaders who take a mission seriously help to hold the college or university accountable through the implementation of the mission. The mission creates the standards by which the university governs itself, develops its people, and serves its constituents. The next two sections define campus accountability and quality in relation to the institutional mission. The third section determines how to measure university progress by using the mission statement as a guide.

#### Accountability to the Institutional Mission

A college or university's mission applies not only to students, but also to faculty, staff, administration, and external constituents. In the field of higher education, concern mounts that an institution's core mission to serve students may become diluted in trying to serve diverse constituencies (Newman, 2000). In trying to meet the needs of the increasing numbers of students, institutions of higher education are adopting broader and more diverse courses and programs. Chaffee stated that a defining mission should be determined by what an institution's constituencies want (as cited in Tierney, 1998). Bogue and Aper (2000) asserted that open communication with university stakeholders is advised, to meet the continuum of needs of all of them. Alexander Astin (1981)

concluded that stakeholders' needs are to be accommodated, but especially emphasized the learning needs of students.

Both administrators and faculty are challenged by the needs and requests of their students and other constituents as never before (Keller, 1983; Tucker, 1996). Not only are they responsible for educating students, but also they are charged with creating a well-balanced workforce from which prospective business and public leaders must emerge. Colleges and universities today not only must produce competent graduates, but they must generate exceptional operational and fiscal outcomes and meet the needs of their marketplace, including students, parents, donors, and external constituents. (Spanbauer, 1996; Tucker 1996; Scott, 1998; McPherson, 1999).

Cornwell and Stoddard (2001) also stated that institutions of higher education are faced with balancing educational values with the external demands of their public. Public universities have particular demands for competency placed on them by their stakeholders, which include state taxpayers who support these universities, although they may not benefit directly from an educational experience on campus. Therefore, the public university must pay attention to the strength of both internal and external constituencies. A public university and its graduates have a great deal of influence on their statewide stakeholders, which can be a reciprocal relationship with the taxpayers, if they do not find the outcomes acceptable.

Equally challenging is the call for creating stronger results with fewer financial resources (American Association of State Colleges and Universities, 2002). Pressure from external constituencies such as parents, alumni, legislators and taxpayers adds intensity to the application of a higher education institution's mission. A college or

university is called to balance the development of intellectual outcomes with fiscal accountability (Spanbauer, 1996; McPherson, 1999; Cornwell and Stoddard, 2001). Strategies to accomplish both must be carefully designed. If a college or university's external or internal communities find an institution to be unresponsive, then that institution may be ready to re-evaluate its mission.

The mission and values of a university are not exclusive of the marketplace (Cowen, 1999). Colleges and universities do have to depend on strategies for change management to determine the quality inputs to guide a mission-driven culture (Thomas, 1998; Caruthers, 1981). If a mission is changed to advance quality, then it must be incorporated into everything that is done on the campus.

### Defining Institutional Quality through Mission

Determining the characteristics of quality higher education is an ever-present debate among college and university practitioners and researchers. O'Brien (1998) stated that a university has to be aware of the expectations of the many publics it serves in order to influence society. If a university aspires to be an institution of excellence, it must determine what the critical benchmarks and measurements are going to be.

Quality education is not only important to the institution but also to the students, to the community, and to the sponsoring public of the state in which it resides. The income advantage enjoyed by college educated persons increases significantly with age. Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) determined that benefits of a college education are linked to good health, both for family and the student, wise economic choices, and global happiness, life satisfaction, and "subjective well-being" (p. 550).

The pressure on a public university to produce competent graduates can produce scrutiny by state citizenry, even though individual's definitions of quality may vary from the university's measures. The public wants an educated citizenry produced by their state colleges and universities. The benefits of an educated citizenry have been clearly documented, as in the following example. Income level always has been dependent on education (Kominski & Adams, 1995). In a study conducted by Mortenson (2002), the importance of a college education is related in economic terms:

- College graduation tends to be most important in relation to per capita personal income and median household income.
- The importance of a bachelor's degree has grown with respect to per capita personal income and median household income.
- The correlation between income and educational attainment shows that per capita personal income increasingly requires college-level education. The number of college graduates in a state directly affects the economic welfare of the state as demonstrated by the state per capita income. The states with the highest proportion of bachelor's degree holders have the highest increases in per capita personal income per year as well as higher employment rates (Mortenson, 2002).

Defining quality education is difficult due to so many stakeholders—administration, donors, the public, and governing agencies of higher education—that create the standards of judgment. The term “higher education” refers to a continuum of institutions ranging from large research universities to small campuses with associates’ degrees. A university distinguishes itself with its niche and mission; its faculty, staff, and administration are called to hold a distinctive belief in what constitutes quality on the campus. The concept of quality is also relative to the needs of the individual student. The abstract question of determining the “best” college cannot be asked unless the best

college for a particular student is determined. Excellence in education is measured by the consumers of that educational experience (Fiske and Hammond, 1997).

Colleges and universities characterize quality of education by selectivity related to academic achievement. Institutions of higher education often measure their student scholastic ability by S.A.T. scores or grade point average. However, the upsurge in standardized testing and academic excellence has created the “homogenization” of U.S. colleges and universities according to Jencks and Riesman (1968). Fiske and Hammond (1997) described the evolution of colleges and universities in the following quote:

Small colleges went national; land-grant universities emphasized research; religious colleges went interdenominational; and teachers colleges became full-service state colleges (p. 17).

These changes in colleges and universities called for a new way to determine differences of universities at the same time that colleges and universities began to market themselves to the more academically advanced students in terms of SAT scores and grade point averages (Fiske and Hammond, 1997). Students need to understand the core values and character of an institution and the areas in which it excels to see if how it may match their aspirations. How the faculty, staff and administration will help to stimulate personal growth is a critical value, though one of the most difficult to identify. Pascarella and Terenzini (1992) explained:

What stimulates is the character of the learning environments that other students and the faculty create, and the nature and strength of the interactions they provide for learning and changes of all kinds. The research makes abundantly clear the important influences of faculty members... But students also change because of other students, the academic program required of them, departmental climates, the residence hall arrangements and environment, co-curricular activities, and (to a lesser extent) institutional size . . . (p. 2).

### Measures of Quality in Higher Education

Often the equation for measuring quality in higher education is balanced by selectivity, SAT scores, and class rank, though these qualities tell little about a student's level of curiosity and capability to explore intellectual options. The diversity of students on a campus and the resulting mixed ideologies and expressed points of view also mark a campus with quality and intellectual atmosphere (Fiske and Hammond, 1997). Colleges and universities, in their quest for academic excellence, have recruited and admitted more students with top SAT scores (Taubman, 1976). College and university students, rather than only coming from elite parts of society, come from various racial, ethnic, gender and family backgrounds (Scarr, 1995).

Another measure of a university's quality is the interaction of faculty and administration with students. Fiske and Hammond (1997) identify three types of faculty-student interactions: classroom, advisory, social/extracurricular. They note that the involvement of faculty and staff can happen on both large and small campuses, though a large university may have to create subcommunities to capture the feel of the intimate environment. Students on campuses of excellence are invited to join faculty in research projects. First-year students are engaged in freshman seminars in order to have direct individualized contact with faculty.

The extent that faculty and staff interrelate outside of the classroom is also vital to the life of a university aspiring to achieve high standards of quality. Events in faculty members' homes, as well as informal exchanges with administrators, create an interactive culture of intellectual exchange for students (Fiske and Hammond, 1997). Though not measurable by academic standards or by the widely acclaimed U.S. News and World

Report rankings of colleges and universities, these factors are vital to the student experience in higher education.

Hernnstein and Murray (1994) argued that college work should be made more rigorous to produce a society where people have access to satisfaction in life. To have these satisfactions, a liberal arts education is often recommended by faculty and advisors for students seeking an educational experience beyond the classroom. However, college students also demand both a degree program and an educational experience that prepare them for their career.

In order for an institution to reach its goals of educating the student in intellect and service, an institution often needs a change of mission to more closely describe its purpose. A change in institutional mission taken seriously can affect not only the foundational organizational structure of a college or university, but also can alter completely the culture, environment, and image (Kotter, 1996). How to develop the essential strategies related to a change in institutional mission is the critical question. The commitment from faculty, staff, students and administration to implement the strategies to support the change processes on all levels is the challenge.

### **Significance and Organization of the Study**

The significance of this study was to examine how the adoption and implementation of a new institutional mission changed the nature of a public university. The researcher examined the process taken by the administrators, faculty, staff, and students of a public university in the southeastern United States which was charged with changing from a regional comprehensive university to a state liberal arts university. The

public liberal arts university is currently rare in higher education, though it is becoming more common (Yarmnolinsky, 1995). This study follows the intentional movement of a university toward the ideal of being a liberal arts university. This research on the strategy, critical events, and campus dynamics that shaped the change does not imply that complete change has resulted. This research does offer a view of the University prior to the new mission and its progress in its culture change from 1996 until the time of writing of this paper.

The context of the research is related to a particular campus so a case study design was selected. Through the case study, critical variables were identified which influenced the implementation and the incorporation of the new mission. The researcher organized this study to: (1) identify factors that helped to drive the transformation of the University; (2) examine the process developed by administration, faculty, and staff that moved the university toward the new mission; and (3) discover the strategies to produce effective changes implemented by the faculty, staff, students, and administration.

The researcher interviewed members of the Senior Administrative Leadership Team, the selected members of the faculty, staff, and student body of a state liberal arts university. Individual interviews were conducted to gather information describing their perspectives and roles in the phenomenon of the institution's mission change (Patton, 1990). The goal of this research, as suggested by Siedman (1991), was to gather information and construe collective meaning from the experiences. The researcher also conducted focus groups with University faculty, staff, and students to collect data from those who were participants and observers in the mission change process.



This study is important not only for liberal arts campuses, but for colleges and universities studying strategic planning to match a changing mission. To thoroughly address the topic of how a university gives meaning and exemplifies its mission, the researcher approached the study considering the following research questions:

- What impact does an institutional mission have on a university's campus culture in academics, organizational structure, campus climate, and physical environment? How is the liberal arts mission exhibited on the campus and throughout the faculty, staff, students and administration?
- What steps are taken to ensure full implementation of an institutional mission on a university campus?
- How does the strategic implementation of a university following a new liberal arts mission contribute to the understanding of mission implementation and change in higher education?

By posing these critical questions, the researcher was able to collect information from key participants in the mission change process who offered insight into this qualitative study. The investigator searched for the driving forces and other factors that led to a university's planning for and implementation of a mission change.

### Definition of Terms

The following definitions were used throughout this study:

Descriptive research: research in which description and explanation are sought and the potential causes of behavior cannot be manipulated or when the variables are directly connected to the phenomenon or event (Merriam, 1988).

Faculty Focus Group: a selected group of current GC&SU faculty members who were employed at GC&SU prior to 1996.

Georgia College: the most recent previous name of the site institution (1968 – 1996).

Georgia College & State University (GC&SU): the institution for study. (Note: the ampersand is part of the official title of the University and is used exclusively.)

GC&SU Mission: guiding statement for GC&SU related to their designation as a liberal arts university in the University System of Georgia.

Georgia State College for Women (GSCW): A former name of the institution.

Grounded theory: building theory from data that is grounded in real life scenarios (Merriam, 1988).

Mission: a guiding statement for an institution that describes a distinctive reason for being for an institution or organization

Senior Administrative Leadership Team: a group of 18 members of the GC&SU executive team of the institution made up of the president, vice presidents, deans, and directors.

Staff Focus Group: a selected group of GC&SU staff members who have been employed at GC&SU prior to 1996.

Stakeholders: individuals or groups who have a financial or time investment in a college or university; may include students, parents, faculty, staff, administrators, alumni, external boards or agencies (i.e., alumni or foundation boards, Board of Regents) or state taxpayers/citizenry.

Student Focus Group: a selected group of GC&SU students who were beginning students in 1998 and are seniors in 2002.

Thick description: description of norms, mores, community values, attitudes and ideas (Guba and Lincoln, 1981; Merriam, 1988).

Qualitative case study: a design particularly for situations where a phenomenon's variables cannot be separated from its context (Yin, 1984; Merriam, 1994); a process which tries to describe and analyze an event or phenomenon as it develops over time (Wilson, 1979).

Qualitative data: descriptions with details about situations, events, people and their behavior; also may include quotes about experiences, thoughts, ideas (Patton, 1980; Merriam, 1998).

Women's College of Georgia: The name of the studied institution prior to 1967 following the name designation, Georgia State College for Women

### Organization of the Study

Chapter I introduces a case study on the strategic implementation of an institutional mission for a college or university and the ramifications of the mission on the advancement of the institution. The context of the study, a brief history of the institution studied, the purpose and the organization of the study are incorporated. Also included in Chapter 1 is a definition of key terms used in the study.

A review of recent literature related to the topic is discussed in Chapter 2. The topics researched are institutional mission development and implementation, strategic change on college and university campuses, and liberal arts colleges and universities. Cross-references among the topics are included.

In Chapter 3, the methodology and research design for the qualitative case study is outlined. The setting, sample selection, data collection and analysis procedures are described. Assumptions of the study and limitations of the research are included. Final sections of the chapter identify the credentials of the investigator, and a discussion of validity, reliability, objectivity, and subjectivity.

The findings of the study are presented in Chapter 4. Data collected from individual interviews, focus groups, previous surveys and retreat summaries are included. Themes that emerged from the data are used to organize the chapter. Driving factors and obstacles for the change of mission are discussed, as well as background information about the participants' experience.

Chapter 5 summarizes the findings of this study. The investigator's analysis offers interpretation of the data. Future implications for further studies in higher education and application of the research conclude the chapter.

### Credentials of the Researcher

Serving as the investigator of this study, I conducted the current research of this topic with the selected participants in 2002. In addition, however, I served in a consulting role with GC&SU since 1997, facilitating the Senior Administrative Leadership Team strategic planning retreats. I also created executive reports and retreat summaries that provided rich background and understanding for this study. I was not involved in the actual implementation of the mission. Also as an alumna of the institution, I offer a deeper understanding and broader perspective of GC&SU, as both a former student, graduate, and alumni volunteer. The relationship with the institution

provided entrance into the process because of former experience with some participants, as well as a basis for quick understanding of some of the issues identified in the interviews and focus groups.

Beginning this investigation, I conducted both the interviews and focus groups in the role of researcher and facilitator. Throughout this study, I remained an observer, serving as facilitator, observer, and reporter. The objectivity and validity of the project were optimized. The interviews and focus groups conducted as a part of this qualitative study were guided by the open-ended questions and participants' responses, rather than previous experience or expected answers. As researcher, I was continually surprised by the unknown facts discovered, keeping the study fresh for me and for the readers. Some knowledge both of the institution and the mission implementation process became common knowledge because of the multiple roles in which I served. My extensive time spent with the participants promoted understanding of the process through which the mission change has been implemented

### **Chapter Summary**

The implementation of an institutional mission can be the instigation of enhanced development for a college or university. The strategic path to develop a mission and create ownership by all of the involved parties is critical to producing graduates who are well-balanced citizens. This study examines the strategic process of a university adopting the charge of a new mission that began to change the focus of its reason for existence. The strategies developed in pursuing a distinctive mission speak for the value of mission implementation in higher education. The processes described in retrospect

and the outcomes delineated in this study capture the dynamic process of making a mission meaningful within an institution of higher education.

The next chapter further supports the study by providing a review of current literature. The major topic areas searched were institutional mission, strategic planning in higher education, the role of organizational change in higher education, and liberal arts institutions. This literature review provides support and background for this case study.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

Discussions in higher education concerning the significance, implementation and change of an institutional mission result in deep and ongoing debate. Research in the field covers a wide range of perspectives. The researcher conducted a review of the literature and found three relevant topical areas for this investigation. The first section of this chapter addresses the study of institutional mission and why it is important to higher education. The second section relates to strategic planning for colleges and universities. The third section deals with an analysis of the nature of change on university and college campuses. It also includes relevant references from publications on the role that vision of leadership play in implementing change. In the fourth section, scholarly writings are reviewed that relate to liberal arts institutions, including factors that determine how the liberal arts designation is defined and applied. All four sections interconnect because they provide a backdrop for the case study of the university being examined because of its transformation from a regional comprehensive university to a liberal arts university. The review of the literature was conducted before and during data collection and continued throughout the analysis of data.

#### **The Institutional Mission**

An institution of higher education is founded on a mission that is the initial thought and the guiding force for its functionality and its development. Bogue and Aper (2000) defined the elements of mission as “conserving the past, criticizing the

present and constructing the future” (p. 17). They acknowledged that a university simultaneously trying to accommodate the past and the future presents a complicated tension throughout the organization. This strain was evidenced in interactions among administrators, faculty, staff and external forces. However, the constituent groups were not pulling against one another in defiance, but were working to keep the university in balance. Robert Maynard Hutchins understood the importance of a strong mission when he stated:

You cannot run anything, including a college, unless you have some ideas of what you are trying to do. A purpose is a principle of limitation. When everything is just as important or unimportant as everything else, when there is nothing central and nothing peripheral, nothing fundamental and nothing superficial, any enterprise, no matter what it is, must disintegrate (as cited in Crimmel, 1993, p. 217).

Chaffee (1998) wrote that when an institution clarifies its purpose and communicates its mission, the members of the institution begin to view things differently. Giving people the opportunity and the time to understand the mission helps them to begin acting in different ways, challenging former ways of operating. A study by Embree (2001) stated that if institutions of higher education do not look carefully at their mission and how they operate, institutional effectiveness can quickly erode.

A descriptive, functional mission statement is critical for the long-term success of a university, if applied with intention. Frequently institutional missions are indistinguishable one from another. One university’s statement may sound just like another (Freed et al, 1997). Boyer (1987) reported that most colleges have trouble in delineating their crucial goals and defining purpose. His findings indicated that faculty thought that an institution’s mission is often hollow. Boyer commented that students



and faculty on some of the studied campuses were not knowledgeable about the institution's mission and goals, based on recognition of the statements alone.

Ireland and Hitt (1992) asserted that a quality mission statement describes how an institution is distinctive in its purpose and functionality. The mission not only states practical application of its objectives but also gives the philosophical foundation of its efforts for the people whom it serves (as cited in Rowley et al., 1997). Perts (1959) stated that the mission and ideals of an institution must be well defined if the institution is to follow it and apply it usefully. Defining the aims of education should be an intentional process to offer understanding for all involved constituents (Crimmel, 1993).

External agencies of higher education demand that a mission statement be created to lend distinction to a campus. In turn, this serves as the key to effective strategic planning and operations (Bogue and Aper, 2000). Bogue and Aper (2000) outlined expectations for an institutional mission statement from the Criteria for Accreditation of the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools as follows:

An institution must have a clearly defined purpose of mission statement appropriate to collegiate education as well as to its own specific educational role. This statement describes the institution and its characteristics, and addresses the components of the institution and its operations. The official posture and practice of the institution must be consistent with its purpose statement. Appropriate publications must accurately cite the current statement of purpose. (p. 27).

Crimmell (1993) referred to the incorporation of mission into an institution's operations as an intentional action. He emphasized that without an "understood institutional ideal," a university cannot lead people from an "undesirable, real state to a desirable, ideal state" (p. 116). The defining of the mission is crucial for the efficient

and effective operation of a university or college. Anderson (1993) stated that the university's purpose is to set the "standards of truth-seeking for a society" to differentiate its actions from mediocrity to excellence (p. ix). The importance of knowledge and its pursuit must be the principal guide for an educational institution (Mark, 1994). Chaffee (1998) stated it most simply by saying that an institution with a strong mission is required to provide educational services for those who want or need them.

### Accountability of Mission

A thorough mission statement provides the formula and foundation for an institution to advance, but it takes enormous effort and careful attention (Knauff, Berger, and Gray, 1991, p.7). Depending upon the process used to develop the mission statement of a university, the outcomes can be dramatically different. In a 2001 study, Hartley examined the process of purpose-centered change at three liberal arts institutions. By their willingness to meet the needs of their constituents and challenging the status quo, each of the institutions adopted a renewed sense of mission (Hartley, 2001). Mortimer (1972) contended that accountability and results are linked with an emphasis on the outcomes of an educational institution rather than the inputs. Some missions can inspire and benefit faculty, staff, students and external constituents. However, if a mission is created from an exercise only to meet accreditation rather than other aspects of accountability to stakeholders, the resulting product will be equally lackluster and consequently irrelevant to the work at hand (Bogue and Aper, 2000).

The practicality of the mission is vital to an institution's ability to use it productively. Anderson (1993) stressed that present practice and performance must be evaluated in relation to the current mission. However, the deliberation about purpose does not end with the final draft of the mission statement. Continuing review is required to make sure that an institution knows its reason for being. The flexible universities and colleges are in a continual search for their essential purpose. Anderson (1993) further illustrated:

These deliberations never end. We can never quite know what we are after. Furthermore, we can proceed only from where we are. . . . Thus, we always proceed step by step, contrasting what exists with what we think we are actually trying to do, as we conceive that idea of purpose here and now. We work from our own disappointment, our uneasiness with things as they are, toward something we only vaguely suspect might be better (p. 11).

Articulating the mission is the understandable initial task for an institution. The challenge of a great mission is to continually develop its application, aiming for quality to move beyond present performance and practice (Rowley, et al, 1997, p. 28).

“Mission-directed management” incorporates analysis and adaptation to clearly explain the mission (O'Brien, 1998, p. 221). Savvy academic leadership however knows that though the market is important to the institution, the mission must influence the market, and not the other way around (O'Brien, 1998; Resneck Pierce, 1994).

### The Institutional Stakeholders and the Mission

The practice of an institution's mission depends upon how the mission is translated to its stakeholders and involved constituents. Because many people from both internal and external positions rely on and relate their work to the mission, its

message must be easily transferred. The university needs to be accountable to its many publics. Middlehurst (1995) stated that accountability is integral for accomplishing the institutional mission, but now the definition has broadened to accommodate more stakeholders who are the investors of time, service or money into the institution and they demand accountability. The mission and goals are viewed from various perspectives because the intent of the mission must meet the expectations of faculty, administrators, staff, students, civic and political leaders – as well as those who hold the higher educational purse strings (Bogue and Aper, 2000).

Bogue and Aper (2000) went on to say that institutional quality and productivity are tied directly to the involvement of a university with its mission. If the mission is visible and its influence pervasive throughout the institution, then the stakeholders will know what is expected. The central impetus for ensuring quality standards is so that the institution will accomplish its mission and goals (Freed et al, 1997). Raising standards, however, may add pressure from stakeholders to meet productivity and production requirements (Bogue and Aper, 2000).

Building trust means being flexible and adaptable to stakeholders' expectations. Chaffee and Seymour (1991) concurred that public questioning of the institution's values is validated to guarantee that they are getting what they pay for and that their investments are being used sensibly. The public has a right to know and understand about how a university is accomplishing its mission. It also requires stakeholders' involvement in the planning processes to develop expectations (Freed et al, 1997). According to Chaffee (1998), a university must define the advantages it offers the public because, as supporters, they have a right to know about the value-added benefits.

However, though a new direction for mission development may be needed to address the stakeholders' needs, the institution should not try to please everyone.

### The Role of Institutional Vision and Leadership

Clear vision coupled with a well-reasoned mission is critical in driving change in a university's culture. Block (1989) stated that a mission statement lends focus and direction to make an institution distinctive from its peers. Wellins, Byham, and Wilson (1991) wrote that, "A vision . . . is a statement about an organization's future state" (as cited in Freed et al, p. 55). The university leadership is responsible for communicating the institutional mission, vision and values to position the standards for productivity and guide the institution's direction (Naretto, 1995).

A study by Donnelly (1996) offered insight into the long-term performance of four college presidents who took their institutions in new philosophical and practical directions. He stated that the president is one of the drivers of change on a campus that is able to see the institution as a whole. Because of the unique perspective the chief officer holds, he or she is integral not only in the visioning process, but in the implementation of the changes to reach long-term goals (Donnelly, 1996).

Leaders must convey the meaning of the vision to set the stage for growth. Bolman and Deal, (1991) as well as Pascarella and Frohman, (1990) developed this idea:

Vision and values must be communicated throughout the organization in a way that builds commitment and meaning. Vision is the only universal characteristic of effective leadership in the literature (as cited in Freed, et al, 1997, p.55).

Especially when the mission or vision is new to the university, the leadership is seen as the architect or lead agent driving the change (Middlehurst, 1995). However, all involved parties throughout the system must be engaged in the change process. The old way of hierarchical control does not work well on a campus that is innovative and wants to employ a mission with meaning. A new approach to changing a system is to allow “local control united by purpose or vision” (Freed et al, 1997, p. 133).

Addressing change rather than avoiding it becomes the challenge. A study by Cotton of four campuses conducted through in-depth interviews with the respective provosts of each campus speaks to the need for aggressively tackling change. Cotton (2001) observed that transitional-style faculty members, even though they initially objected to a change in mission, eventually supported the efforts to redirect the curriculum.

Research completed by Gatteau (2000) on presidential leadership recognized that commitment to mission and working collaboratively in change are essential elements of a strong administration. Freed, et al, (1997) confirmed that it is critical for involved and affected members of the university community to be able to claim ownership in the change processes.

Tierney (1998) emphasized that people must be mindful of scarce resources and try to “do more with less (p. 2). Middlehurst (1995) confirmed this saying that priority decisions have to be made swiftly because of stretched resources. Administrators simultaneously have to balance leadership responsibilities, such as visioning and guiding direction, with managing the day-to-day decision-making for the entire institution. This balance of responsibilities requires understanding of both long-term

and “here and now” institutional needs. Strategically advancing the university through careful planning allows leaders to implement innovative change.

### **Strategic Planning**

A study by Porras and Collins (1994) compared the most outstanding and enduring organizations with their competition to discover the reasons for their effectiveness. The most important traits recognized were that their leaders had a distinctive vision and sense of mission for their organization. Moreover, the vision and mission were clearly communicated and internalized by every member of the organization (as cited in Freed, 1997). The central intent for strategic planning is to position the institution so that it has the freedom to create its own environment and prepare for its future.

The leaders of any institution must understand clearly what has created the current context for the institution. Administrators, faculty, and staff must also identify the most powerful influences that have created the current culture and therefore may influence future change (Rowley, et al, 1997). A strategic planning process implemented by these leaders prepares the institution to face the unknown future challenges (Nutt and Backoff, 1992). Brandt (1991) agreed that organizations that develop strategic plans excel beyond those who do not engage in long-term planning (as cited in Rowley et al, 1997).

Taylor and Pfeiffer (2000) made a distinction between traditional and strategic planning models. While traditional planning is often budget based and focuses on the current state of institutional affairs, strategic planning, as inferred by the authors, is

more appropriate for innovative colleges and universities because of its concentration on a continual process and future direction. The critical steps for strategic planning are to 1) align the organization with the environment; 2) organize according to strategic direction; 3) focus on the organization as a whole; and 4) approach planning as an ongoing process.

Institutional leadership must adopt planning methods and outcomes that specifically address the current stage during which the planning is taking place (Keller, 1999-2000). A university must assess the institution's internal and external dynamics to fully understand the context for planning. The university's strengths and weaknesses must be taken into consideration, along with its future aspirations (Flack, 1994). An institution then is able to move forward acknowledging known factors and limitations, while strategically preparing for unknown challenges .

Involving as many people as possible in the planning process strengthens not only current campus operations, but also reinforces the future planning goals. In communicating the organization's mission and vision, each person involved has the opportunity to become committed to the plan and thereby can buy into the ideas generated (Deal & Jenkins, 1994). The mission and vision become the dominant thread of the fabric of the institution. Every goal, position description and performance expectation must match the mission (Freed, et al, 1997; Rowley, et al, 1997). Senge (1990) stated that ongoing campus conversations revolving around the mission and vision continue the creative generation of ideas and plans. Freed, et al. (1997) reinforced this idea affirming that when employees decide that they are committed to



the planning process, the mission becomes the strategic change driver throughout every aspect of university life.

Planning is not for the impatient or weak in spirit. It is not always a smooth process, but creates interruption of business-as-usual. It involves risk, boldness and willingness to face difficulty and make hard decisions (Keller, 1983). Moreover, it is a continual process as leaders frequently refine strategies and plans to accommodate the most current developments (Rhoads and Tierney, 1987). To create the best decisions, however, institutional leaders need well-defined standards of measurement. To measure success, the pre-determined assessment tools must be in place (Anderson, 1993). Keller stated that the result of strategic planning should not be a “fat document,” but a simple well understood plan (1983, p. 140). As Cyert stated in an American Council on Education workshop (October 1981), the main reason for institutional planning is to use efficient methods to create a distinct organizational map leading to excellence.

### **Change and Innovation in Higher Education**

Strategic planning is not incorporated into institutional management in order to implement wholesale change. Nor is it designed to maintain the status quo. Anderson (1993) asserted that there is a “middle ground between identifiable extremes (p.)” He suggested that universities need to “know how to make the most of the materials at hand” (1993, p. ix.) Rosser and Penrod (1991) from California State at Los Angeles identified three major reasons for significant change in higher education: “a major crisis, outside pressure, or a vigorous and farsighted leader” (Rowley et al, 1997, p. 9).

External and internal forces demand that institutions operate in new ways, even to accomplish existing tasks, in order to serve their public. However, change is not just about peripheral activities, but real change requires that thinking, and therefore behavior, of the people involved must be different (Tierney, 1998). Change is complex and requires the capability and the flexibility to select options and choices in light of the current environment including complex factors, priorities, and markets (Middlehurst, 1995). Bogue and Aper (2000) strengthened this stance with the following list of choices to be made:

Some of the variables in a climate less friendly, and sometimes downright hostile, to higher education include: cost containment pressures and reduced revenue regimens; political leadership expecting sharper mission focus and less across the board mentality in dealing with fiscal retrenchment; parents and students expecting their college tuition investment to yield a good paying and satisfying job upon graduation; policy makers relying increasingly on market mechanisms to define public goals and priorities: dramatic expansions in the educational promise of technology; civic dissatisfaction with attention to teaching; competitive pressures from an emerging privatized sector; impressions of organizational obsolescence and recalcitrance to change; egalitarian discomfort with higher education as a haven for a protected and privileged class; and public disaffection with values modeled in higher education. It is no longer a question of whether institutions must change, but of who will control that recasting of the nation's colleges and universities, or an increasingly competitive market for postsecondary education that holds little sympathy for institutional tradition. (p. 216).

Clark Kerr (1982) simply measured educational institutions on how wisely and how quickly they are able to adapt to challenges and possibilities (as cited in Rowley, 1997, p. 25). Adam Urbanski offered this reminder to higher education: "If you always do what you always have done, you'll always get what you always got" (Chaffee and Sherr, 1992). Quality and value-added outcomes necessitate a need for major change in higher education. Universities must proactively approach change with real and tangible

responses (Freed et al, 1997). Massy (1994) in an article published in the Chronicle of Higher Education, stated that he knows of “no industry that has experienced this juxtaposition of financial pressures and technological progress that has not gone through fundamental change” (as cited in Freed, 1997). Institutions must pay close attention to the signs of change (Freed, 1997).

A first step to strategic change is to acknowledge what the institution is doing well and what programs should continue. This assessment offers two advantages: 1) existing investments of human and financial resources are recognized and appreciated, and 2) the change process gets a quick start (Chaffee, 1998). After the implementation of the plan is in process, the difficulty comes in ensuring that the plan is linked authentically to the continuing functional operations. As stated earlier in this review, the institution must distinguish itself through the university’s distinctive character and productivity. Planning should enhance operational processes and give the college or university a niche that moves it into the spotlight (Rowley, 1997).

#### Determining Quality through Mission

Freed, Klugman, and Fife (1997) discussed how quality must be the baseline for projecting and measuring institutional outcomes. Keller (1983) wrote that “to pursue quality, a president and the rest of academic management should see that the entire institution speaks of taste, care and thought to a visitor or enrolled student” (p. 134). Quality should be reflected everywhere on campus including all departments, publications, and food service – even in signage (Keller, 1983). Berquist said that

quality is evident on a campus when collaboration is based on the mission. He explained:

Quality exists in a college or university to the extent that adequate and appropriate resources are being directed successfully toward the accomplishment of mission-related institutional outcomes and that programs in the college or university make a significant and positive mission-related difference in the lives of people affiliated with the college or university and are created, conducted and modified in a manner that is consistent with the mission and values of the institution (Berquist, 1995, p. 44).

A transition has happened in the field of higher education in that universities and colleges are now being judged by their results produced rather than on resources and reputation alone (Bogue and Aper, 2000). Hersh (1994) addressed quality as the foundation for the institution, particularly for one that brandishes a distinctive mission that adds value to the student experience.

Rowley, Herman, and Dolence (1997) added that institutions not only recognize quality but also should be creating value by continually revisiting their standards. This is no easy task because those the university serves must be encouraged to change their current expectations of quality. Chaffee and Sherr (1992) stated that in environments where continuous improvement is already a part of the culture, people are more open to changes in levels of quality. More people across the campus are able to be leaders in changing operations as planning becomes more accepted part of the culture.

Freed, Klugman, and Fife (1997) offered that university faculty and administration have been slow to give credence to quality principles. Often, faculty may see quality initiatives as new and coming from the business sector and do not appreciate the correlation between business and academia (Bonvillian and Murphy, 1996). Freed, Klugman, and Fife (1997) continued that quality is by no means a new

concept in university life, but today the environment in which institutions operate is monitored more closely by the publics they serve. The terrific competition that exists now in the world of higher education impels university leadership to take the reins of strategic planning and embrace the concepts once thought only attributed to business (Steeple, 1988; McPherson, 1999).

### Benchmarking and Measuring by the Mission

The question of how to measure outcomes leaves academicians searching for qualitative and quantitative measures. Anderson (1993) explained that quantitative measures may never fully capture the exact results achieved. Anderson (1993) stated that:

The gap is not the same as human well being, and standardized test scores do not measure the quality of education. We are uneasy with our criteria. We pay for precision with an unavoidable sense that our standards are diverting us from our aims. We know that we can be trapped into pursuing the measure rather than the aim – preparing students for the test, let us say, rather than for the understanding, we wish them to gain (p. 13).

University leadership and faculty may find it challenging to effectively measure human outcomes. It is difficult to determine if students graduate with different skills and knowledge than when they entered the institution. Faculty and administrators assume that value has been added to the lives of the students, but how that is measured is still a question (Freed et al, 1997). Anderson (1993) also identified the challenge of defining value in outcomes as the correlation between standards and purpose.

U.S. News and World Report has become increasingly prominent as a measure of institutional ranking (Tucker, 1996; Bennett, 2001). However, Bennett questioned its validity as an assessment tool for quality. In trying to determine “excellence,” some

standardization has to be attached to performance measured against the yardstick of mission, not ranking alone. Anderson (1993) argued that the more specific the measurements become, the more often that observers and participants question their validity.

### Survival as a Instigator of Institutional Change

Universities are expected to create quality outcomes and adhere to levels of excellence, even though it is difficult to clearly define their expectations. Even so, to survive and prosper, universities have to respond to their publics in their desire for quality. Responsive universities will have to focus on outcomes demanded by their public or risk losing supportive relationships that add value to the university as a whole (Keith, 1998). However, a college does not need to focus on survival as its objective, addressing only short-term goals. An institution that wants to live must pay attention to its central purpose and core mission in order to succeed, not just survive (Cowan, 1993).

Public and private institutions alike are taking desperate measures to live in the “lifestyle” to which they are accustomed. Private colleges compete with public institutions for students, funds and political support. Public colleges are now taking fundraising more seriously to compete with private endowments. All institutions are struggling to create academic offerings that prepare their graduates for a varied and often turbulent job market (Breneman, 1994). Keller (1993) concluded that institutions of higher education must attend to issues of quality if they are to survive. However, in creating new centers of excellence, higher goals and objectives are set and achieved and the groundwork is laid for successful strategic planning and advancement.

Though it seems to be a contradiction, change is critical for survival. Students in the United States can choose from more than 3600 colleges and universities. How student choices are made affects the very existence of an institution (Jayaraman and Rosenblum, 2002). Stakeholder observations merge with the university's definition of its own mission to create a multifaceted picture that becomes the image and culture viewed by internal and external constituents.

In order to better define the institution and its direction for prospective students, parents, donors, governing bodies and other stakeholders, institutions have to differentiate themselves from one another. For instance, Kushner (1999) discussed curriculum as a strategy for contrasting campuses, rather than only an internal program. Universities can use their curricular choices to distinguish themselves from competitors (Kushner, 1999). Ramsay (1999) stated that in the competitive environment surrounding higher education, colleges are beginning to speak of "market niches" instead of institutional identity. A university then can address the varied expectations for quality by its potential students. Coate (1990) summed it up by saying, "Quality is what customers say it is, not what universities tell them it is" (p. 27). Therefore, an institution has to be cognizant of the real driving forces behind its longevity. The reasons thought to be most important or most obvious to the leadership, may not be what keeps the university prosperous. Often an institution has to look at the values that determine its reason for being to find the strength and potential for long-term educational and operational success (Rhoads and Tierney, 1992).

### **Liberal Arts Colleges and Universities**

In studying organizational change in educational institutions, the literature shows that the smaller liberal arts campus faces its own specific challenges. Critical inquiry calls for both philosophical and operational questions to be asked during change processes. However, the Council of Independent Colleges purported that smaller colleges and universities sometimes have fewer bureaucratic obstacles to overcome and may be able to adapt more readily to change. Because of the interactive, more personal culture, sometimes a small group of people can initiate change more easily than a large organization (as cited in Bonvillian and Murphy, 1996, p.33). Though change has been difficult on many traditional campuses, a few liberal arts institutions have taken the challenge and created a pioneering application of the liberal arts mission (Hawkins, 1999). A case study of one such institution is developed later in this study. Attitudes and structures that assist to ease tension through the transitional periods are greatly needed. If an institution can overcome the administrative hurdles that often slow progress, then it can match the needs of the fast-moving society it serves (Myers, 1994).

Trenton State College, a liberal arts institution in New Jersey, was another institution that needed to survive financially, due to falling revenues and increased competition for superior students. In order to become a leader in teaching undergraduates, its faculty and administration knew that they had to make some creative decisions to change. In the state system of New Jersey, it also meant that all state colleges were similar in mission, programs and students. Trenton State College was renamed “The College of New Jersey” and at the same time changed its mission and the approach to achieving quality outcomes (Jayaraman and Rosenblum, 2002). The



transformation to a public liberal arts institution was the result. A college intentionally chose its new mission not only to survive but also to thrive. It was bent not on changing for change sake, but on changing to achieve excellence. This case study offers an example for observing and examining institutions who are taking a mission seriously, and creating change that produces results.

### Liberal Arts Mission and Philosophy

The liberal arts institution in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century is different from its Jeffersonian predecessors. Liberal arts institutions have a specific mission and each one works within an explicit context. The purpose of a liberal arts colleges or university needs defining, perhaps more than other institutions, so that its many audiences understand the specific student niche it serves. The pursuit of knowledge is the cornerstone of the study of liberal arts. Crimmel (1993) stated that, “like all forms of intentional action, liberal education requires an understood institutional ideal—a purpose, mission, end, aim or goal” (p. 116). However, often the understood definition of liberal arts is assumed so that the authentic mission may get left by the wayside (Mark, 1994). This concept of the open pursuit of knowledge may be challenged by those who support the traditionally applied educational function of the university -- to shape thought and conscience (Anderson, 1993).

Bogue and Aper (2000) argued that institutions of higher learning have the charge of engaging students in critiquing traditional thought and coming to their own conclusions. The liberally educated person understands “critical inquiry – the ability to question what one hears and reads, to challenge one’s own assumptions and the

assumptions of others, and to ask difficult questions” (Mohrman, 1994, p. 27). Being able to think critically, analyze issues from multiple perspectives, develop logical conclusions, and clearly express ideas mark the liberally educated student (Caruthers, 1981; Ikenberry, 1997; Hersh, 1999). Baldwin (2000) and Lang (1999) reiterated that the need for a liberal education is stressed by a complex society that wants citizens with a commitment to common values. The liberal arts university produces this type of graduate.

Cronon (1998) concluded that an educated person is able to see how thoughts connect. These connections cause the creative tension produced by students and led by the faculty which is the hallmark of the liberal arts institution. As reported in the Futures Project at Brown University, it is essential to higher education’s continuing role that the university be upheld as a place for open discussion of critical issues (Newman, 2000).

As has been discussed earlier in this review, many colleges and universities are in a struggle to survive. However, those that seem to survive in the liberal arts take on the challenge of an intentionally limited mission, rather than trying to be all things to all students. Bogue and Aper (2000) concurred that the liberal arts college or university has shown success because it has adopted the “prized but limited mission” (p. 206). Accepting this mission may create complex decision-making in the future. The realistic challenge of finding students may increase the economic challenge and tempt the liberal arts institution to expand its offerings. Staying committed to the mission is the key to success for the liberal arts college or university. The commitment to their primary

mission is the core of the liberal arts institution's educational success (Breneman, 1994). Breneman added :

At their best, I believe that private liberal arts colleges provide the finest undergraduate education available in this country. Importantly, these colleges are single-purpose institutions, with no rationale for existence beyond their capacity to educate undergraduate students. We do not rely on them for large-scale research, graduate, or professional education, or public service beyond that which members of an intellectual community regularly offer their local area (1994, p. 3-4).

The public liberal arts college, as defined by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, has had trouble finding its place in higher education in the U.S. "Liberal arts" is defined as consisting of academic disciplines that provide cultural information and societal concern, instead of specialized professional training (Billington, 1994). At times the liberal arts campus has inadvertently evolved into a multipurpose institution (Breneman, 1994). Gilbert (1995) agreed that the colleges identified with the liberal arts designation are not a standardized group.

For some institutions, the addition of professional programs with the liberal arts has clouded the purist definition. This is not to say that professional programs and liberal arts programs cannot co-exist. However, Lou, Mendonca, and Bloom (2001) proposed that students, in purely professional programs, are seldom guided to use all of their learning combined into a knowledgeable whole. The integration of professional and liberal arts learning offers the opportunity to synthesize learning. Tritelli (2001) discovered that the intellectual capacities and knowledge developed through liberal education indeed prepare more fully the students for their professional work. Anderson (1993) supported the evolution of the "new," integrated learning in the liberal arts institution. He stated that it is greatly needed because the university in general has

become a “peculiarly systematic and rationalized, and a peculiarly unreflective institution” (p. 6). Therefore, higher education still welcomes the liberal arts institution, even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### Teaching and Learning in the Liberal Arts Institution

The question for consideration at this point is, what is the current liberal arts institution? To define the current direction of liberal arts is to offer understanding of these colleges and universities whose mission is to be distinctive in their teaching and unsurpassed in their students’ learning. American institutions all offer teaching and students may graduate with similar degrees. However, the “start” and “end points” may be extremely varied across the different colleges and universities (Pascarella and Terenzini, 1992, p. 589). The focus of institutions of higher education has been on pursuing excellence through teaching. What is changing is that the emphasis is now on quality learning (Freed, Klugman, and Fife, 1997). Barr and Tagg (1995) affirmed that the university or college mission emphasis is not on teaching, but on “producing learning” through multiple methodologies that works for the student (p. 12). Anderson (1993) stated that the fundamental quandary is what can be taught and what ought not to be taught. Responsive universities use creative teaching methods to help students achieve quality outcomes (Keith, 1998). Astin (1999) outlined three types of outcomes for colleges and universities to consider:

- 1) educational outcomes that relate to long-term changes in the student’s experience; 2) existential outcomes which relate to the meaningfulness of the total educational experience; and, 3) fringe benefits which refer to the practical value of the degree itself related to job possibilities ( p. 79).

A call has been made to reconsider dedication to teaching. Liberal arts faculty and administrators are asked to revisit “the business of the business,” which is teaching and learning (Bogue and Aper, 2000, p. 207). Within the liberal arts institution, the responsibility for learning is given not only to the faculty, but to the students (Steeple, 1998). Seymour and Collett (1991) discussed the learning process as being “mutually owned.” Freed, Klugman, and Fife (1997) affirmed that thinking needs to be shifted so that students are seen as stakeholders; this turns the focus to learning versus teaching. Middlehurst (1995) also discussed that the emphasis on learning underscores the expectation of accountability to students. Students who are involved in innovative education should take ownership of the learning processes (Kliwer, 1999). Their involvement in their own programs of study incorporates responsiveness and participatory learning.

However, Anderson (1993) cautioned that the college is not a free forum for public debate. Even though students are to be involved in their learning processes, it is critical that the core curriculum be well defined. Deciding what will be a part of the curriculum and what will be omitted is the critical question. The mission has to be regarded as the plumb line in the quest for institutional excellence.

### Curriculum in the Liberal Arts Institution

Throughout the literature related to liberal arts institutions, the core curriculum surfaced as a critical issue because of its significance to the question of balance in teaching and learning. The philosophy exposed in curricular offerings at a liberal arts institution needs to be explicitly stated in order to understand the critical liberal arts

mission (Crimmel, 1993). It is important that students and others understand the integration of critical inquiry in addition to subject matter. The National Endowment for the Humanities report of 1988 stated that institutions must reshape their undergraduate program to develop “an educated person, regardless of major” (as cited in Fincher, 1991, p.29). Intellectual connections are the keys to learning success, according to Mohrman (1994). Examples may include interdisciplinary courses from different fields of study all focused on a central idea, or general education courses that together develop a school of thought or inquiry into conceptual learning (Mohrman, 1994).

The core curriculum for a liberal arts college is integral to the defining of a liberal arts institution. Breneman (1994) equates liberal education with studies for undergraduates in the areas of humanities, social sciences, mathematics, biological and physical sciences, and psychology. He further argues that his definition may dismay “those who believe that liberal education is a process, and thus should be content free” (Breneman, 1990, as cited in Breneman, 1994, p. 53).

Crimmel (1993) reported that even the curriculum questions should not be addressed prior to the mission of an institution being clarified. The educational mission must be clearly seen throughout the curriculum, not defined as a result of the curriculum. Anderson The liberal arts curriculum is more about a philosophy of learning rather than a plan for teaching (Anderson, 1993).

## **Chapter Summary**

Research in higher education pertaining to institutional missions is broadly developed through a multiplicity of completed works. This study was designed to incorporate a focus on university mission as an integral guide to organizational development. The perspectives on change in higher education are extensive, offering a variety of insights. As the study was narrowed to examine the effect of change on a liberal arts institution, the literature review was included studies on the distinctive philosophy and mission of liberal arts institutions.

The next chapter describes the research methods that were used in the further development of this case study. The methodology, the organization of the study, and the purpose of the study are included to provide an overview of both the data collection and analysis of the study.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of this study was to explore and understand the transformation of a regional, comprehensive university into a liberal arts university through the implementation of a deliberate change of institutional mission. The study was designed to discover factors affecting the change on campus related to the new mission implementation. Changes in strategy, in processes, and in the interaction of students, faculty, staff, and administration were investigated. Because the research was focused on one institution, the study was designed for depth about one case over a six-year period of time, not breadth to describe all liberal arts institutions or all universities (Patton, 1990). The researcher focused primarily on the strategic processes used to implement the new the university campus.

In the investigation, the researcher also studied variables active in the resulting changes as well as the interpersonal dynamics among administration, faculty, staff and students. The research sought to discover how a university takes a liberal arts mission and consistently implements it throughout the entire organization. Because the variables encountered were unknown to the researcher, a qualitative research approach was selected. The researcher was interested in gaining “in-depth understanding of the situation and its meaning for those involved” (Merriam, 1988, p. xii). The qualitative approach allowed the researcher to find out “what people do, know, think and feel by



observing, interviewing, and analyzing documents” pertinent to the change (Patton, 1990, p. 94).

### **Research Design**

Qualitative research was chosen for this case study in order to understand the context, process and concept of a social phenomenon. The case study method allowed the researcher to study fully the data and patterns identified. The researcher had no control over the events or the data collected, therefore, the case study approach was an appropriate strategy to look at a “contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context” (Yin, 1984, p. 13). The case study also was chosen because this research was not based on a specific theory, but sought to gain “close-up, detailed observation” of specific event-based phenomena (Strauss, 1981; Yin, 1984). The unit of analysis was one university and the experiences of a cross-section of the people who constitute the university community that evolved through a change of mission (Patton, 1990). Therefore, qualitative research was deemed most appropriate because the study was not to prove or disprove theory; “rather the abstractions are built as the particulars that have been gathered are grouped together” (Bogden and Bilken, 1982, p. 28).

The researcher found grounded theory to be the appropriate data analysis methodology because the data inherent to this study is grounded in real-life information collected from the selected university participants (Merriam, 1988). Grounded theory was used because “theory at various levels of generality is indispensable for deeper knowledge of social phenomena”(Strauss, 1987, p. 6). The researcher described and

analyzed events to create images for comprehensive understanding (Merriam, 1988, p. 13).

Patterns began to emerge which lent understanding to findings of the study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) reported that pattern theories are an asset to qualitative research when explaining elements that create a coordinated system. Kaplan (1964) also posited that the focus of a qualitative case study is “a specific part in an organized whole.”

Patton provided more details about the use of qualitative research below:

Qualitative data consist of detailed descriptions of situations, events, people, interactions, and observed behaviors; direct quotations from people about their experiences, attitudes, beliefs, and thoughts; and excerpts of entire passages from documents, correspondence, records and case histories (Patton, 1980, p. 43).

### Research Setting

The setting of this study was a public state-supported university in the southeastern United States. Georgia College and State University (GC&SU) is set in Milledgeville, Georgia, which is in the central part of the state. This institution was chartered in 1889 as Georgia State College for Women. The history of the name changes of the institution was described previously in Chapter 1. The current enrollment is 5,400 students. The University offers the Bachelors of Arts degree, the Bachelors of Science degree, and Masters degrees in 65 majors.

The University is uniquely designated as a public liberal arts institution within the University System of Georgia. The institution is described by the University System of Georgia Board of Regents as a state public liberal arts university, therefore charging it with a mission in 1996 that was different from any of its other System entities. Because

of the distinctive mission of this state institution, it was appropriate to design a case study to look at its unique characteristics, history, and processes.

The site selection also was important to the study, as the mission was a change due to a mandate from the state's educational governing body. Its mission was first to the students of its home/sponsoring state. The region was mentioned because the earlier mission of this university had been to serve its local constituents, within 50 miles of the campus. The new mission immediately changed this state university's focus from regional students to statewide recruitment.

#### Description of Research Sample

The selection of participants in the research sample was based on position or level of responsibility at the identified university. The investigator searched for those individuals and groups who could provide a cross-sectional overview of characteristics, processes and results that have developed throughout the implementation of the changed mission. Purposeful sampling was used to select participants who had been most heavily involved in the mission change process. The goal of the selection process was to select "information-rich cases for study in depth" (Patton, 1990, p. 169). The sample selection criteria involved five categories of participants.

The senior administrative leadership team of the university created the first group of participants. Following those interviews, three focus group sessions were incorporated into the design because they represented three other categories of people involved in fundamental roles throughout the change process. Members of the university faculty, staff, and students were identified for each of these respective focus group interviews.

The participants for each focus group were chosen through purposeful, non-probabilistic sampling in order to gain the most in-depth information and to expand on developing theory related to the study (Bogden and Bilken, 1982; Patton, 1990). Each focus group included a group of university participants from a broad range of positions across multiple academic and operational departments of the institution.

Senior Administrative Leadership Team. The first group of participants included those individuals serving as the institution's current senior level administrators. The selection for individual interviews then was determined by the membership of the senior level leadership team that included 17 administrators. The GC&SU administrators that were interviewed included the university president, four vice presidents, six deans, and six directors. Associate deans were not included in the interviews, so that each academic or functional area would have one participant, rather than multiple representatives from any one area.

Faculty Focus Group. Members of the GC&SU faculty also were selected for a focus group interview. The nine faculty participants, including four women and five men were selected from a comprehensive list of active faculty members generated by the GC&SU Office of Academic Affairs. The criteria for the initial list was that participants had begun teaching at the university prior to the mission change in 1996 and were still active faculty in 2002. The faculty members were chosen by the researcher with input from campus administrators, staff, and faculty to represent a cross-section of academic fields and departments.

The researcher designed the group so that no more than one participant from an academic department would be present. Alternates were also selected in case of unexpected scheduling conflicts. One alternate was needed to participate. The researcher wanted to ensure that the participants would be willing to speak candidly in a group setting. The participants included some faculty members who had been very vocal about their perspectives on the mission change, both in positive and negative ways. The researcher was careful to create the opportunity for each member to have a clear, candid voice in the interview.

The validity and credibility of the study called for a cross-section of involved faculty members. The objective was to identify a broad group of participants that had been actively teaching on the GC&SU campus prior to the mission change and had remained as faculty until the current time, April 2002. Participants represented the departments within arts and sciences, business, education, and library sciences with no more than one participant from any particular department. Current part-time faculty members were excluded from the list of potential participants. Also, faculty members who had left the University prior to the conducting of this study were not included due to their unavailability in person. The selection of participants was designated by those people who were currently on the campus and had the opportunity to witness the full process, at least to this point in history. The researcher wanted to interview those who had understood and participated in the former mission of the university and had understood the previous campus culture as well as the current culture. The observations of these faculty members provided many insights into the impact of the change in organizational culture.

Staff Focus Group. GC&SU staff members were selected for a focus group interview to offer an additional perspective to the faculty group. Participants were selected from a list of active staff generated by the GC&SU Staff Council. The participants were chosen based on their knowledge and extensive experience working under both the former and current missions of the university. As in the faculty group, the participants represented many different units throughout the GC&SU campus. The twelve staff member participants selected represented a broad range of university functions including enrollment services, student affairs, institutional technology, human resources, art, physical plant, admissions, and business services.

These participants were selected from a list of staff members who had been employed on the campus prior to 1996 and the mission change. The eight women and four men and were active staff members, though some of the participants had worked in different positions during the elapsed time period. Only in the areas of student activities and student affairs, had the participants been employed after 1996. Other than the Vice President of Student Affairs, there was no employee in this area that had been active there since 1996. The Vice President had been a participant in the Administrative Team interviews.

Student Focus Group. GC&SU students constituted another focus group that provided for the researcher to hear their individual and collective perspectives on the liberal arts experience at the University. The students invited to participate in this focus group were not enrolled when the mission change actually happened, but enrolled soon after the mission was implemented across the campus. The students were selected from a list

produced by the Dean of Students' Office including all GC&SU students listed who had been students for at least four years on the main GC&SU campus. Each of the students had entered the university as a freshman in the fall semester of 1998. They each had completed senior level work at the point of this focus group session.

The students were asked to participate to represent a range of different departments and hometowns to offer a cross-section of experiences to the study. The eight students were majoring in various academic fields including theater, music, business, psychology, sociology, and political science. The students also were involved in a wide range of extra-curricular activities, varying from athletics, performing arts, and community activities. Community service expectations were a strong part of the university mission, therefore the researcher found it important to have the participants represent a cross-section of student activities as well as the academic spectrum.

Supporting Individual Interview Participants. The fifth group of participants contained some individuals selected for their knowledge of the background and history of Georgia College and State University. This group of people included the former president of GC&SU, the former vice president, and interim president of GC&SU, and the university historian. The researcher conducted individual interviews with each of these participants.

### **Data Collection**

The open-ended interview method was used to investigate the phenomena and “determine the structure and essence of experience” for the participants. Knowing what people experienced and how they interpreted those experiences added rich content to the

study (Patton, 1990, p. 69). Therefore, groups and individuals from across the GC&SU campus were interviewed. The following description gives details about the interview methodology.

The number of participants selected was sensitive to both sufficiency and saturation of information (Siedman, 1991). The entire team was scheduled for the Administrative Team interviews. A sample of this team would not have reflected the entire team's perspectives because each administrator is the chief academic officer in their respective academic or functional units. In each of the focus groups, a sufficient number was chosen to reflect a cross-section of academic and functional departments on campus related to faculty, staff and students. Patton (1990) stated that the sample was to be "illustrative not definitive" (p. 173). The researcher determined that saturation of information had been reached as common patterns and themes began to be repeated in the interviews.

#### Senior Administrative Leadership Team Individual Interviews

The members of the Senior Administrative Leadership Team were selected for individual interviews to capture detailed information related to the study. They were identified by their position on campus and their close involvement with the implementation of the new mission. Prior to the scheduling of the senior administrator interviews, the president of the university was asked permission to conduct the study on the campus and to ask for approval to interview members of the senior team. The approval was given verbally and in writing by the president. The president also made an



announcement at a senior staff meeting to offer the senior team a chance to be briefed about the impending research.

Following this process, the researcher contacted each senior administrator by telephone to ask for his or her willingness to be a part of the study. Each administrator graciously agreed to participate. An appointment was scheduled by telephone. Though several appointment changes were made in the weeks prior to the interview, each of the interviews was conducted during the month of April, 2002. Each session was confirmed by the researcher through e-mail and calls to the participants or their administrative assistants a day or two before the interview.

Each interview was held in the office of each administrator to create a situation convenient to his or her schedules. Also, the researcher was able to observe the participants in their natural surroundings and in their respective areas of the campus environment. Prior to the start of the interview, each interviewee signed two copies of a consent form, approved by the University of Georgia Graduate School (see Appendix A). One form was maintained by the participant and one by the researcher.

Each administrator was briefed prior to the interview as to the purpose and expected process for the interview. They also were offered the opportunity to ask any questions of the researcher related to the study, its future application, or the logistics of the project. The interviews ranged in length from one to two hours. Each interview was audiotaped after receiving specific permission of the participant. The researcher also took notes by hand throughout the interview to check for accuracy on the tapes and to make memos for future analysis.

Each administrator was asked a series of open-ended questions developed by the researcher to ensure continuity (see Appendix B). However, the researcher asked additional questions of each administrator as the interview progressed to extract additional information. Often the administrator offered in-depth details about a particular project or observation and the researcher would ask for more information to fully understand the context of the comments. At other points during the interviews, the researcher asked for additional information about the administrator's particular field to add depth to the collective information. The administrators also were informed that they would be allowed the chance to review a copy of their transcription. "Member checks" were offered to each administrator to review the notes from their individual interview for accuracy.

### Focus Group Sessions

Three focus group sessions were held in April, 2002. Each session lasted between one and two hours. One focus group was with faculty members, one with staff members, and a third was held with undergraduate students. The participants were briefed, as the senior administrators were, about the purpose, application, and logistics of the study. They were allowed to ask questions or make comments before audiotaping commenced. The confidentiality of the information on the audiotapes was assured by the researcher. The audiotapes were only reviewed by the researcher and the professional transcriptionists.

The focus group participants were asked open-ended questions. The interview guide was prepared in advance by the researcher (see Appendix C), though the

participants led the discussion. The researcher acted as facilitator to ensure that questions were covered thoroughly. The researcher/facilitator changed the order of the questions for each group, due to the direction of the conversation. Often, responses to other questions were included in the reply to one. The researcher/facilitator responded appropriately with additional questions or the invitation for the participants to continue to allow for full description and to avoid stifling the flow of communication.

Faculty Focus Group. The faculty focus group interview was held on the GC&SU campus in the Arts and Sciences conference room. The room was private and allowed for clear taping. Two audio tape recorders were placed on the tables in order to be able to hear comments from all of the participants. The facilitator also took notes on a standing flipchart throughout the session to keep written documentation of the comments. Taking written notes also allowed the focus group participants the opportunity to review their comments to ensure that the researcher interpreted them correctly.

Staff Focus Group. The participants met in a conference room in the GC&SU Continuing Education Building, Chappell Hall. The room was private and allowed for clear taping. Two audio tape recorders were placed on the tables in order to be able to hear comments from all of the participants. The researcher/facilitator also took notes for this group on the standing flipchart. The 25 flipchart pages of notes taken were incorporated into the transcription of the meeting. The session ran approximately two hours.

An interview guide was developed and used during the focus group sessions; however, the researcher remained flexible during the facilitation of the session to allow the group to offer any relevant information, even beyond the established questions. For

example, several comments made in response to the first question related to other sequential questions. Rather than have similar answers repeated, the group reviewed their previous responses and agreed that they had sufficiently covered the next topic. Additional questions were developed during the session to encourage the participants to expand further on topics. Periodically during the session, the facilitator repeated certain group responses to make sure that the group felt they had fully covered each subject and to make sure that there were no other individual responses to be added. The facilitator also asked the group to continue to add responses, even if the specific question related was treated earlier in the session. At several points, participants did ask to add a comment to an earlier question and it was noted for the record.

Student Focus Group. The student participants met in the GC&SU Student Affairs conference room in Lanier Hall. The room was private and allowed for clear taping. Again, two audio tape recorders were used. The researcher/facilitator also took notes for this group on the standing flipchart. The session ran just short of two hours.

The researcher/facilitator kept a conversational tone and flow throughout the interview, to encourage student input. Some additional questions for clarification and expansion were added to the interview, although an interview guide was developed for the student group and was followed. The students were not leaders in the implementation of the mission change; they were customers and consumers of the services and products resulting from that change. The questions prepared for this session differed from the faculty and staff focus group questions reflecting the unique role of the students on the liberal arts campus.

### Supporting Individual Interviews

Also included in the interview process were three individuals who provided clarity of detailed historical background for the study. A former president of the university, a former GC&SU vice president for academic affairs, and the university historian agreed to individual interviews. It was important to interview them individually because of the different nature of their questions. The two former administrators had not been in leadership positions since 1997 and, therefore, were not participants during the most recent stages of the mission implementation. However, they were the change agents and the administrators leading the campus through the decision and original consideration of the mission change. The former president returned to teaching and then retired shortly after the mission implementation. The former vice president served as interim president for approximately one year, then returned to teaching shortly after completing his interim presidency.

The university historian also served as the chairperson of the curriculum change committee. Therefore, his participation in this research project provided a rich history of the college turned university, of the historic curriculum change, and of the subsequent evolution of the campus after the adoption of the new liberal arts mission.

### Additional Data Collection Methods

The researcher also incorporated other facets of information from earlier involvement with the Senior Administrative Leadership Team. The researcher had worked with the Senior Administrative Leadership Team previously during the team's strategic planning retreats over the past four years. Prior to this research, the researcher

had facilitated strategic planning sessions for the university since 1997. This involvement with the Senior Administrative Leadership Team allowed the researcher to have accumulated knowledge of the University's mission change and organizational development, which added depth to this study.

Because of former experience with the administrators, the researcher was able to compare new data with information from executive summary reports, and notes taken from participants' quotes in anonymous surveys conducted prior to the planning sessions. Appendix D shows a sample from an executive summary. Appendix E offers an example of an individual questionnaire used in a previous Senior Leadership Team planning session. A summary of questionnaire responses from a former planning session is included in Appendix F. This summary offers pertinent information that was gathered in 1998 from the same administrators that were interviewed for this current research. Only three new Senior Administrative Leadership Team Members had been added and two members had left GC&SU before the current interviews took place. Because of the long-term involvement as an observer and consulting facilitator with this university's leadership prior to this current research, the researcher had a deeper understanding of the changes resulting on the campus in the past five years. The data collected for this study, when analyzed in conjunction with the reports from the past five years, provided a rich content base for the writing of this document.

### **Data Analysis**

A researcher using a case study analysis "gathers as much information about the problem as possible with the intent of interpreting or theorizing about the phenomenon"

(Merriam, 1988, p. 28). However, Yin (1989) cautions the researcher that it is impossible to understand every aspect of the data. In a qualitative study, keen analysis is the critical path to discover patterns and themes from the data collected. Due to the extensive nature of the total data gathered from the interviews, focus groups, documents and observations, the analysis began almost immediately as the data was being collected.

### Interpretation of Data

Individuals interpret meaning through involvement and significant communication with others (Bogden and Bilken, 1982). Serving in both the facilitator role in the focus groups and the interviewer role with the administrators, the researcher began to group patterns found as the data collection progressed. Kaplan (1964) referred to the interpretation of data through the pattern model by stating that people can explain a situation when they understand it, rather than saying people understand something because it has been explained to them. The GC&SU interview and focus group participants added rich content to this study by helping to interpret the data through their current understanding of the GC&SU mission and by giving examples of their earlier misconceptions and skepticism and how their thought processes had changed. The integration of how to implement the mission did not come only because someone told them how to apply the mission, but their understanding became clearer as they developed their own interpretations and explanations about how a university employs a mission.

The role of the researcher proved critical to the process. The interpretative lens with which the data was analyzed played a significant role in describing the findings.

The researcher conducted the primary research in the area in which the events occurred to better understand the setting (Bogden & Bilken, 1982).

Each of the individual interviews and focus group interviews was transcribed verbatim. Also, memos made on site during the research were incorporated into the field notes. The current interview transcriptions, along with summary reports and questionnaires from prior GC&SU strategic planning retreats since 1998, formed another part of the researcher's database. Analysis began as the interview transcripts were being completed by comparing current interview notes with former documentation from the questionnaires and reports.

The human interaction during the data collection enriched the discoveries, and would not have been available through written documentation alone. Merriam (1998) stated that the researcher, as the human instrument, can begin to process data on-site to filter the data and its emerging patterns even as responses are being given. Patton confirmed an important concept and stated the following:

[It is important] to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there. This understanding is an end in itself, so that it is not attempting to predict what may happen in the future necessarily, but to understand the nature of that setting-what it means for participants to be in that setting, what their lives are like, what's going on for them, what their meanings are, what the world looks like in that particular setting-and in the analysis to be able to communicate that faithfully to others who are interested in that setting (1985, p. 1).

Merriam (1988) stated that the analysis is "emergent" and "dynamic" in qualitative research; therefore, data analysis is continuous throughout the collection process but intensifies at its completion (p. 123).

The researcher continued ongoing analysis as the interviews progressed. With the completion of the fourth individual administrator interview, the researcher began to



recognize some initial patterns in the responses. Because the individual interviewees were from a range of functional and academic areas across the university campus, some of their perspectives were unique to their field. However, comments about the total campus culture and the leadership dynamics began to show up quite clearly early in the process.

The researcher made field notes during the interviews. These handwritten notes were made on the original handwritten records created along with the audiotapes. Merriam (1998) suggested that “hunches” and “working hypotheses” helped to direct the study. This researcher began to develop hunches about the study. For example, an additional question was added to the interviews because of information gathered in the first session. Following each interview, the audiotapes were transcribed into transcripts. Microsoft Word 7 and Microsoft Word 8 were used to create the written transcripts. (See Appendix G for a sample portion of a transcript. The researcher notes that a complete transcript was not included to protect the anonymity of the participant. Because only one person from each functional and academic area was included, the responses were linked closely to their field and would be easily identified with an individual.) The researcher worked with transcripts ranging from seven pages to twenty-two single-spaced pages per interview. The researcher also listened periodically to portions of the tapes to gather information from specific passages and inflection. An initial scan was made of each transcript, highlighting passages that immediately offered meaning. Broad themes were listed to narrow the data analysis, although no data was disregarded. Additional memos and comments were added to each of the transcripts in order to develop the case record.

The interview transcripts were then arranged in participant code order to make the information more manageable (Patton, 1980).

The interview information was reviewed again and arranged to identify the most striking and the most important, aspects of the data (Goetz and LeCompte, 1984). The patterns that began to emerge determined categories for the researcher. Once the categories started to become clearer, codes were assigned to create ease of data management. The codes were designated by abbreviations for each concept. Single words were used if the word presented a clue as to the full development of thought in that category.

The researcher then began to determine categories and other pieces of data for correlation and categorization. Merriam (1998) defined convergence as “determining what things fit together--which pieces of data converge on a single category or theme” (pp. 134-5). Divergence then was used to more fully interpret and describe the categories once they were identified.

Next, the researcher began to cross-reference connections between the new interview categories and the patterns that had emerged from earlier data collected. Documents from former strategic planning sessions were reviewed and coded for possible association with the current data. The researcher prepared to show levels of change within the five-year period being studied. Axial coding was used to create connections among specific categories. Whenever possible, codes were created from phrases developed by the participants to maintain the basic credibility of the data analysis.

As the categories were refined still further, the researcher often referred to the original handwritten notes from the individual interviews or flipchart pages from the focus group sessions. The objective was to preserve the flavor of the original patterns and meanings developed by the participants. As Patton (1990) stated, “the essence of experience of this phenomenon for these people” is the most important tenet from which to develop the description and analysis of the data (p. 69). He continued by saying, “There is an essence or essences to shared experience” (p. 69-70). Cross-case analysis was then used to analyze multiple responses on the key issues identified (Patton, 1990). This study of the different interview transcripts to see how each participant responded similarly or diversely on a given question contributed telling content for the study.

#### Assumptions of the Study

1. The researcher’s goal was to capture the full meaning of a phenomenon through qualitative study. Merriam (1998) stated, “In contrast to quantitative research, which takes apart a phenomenon to examine component parts (which become the variables of the study), qualitative research strives to understand how all the parts work together to form a whole” (p. 16).
2. A case study is appropriate methodology for “addressing problems in which understanding is sought in order to improve practice” (Merriam, p. xiii).
3. Qualitative methods were used in this study to “discover what is happening and then to verify what has been discovered” (Patton, 1990, p. 60).
4. Though the researcher studied data collected through interpretive lenses, it was understood that researchers “guard against their own biases by recording

detailed field notes which include reflections on their own subjectivity” (Bogden and Bilken, 1982, p. 42).

5. The researcher understood that in the interpretation of data, “objects, people, situations, and events do not possess their own meaning; rather meaning is conferred on them” (Bogden and Bilken, 1982).
6. In this study, the researcher used in-depth interviewing to understand the “experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience” (Siedman, 1991, p. 3). The meaning that the participants attributed to an experience affects the way they respond to that experience. The researcher was sensitive to inflections in individual response and reports findings accordingly.

#### Limitations of the Study

1. Reliability may be problematic in qualitative research because “human behavior is never static” (Merriam, 1998, p. 170).
2. This study is limited in that it is a case study of one public liberal arts institution. Though some information may be transferable to other studies, some of the information is limited to this particular research.
3. This study is based on a public liberal arts university that is part of the University System of Georgia. Some of the institution’s ability to make independent modifications (i.e., curriculum changes) is limited by the System requirements.
4. This study is limited by the experience of the researcher. However, the researcher offers a breadth of knowledge about the subject serving as a

facilitator, volunteer leader, former student, alumna, and consultant. The involvement on multiple levels with the university adds credibility to the study, but the researcher's bias may be evident in parts of the recommendations and conclusions.

5. Results of qualitative study may not necessarily predict the future behavior of another group (Merriam, 1998, p. 32).
6. The researcher's sensitivity to the subject can limit the qualitative study (Merriam, 1998).
7. The generalizability of a qualitative study may be limited. The research was connected directly to one social setting, and may not be readily transferred to another group or organization.
8. The researcher "is the instrument in qualitative inquiry" according to Patton (1990, p. 472). The researcher's experience and ability to remain objective in reporting the findings was a critical element to the validity of the research.
9. Theory may be produced from the research, but qualitative research will not prove theory.

### **Chapter Summary**

Qualitative research methods were selected for this investigation due to the need to discover the essence and experience of the situation, as stated by Patton (1990). In this chapter, these methods with supporting rationale were discussed. An exploratory case study provided the framework for the development of this research. Individual and group interviews enhanced and supported the rich content of this study.

In the next chapter, the participant responses and observations gathered provided the basis for analysis of the findings for this study. As described in this chapter, interviews and focus group sessions allowed the researcher to discover and analyze primary data presented in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **FINDINGS**

A university desiring to change its mission must readdress its core systems, values, and operational functions, if the mission is to remain central to the business of educating students. The mission provides the foundation for everything a university does. Georgia College & State University (GC&SU) is a four-year institution that took the opportunity to redefine the ways it serves students and its internal and external constituencies. GC&SU's faculty, staff, administrators, and legislators were not only observers of change; they became the implementers of change.

This chapter describes, through primary research, a phenomenon that has changed the way that people who make up GC&SU teach, learn, make decisions, and govern themselves. In defining a mission, a university must first determine what its reason for being is and how that mission is made visible through its programs, processes, and operations. GC&SU strategically and deliberately approached a new mission, from the ground up, and faced struggles and challenges resulting in a continually transforming institution. It may seem a bit superfluous to discuss how the University evolved through five previous name changes before the current selection, but each step in the process foretold the events to come in the 1990s. Both historical evaluation and organizational progress warrant the inclusion of the following chronological narrative of the evolution of the university.

Seven years ago, this institution of higher learning started down an intentional path to change its mission to that of a liberal arts university. A cross-section of GC&SU

stakeholders who have been involved in this university's changes offered critical insight for this study. From individual and group interviews with administrators, faculty, staff, and students, findings emerged showing how one institution cultivated a mission and evolved from a comprehensive regional college toward a distinction as a public liberal arts university.

### **Historical Background of Georgia College & State University**

Georgia College and State University has had several names and missions, being first chartered in 1889 as Georgia Normal and Industrial College (GN&IC). A brief description listed below of the institution's history of mission development sets the stage for this qualitative case study.

#### From GN&IC to Georgia College

A driving force in the founding of GN&IC was Julia Flisch, a student who grew up in Athens. During the late 1870s and early 1880s, she tried to enroll in the University of Georgia (UGA). As GC&SU historian, Robert Wilson, tells the story: UGA "was a men's school, but she just thought that she was bright enough and they would take her; well, they didn't." She graduated from the Lucy Cobb Institute and became a reporter journalist with the Augusta Chronicle. However, remembering her struggle, she launched a crusade to create a college for women. Under the slogan, "Give the girls a chance," the GC&SU Historian characterized Miss Flisch's rationale this way, "She said we have to move past the moonlight and magnolia traditions and prepare young woman for useful education in the modern world."



By talking with many influential groups throughout the state, Miss Flisch attracted the attention of Susan Atkinson, wife of a powerful legislator who later became governor, William Atkinson. Mr. Atkinson was responsible for introducing the bill to create a college specifically for women. Several contingencies were lobbying for the college to be located in their counties. After a statewide campaign, Milledgeville was selected as the spot for the Georgia Normal and Industrial College (GN&IC). The GN&IC name was held by the college until 1922, when it was renamed Georgia State College for Women, a four-year college dedicated to educating young women in the liberal arts and the art of teaching. In 1961, the name was changed again to Women's College of Georgia. Through the next six years, discussions arose questioning whether or not WCG should become a co-educational institution to relieve financial struggles. Adding men as students would allow the institution to expand their recruitment pool. That transition was fought, but economic troubles continued causing a reassessment of mission. Its distinctiveness as a women's college was no longer a novelty in the state because other colleges were offering the same educational focus. The Board of Regents deemed that the college, renamed Georgia College at Milledgeville in 1967, would accept male students. With the new name, Georgia College at Milledgeville adopted a co-ed mission and began to enhance its curriculum with the introduction of professional schools, including business and government.

The college's name then was simplified to Georgia College in 1968 and remained so until 1996. One determined woman's efforts inaugurated an idea for higher education that had continued to evolve. Although it no longer had the strong single-gender

distinction or its liberal arts educational mission, the college had taken steps to respond to the needs of its changing public.

#### From Georgia College to GC&SU

In 1968, Ralph Hemphill joined the faculty and almost immediately, extended the number of majors available at Georgia College. The campus enrollment grew and the disciplines multiplied through the 1970s and 1980s. Under the leadership of President J. Whitney Bunting, the college broadened its mission to include a School of Business, which posthumously bears that former President's name and promoted his vision, though it took emphasis off some of the liberal arts focus. In 1981, the selection of Dr. Bunting's successor, President Edwin Speir, started the college on a course to become a regional campus, serving students within a fifty-mile radius of Milledgeville and Baldwin County. Beginning in the late 1980s, Dr. Speir sought to add international appeal to the regional outreach and mission of the college.

Georgia College's expressed goal was to serve all of the students in the counties surrounding Baldwin County. As Georgia College initiated more off-campus programs, its visibility and the actual numbers of enrolled students grew. Courses of study for traditional and non-traditional students were offered at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. The mission of Georgia College was to take the education to the students throughout the adjoining communities.

The regional comprehensive mission not only expanded the scope of the college's focus, but also extended the outreach and resources of the faculty, staff, and administration. Some faculty members traveled off-campus to teach classes each week,

developing courses in the adjacent towns of Macon, Warner Robins, and Dublin making learning sites more accessible to students who could not leave home or jobs. This growth pattern was aimed toward becoming a regional comprehensive institution, reaching ever-wider groups of students in central Georgia, much like Georgia Southern College and Valdosta College had in other areas of the state. In 1967, the curriculum offered twelve majors; by 1996, there were sixty-five majors offered at Georgia College. Enrollment had increased from approximately 3800 students in 1980 to 6500 in 1996. The number of full-time faculty had grown to more than 200. The physical plant stretched its boundaries beyond the facilities located on the blocks adjacent to the main campus. A new West Campus and campus properties in three counties other than Baldwin were added. President Speir, and now Vice President for Academic Affairs Hemphill, led Georgia College in a regional mission that was instigated to educate the population of central Georgia.

In 1995, President Speir and Vice President Hemphill were informed by the Board of Regents that the new Chancellor of the University System of Georgia, Stephen Portch, was calling for a statewide review of each of the universities and colleges in Georgia. Each institution was studied in light of the total state system. At this time, also, there was a great deal of speculation in the state about the movement to elevate several four-year institutions to university status. Also, two-year institutions were being considered for advancement to four-year status.

Georgia College was faced with a new challenge. It was important to achieve university status, but competitive recruitment of students was the main issue at hand. In neighboring Bibb County, central in Georgia College's target recruitment area, Macon

College, a two-year institution, was eager to expand to four-year standing. If it became a full four-year institution, Macon College was geographically poised to take a large share of the central Georgia students. Georgia College President Speir and Vice President for Academic Affairs Hemphill were acutely aware of the competition, as were the faculty and other administrators. Some of the administration and faculty members recalled the competitive nature of the Macon College bid. One administrator, whose office was moved to Macon, discussed the potential Macon change as follows:

Macon is a metropolitan area and so we were trying to show a high level of presence in Macon. To be quite honest, there was a competitive measure against other schools there, and so that was why my office was assigned to Macon.

A former administrator concurred, stating:

We wanted to attract the Macon market and we wanted to grow and the students that were going to be available, we felt, would be the adult population that was pretty well untouched in the Macon area. They had a two-year school there and they had some expensive private schools with no public four-year university or college. And so we felt there was a major market for education students, for business students, and a more limited market for arts and science type students and nursing.

Therefore, the threat of Macon College garnering four-year status was not only competition for the student market, it also could dilute the amount of state resources that would be focused on the central Georgia colleges. The Georgia College administrative team members were conscious of these implications. In anticipation of the change with other peer campuses, the current Georgia College five-year plan already had begun to address the recruitment challenges to prepare for the impending, yet undefined, changes that were soon to affect the college.

## **Preparing for Change**

Years before anyone at Georgia College was aware that a mission change would be implemented, numerous efforts had already been achieved to raise academic standards and levels of service to students. Processes related to admissions, student recruitment, core curriculum, and informational technology were streamlined which prepared a foundation for the change of mission, even though the administration, faculty and staff could not have anticipated such a future need.

### Recruitment Standards

In 1992, Georgia College decided to upgrade its enrollment services and recruitment efforts. In keeping with the regional comprehensive mission, Georgia College set about the task of increasing the number of students and upgrading the standards by which these students would be admitted. In growing a regional university, not only was student recruitment critical, but also retention of those students to graduation was vital for success. Under the Speir administration, Georgia College began requiring that all students must have completed the College Preparatory Curriculum.

Larry Peavy, Associate Vice President for Enrollment Services, proposed that there were no alternatives by saying:

Behind our movement to require the CPC was to make sure students were prepared for what they were going to face at Georgia College that first year. Because all research was showing that if they could be successful that first year, the rest of the time was not nearly as difficult. The highest dropout rate and the highest failure rate have always been during that first year of college. I made a recommendation that we really [should] start working on improving the quality of students.

Speir, Hemphill, and Peevy agreed that the change from accepting a large number of developmental studies students to requiring all students to have College Preparatory Curriculum (CPC) was a large leap to make. They decided the wisest move would be to simultaneously begin to reduce the number of developmental studies students and raise academic standards related to English and math, rather than address all of the CPC categories at first. Peevy explained their caution by saying:

Well, we knew if we went to five [CPC areas] automatically, we'd eliminate the freshman class. But we couldn't do that. So we advertised a year ahead of time, starting in 1991, that we would accept students with no more than three deficiencies, and then in 1993, no more than two [CPC] deficiencies, in 1994, no more than one deficiency. Then in 1995, we would not accept a student with a deficiency in the college prep program. Now this was a bold step for Georgia College, because no one else in the system was doing this.

Peevy continued:

But we were real concerned about...doing everything at one time, because you've got to phase certain things in to be most effective. Particularly when you start increasing requirements, counselors have to have time to let students know in the ninth grade that requirements are changing. This would allow them to work with groups over a period of time, rather than overnight, in preparing for their academic future. We decided consciously not to raise S.A.T. or high school grade requirements at the same time. The reason for that decision was that we felt there was such an unknown [factor] associated with increasing the college prep requirement that if we were to include two or three unknowns, it could possibly result in an enrollment disaster.

A staff member also described the implementation of the new requirements:

Our first move was increasing requirements, though we still were in keeping with the posture we had held. We had led the System in setting more rigorous entrance requirements. Let me explain that when the College Preparatory Curriculum was accepted, we did not have to have CPC. The students could come in and make it up [in developmental studies courses].

Another staff member concurred:

All of that was done for the benefit of the students. We were trying to bring in large number of students, but retention was not what it should have been. We were bringing in students that would struggle their entire first year and then say “I’ve had enough.”

A member of the staff focus group described the situation this way:

There was a lot of hubbub about doing away with the developmental courses. They had to spend a year of their college doing developmental coursework and getting no credit. That whole section of the school was almost non-existent by the time we got our mission change.

Over the next few years, in the early 1990s, Georgia College began to raise both high school Grade Point Average (GPA) and Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) standards. Although they lost some students, the faculty, staff, and administration were soon to learn that they had increased overall enrollment. Georgia College faculty, staff, and administrators took a “bold step” in recruitment and retention, but balanced it with caution. In applying incremental quality changes, they were able to prepare for the future changes they would make and maintain a healthy pattern of growth.

#### Additional Campus Changes

In the 1990s, there were additional factors that greatly influenced decision-making at Georgia College. In 1998, all Georgia public colleges and universities converted to the semester system from the quarter system. The potential loss of students and credit hour production was a real concern for Georgia College until the new systems were securely in place. One faculty member described the situation in that professors were fearful of loss of positions because of the reduced number of students.

Also, the University System was changing to the BANNER student information system, which presented further complications. Though these had been anticipated changes and the groundwork had been well prepared, wholesale change resulted in curriculum, scheduling, and degree requirement modifications across all Georgia College campuses.

A continuing topic for discussion in state higher education in the late 1980s and early 1990s was the status of four-year and two-year colleges. Former President Speir clarified that issue, saying:

A number of us were quite aware that the senior college category in Georgia was really not descriptive of our already existing mission, in fact. So, I would say that in the early 1980s, it was clear in some of our discussions at the Chancellor's level and in meetings of the presidents ... the fact that our nomenclature did not fit our mission. In parallel fashion, the two-year colleges were all attempting to get rid of the "junior," [college status] which I think was more of a status symbol than anything else. They were effective in doing that in the late 80s .... There was more and more interest on the part of other senior colleges, too, to have the label "university," partly because again they saw it as more attractive to students holding enrollment up.

In addition to the two-year and four-year issue, some colleges in Georgia were heavily vying for university status. As discussed earlier, Chancellor Dean Propst addressed the need for regional universities in the State of Georgia, each serving a specific geographical area. Georgia Southern College (Statesboro) and Valdosta College were already in the midst of creating a regional presence. The presidents of these two campuses were called together with Georgia College and West Georgia College to discuss the movement toward creating regional universities. Speir recalls:

It was made clear, at that point, that West Georgia [College] and Georgia College were, because of our location—not the size of student body—but the breadth of degree programs and history of the institution, that we were ready for regional university status. That was really the first formal



indication from the Chancellor's office that the Regents staff and the Regents were considering that.

The designation of "regional university" seemed to be the logical choice for Georgia College. The administration at the time thought that the comprehensive multi-disciplinary, multi-campus university model was a viable direction for the central Georgia college to take. Competition amplified the dilemma because there were eight colleges and universities within fifty miles of the campus and the student population was not growing.

In 1995, the new Chancellor of the University System of Georgia, Stephen Portch, brought in a consulting firm to study the status of the colleges and universities across the state. This team offered recommendations as to which institutions should be offered the new regional comprehensive university status. Administrators thought that the plan to outsource this decision was important, due to the immense political influence that was surrounding the topic. After looking at the possibilities on each of the campuses, Georgia College was assigned the designation of "regional comprehensive university." The task now was to decide a new name, with the only stipulation being that "state university" had to be part of the new name selection. This charge became the impetus for the new name, Georgia College & State University (GC&SU).

#### Changes in Core Curriculum

Also preparing GC&SU for the future was a focus on modification of the core curriculum. At the request of President Speir and Vice President Hemphill, a Core Curriculum Committee was convened in late 1995. The charge to this committee was to reexamine the core curriculum that had been in place since 1967. This effort was part of

the conversion to the semester system. Bob Wilson, a history professor who chaired the committee stated:

We wanted to establish Georgia College's identity as an institution that will provide an academically superior liberal arts education to the citizens of Georgia.

Wilson continued that the process to redesign the core curriculum was a long-term consultative process, involving a cross-section of faculty from throughout the campus. The goal of the committee was to represent the concerns of each academic department. The process was conducted through open deliberations to allow the opportunity for questions and for "re-thinking" the possibility of a new liberal arts mission. The administrators were considering changes to the curriculum because of conversations regarding a potential mission change. The question posed by the committee, according to the chairperson was:

If we build a strong liberal arts-based curriculum, will the students come? How will we modify or reconcile a liberal arts mission with our current mission? Will we have the requisite number of qualified faculty to engage in the kind of learning relationships implied by a liberal arts mission?

Wilson continued:

The Core Curriculum Committee proceeded on the assumption that Georgia College's new liberal arts direction will gradually attract more academically gifted students. The courses we propose generally assume a certain level of background and ability . . . So, this may be too rosy a view but we are hoping that if we build it they will come. The mandate has come both locally and from Atlanta to revise our core [curriculum]. . . The point is that it's very much in the context of preparing for the liberal arts mission.

The Core Curriculum Committee was assisted by a consultant, Del Crist. He helped the committee members align themselves with some of the same standards in core curriculum as are followed by the members of the Council of Public Liberal Arts

Colleges. The challenge of the GC&SU committee was to design a core curriculum that combined the Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges (COPLAC) standards and the University System requirements, and that allowed for transferability among other Georgia institutions. Wilson discussed the challenges of the committee by explaining:

There were really only 36 hours that had to be devoted to the basic core, 18 hours to courses related to the major, that's 64 hours. Then that gave us just about 6 hours to play with for what we ended up calling "institutional options," meaning the courses that could be really distinctive to Georgia College. That is when we put in . . . environmental courses and . . . those courses . . . that do not exist anywhere else. We had hoped, as I said, to really be able to fashion a much more distinctive core because it's so essential to the mission.

He continued:

But, the problem is that so many of them [students] transfer before their core [curriculum] is completed. So then, if we have a core that is really radically different, then trying to figure out what credits count and what does not, becomes a [huge] issue. I wish we had students that came here the whole four years. We could mold them and direct them and create our own academic experience, but as a state school that is very difficult to do. The problems with the mission, and this is certainly nothing new to anybody, but the problems are not being a private school. We are constrained by all those directives that come down from the Regents level. We are constrained by issues of transferability, and also by the size of the institution.

The challenge of a new core curriculum was a daunting task due to the concomitant restraints and standards. A few courses added to the core curriculum were called "institutional options." They were distinctive to Georgia College and often were interdisciplinary in approach to match the mission. The core curriculum project was another defining moment in the process of preparing to incorporate a new mission.

### Another Name for Georgia College

It seems that the institution's name selection would have been a simple task, and not an especially critical factor in this transition. However, the institutional name change is important to this study not only because it corresponds to the sixth name for the institution; but also because it brings to light an ideological struggle on campus that transpired in 1995-1996, just before the adoption of the new mission. The administrators and faculty at the time were amazed at the "tempest in a teapot" caused by the name selection. Due to the heavy involvement in the establishment of the institution by Governor Atkinson and his wife, the new name chosen was to be "Atkinson State University." The name was sent to the Regents and announced publicly, but immediately received heavy criticism from both the public and from the alumni, particularly the GSCW alumnae. Some of the former students thought that now the university had been so changed in mission that no part of their alma mater remained. A great dispute resulted.

Through the work of an internal committee from the college, a "compromise" name was established: "Georgia College & State University." A faculty member suggested that the new name be patterned after Virginia Tech's name, which is actually "Virginia Polytechnic College and State University," though few references are made to the formal name. To squelch the seemingly endless controversy, the name, found "awkward" by faculty and staff, was approved by the Chancellor and the name "stuck," as many faculty, staff, and external supporters lamented. The reviews of the name were mixed and are still questionable at the time of this writing. The purpose of including this account within this study is to describe the intense adjustments that the campus made in

the early to mid-1990s. However, this period of extreme uncertainty may have set the stage for the University's impending changes.

### **A Change of Mission**

In August of 1996, the university's new name, Georgia College & State University (GC&SU) was announced and the naming ordeal was resolved. The administration, faculty, staff, and students had survived long-term confusion in unfamiliar territory, but had accomplished the task of creating a name change that the Board of Regents approved. The name selection process had caused unrest among the university community, but the majority of people were comfortable once a name had been designated. The processes addressed in the recent years of reviewing the name, the mission, and the core curriculum of the University questioned the institution's purpose, identity, and reputation. Unknowingly, these exercises prepared the faculty, staff, and leadership for a new level of challenge.

### Transition to a Liberal Arts Mission

An study by the Chancellor's office led to another critical change for the comprehensive university with a new name. GC&SU now could address the business of growing a multidisciplinary institution, with several campuses and various target markets. All local students were potential recruits. However, influence from Macon College began to have more impact on Georgia College than originally anticipated. Macon College had been given four-year status in 1996. Now, as Macon State University, they could attract the same students that GC&SU sought. The competition developing

between GC&SU and Macon State College was soon significantly evident to faculty, staff, students, and the community. Almost all interview participants mentioned this competitive element as an impetus for the change of mission. These perspectives on the situation were developed from the interviews with administrators, faculty, and staff. One director said:

There are several factors and this is, of course, my own perspective. But I think that there was an overriding realization that we either make this mission succeed or this school might well be in jeopardy of—I won't say surviving—but certainly its programs and its health would be jeopardized. The reason being that the population center is in Macon. There is a state college in Macon. Unless we could define this university in a way that was unique in Georgia, certainly distinctive from whatever could be found in Macon, . . . our health as an institution would be threatened. No question about it.

A faculty member stated:

Now whether Ralph [Hemphill] came up with the idea or Stephen Portch did, but it was one of the two. What Ralph did know and did talk about and was very insightful about was that if we did not find a way to make ourselves different, then Macon State College was going to be a four-year institution. He knew this eight years ago. They were going to “eat our lunch” and be twice our size. But now, the difference will be that three-fourths of their students won't be admitted over here and could not be admitted over here.

Another professor added, “Macon College posed such a threat that we had to do something. That was the deal.” A faculty member concurred by saying in the focus group:

As Ralph Hemphill has told me, they (he and Dr. Speir) were campaigning for university status and also for some distinctive mission in the University System that would provide some protection or produce some separateness from what Macon State was attempting to become. So the timing was particularly good. At that particular time, the University System was perhaps receptive to a public liberal arts university and we were looking for something distinctive to be. And we just happened to be squarely in the middle of the state with a liberal arts history (or at least a

legacy of it) and a campus that looked the part. It just seemed like the most logical campus in the system to do it.

A member of the faculty supported this discussion by saying:

There were several things happening at the same time. We were doing battle with Macon College. Macon Junior College became Macon College. We became a university. We did not want them to become a four-year school . . . There were a whole bunch of things going on at the same time including the core curriculum [committee process]. . . Partly because the Board of Regents wanted the whole core around the whole University System to be the same. So we had to take a look at that and make changes.

Colleges throughout the state experienced changes similar to those of GC&SU in moving to university status. Its regional comprehensive four-year mission was what differentiated GC&SU from the other neighboring public and private institutions. The distinguishing characteristics of the University were being obscured by other institutions, aiming for the same students. As this reality began to spread across campus, a memo sent to Dr. Speir precipitated an unexpected turn of events. The former president recounted in an interview:

Just before this [name] change and almost simultaneously with it, we were asked whether we really wanted a change in mission, as well. Would we like to be the liberal arts university of the University System [of Georgia]? This came from the Chancellor's office in the form of a memo. It was very brief. From my understanding . . . West Georgia College was also asked if they would like a similar mission. We started to take it under consideration in the President's Council.

The former President continued:

We had already been designated, as I told you, by the previous Chancellor as one of the four most prepared [institutions] to be comprehensive regional universities....and suddenly the Chancellor gives us this [mission]. I think one of the reasons why the Chancellor did this was that he was used to specific campuses with specific missions from Wisconsin [the Chancellor's former university system]. Each of the Wisconsin universities, even the regional campuses, had comprehensive professional, as well as arts and sciences, programs and usually had a designated

specific key mission. He knew and had already worked with special missions and this was one that somehow he must have wanted to sponsor within the [University] System [of Georgia.]

Dr. Speir commented later, “Though it was not universally a positive reception [to the potential mission change], my initial reaction was to see if this was what we wanted to do.”

Dr. Hemphill was Vice President of Academic Affairs at this time and described the situation during his interview. The Board of Regents Office made a telephone call [1995] to Dr. Hemphill to discuss the potential change of GC&SU’s mission to a liberal arts mission. The Regents representative wanted to clarify that the change of university status and the mission were separate issues. That conversation ended with Dr. Hemphill saying, “Let’s think about it.” That understated comment may have set the stage for a mission change process that would require inordinate amounts of thought to put into action. After consultation with Dr. Speir, Dr. Hemphill called the Chancellor’s Office with a counter offer that would distinctively and simultaneously narrow and broaden the proposed mission. He responded to the Regents representative by saying, “If it is a statewide mission, that would interest us.” Many of the participants in this study were aware that two other campuses had been offered a liberal arts mission. Dr. Hemphill closed that opportunity by requesting that GC&SU receive clear authority to serve the state as a public institution in Georgia with a unique liberal arts mission. This assignment provided GC&SU a clear mission and a distinctive objective in educating students. Hemphill goes on to say, “The liberal arts, unique mission would be a safe harbor” for the institution. It would provide the opportunity for GC&SU to differentiate itself from “competitors” in the state.



The interview participants recalled this decision as being vital to the “survival” of GC&SU, referring to the financial and enrollment challenges. Faculty, staff, and administrators made statements during this study’s interviews in support of the mission selection, though there was skepticism and fear at the time. One administrator said that “the mission protected us.” A professor in the focus group also stated that the new mission was “an issue of survival, to a certain extent.” Another professor in a focus group commented:

I think that it’s inherent in this discussion whether [President Ed] Speir or [Vice President] Ralph [Hemphill] did it. I don’t think that they saw it in the way things ended up, but I think that they should get a lot of credit for seeing -- for pursuing this. In my opinion – it was this or bust. We didn’t have a future.

A faculty member in the same focus group said:

Macon College posed such a threat that we had to do something, but I think when Portch brought this issue forward, it was that he wanted to have a liberal arts school – it just happened that it worked out for him and it worked out for us. It was a nice coincidence. But I don’t think that Portch gave a thought to Macon College. He said this is going to be the liberal arts school in the system. We just happened to be looking for something to make that difference . . . it worked out.

Another faculty member gave his thoughts on the subject as follows:

I think . . . this multiplicity of things is really true. I think when presented with this opportunity, Ralph Hemphill saw the light and said “this is the answer.” Because for so long, we had been playing this chess game between us and Macon State [University], Fort Valley [State University]. Here was an opportunity to survive. It was just fortuitous.

The liberal arts mission was also one that was wanted by Chancellor Portch for an institution in the University System. Part of his statewide vision was to offer the students of Georgia a liberal arts education. Several participants mentioned that “the Chancellor was taking note of our movement,” referring to the changes in admission standards and

enrollment, as well as the related curricular changes. Also, GC&SU had the look of a liberal arts campus, a university with historical buildings, green spaces, great porticos, and columned porches. GC&SU's roots were originally grounded in the liberal arts. It seemed to be a good match to re-establish a liberal arts institution. One faculty member recalled:

The stories that we heard at the time though I don't know how apocryphal or true [they are]. When [Chancellor] Portch saw it, he took a look at the front lawn and said that "this is a liberal arts campus." He is a big [Flannery] O'Connor enthusiast and those factors may have come together in determining his decision.

An administrator also discussed the Chancellor's interest in the liberal arts:

This is close to his [Chancellor Portch's] heart. I know he is the liberal arts type himself and he wanted to do this. He wanted to create this kind of campus.

In every interview, references were made as to how the decision was implemented. Though each individual had an idea of how it happened, the stories are varied, as represented by participant comments during interviews. A professor made the point:

I think that Portch said that we are going to be changing the status of a lot of different schools. We are going to turn the school in Macon into a four-year school. Something has to happen to Georgia College. Georgia College is ideal for a public liberal arts type of institution. At the same time, we were supposed to build a case for it.

Another faculty participant offered this view:

This is my theory. We know for a fact that the Board of Regents mandated that every institution review their mission and brought in a consulting team, from what I understood.

Another administrator said, “It [the mission] came down from on high from the Chancellor as a mandate.” An administrator offered this theory:

But the one thing that he heard people say was missing was a state liberal arts college. So I think the reasons were both idealistic and pragmatic on the Regents’ part, on the Chancellor’s part and the State’s part. The pragmatic part is “Let’s keep these kids in Georgia.” Some of the brightest kids in the state are leaving Georgia because we don’t offer this kind of experience.

This information was offered by an administrator as to the background for the decision:

At that time, there began to be a tightening of revenue allocations. Ralph Hemphill and Ed Speir really did some brainstorming about what could be a niche for the college that would help to bring revenues to the college. There was some discussion at the Regents Office about having a public liberal arts university in the state. Well Ralph [Hemphill] thought if we would volunteer to be that public liberal arts university it might mean that we could get some additional revenues allocated to us. Of course, a lot of people were concerned about that; if it had come to a vote on campus it would have never passed. But Dr. Hemphill . . . and he pretty much "announced" that we were going to ask to be and had received notice that we would be the state's liberal arts university. There were lots of folks out there looking for this type of [liberal arts] environment.

Several members of the faculty focus group had this interchange:

I think we even had a vote at a faculty meeting, didn’t we?  
 I remember it. (nodded agreement)  
 As to whether or not we wanted to seek that status?  
 But it was presented as not something that was dumped in our lap, but something that we were going to have to vie for and present a pretty good case for why we should be this.  
 It could be.  
 I don’t know – I can’t recall – but I do remember it being presented that way.  
 I think we were getting conflicting signals. I think both versions here are correct.

Though the signals were “mixed,” these participant exchanges illustrated how important each person’s story was integral to the process of understanding the new mission. Almost every participant, including the former President, mentioned that Vice

President Hemphill played an integral role in both the instigation and implementation of the change to a liberal arts mission. A faculty member offered these comments during the faculty focus group, “Ralph Hemphill has not gotten the credit that he should have gotten, in having a foresight to know that with Macon State on the rise, there was no way to stop it. We had to be different.” The former President stated in an interview, “Ralph was trying to move the mission forward but we had all these other things on top of us.”

### A New Mission Adopted

In July, 1996, a new name and new mission for the University were announced on the front porch of Parks Hall. In battling the challenges of a changed mission, new names, revised core curriculum, elevated standards, altered enrollments and different markets, GC&SU had weathered a great deal of change at one time. An administrator reflected on the change by saying:

That’s pretty unusual in the life of the university to change the mission, hire a new president, hire a new vice-president, get a new name, all in a two-year period, change the colors, change the mascot . . . A lot of the changes . . . I think that it all came together and then I don’t know who suggested it that we become the state liberal arts institution. And that just all sort of happened in a 24-month period in the mid 1990s. There were a lot of things going on about that time.

The faculty, staff, students and administration were part of an institution now focusing on a different mission; it was a mission that would move their sites to a different target. However, an administrator stated that the faculty and staff were assured by the former administrators that even though they were directed to adopt this new mission, they were told, “Nothing is going to change. We are going to do business just like we always have and there will not be anything different on campus.” The faculty and staff were

promised that the level of change on campus would be limited. However, a major event then changed the scenario. A member of the faculty focus comments about this time period:

As far as he [Vice President Hemphill] knew at that point, that was true. That was the way it was going to be and he told everyone not to worry. Nothing was going to change. . . .Then Ed Speir stepped down.

Others voiced the same sequence of events, but each with their own interpretation.

An administrator referred to the presidential announcement by saying, “Right after the mission change we got into the name change and then within the midst of the name change, Ed Speir resigned.” A faculty member said during an interview:

Speir leaves, Ralph [Hemphill] takes over as acting President and . . . Ralph set about talking about what is a public liberal arts university and the very first one [memo explaining the mission change] came from his office.

During the faculty focus group, a participant offered this view:

I think our [administration] felt this was just a way of getting extra money for doing [laughing] the things we were already doing with a few changes. I don't think they visualized the changes that would take place. I don't think so; [they] may disagree with that. That is my interpretation.

The resignation of the current president in 1996 created a great deal of discussion across campus. Just as the mechanisms seem to be in place for moving forward, this significant personnel change took place. President Speir reflected on the timing of his decision by saying:

One of the reasons I had stayed on was to see university status [take place] and the late-blooming possibility of a mission change. Both of these things took place. It was also pretty clear to me, because I had been around long enough and I had seen others hold on to positions much too long, that the time was right [to leave the presidency].

It was going to be the kind of challenge that a new person with a strong background, of course, but with an interest in the mission should take. I

think that shows why Dr. DePaolo has been able to get that kind of support, again, largely through her own efforts. Of course, she has had to continue to explain it [the mission] just as we were trying to do the last year and make sense of it and work with the Regents and the donors and other supporters of the college. But, I just felt there was no question and the Chancellor did not disagree at all. By that time, I had already told him the year before that I saw my tenure as being relatively short.

President Speir returned to teaching to make way for a new president who would continue to champion the new liberal arts mission. Vice President Hemphill stepped up as Acting President as of January 1, 1997, at the President's recommendation and the Chancellor's request. He made it clear to the Chancellor, however, that he chose not to be considered as the permanent choice for President. The mission was in place as the Board of Regents charged a University search committee to begin to look for a chief officer that had specific interest in the liberal arts and could move the University's mission forward.

As the search continued, the Acting President continued to lead the way, helping the campus adopt and adjust to the new liberal arts mission. Basically, the school focused on the liberal arts, while still maintaining a College of Arts and Sciences, School of Business, School of Education, and School of Health Sciences. The GC&SU administrators, faculty, staff, students, and alumni expected no significant change in institutional culture. A faculty member who was interviewed supported that expectation with these words:

Frankly, at the outset, the change in mission was not taken seriously, either by the administration at the time or by the faculty. I think we probably, we being faculty, and also the administration figured it was something that was going to be 'lip service' – a change in name or a change in letterhead; not a whole lot of substantive change. I believe . . . that the change of mission was actually told to us in a faculty meeting.

Another administrator added:

Well, not that there would not be a change, but we were really a public arts institution right then. All that we were doing is recognizing it and giving us that title. Probably some changes down the road [would happen], but they would not be comprehensive and would not have a great deal of effect. That is the impression that I had.

The change in purpose did raise anxiety level across the campus. With a more concentrated approach to student recruitment and increased admissions standards, faculty, administrators, and staff were concerned about the financial ramifications and performance expectations if the initial response caused reduction in enrollment and expressed their concerns formally in forums and informally among each other. Also, with liberal arts as the central theme for guiding operational objectives, some of the GC&SU leadership, faculty and staff members were extremely concerned about future implications for the professional schools. Participants were very candid about their fears and disdain for the mission's potential impact on the professional schools and off-site centers. In 1996 and the immediate years following, program elimination was a strong influencing factor on the unwillingness of people to engage wholeheartedly in forwarding the mission. Faculty, staff, and administrators alike expressed their early apprehension with the following comments, "[There was a] fear of the professional schools feeling that they didn't belong." A Dean illustrated the widespread fear evidenced across the campus community with the following illustration:

And, of course, the business community, the faculty, everyone thought the Business School would not fit into a public liberal arts university, so there was great concern. The President would go out and give speeches about how wonderful a liberal arts university was and she would answer questions and the businessperson would say, "What's going to happen to the Business School?" She [DePaolo] repeatedly said that the liberal arts mission is not discipline-related but delivery-related. How a student, regardless of their major, gets the degree is what is important, not what

they are majoring in. So a student is a liberal arts student having a liberal arts experience, even if they are majoring in business.

Another administrator offered this view:

And then also to be in a professional school, we were very concerned as faculty about what our role would be in a liberal arts institution. We were at the beginning stages of trying to expand to be the regional university like Valdosta and Georgia Southern, so in '97, . . .having this new mission. It was unsettling and disconcerting for faculty, especially at an off-campus center.

A professor added these comments:

There was a lot of fright. A lot of people were scared that the professional schools were going to disappear. Was the liberal arts going to be dominant and everything was going to go to liberal arts and the rest of us would be left behind in all of this? And that has not happened. The resources have not flowed away from the professional schools.

Another administrator gave this example of the concern regarding professional schools:

Fear in the professional schools early on was particularly great and it took several years in fact for the business community particularly, I mean outside this campus, to stop saying, "This is a disaster, . . . [they are] trying to close down the School of Business." And [we] got that constantly. A lot of people were happy about that. That change was made early on and some people said, "Okay that was made, who's next?" but those kind of concerns were out there.

These fears were addressed, to a degree, by campus visits from Vice Chancellor James Muyskens of the Board of Regents. A faculty member notes the response from the Vice Chancellor's first visit after the new purpose had been established:

I also remember during Ralph's [Hemphill] year as Acting President, the Vice Chancellor came down, [James] Muyskens. [We asked], "If we seriously do this, and we raise our standards, and our enrollment drops, will we have to pay the price?" And he said, "Absolutely not. You will be judged on how you perform your new duties rather than how you judge the new students." But at the end of that conversation, [he said], "If you do it right, they will come." But I remember this was at the time that it would become serious, and it was at the time that Ralph was Acting President that we had to give to the Board of Regents a five-year projection on enrollment that we are still living under.



That five-year projection meant that this is what we were going to do, but you have to meet these numbers. This was to make the [professional schools] happy because that is what could be left behind if we became a liberal arts school. “There’s room on the campus for everybody,” he said.

At the time that it started, we thought we were going to become a liberal arts school, and the professional schools would go away. . . . Muyskens spent a lot of time in the auditorium explaining, “Just achieve your mission and everybody is going to do fine.” Because I know that was a concern when we started doing this, because we started raising entrance scores for new students. And there was a concern that when enrollment dips, the budget would dip too. And we were sure [now] that would not happen.

Even with this assurance, great trepidation surrounded each ensuing decision.

The current administration had to move the mission forward and at the same time meet the challenge of maintaining the morale of a campus still reeling from the recent revisions of purpose and approach. Several participants articulated their appreciation for that dual support from the administration. One faculty member’s comment during the focus group session was:

I think it is wonderful to recognize that there were forces moving us along before [the new president] came and we definitely would not be where we were when [the new President] got here, had we not had Speir and Hemphill. They actually led us and the mission.

Another professor said:

Hemphill put us ahead of the curve on a lot of things [such as] the CPC [College Preparatory Curriculum] requirements. The members of the CPC could see what was coming down the line.

A faculty member in the focus group also offered these thoughts:

I think that there are a lot of things associated with Speir’s leaving, but one of them was recognition that if there was going to something done in terms of changing us to the state public liberal arts institution, that we had to have a top leadership change.

The upheaval on campus gradually subsided and the University began revolving around liberal arts and educational quality, rather than the recruiting a certain number of students being the central focus of the efforts of faculty, staff, and administration. GC&SU was embarking on a period in which they were becoming an institution with one collective purpose of being a liberal arts university. The critical missing element in this delicately balanced equation was the leadership. GC&SU needed to identify a new president to continue the progress toward implementation of the new mission.

### A Change in Presidents and Approach

The members of the GC&SU leadership team, faculty, staff, and student body anxiously awaited a new president. The campus culture in 1997 could be described as operating along a continuum from resistance to neutrality to cautious optimism toward the new mission. The University was waiting for the next directive from their new President. Those who considered themselves “survivors” of the transition were eager to discover the circumstances of the next phase. One faculty member stated:

Life was good, I mean we were headed in a new direction a new mission and we were going to get a new president and we were going to get somebody with a liberal arts background that was going to take us to great heights. And then Rosemary DePaolo was named.

The participants interviewed were anxious to answer when asked to differentiate the driving forces that influenced the mission’s implementation from 1997 forward.

One administrator responded:

And then suddenly there was, and if I had to describe the driving force, it would be [Chancellor] Stephen Portch. Yes, because I think he came in and installed – he didn’t do it – but Rosemary DePaolo became president and suddenly things weren’t going to be the way they had always been.

[We] didn't see any of the levers operating, but he was at the bottom of all of that.

Another professor remembered this story by saying:

I remember Stephen Portch's story about the clouds parting and the plane landing and finding the liberal arts leader [Rosemary DePaolo].

A different faculty focus group participant added:

I would say too . . . [that] the driving force seems to be the good description of that [Hemphill's administration] and "leading force" seems to be a good description of Dr. DePaolo, as in whether you come along or the choice to come along or not is yours.

Unequivocally, the most frequent response to the most influential force was the newly named President, Rosemary DePaolo. Some of the responses were simply, "Rosemary," as if the understanding of her forcefulness was universal. Other responses about the new president's influence from participants were represented by this statement from a faculty member, "Rosemary was hired explicitly for the purpose of making this new mission a reality." An administrator spoke about the leadership saying, "Dr. DePaolo took the mission and made it work; strong leadership communicates the importance of the move in mission."

An administrator said it this way in an interview:

She [DePaolo] came on board with "both guns smoking" and it stirred up quite a bit. . . The nice thing about it, I thought, was that people that had not been motivated to do anything positive . . . at Georgia College were all of a sudden put on notice that "either you get on the train or get off the train."

A member of the Senior Administrative team said this in an interview:

I think that part of Rosemary's challenge in taking the presidency of this university was the challenge. I think that was one of the appeals. I think that she was drawn to it.

The President's comment about her own choice was, "GC&SU was the right place for me and I was hoping that I was the at the right place for it."

The new president had been hired away from Western Carolina University bringing a humanities background, coupled with experience as both a professor and administrator at several campuses, including two Georgia colleges. In an April 26, 2002, article in the campus newspaper, *The Colonnade*, a member of the GC&SU Presidential Search Committee stated:

I thought she was very knowledgeable and charming. She had studied our catalogue and knew our curriculum, and she'd made a special point of learning about our (then) new mission as the public liberal arts university in Georgia.

Another statement printed from a Search Committee member was, "I was impressed by her energy and vision for what our university could become. In fact, interviewing her helped me figure out what this new mission was all about."

The new leader was challenged by the unknown variables related to the University's next chapter. President DePaolo came in with an intentional energy that faculty, staff, administration, and students sensed immediately. Although the reviews were mixed, it was clear that the mission would now "bring life" to the University, as one administrator remarked about the influx of energy observed on campus. The path for moving forward was becoming more defined for the university community, whether they agreed with the direction or not.

Everyone did not necessarily concur with the implementation plan for the mission. Faculty, staff and administration were vocal in their differing opinions of the administration's direction and how the president approached the change. Both positive and negative impressions were given, though indifference was rarely reported by any of

the participants. Several faculty members stated that though a negative contingency was present on campus, the ones that were negative at the beginning of the mission change process, soon became quiet. Negative comments were being generated at one point by an anonymous electronic newsletter, though identity of the writers was never divulged. As one faculty member noted, “It soon was no longer popular to be negative on campus.” This interviewee stated that everyone on campus knew that this mission was here to stay, and the only option was to get involved and begin to act on it.

### A Change in Vice Presidents

A few months later, another change turned campus-wide attention to the Office of Vice President of Academic Affairs with the announcement that Dr. Hemphill would relinquish his administrative duties and expand his teaching responsibilities. As one department chair succinctly expressed it, saying, “The qualitative difference was that Hemphill saw it as a strategy, but that DePaolo believes in this as a mission. I think that may be the difference.”

In 1998, Anne Gormly was selected as the new Vice President and Dean of Faculty and the momentum increased. One faculty member’s response to the selection of the new Vice President was:

I thought, too [that nothing was going to change]. You know, we were told by the administration at that time that nothing would change. Well, shortly after that, we got a new president and then a new vice-president and it became very clear that everything was going to change and that we had to “get out of the box” and begin to think in a new way.

Another participant responded on the subject of the current environment:

The administrative staff were very committed to the mantra of being liberal arts, but were less sure about how or what that would mean. Trust

between administrators and faculty was low, but there was hope that the new President [DePaolo] and Vice President [Gormly] would be faculty-oriented.

Rather than assign an interim vice president, President DePaolo managed both positions herself for several months. As she explained, she wanted to gain first-hand knowledge of the office and how the position needed to be implemented throughout the academic sector in light of the new institutional direction. Dr. DePaolo explained:

I was able to . . . be the president and vice-president on campus. I learned so much more. If we were to have had Anne [Gormly] in then, I would not have learned all the “nitty-gritty details” I needed to know to deal with faculty, particularly on the level that meant most to them. Also, there was another advantage. I had come strictly from the academic side of things. It was the area I knew; it was my comfort level. So, to be in my comfort level for a lot of the days while I was also seeing how I could move the University around and how I could be a better president was great. It was very significant that I basically had to take on both roles that year.

Vice President Gormly proved to be a strong force in the chief academic position. Her career experience at liberal arts institutions was the rationale behind GC&SU’s recruitment of her and her motive for accepting the position. One administrative participant spoke about this selection process:

Later I served on the committee to hire a vice president. We knew that we needed somebody to come in and define liberal arts. At the time, we all had different ideas about what it meant. I might have one idea about what a liberal arts university is but somebody else had another idea, and we were all wrong. We were all trying to figure out what it was we were supposed to be doing. It really wasn't until Dr. Gormly got here that she brought her expertise from a university that had gone through the same change. In every meeting that I had with her, I learned more about what we were supposed to be doing. Then we started reading this famous book, 40 Colleges that Change Lives, and that was probably the most revealing thing to get me thinking along those lines.

Dr. Gormly explained her criteria in making her move to Georgia from the College of New Jersey in an interview with the researcher saying:

Because I came from an institution that had undergone a similar type of change from a comprehensive regional state university to a highly distinctive one, . . . I came with a lot of experience in a number of key areas that contributed to that [the mission change]. So by virtue of my position as Vice President, I have responsibility for academic programs, faculty, student support, and enrollment services. [Enrollment services] includes admission – recruitment, admissions, and retention kinds of efforts. . . . By virtue of my experience that I brought from the College of New Jersey, it was clear to me that I would be a major player in this transition, shaping not only the academics, which is a traditional approach from an academic Vice President’s point of view, but also the whole learning environment.

Gormly continued:

[In] my interview, [I said], “That’s the kind of institution I was looking for.” A place that really valued teaching and learning and creating that kind of environment . . . . The vision of where this institution was going, not just in academics, but the whole University . . . This is what really sold me. When I came to my interview, the faculty here really were concerned about what students were learning and you can not fake that. I mean if you don’t have it, you’re dead in the water.

### The Mission Defined

With two new dedicated liberal arts administrators at the helm of GC&SU, all indications were that the institutional leaders, faculty, staff, and students were grounded in the liberal arts philosophy, secure in their mission, and enthusiastic about their future.

One administrator’s comments supported this notion by saying:

The new president, President DePaolo, and certainly, our Academic Vice President, were absolutely crucial changes in making this [mission change] work. It provided the driving force behind the accomplishment of the mission.

The lack of support or understanding about the mission by a large number of the campus community initially slowed the momentum to implement changes in programs

and systems. However, the collective understanding developed by the faculty, staff, and administrators became the catalyst for individual and collective ownership of the mission. Faculty, staff, and administrators began to understand the mission by creating their own ways to apply it in their respective functional or academic areas. More than a year after the mission had been assigned, people were still struggling with how to define “liberal arts.” President DePaolo reflected on this struggle by stating in her individual interview:

When I came on campus, I must admit that despite having . . . read a lot of briefings, I still assumed that the campus would be slightly further along in thinking through this mission than it turned out that it was. So, when I came on board, I had to assess quickly how much work had been done, . . . how much understanding there was, and there really was none, either on campus or in our community. Then, I had to set up a plan and go to work on that.

This realization was a critical step toward substantive change for GC&SU. Had this phase of the change process been neglected, some of the work toward advancement would have been thwarted. In the faculty focus group, there was agreement around these statements:

If someone at the top cannot consistently tell people below what the mission is and what it is going to take to accomplish it, it is not going to happen. We saw that with the change of administrations from Ed Speir to Rosemary DePaolo. One of the greatest assets she [Dr. DePaolo] brought to us was a very clear vision of what this liberal arts mission meant and eventually the ability to communicate that in such a way that other people saw their importance in accomplishing the mission.

Second, you have got to be willing to make some hard decisions and changes. You can't put a liberal arts mission on top of another mission and keep everything; there has got to be change. Always there is resistance to change. So therefore, there have got to be some hard decisions and those people that will not buy in to the university or mission have got to be eliminated.



Another administrator said:

Again I had some ideas; I think Dr. DePaolo clearly had ideas. At the same time that wasn't enough. They had to be communicated in terms of what a public liberal arts university is. That took a lot longer. And we are still working on it.

A Senior Team member stated:

Dr. DePaolo was hired and brought in for the specific purpose of implementing the mission of the University and making this a real public liberal arts university. . . . Her biggest job for the first year was to let people know what that meant. I don't know how she survived that first year of people asking, "What is student-centered?" and "What is a public liberal arts university?" It was a time of great questioning on campus as to, "What did that mission really mean?" I guess I am a quick learner because it became very apparent to me that first year what it meant and that is when I began to work on my faculty.

As one of her first duties, the President expanded the Senior Administrative Leadership Team, which she claims as one of the best first steps she took as President.

The President discussed the leadership team by saying:

As it went along, and pretty quickly after that, the greatest thing I did was I put together an incredible team. They are so good. I am not sure if they are a team in the way that sometimes a team responds. They are competitive, as may be natural [in a university setting], but that has changed over the years.

Another administrator describes that situation:

Rosemary [DePaolo] got a fairly large group together and said, 'Hey, what does liberal arts mean?' A lot of people were very confused about it. I thought we were going to have trouble even getting over that part, let alone anything else. I kind of understood it in my terms what a liberal arts education means, because [of] the institution I went to and got my education (even though it was the traditional kind of place). I really felt I got a liberal arts education because of the kind of background I had.

The Senior Administrative Leadership Team (SALT) became involved in the mission process and was soon leading the charge to define liberal arts for both the internal and external communities. As a member of the Senior Leadership Team stated:

Converting those people who are already here, making them feel comfortable and valued, secure and getting them on board with the mission and then bringing in, as you have the opportunity, new people who have the same ideas and vision.

Another administrator commented, “[People have] got to feel a sense of ownership of this institution and the community.”

Particular phrases used habitually in the “liberal arts language” helped to tell the story. The university community began to hear and speak the new language, repeating “sound bytes” and informed phrases aligning efforts with the meaning of the mission. Some of the phrases most often repeated by administrators, faculty, and staff interview participants were:

We are student-centered.

Improve the quality of the students here, not just the numbers.

‘In class and out of class learning’ is connected.

Believing in the mission;

Student recruitment is a university-wide responsibility.

It is not necessarily at this university the discipline that the student is studying or majoring in, but the type of experience that they have while here.

Liberal education and a liberalized university environment has very little to do with the disciplines.

Give them [students] proper encouragement and give them proper support.

I think just the appreciation is the thing that really helps . . . to feel like someone cares.

Everything we do has to be reflective on every piece and also reflective of the quality things . . . going on at the University.

Then you begin talking about it more in terms of being a mindset, a way of doing things, a philosophy.

You can have more of a liberal arts experience here as an accounting major or nursing major or whatever than you can have at many large schools as an English or a History major.

Everyone needs a ‘can-do attitude;’ it has to be all of us accomplishing the mission.

One unexpected barrier to acceptance of the mission on a comprehensive scale was that some faculty and staff were not persuaded by the merits of “student-centeredness.” In fact, the adamant opposition to student-centeredness was a surprising obstacle to the acceptance of the mission. The general consensus of those who were initially against the concept of being student-centered was that it was “too touchy-feely,” meaning that faculty members were afraid that the academic standards would drop and expectations of student work would be lowered. With the same sense of skepticism, community members and external supporters even questioned the words, “liberal” and “arts.” Although this surprised the President and some of the leadership team (SALT), the opportunity to discuss the range of perspectives eventually led to a more complete understanding of the mission after the initial year. An administrator in an interview discussed one of the arguments related to student-centeredness:

That first year we talked about [being] “student centered.” Perhaps Dr. DePaolo engaged in that [debate] and created unknowingly a sense of concern because “if you’re not student-centered, you shouldn’t be here.”

A faculty member said:

Not all faculty are in alignment with this [student-centeredness]. But there are many who are. There are many staff who were concerned in some

respects about being student-centered. Some faculty saw it as lowering standards or coddling the students in college. I am hoping that more and more are realizing that it is not the same thing.

An administrator also commented about how people were defining the focus on students:

I think the way faculty see that is you may not be lowering admission standards, but you are lowering class standards and you are watering down grades in order to appease students, to be their friends, etc. “Do you want me to take them on canoeing trips?”

Across the GC&SU campus community, some people were concerned about the fast this student-centered mission was being implemented. Some faculty members recalled that some opposition was evident early in the process because they felt that the President and other leaders were not close enough to the issues to understand what a great change this mission presented. These differences of opinion in conceptual thinking actually strengthened the process, according to some of the leadership team. One of the SALT interview participants said:

You wouldn't have wanted 100% [to agree] because people did think seriously about how to make that [mission] shift. Any time you talk about change, change is hard. It is hard for people to think differently. Just because we've always done it this way, it has worked for me, so why should I change?

An administrator added this comment:

A lot more of us understand the mission and have learned it partly from the way Rosemary [President] and Anne [Vice President of Academic Affairs] and other people talk, but I think we have kind of made it our own.

Bernie Patterson, the Dean of Arts & Sciences at the time, summarized the acceptance of the liberal arts mission on the GC&SU campus by saying:

It's a feeling. It's part of the every day fabric of the university where people, rather than questioning the idea of undergraduate research, they are talking about how to do it.

### Students Define the Mission

Since, however, “student-centeredness” is the heart of the institutional liberal arts mission, the GC&SU student participants were asked to comment on what “liberal arts” means to them. A collection of descriptive phrases captured in the student focus group are listed below. Each separate paragraph shows a statement by a different student.

Their comments are as follows:

Receiving a broad-based education; we’re required to get a taste of other subjects; it forces you to study other topics; it’s a wonderful thing.

Being introduced to new things; observation and questioning;

Strong community service base; service learning;

Experiencing different cultures;

Being exposed to culture: music, art, theatre;

Understanding “how it all ties together” related to curriculum and outside of the class learning;

How it all relates to life; gives us broad choices for jobs, not only specific skills;

Learning how to write ideas clearly;

Taking a lot of core classes; liberal arts exposes you to a lot of things, in case you may not know what you want to do.

Practical application of studies; and

Learning focused on being “well-rounded people.”

However, when the students were asked during the focus group about the mission statement, itself, they did not know a great deal about specific statement. The comments offered during the focus group offered the researcher information that the students knew

how liberal arts was individually meaningful to them, but they did not show recognition or understanding of the full meaning behind the mission statement.

### **Implementing the Mission with Meaning**

The university-wide community spent time not only on defining liberal arts, but also on the actual implementation of this mission, weaving it into the “fabric” of the institution in meaningful ways. The emphasis had been on making the mission one that people could understand, because they could see the outcomes it produced or experience its effects permeated through all aspects of campus life.

To instigate the mission, meetings were held which eventually involved everyone on campus including students, staff, faculty, administrators, and the community. President DePaolo was resolute about offering everyone the opportunity to speak up and listen in multiple campus-wide discussions about the mission. She, in fact, said, “I learned to listen more as I went [around the campus and state] and when I left these meetings, I was still learning and listening.” The time spent deliberating about the definition of the mission may have seemed excessive to many people on campus, but the President, Vice President and Dean of Faculty, and others recalling the early days of the mission implementation believed that the mission story could not be repeated too often. This mission was exclusively attached to Georgia College & State University, but it was not exclusively linked only to academics or any other single component of the institution. It was pervasive; it was created to infiltrate every facet of the institution, both philosophical and operational. Though it seemed an impossibility for such extensive

implementation to take place, this section gives examples of how this group of leaders generated change and multiplied this mission's influence across the University.

### A Focus on Strategic Planning

The first task to implement was to clearly communicate the mission, in written form, to confirm that GC&SU had a mission that was clearly defined. When Dr. DePaolo arrived on campus, the University was working from a mission statement that had been co-produced by the Regents Office and the former administration. This mission statement was printed in the GC&SU handbook. Faculty, staff, and administrators found it awkward and lengthy, although it did relate to the liberal arts concept. There were few on campus who could have given a brief synopsis of it, or especially recite portions of it.

In July, 1998, the recently expanded Senior Administrative Leadership Team met for a strategic planning retreat where they were asked to address the mission and make it better fit the current institutional focus and approach. From this initial meeting, a basis for a mission statement was created, along with goals to address the new standards specifically related to student/faculty ratio, G.P.A. scores, student retention rates, S.A.T. scores, and graduation rates. (See Appendix D, p. 195.) The members of the group challenged themselves to stretch beyond their expectations, even though as they left the 1998 retreat, they were skeptical that any of the goals was obtainable. At this same retreat, the Senior Administrators discussed the definition of a liberal arts institution and what "student-centered" meant and how these concepts related to some of the concrete challenges mentioned earlier in this study. This was especially pertinent since this concept continued to cause debate across the campus personnel. Some of the Senior

Administrative Team members specifically referred to this initial planning as instrumental in their progress in reformation. A related comment from a Senior Team member is listed below:

I think strategic thinking/planning processes that she [DePaolo] had her administration, as well as faculty, staff, and everybody, start thinking about was significant in helping us make this shift. We all had to be on the same page and understand what this meant and we could not continue to do business as usual.

Following the Senior Administrative Leadership Team strategic planning session, a larger session was held on campus at the Centennial Center. More than 125 faculty, staff, administrators, and students met for a full day to discuss the mission. This not only was a strong collaboration of institutional talent in one room, it was also historic in another sense. Never in the recent history of Georgia College & State University, under any nomenclature, had a cross-section of University associates ever met together in an open forum to engage in planning. Participants called it “chaotic,” “loud,” and “intense.” However, it is remembered as instrumental in renewing progress at GC&SU. The entire campus was invited not to hear reports, but to become involved in the process that eventually evolved into a completed mission statement and strategic plan. The groundwork was laid by the Senior Administrators at the first retreat. However, the end result was a product of the larger retreat along with many more hours of editing and planning by committees and task force groups who refined the mission and vision statements. The President remarked:

I think that was a significant moment when we came up with that phrase, “GC&SU, it’s a total experience.” Then, of course, we had the Centennial Retreat with its amazing acoustics. I don’t know how that worked, but it worked. Again, no one had come together. There had been all this division. The retreat was symbolically important, a monumentally important retreat.



I remember a couple of milestone phrases, where [a professor], for instance, and I clearly remember this, said, “Here is what I would want for my daughter who is about to enter college. Maybe what we should be doing is thinking about it in that way as what would we want for our own kids.” Since he had been one of the “critical voices,” people listened to him.

The President continued:

The chaos helped . . . . When I came on, the former administration had run everything by very strict five-year plans and everyone kept saying to me, “We’re going to the five-year plan, we’re going to the five-year plan.” I just made a very conscious break from that. We are not going to do that, because I knew that if we did a very conscious five-year plan, then had change in increments, that is not what we needed. We needed fluidity and we needed a kind of explosion. You do not have that with a five-year plan.

Not only were people at the GC&SU invited to become joint owners and authors of the mission statement and central plans, they were encouraged to be a part of the “explosion” that propelled GC&SU forward. One significant benchmark was that all but one of the attached five-year goals in Appendix D were met in the next three to four years. An administrator in Institutional Research offered these comments, saying:

With great enthusiasm, I can report that not only can people feel a changed culture at GC&SU, it can be shown to be statistically significant. The ACT student opinion survey was administered in the Falls 1997, 1999 and 2001. The statistically significant difference in student satisfaction is easily seen when comparing 1997 to 1999 and 2001 data. I have administered this instrument at two schools prior to coming here and rarely had questions yield statistically different responses. The changes in the perception of GC&SU students was pervasive and incontrovertible.

Faculty and staff attitudes have also shown dramatic changes in attitudes. We administered these surveys in 1999, 2000, and 2001 and there were fundamental changes in involvement in decision making and employees satisfaction. People want to be a part of something bigger than themselves and this is what GC&SU has become.

### Communicating the Message of the Mission

GC&SU had been a relatively unknown campus in the system and throughout the state. However it was well known in central Georgia because for more than ten years, its mission had been to saturate the local 50-mile area surrounding Baldwin County. Every small newspaper in the central Georgia area carried GC&SU campus news. However, with the mission now moving statewide, the marketing and public relations program had to take a different approach. GC&SU took a multifaceted approach dispersing the message, using the President as its main voice. Max Allen, Director of Public Relations and Executive Assistant to the President, offered this overview of the importance of this statewide visibility. He stated:

The President needed to get on the speaking circuit . . . and network with Rotary, Kiwanis, and other civic clubs throughout the state. We lobbied the Regents as well as legislators. I made a concerted effort to start going more often through Atlanta to the General Assembly meetings when the session was in. We were working with our local delegation to get her [DePaolo] access to a lot of . . . legislators by . . . having her address both the House and Senate in one year which was significant.

Allen continued:

I knew that from a p.r. [public relations] standpoint we needed to have a much broader emphasis on getting our word out statewide and beyond. [We looked] at a number of different ways in doing that, using both paid advertisements, as well as "freebies." The main [group] that we knew we needed to make inroads with first was with business leaders in the State. The first concerted effort was with the Georgia Chamber of Commerce Board.

The focus on liberal arts was broad and the message about quality in students, in teaching, and in function was clearly directed toward liberal arts. Influential groups took notice of GC&SU, especially in the political forum. Addresses by the President to both chambers of the State Legislature brought not only more attention from legislators from

surrounding counties, but from across the state. The Board of Regents obviously was keenly aware of the progress the University had made, but a landmark visit to the Milledgeville campus by the entire Board took place in 2001. It was no small coincidence that special funding to create a 7.5 million dollar tuition differential was awarded later that year. Instead of taking the classes to the students, GC&SU now began to create a deliberate posture in strengthening the central residential campus, and marketing the University as a distinctively liberal arts residential campus. While GC&SU was working to send the message throughout the state, the invitation also was being concurrently to students, alumni, legislators, and the community-at-large. The GC&SU community began to witness the tangible evidence of the beginning of a transformation into a liberal arts residential campus of higher learning.

The message of the mission was no longer difficult for faculty, staff, and administrators to remember. Almost everyone at GC&SU began to carry a card with the mission statement printed on it. Vice President Gormly is known for conducting surprise “mission checks” around campus to reinforce the mission. The following comments during an interview with her demonstrated her position:

We did get a mission statement, as you recall, from our retreat. We had subcommittees. We did various renditions and came forward with discussions, but ultimately, we came out with a vision statement. I think it took another year before I created the mission card and the table tent, but it came out of a realization that you can not just put something on the web and expect that people are going to hit it everyday and look at it.

Whether you are at conferences or [other external meetings], you must have a common message. Again, the method to my madness was for the people who were here to understand and have a common message. So that is why I wanted them to feel like they were a part of this by virtue of being a “card-carrying member.” I wanted them to have it [the mission statement] visually available to them. I said in [faculty] meetings, “If you

are debating something, bring it back to the mission.” So that was why [we created the card] – and it made it fun.

At GC&SU, the mission is a working message; it is a part of the people who make up the University.

### Faculty and Learning within the New Mission

As has been mentioned earlier in this study, teaching was no only longer lecture-oriented and teaching-focused. The liberal arts mission was learning-focused and became incorporated throughout the academic areas of the University. Faculty focus group participants mentioned some major differences in the classroom approaches, as did the students focus group participants. Vice President Gormly made note of the changing mind-set of faculty when she first arrived, saying:

That was a real positive feature . . . that you care about challenging students. I did not hear people say, “Well, what are you going to pay me to do this?” I heard people expressing a concern about needing to work more closely with the students and not understanding what it would take to do that. So they were willing and cooperative. So, I mean, that made my job a lot easier.

Dr. Gormly continued, “We did change some department chairs as a result of my working with the deans to say, “I am holding you accountable for the . . . leadership [of these departments].”

Some of the examples of how academics is learning- and outcomes-based are listed below in these participant comments. One administrator said in an interview:

The academic area has made numerous changes, unbelievable kinds of changes. So when you go to some of these conferences where they say,

“the academic people never change, they just can't stand change,” that is not true here.

A professor stated:

More emphasis has been placed on teaching. We started having interdisciplinary lunches and people could share information. One of the biggest things I remember was the School of Business had these lunches to bring faculty together.

An administrator made the following comment about teaching, “We had a lot of people that were just flat lecturing and not involved with the students and that has changed. I doubt if we have any of those [professors] left.”

However, several professors interviewed individually or in the faculty focus group stated that, “Nothing had changed” [in the classroom]. Some faculty were teaching the same way that they had taught for years. One professor said that, “I have not changed my style. I was already teaching in the liberal arts way. I already use very hands-on, experiential learning methods.” Another faculty member offered this view of teaching as the mission change was implemented:

We believe in experiential learning. The students are out in the school immersed in the classrooms learning how to be a teacher and then coming back and questioning this practice in learning theory and then going out and testing theory and coming back with the elements of a service learning [experience] being out in the field. We also had our students organizing cohorts. Small groups of students, and you can see them behind you. Eighteen to twenty-four with a faculty member and that faculty member stays with the group for two years so they have very close interpersonal relationships between the faculty member and the students. We also believe that our students – we want our students to be the kinds of teachers that do things with their children outside the classroom so we would take our students, you know, the candidates, teacher candidates Cumberland [Island] or to Atlanta and so the kinds of – those experiences we were providing for our students, that’s... liberal arts.

The researcher identified that the subject of change in the classroom is controversial on the campus. Each professor is expected to design his or her curriculum and teaching

methods to coordinate with liberal arts methods, incorporating experiential learning, discussion, critical inquiry, and other styles of teaching that fully involve students. However, some professors stated that some GC&SU students were not ready for that type of learning engagement in the classroom. Other members of the faculty focus group disagreed, saying that interaction with students had changed because there is more interaction in class and outside of class. In the liberal arts mission, interaction among students and faculty members is strongly emphasized at GC&SU. Examples of actions taken to evidence the new emphasis were mentioned within all of the focus groups. One major event on campus was mentioned as initiating the faculty-student relationship. Convocation is held during the first week of Fall Semester to set the tone for the high academic expectations set for GC&SU students. This event allows freshman to meet faculty in full academic regalia during their first week to send the message that learning and the relationship of faculty and students is central to everything done at GC&SU.

Learning “Circles” were developed in which students met during their first few weeks on campus with peer students and a faculty or staff member who encouraged faculty and student interaction. Within the Circles, not only were students offered the opportunity to meet a small group of students to help the transition into the University, but they also were asked to read and discuss collectively a book during this first week of school. Though the freshman students are shocked by an academic assignment to read a “whole book” so early in the year, they understand the expectation as they have the opportunity to listen to the selected author at the Convocation ceremony, the first week after they enroll. These and many other examples were gathered from the interviews and

focus groups which relate to GC&SU's focus on the connection of teaching and learning, along with faculty and staff interaction.

Feedback and communication are important for faculty and student bonding. Another example of student and faculty involvement is a newly established system for classroom evaluation. Not only has the GC&SU faculty performance evaluation process been redesigned by the Vice President and Dean of Faculty to a behaviorally-based system, but also now student evaluations of classes are available on-line. Accountability is key to the liberal arts mission and underscores the fact that quality is the goal, regardless of the subject or functional area. A GC&SU administrator explained another method for accountability for educational outcomes:

[There was] a focus on student outcomes; there was input information [related to] how many students, how many faculty . . . And how do you know that the students are being successful? What kind of measures do you have? What kind of contact do you have with the alumni? So the program review was important in terms of what I would be looking at and I put it together with the annual report. And so that really kind of changed the way in which people would be focusing the activity at the level of the system wide program review.

The GC&SU core curriculum had been addressed earlier. Although the core curriculum was not dramatically different from other State institutions, other curricular modifications were being made on campus. Another example of faculty-student interaction, mentioned by the faculty participants, was the development of cluster courses. GC&SU cluster courses are developed as interdisciplinary courses, involving two or three professors from across the campus. One successful cluster course was entitled "Environmental Ethics." Professors taught a course combining English, science, and ethics. Students from any major could take the course. The first-year academic seminar, created to offer freshman a direct introduction to academic expectations, also set

the tone for students during their first year on campus. The early attempts in offering Cluster Courses varied in outcomes and success, as mentioned by one professor who had been involved in a Cluster Course. However, the approach to interdisciplinary learning was expressly designed to offer students a comprehensive education, that was “delivery-based, not discipline-based.”

Student Affairs also became involved in creating opportunities for students and faculty to interact outside of the classroom. With an emphasis on the residential campus, the Office of Student Affairs have created more weekend options for students on weekends. Though these activities are for entertainment, they are designed with the liberal arts mission in mind. One example of events sponsored by the Office of Student Affairs is a “Bobcat Night.” These events are held throughout the semester, each with a theme. An illustration of faculty involvement was a Bobcat Night that had a casino theme. In addition to the games, a professor of statistics was also invited to the event. Students had the opportunity to meet this professor on a more informal level than the classroom, but also they were taught by the professor on a weekend night about the “odds of winning” relating the games to the study of statistics.

Another way which has helped to transform the way that GC&SU approaches faculty-student interaction is through technology. GC&SU has developed two distance learning courses, though this is not the main emphasis of the GC&SU Office of Institutional Technology. An administrator in this area described how this office is focused on the mission by creating technological solutions to promote liberal arts. It seemed as though technology and liberal arts have no connection, rather than to support the administrative functions of the faculty, staff, and administrators. However, 3400



students are involved in a technological learning option somewhere across the campus. Some examinations and class information sessions are offered on-line. Though this example seems to contradict the importance of faculty student involvement, the liberal arts component of technology was explained to the researcher by the Vice President of Institutional Technology. If students are able to go on-line to study some aspects of the courses or examinations, then the “face-to-face” time in the classroom is freed up more time for discussion and critical inquiry directly among the students and faculty.

Learning outside of the classroom has been heavily emphasized at GC&SU since the instigation of the new mission. Students recognized learning outcomes both in the classroom and outside of it. For example, several administrators mentioned the service learning. Service learning allows the students to work outside of the campus in non-profit or charitable agencies to learn professional experience, while offering volunteer hours. These service learning hours are incorporated in the overall experience that a GC&SU student has while on campus; these hours are viewed as a significant part of the GC&SU student’s academic experience. Also, the Academic Outreach Program, allows students to work in their field in the Milledgeville community. This experience offers them not only work experience, but a chance to do service in some capacity in the town surrounding the campus. Both of these programs offer a chance for GC&SU students to be visible in the community, which adds an additional connection between the campus and the community. In 2002, the experiential transcript was developed to give the student an opportunity to document and provide meaningful connections between both the academic courses and the service learning experiences. One interviewee made this comment about GC&SU learning environment related to service:

We need to create the kind of curriculum in terms of, not just the required courses, but also the kinds of experiences that will challenge the students; hence we have got the experiential transcript. It is changing the net learning environment [at GC&SU].

The faculty composition has changed dramatically in the past five years at GC&SU. More than sixty-two faculty members have been added with new state appropriations and private funding, with interviews being conducted to fill eighty additional positions. In order to more closely meet the liberal arts mission, the faculty student ratio must be reduced, with a goal of 15:1. The additional faculty hired are not only aware of the liberal arts mission, but they selected to apply at GC&SU because of their interest in the liberal arts, according to the Vice President and Dean of Faculty. Even the recruitment and interview processes were transformed, including not only administrators and department chairs, but also faculty, staff, and students from across the campus. An administrator explained:

People do get involved with the searches. They were, at first, more interested in undoing the bureaucracy. Now they're more interested in how we can get a good quality candidate here.

The message of the mission was also spread thorough the new or potential faculty members as they are interviewed. The Vice President and Dean of Faculty said in relation to recruitment of new faculty:

[We developed a faculty recruitment] handout that would capture some of this [information about the mission], because people can hear it. Also, they have a plane ride back [after a campus interview] and I want them to review [what they heard about the mission]. I want them to read about it. I want the people in department to read it . . . So I used [a] brochure as a standard that I give to every candidate and faculty member. Then the faculty selected have a "resonance with our mission."

### The Role of Staff and the Mission

According to the staff participants, it was clear to every person employed by GC&SU that they “had to change in every aspect of campus life to reflect the mission and deliver student-centered service.” Although participants said that they work harder and longer hours than ever before, “morale has improved.” The open meetings led by the President created a noticeably positive impact on the attitude of the staff. The staff members felt included, not only on Staff Council, but in decision-making across campus. The staff participants also stressed that their interaction with faculty had improved with more interaction demonstrated among staff and faculty. The staff members reported that they were surprised that faculty members often had the same fear of change and lack of understanding about the mission as they had at first. Being able to discuss those concerns openly helped the mission move forward. One administrator offered this view of the early reaction by staff members:

I saw a lot of trepidation early on and heard a lot of rumors . . . in terms that their units would not be key parts of the future of the institution or even parts of the future. To a certain extent, people in my unit were a little worried. That is about the time we had our retreat to see how we could become a more valuable part of what was going on. Since then, I have seen a lot more excitement and enthusiasm. I know my people are on board with the mission as long as we can pay for it.

From the staff focus group, the discussion about the mission was primarily positive. In fact, the staff participants felt that they had shifted more easily to the mission than perhaps others on campus had. A concern that still exists relates to the addition of a great many new faculty members is that the University will not have funds left to hire a sufficient number of staff to support the new faculty. Workload was an expressed concern for both staff and faculty.

However, working hard or working with more intensity to allow the University to implement the mission in meaningful ways was not a fear of the staff. The staff appreciated the work ethic of the new leadership, especially of the President. She was described as “visible on campus and involved with the staff.” One staff focus group member said, “If the boss works that hard, we certainly can.” Other statements were made about the President, saying that she is “the best boss because she is an advocate, gives direction, offers leadership, and conveys a message.” They are aware that they are expected to solve problems and take ownership for the solutions, rather than to report the obstacles. The culture is “completely different from four or five years ago,” according to the staff participants.

Several staff members illustrated examples of the mission change that affected them most directly. Several years ago, based on an energy crisis, the college began to shut down at noon on Fridays. One of the first changes that Dr. DePaolo made was to extend the workweek again, saying that if students are expected to be here on Fridays, faculty and staff will be on site. Though this offered great disappointment at first, the staff member participants stated that their colleagues understood that to meet the mission, the campus had to be student-centered, and that meant that faculty, staff, and administrators needed to be present on campus on a Friday afternoon to support classes and student activities. Also, the staff understood that they are also a part of the GC&SU recruitment and retention efforts. The staff also acknowledged that along with the improved morale, the GC&SU campus is easier to “sell” now, because everyone understands the mission. Their involvement with students and potential students could have a great impact on attracting and keeping students.

Even though the staff had concerns about the financial ramifications and changes affecting them in light of the new mission, they showed willingness to assist the process when needed. When a budget cutback was called for, all campus personnel were asked to empty their own trash cans for a short period. The staff participants said that in earlier times, no one would have agreed to help with this problem by taking out their trash. However, with this new mission, they saw this step as a part of the collaboration on the new mission. The emphasis was on making this University student-focused, whatever is required. The staff valued working together across campus, whether on the most menial of projects or in University Council where faculty and staff now discuss campus issues. They clearly communicated that they are partly responsible for creating an environment where the liberal arts mission is evident throughout the entire campus.

### The Physical Campus

Though the facilities of a university are not necessarily thought of as integral to the academic mission of a campus, GC&SU has taken great care in focusing on the buildings that house both the students and their learning opportunities. The student-centered mission means that the campus needs to enhance this liberal arts institution. GC&SU has made extensive strides in this area. At the time of this study, \$171 million of construction was either taking place or was in the planning stage. A new centrally located library addition was being added that will double the service capacity. It holds a prominent place on the campus, as it is the philosophical center of the academic environment. In addition to holding the University's book collections, it will soon have a state-of-the-art technology center, a 24-hour copy shop, and study concourse.

Bill Richards, Director of the University Library, described the process used to decide the plan for the new library addition and how it fit the liberal arts mission, with this discussion:

I think it is a much more coherent program of services, resources, facilities, and space. It does conform with my vision but fortunately, there were many people who were involved. It was a . . . a library planning task force with the mission of the University in mind and the deficiencies of the library clearly identified and defined for that task force [that created success]. We were working on COPLAC membership, so we brought to the discussion what do we want to be like and what will it take to get there with regard specifically to the library. We took COPLAC numbers related to the library's specific collections, ratio of volumes to students, seats to students, etc. What do these COPLAC libraries have that ours does not have and how do we make it more like those? . . . That is . . . where we are headed. So that was the driving force and as a result of that, we have a library that is being built around our mission.

Due to the historic nature of the campus, which highlights the liberal arts mission, the leaders have been conscious of how to build a campus with new state-of-the-art facilities, while maintaining the "feel" of liberal arts intimate environment. For example, the Student Union building, built in the 1970s was too expensive to rebuild to make it match the mission. However, a clock tower and more pleasing façade has made it an appropriate entrance point, welcoming students and guests to campus.

The story recounted below tells how even the new chiller system was rebuilt, befitting the mission. Harry Keim, the Vice President of Business and Finance gave an example of the type of pride that became evident among the staff under the new mission.

He stated:

They are improving the whole thing by doing it. I have got a really good example of this kind of project. We have had trouble with a chiller in our student union building forever (but it was 28-29 years old). Chillers are not cheap -- they are \$250,000. However, because it is an auxiliary building, the legislature will not allocate money for it [the chiller]. So we have to find other sources of funds to do this, which I did find out of our

auxiliary reserve. But my point was this. We could have just had it done that way, but the room it was in looked dismal. I mean, [still as it had been] in 1970 when it was built—only it is more than thirty years later.

So, they [Physical Plant] did not even tell me this; they wanted to surprise me. When it was all said and done, they invited me to go up and look at the new chiller and I went up there. Everything was painted; it is color-coded; it is just a transformation from what I saw when I first was looking at the old chiller. No one actually sees this, but it makes them proud of the fact that they [Physical Plant employees] did this. It probably would have cost us another fifty to one hundred thousand dollars to have a contractor do the paint and finishing. They put in new pipes if they needed them; they really just updated the whole thing.

Keim continued:

It is that kind of feeling that we have been able to give to them [campus employees]. It is called “empowerment” and I have been preaching this for a long time. [I tell them,] “You're the one I am asking to do this. If you have a better idea of how to do it tell me or do it, . . . tell me what it is. You are the one who has to operate it.” So it is that kind of attitude that I have been able to work with the senior directors on. It is a "can-do" attitude is what it boils down to. I know sometimes when I walk into the room they are wondering, what has this guy brought up next?

Housing is critical on a student-centered campus and GC&SU had a challenge in this area also with very old dorms, needing extensive repair or renovation. State funds were not available for buildings, so the University, through the GC&SU Foundation developed a bond referendum to fund four new dorms from the ground up. It allowed the University to begin to “redo its entire residential environment.” In addition to having suite-style rooms to replace 1960s architecture and group restrooms, the residential areas will also incorporate classrooms and technology labs. Bruce Harshbarger, Vice President for Students, discussed the new housing plan by saying:

What we are doing is designing basically two villages, one that would be on the main campus and be configured as suites (suites meaning two rooms share a bath). You would be in a building with inside corridors. You would be a member of a floor in the traditional residence hall kind of setting. That is really what was wanted for our first-year students. The

trend at a lot of [colleges and universities] is toward apartments and we are starting an apartment village on the West Campus (two miles west) for sophomores and above. But really we did not think that was a very appropriate way for first-year students to live. So we are instituting our first-year residence requirement. It is not geography specific.

Another comment recorded from an administrator interview was:

Those buildings will have multi-media classrooms that seat 40 or more. They are built around community centers and reflecting pools. The village in the Centennial Center area will have the most upscale coffee house. I have seen on a college campus on one end and then the train depot on the other end which is in the process of being renovated as a fitness and wellness center. In between that, state-of-the-art housing facilities, maybe not as intensive as everyone (resident or not) being assigned to one house or one physical location would be in the English model, but there is certainly going to be a real close sense of community built.

### Financial Support

The responses of GC&SU administrators interviewed in this study made an important statement related to the financial challenges of this new mission. One administrator said, “You can not create this new mission appropriately without proper funding.” One administrator gave a pertinent example of the importance of proper support:

Needless to say, being in the financial area, it was rather important that I be brought along with all the various plans that it has required to change from the direction we were going. Basically we were headed towards being a regional university and all of our efforts for quite a few years, before five years ago, were in that direction. All of a sudden, it was decided that this should change (via the Board of Regents) to a liberal arts institution, which was largely different and required a lot of change on a lot of people's part. I think that is probably one of the easiest and the hardest things for a lot of people to do—accept change. I . . . have found it very delightful and very invigorating and I have really enjoyed this. I am going to continue to enjoy it because it has been such a challenge. You know the backbone of a lot of this [effort] is money, so it has been challenging for me to try to figure out how we do all of this on a nickel and a dime.



To secure private funding, the alumni and foundation had to be dealt with differently than before. To look like a private liberal arts university on state funding, private funds must be acquired also. Public universities are behind historically in asking for private contributions. However, the tide has been changing in this direction as well in light of the new GC&SU mission. One administrator knew that the difference was not in asking for larger gifts, but in building relationships. This participant, Vice President for Advancement, Ralph Norman, said:

As soon as I arrived on campus, I began going to visit our Foundation members, one by one,. We are building a fundraising approach here, not a program. In building for the long-term success that GC&SU needs, we must create long-term relationships.

The generosity of the Board of Regents, the legislature, private foundations and individuals has infused funds onto the GC&SU campus, not for visibility or for short-term gain. This support has created a long-term approach to serving students and the people of the state of Georgia. As a public institution, the people of this state have to be the focal point of the university.

#### Students as the Focus of the Mission

The placement of this topic is not representative of an afterthought in this research, but students are the focal point of the mission study. Liberal arts education serves students first. The student-focused approach at Georgia College & State University not only has changed the way that the college looks or operates, but it has changed the type of student that graduates from this institution.

The student participants explained what it meant to them to be a liberal arts student, by offering the following ideas. These quotes were captured during a student focus group, though these represent individual statements:

When I look at graduate schools, I have it all, all I need to get accepted.

Outside experience programs prepare me for professional experience.

Community service and work opportunities provide me a different view of the world and different cultures.

We are taught to be analytical and to question.

Size of classes (sometimes with 7-10 students) allows me direct access to my professors

They want you to ask questions.

Our professors encourage us to disagree.

Participation is 10-20% of our grade.

They created an independent study for me in “metaphysics” because classes are overloaded.

We get prepared for real world application.

Teachers will stay with you; they have ‘got my back.’

We are involved with faculty in research and learning.

They [faculty and staff] care about the school.

I came planning to transfer; now it’s my choice to stay.

These statements represent the reasons why teaching at GC&SU is more focused on learning, why Student Affairs Directors planned out of classroom experiences, why faculty members stayed after class and why the library has designed a 24-hour technology center. According to its own faculty, staff, and administration, GC&SU has taken its mission seriously.

### Entrance into the Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges

A badge of honor for a public liberal arts institution is to be a member of the Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges (COPLAC). GC&SU applied for membership in the first year that it began operating under the new mission, even while its cultural stance as a regional university had not changed. Jim Purcell, Director of Institutional Research, discussed the importance of benchmarking and measurements in GC&SU's approach toward becoming a liberal arts institution, by saying:

My role in the transition was in many respects to quantify "liberal artness." This was important so that the transition team could determine if we were truly making progress toward achieving a liberal arts mission. Looking at trends in enrollment and credit hours, and conducting various "what-if" scenarios were important in helping guide decisions on future initiatives. I have been base-lining, benchmarking, and quantifying key indicators of our liberal arts mission ever since.

Dr. Purcell reported the benchmarks of COPLAC institutions in a report:

The Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges (COPLAC), a selective consortium of state universities and colleges, was identified. COPLAC school characteristics were as follows:

Similar missions

Emphasized undergraduate Liberal Arts Education, with selected professional programs.

Educational environment

Offered quality liberal arts education at an affordable price.

Institutions exhibited an active learning community.

Students were involved in, owners of, and responsible for their education.

Institutions values learning environments in and outside the classroom.

Cultural and intellectual diversity were integral to the educational program.

The institutions had quality residential life programs.

On average, enrolled less than 5,000 FTE students.

Eighty-five percent of FTE were undergraduate.

GC&SU aspired to be a member of COPLAC in 1996, to be recognized as a distinguished liberal arts institution. Upon its second application in 2001, GC&SU was

accepted as the 19th COPLAC institution in the nation. One of the reasons cited was that the institution's decision-making seemed to be based on the liberal arts mission throughout every aspect of its service of students. The increased standards and entrance measures also gained the attention of not only the COPLAC Board, but also U.S. News and World Report, and the state-at-large.

### **Defining Moments as Symbols of Change**

During the analysis of data for this study, the researcher discovered patterns in comments and information related to the symbols of the GC&SU change process. The following categories of patterns emerged as faculty, staff, administrators, and students gave their impressions of pivotal points in the change process that demonstrated a connection between the mission and occurrences on campus. These symbols of change lead to the conclusions developed by the researcher in Chapter 5.

Communication of the Change. Prior to the new President's arrival, the campus had been reassured that "nothing would really change." Almost immediately after Dr. DePaolo took office, the President made it clear that the liberal arts mission would affect every part of campus. Through open forums, memos, and retreats that involved people across the campus, the message was clear that they were changing the mission. As one of the interview participants stated, "We are a community. We are all going to discuss this." Dr. DePaolo commented by saying, "I knew it was a shock to people when I came in and said, "We are going to make probably a 180 degree shift." It was made clear that people were invited to be a part of the new mission. The faculty interviewees knew from the

president, “there is no Plan B.” The members of the staff and faculty focus groups, as well as the administrative interviewees knew that change was eminent.

However, everyone offered the invitation to change did not immediately accept. Though communication was increased throughout the administration and the faculty, the new mission was not easily accepted. A great deal of misunderstanding about the mission existed among many faculty that had been hired under the former administration and former mission. The open forums provided for more communication, although the communication outside the forums was not consistently positive. However, a faculty member explained that though there were several people on campus who were negative about the change, the administrators directly addressed their concerns and did not ignore the negative comments. By staying engaged with everyone on campus as much as possible and keeping the mission in the forefront, the “nay-sayers” soon either “got on board or got quiet.” Throughout the change process however, the number of people opposing the change of mission became fewer. Although some of the change was due to attrition, many interview and focus group participants aligned in saying that those leading the opposition found that the group that would align with them became gradually smaller. Therefore, both positive and negative communication added to the collective understanding of the new mission.

The July 1998 Leadership Retreat. The July 1998 strategic planning was the first time that an extended leadership team involved not only the Vice Presidents and Deans, but also the Directors representing areas across the University. At the beginning of this key event, anxiety was high and a fear of the unknown was evident in the responses captured

at the retreat. By the end of the two days, people remembered three key exercises as being important. One was that they had completed an activity envisioning what the campus would look like in the next three to five years. The second “defining moment” was that they set a motto that helped define who the University was now. The motto, “GC&SU – It’s a total experience!” brought understanding to the team that was to lead the University forward. Several of the administrators interviewed in this study remembered creating the potential vision for what the campus would look like in the near future, and they mentioned that they were close to meeting that vision. One administrator recalled the event by saying:

The whole motto idea was to try to define who we were and what this was all about. We came up with “It’s a total experience!” and I think that was it, a significant moment, and a significant phrase that shaped up. Because people understood then that it was different from what they had been doing.

Centennial Center Retreat, August 1998. A larger retreat was planned following the senior leadership retreat. More than 125 Representatives came from all departments, schools, and colleges throughout the University. They were asked to offer input to the mission and vision statements that were begun at the Senior Leadership Retreat. It marked the first time that University-wide input has been requested related to the institution’s mission. One of the administrator interviewees remarked that:

Strategic thinking/planning processes that she had her administration as well as faculty staff and everybody start thinking about what was significant in helping us make this shift.

Another member remembered this retreat by saying, “Rosemary [President] got a fairly large group together and said, ‘hey, what does liberal arts mean?’” The responses to that question changed the mindset of the members of the GC&SU Community.

Financial Decisions. Lack of funding had been a significant concern on campus when the mission had changed. Several financial decisions made were extremely integral in the success of the mission-oriented change on the GC&SU campus. The Regents voted to raise GC&SU’s tuition to match the two most senior institutions in the state, pouring \$7 million per year into the budget. The Board of Regents also added \$1.5 million per year with a private fundraising match to support the new mission. The Legislature also supported the mission with an agreement in 2001 to raise the tuition at GC&SU. Also, a \$3 million gift was pledged to the University in 2001 which was by far the largest private contribution in the University’s history. An administrator responded to the financial investments made in the college from 1996 to 2001 by saying that the University had to fund that vision of being a public liberal arts institution. Because of the recent contributions people on campus were satisfied that the new mission was not just “smoke and mirrors.” The interviewee went on to say that people now value the mission and the impact of change. They agreed that this type of financial infusion assured people that there was a future for GC&SU as a liberal arts institution. As one faculty member put it, “that was the essential first step.”

Another financial factor affecting organizational change was a \$1 million allocation from the Board of Regents to the University for application toward the University’s technology needs. The issue of technology had been a point of great debate

for the University, as to whether a liberal arts institution needed to invest extensive resources into technological support. Faculty were unclear about the alignment of technology with the mission. The funds, requested by the Office of Institutional Technology, were not the defining moment. The pivotal factor was the realization by faculty that the technology unit could provide the opportunity for 3400 of the University's students to use online technology for class projects. Only two distance-learning classes existed at the time of this writing, but with the technological resources provided for professors and students, more classroom time is reserved for the interaction and inquiry that is central to the liberal arts mission.

The New Resident Life Facilities Plan. The new Vice President and Dean of Faculty asked upon arrival, "How are you expecting to implement this mission without the appropriate housing?" At this point, an unprecedented plan on the campus is already in process in 2002. GC&SU is building four new residence halls to provide housing that will "facilitate the mission," as the Chief Student Affairs Officer commented. An administrator offered a critical comment:

Because of the liberal arts mission, we felt it was very critical—the living-learning environment that we have said we want GC&SU to have—it is imperative that we do housing a little differently. So first, we didn't feel that a third party to manage the housing would be nearly as receptive to taking care of the needs of the students like the way the University can.

The construction begun on campus in 2002 began the evolution of a campus into a center for learning, combining on campus resources with a vision for the liberal arts, connecting teaching and learning with residence life experiences.



Faculty Incentives. More and more faculty members have been awarded teaching awards since the new mission was installed. Awards recognizing teaching aligned with the mission have been added. Professors are honored who exemplify the liberal arts mission resulting in the connection of teaching and learning. Incentives for study and fees for professional conferences have been increased. Faculty and administrators acknowledged that the new philosophy has been embraced. The implementation of the meaning is supported by the number of teaching awards that have been received across multiple academic areas.

The Message of the Mission Statement. The mission statement was printed on small cards and distributed through campus. With frequent, “mission checks,” people were accustomed to being asked to present their mission cards. As the Vice President Gormly explained:

I’m a visual person . . . I see things and say “Now, I can picture what this institution will look like when we have completed our mission.” I can see it. I can see it in the people; I can see it in the activities; I can see it in the attitude, but that is more difficult to describe. Now our mission statement does a pretty good job of doing that.

S.A.T. and G.P.A. The Senior Administrative Leadership Team set benchmarks and five-year specific goals to match the specific standards set by U.S. News and World Report and other COPLAC schools. The goals for increasing S.A.T. scores and G.P.A. scores were challenging and the participants who set the five-year goals at the 1998 retreat were skeptical of being able to reach them. They set their sites on these goals, but concentrated on a one-year strategic plan to begin the process of meeting the goals in

conjunction with the campus-wide plan. However, the GC&SU administrators were skeptical about meeting the aggressive standards in the time allotted. The S.A.T. goals and average grade point average goals were met in less than five years. People across campus began to believe in the impact of the mission when, in four years, the S.A.T. average score of the freshman class increased by 146 points. Staff focus group participants said that there was probably not another school in Georgia that could achieve that accomplishment.

External Recognition of Change. GC&SU had applied again for COPLAC in the year 2001. They were selected after just four years as the 19<sup>th</sup> member of COPLAC, sending a message throughout the campus that they do act and operate as a liberal arts college. The COPLAC designation provided an external acknowledgement that the University had not only philosophically changed its mission, but had implemented the mission in demonstrable actions.

Convocation. The reinstated Convocation was a defining moment for faculty, staff, and students. The visible connection of freshman students interacting with faculty in academic regalia reinforced for students the seriousness of study as well as the opportunity for connection among faculty and staff, reflecting the meaning of the mission in a visible way.

The Connection of the School of Education and the College of Arts and Sciences. A movement was begun by the Vice President and Dean of Faculty to combine under one

dean the School of Education and the College of Arts and Sciences. As recalled by faculty and administration, the concept was first presented as a suggestion. Soon into the process, the faculty realized that this proposal would be implemented. This process was a defining moment for two reasons. First, the connection of two academic units showed collaboration of academic divisions to more fully connect the content of arts and sciences with the methodology of teaching. Second, the merger, as identified by the study participants, was that a “top down” decision was needed to accomplish the mission. Though collaborative decision-making has been identified as a key part of the success of this mission, several comments also gave credence to the instances when a more firm decision was needed. However, collaboration then was called for as the faculty decided how to implement the decision. An administrator illustrated this point by saying,

We went from one extreme of “What if?” to the other extreme of “Why not?” very quickly. I think that’s how Anne [Vice President] progressed through the process involving faculty, students, and alumni along this trip of four to five months or maybe less.

### **Chapter Summary**

In 1889, Georgia Normal & Industrial College was founded as a result of the initial efforts of a determined and persistent woman who wanted to educate students to serve their state. Julia Flisch was a powerful influence on politicians. Her vision was to see that both professional classes and liberal arts studies were included in the curriculum on this centrally located campus. The work of faculty, staff, and the local supporters coupled with statewide support made the college possible.

In 2002, at the time of this study, Georgia College & State University was implementing a mission championed by strong administrators. Their unique combination

of professional and liberal arts studies prepared students for the professional world. Through the efforts of a strong leadership team, dedicated faculty, and committed staff who model interactive learning, students are led to think analytically, raise critical questions, and understand the responsibility associated with a living-learning environment.

Georgia College & State University not only talks about its mission, it implements it with the making of every institutional decision. The story of creating a meaningful educational environment was documented by the same people that are living the mission. The researcher identified emerging patterns to clearly communicate the route toward the University's mission and vision. How GC&SU plays a role in Georgia's higher education future was clearly marked. The researcher's conclusions and the potential implications developed from this study for other institutions of higher education will be developed in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY OF RESEARCH

In 1889, a college in Georgia was created with the mission to prepare students “for useful education in the modern world.” In this qualitative study, the researcher investigated how its essential mission through the years has guided this institution of higher education, though its purpose and institutional identity have undergone multiple adaptations. Reflecting on its history under six names and five modifications of mission, Georgia College & State University cooperated in a study on the impact of organizational and cultural change. By adopting its latest mission in 1996, this institution repositioned itself. It assumed a more distinctive posture in the University System of Georgia as a leader in liberal arts education, while remaining true to its founding mission of educating students for the ‘modern world.’ The GC&SU mission, as printed in the University handbook and various campus literature is:

As the State’s designated public liberal arts university, Georgia College & State University is committed to combining the educational experiences typical of esteemed private liberal arts colleges with the affordability of public higher education. GC&SU is a residential learning community that emphasizes undergraduate education and offers selected graduate programs. The faculty are dedicated to challenging students and fostering excellence in the classroom and beyond. GC&SU seeks to endow its graduates with a passion for achievement, a lifelong curiosity, and exuberance for learning.

GC&SU was charged with a new liberal arts mission. To fully implement that mission, this university needed to review the techniques and methods used on campus for facilitating learning. In addition, the new mission changed ways of thinking among

faculty, staff, and administrators. The campus community began to apply the liberal arts mission to every function throughout the University. This chapter offers conclusions drawn from the findings gathered by the researcher. Also incorporated in this chapter are implications regarding how this study applies to the field of higher education.

Recommendations are suggested for other colleges and universities attempting to fully engage the campus community in implementing their mission, whether a new or current mission is in place. Ideas for future research emanating from this study of mission implementation and organizational change follow.

A cross-section of GC&SU faculty, staff, administration, and students served as interview participants in the study. Their diverse perspectives and opinions regarding the implementation and outcomes of this critical process of change added credibility, validity, and balance to the research. However, the conclusions are limited by the findings discovered during a five-year period. Therefore, the research makes additional recommendations to the university studied as to potential steps for progressing beyond their current status.

Three major conclusions related to mission-based institutional change are treated in this chapter. First, the researcher developed conclusions based on the theory of organizational congruence and how it relates to institutional change. Alignment of all aspects, both academic and functional, are integral to implementing a full-scale mission change, as well as developing a distinctive liberal arts culture. The second group of conclusions describes how the processes of change related to the elements of leadership, rate of change, and acceptance or resistance to change have influence on institutional development. The third conclusion illustrates how specific events during the

transformation process acted as “institutional defining moments.” Critical activities and programs provided turning points in the progress of the University’s change processes. However, rather than referring only to specific events, study participants also identified critical points in time when collective understanding by a segment of the University propelled the progress toward fully understanding the new mission. Following these conclusions, implications and recommendations are included as recommendations for future research in higher education.

### **Relating the Theory of Cultural Congruence to Institutional Change**

The theory of cultural congruence lent understanding to this researcher’s interpretation of an institution experiencing extensive organizational change. Cameron and Quinn (1997) defined cultural congruence as the state when various aspects of an organization’s culture are aligned. Conversely, cultural incongruence results when an organization or institution is not in alignment. The lack of connection among functional areas alone can be an impetus for change within an organization. Through strategic planning and coordination among faculty, staff, and administrators, GC&SU created a sense of congruence on the campus, meaning that multiple academic and functional areas were aligned or realigned in relation to mission. Coupled with the findings about the new mission implementation, this theory of cultural congruence provided a framework from which the researcher made an initial set of conclusions about Georgia College & State University and institutional development.

The leadership of Georgia College, as a regional campus, determinedly pursued a culture of multi-faceted growth and expansion during the decade from the mid-1980s to

the mid-1990s. The purpose was intentional: to create multiple campuses and numerous programs to meet a diversity of student needs. Departments and functional areas of the College developed separate pockets of influence dispersed throughout the institution.

Despite the College's hierarchical organizational structure, programs, schools, and departments were growing simultaneously, but were only remotely linked to the central campus or each other. This loosely coupled model was based on a design in which the primary objective was "to take education to the students," as one former administrator had stated. To meet this objective, the faculty, staff, and administration matched varied location and scheduling requirements with potential students' needs. The organization focused on expanding services and multiplying the student base with loosely coupled functionality among units. Central campus decisions were made with very little collaborative input. However, decisions at the remote campus sites seemed to be made primarily with local involvement.

Extensive growth and change characterized all of the campuses, but the speed and type of change were not consistent at each location. Interview participants from the current faculty, staff, and administration agreed that the College's regional and comprehensive mission meant that they were deliberately "trying to be all things to all people," or at least to all students. This approach was well suited for aggressive growth, but created disparate functions within the organization. Although academic divisions, departments, and schools operated almost independently, it was not problematic within the current structure. The broad distribution of services enhanced the college's growth opportunities.



However, adoption of a new mission presented a very different set of circumstances for GC&SU. The new mission intensified the need for congruency within all institutional units in order to make efficient progress within a period of pervasive change. With the change to a concentration on liberal arts in 1996, the University began to focus on one campus, one mission, and one centralized functional purpose. Multiple departments and schools still provided the way that GC&SU educated students, but the mission mandated a sense of congruence that provided a framework for the University's operation and its philosophy. Congruence within an organization provides a connection between the mission and operations of an institution, as well as between the philosophy and function of the faculty, staff, administration, students, and external supporters.

The theory of congruence emphasizes the importance of critical governance and operational aspects of the institution being closely aligned. Academic and administrative departments must be associated for both excellence in educational experiences and functional success. The University considers "challenging students and fostering excellence in the classroom and beyond" as a goal within their mission. Therefore, professors and departmental staff were encouraged to orchestrate student services to work together with academic units, along with feedback from students. A campus that claims to have a "residential learning community" should be housed in buildings and residence halls that provide comfortable, efficient settings that are conducive to learning. Students need the opportunity to communicate with faculty about their shared values to create "a passion for achievement, a lifelong curiosity, and an exuberance for learning" as included in the final statement of the mission.

### Fostering Excellence in the Classroom and Beyond

GC&SU has cultivated connections among academic and operational departments across the campus. Collaboration among departments was illustrated in examples cited by the interview and focus group participants. Interdisciplinary courses and students taking classes outside their major department provided for a breadth of knowledge exemplifying the essence of the liberal arts mission. An example of a multi-disciplinary class was an environmental ethics course where the organic science and the political science departments interjected aspects of biology, ecology, and ethics into a single course.

Other examples combined the efforts of academic departments and showed how academicians and student affairs staff members worked together to provide out-of-classroom learning for students. “Bobcat Nights” were developed by the Office of Student Affairs to promote weekend student activities providing on-campus alternatives for student entertainment. For example, one of the Bobcat Nights was a casino night, staged in the Student Center. In addition to providing a non-alcoholic event Sponsored by GC&SU Student Affairs, also offered was a session by a professor on “the statistics of increasing your odds of winning.” The students received immediately applicable content in an enjoyable setting to blend student services with an academic interjection. International nights with ethnic foods to match are offered at the dining hall on campus. Food service personnel wanted to improve the choices for students and chose to offer cultural enhancements to round out the experiences.

A well-known precept at GC&SU was that student recruitment was part of the mission for everyone on campus, not only the enrollment services staff. All faculty

members were expected to recruit students through direct interaction. Faculty members and administrators regularly attended recruitment receptions and schools visitations. The president had lunch with high school counselors. Faculty interview participants mentioned consistently that they took pride in contacting potential students. Faculty became integrally involved in creating unusual scholarship opportunities to attract the top students. For instance, the Chemistry Department offered scholarships to high school students or freshman who have shown outstanding interest in departmental research. They began to present scholarships to students, valid as long as they remained as a declared chemistry major. They also offered students the opportunity to work outside of class performing laboratory work with a particular professor, almost as they would involve a graduate student in a fellowship or graduate assistantship. These and other examples of integrated programs raised the level of educational excellence, combining the efforts of faculty, staff, and students.

GC&SU's mission permeated both the classroom and the non-academic aspects of learning. The philosophical connection of the mission to learning was evident during regular class hours as well as on evening and weekend activities. The central function of educating the whole student promoted how the University made a mission more meaningful with collaborative interdepartmental support.

#### A Residential Learning Community

A cornerstone in liberal arts philosophy is to render the campus as a residential learning community, as expressed in the GC&SU Mission. The initial look of the Milledgeville campus gave a sense of the liberal arts with its historic buildings and

natural environment. The “village feel” of the campus enhanced the learning environment, as supported by participant responses from interviews with faculty, administrators, staff, and students. GC&SU created a learning environment consistent with its mission. New construction amounting to \$171 million is currently in progress on campus that will result in a centrally located state-of-the-art library, residential housing with computer labs and classrooms, and surrounding green spaces with fountains and benches.

Cameron and Quinn’s (1997) concept of congruence is evident in the physical plant of the GC&SU campus. The new mission also was made physically evident when departments and schools were placed geographically closer to each other. The University emphasized their mission by drawing almost all of their academic and operational functions back to the central campus in Milledgeville. Only one program remains off-campus, due to contractual constraints with the Federal Government. The buildings, grounds, and program sites showed congruence and direct alignment to the central mission of the University. When segments of an organization are physically tied to each other, then they became more closely connected philosophically. Changes in one area of The University more easily influenced changes in other areas.

### An Exuberance for Learning

“GC&SU seeks to endow its graduates with a passion for achievement, a lifelong curiosity, and an exuberance for learning” is the final sentence of the GC&SU University mission statement. Helping students understand how to connect areas of interest with their own passion for learning became an underlying belief held by those faculty, staff,

and administrators committed to the GC&SU mission. Though it was difficult for interview participants to explain how “passion” or “exuberance” were endowed, they spoke of examples of results which provided faculty, staff, administrators, and students convincing evidence to the researcher that students were passionate about learning. Several participants related how faculty members helped to create connections enabling students to learn. For instance, a theatre major could not be enrolled in a particular course needed to meet graduation requirements. Remembering that the student had mentioned an interest in metaphysics, a professor created the opportunity for the student to take an independent study combining her scientific interest with her work in the arts. The student asked, “Where else could you do that but here?” referring to the professor’s willingness to be both flexible and creative in meeting academic needs.

Examples of faculty members alignment to student needs to increase “curiosity” was mentioned during interview references to student-faculty research. Undergraduates were invited to partner with professors on research projects. In fact, some students co-authored journal articles or developed theories along with the guidance of a faculty member before they graduated.

Another connection recently implemented was an online evaluation process for students and professors. Student evaluations of currently completed classes and their professors were posted on-line through the GC&SU website. This is an example of the process of continuous assessment to know if students are successful and needs are being met. The on-line evaluation gave an opportunity for feedback to connect teaching and learning. The followers of the liberal arts mission considered student outcomes important, however this is a new system and the reviews from faculty are mixed. Some

faculty members find it invasive to have students' opinions published. This checks and balances procedure aligned with the University's mission to create excellent educational experiences, but could also cause miscommunication on certain levels if not monitored closely.

Faculty members and students were connected again when new students were assigned to be a part of a "circle" at the beginning of their freshman year, much like the literary circles of the early liberal arts campuses. Faculty and staff members were assigned to lead the circle and acclimate students not only to the campus, but also to the thought processes associated with liberal arts learning. During the summer before the academic year began, incoming freshmen were charged to read a book and to ready themselves for discussion it with a group of students and a faculty member when they first arrived on campus. Although the students initially reacted negatively to reading "a whole book," their perspective changed as they became involved in critical thought and analysis with the circle members. They dialogued not only with peers who had read the same book, but also with a faculty member who lent a different perspective on learning in a casual setting. The University enhanced the experience by inviting the author of the book to be the speaker at Convocation and the guest of honor at a student reception. As the students interacted with faculty, staff, and a professional author, they began to display "exuberance for learning" in the way that they responded to each other and the author. One administrator who participated in the interviews discussed the importance of developing a "seamless experience" for implementing the mission. The goal was to create a smooth transition for every student leading from recruitment to orientation and

into the first year. This type of introduction to the learning community was another example of how the mission infiltrated the GC&SU campus.

### **The Elements of Change**

Incongruence within the former culture demanded that the University align every level of the institution. This change process was designed to move the University strategically toward objectives and goals supported by the new mission in contrast to the former mission which focused primarily on increasing the number of students and majors. Conner (1995) stated:

The most important factor to managing change successfully is the degree to which people demonstrate resilience: the capacity to absorb high levels of change while displaying minimal dysfunctional behavior (p. 6).

Conner proposed that organizations manage at the “speed of change” which means that organizations and individuals accelerate the speed at which decisions are made to accommodate necessary change. Conner continued:

Our lives are the most effective and efficient when we are moving at a speed that allows us to appropriately assimilate the changes we face (p.7).

Conner also introduced four roles of change in this model that matched the key roles employed by GC&SU leadership. The four distinct roles identified by Conner that are critical to the change process are: Sponsor, Target, Agent, and Advocate. Conner defined the terms as follows:

A Sponsor is the individual or group who has the power to sanction or legitimize change.

An Agent is the individual or group who is responsible for actually making the change happen.

A Target is the individual or group who must actually change.

An Advocate is the individual or group who wants to help the change happen, but lacks the power to sanction it (Conner, 1995, p.7).

The Sponsors, as identified by Conner's theory, were those in the positions of Chancellor, President, and Vice President of Academic Affairs, now called Vice President and Dean of Faculty. The interview participants in this process identified the individuals who held these positions as the drivers for the implementation of the mission change. They exhibited many of the Sponsor characteristics that Conner identified. They are the leaders who considered the impact of potential changes that faced the University and they assessed risks and opportunities. After the Chancellor mandated the change of mission with agreement from the former President and Vice President, the current President and Vice President were the change leaders who decided which changes would be made and then communicated the new priorities across the entire campus. They built upon this communication by continuously reinforcing changes to ensure success.

An integral part of the success of the change process was due to the visionary leadership of the President as well as the Vice President and Dean of Faculty. Several interview participants described the current leadership as having very specific ideas in mind when they arrived, but "the rest of campus didn't and had to catch up to their vision." Another faculty member concurred that the vision the administrative leadership brought was vital in helping the faculty understand the meaning of the mission. It was widely held by the interview participants that without strong and charismatic institutional leadership, this mission could not have been effectively implemented.

The deans and directors on the GC&SU campus were the Agents of change who had the responsibility to make the change happen within their own schools, colleges, and



departments. According to one of the administrative interview participants, the underlying question for the Agents was:

“How do you get people to change? You get them to buy into it, you get them to see that they are, in fact, architects of change, but they are doing it.”

The Agents of change were the deans, directors, and department chairs who diagnosed potential problems and then developed a change plan for their individual schools, colleges, and departments. They were the architects of change and also led the implementation of the plan. The University Sponsors sometimes acted simultaneously in the role of both Agent and Sponsor. An administrator said during an interview, “The challenge here has been to get people to dream and think about that in the same way and to provide the resources to do that [implement the mission].”

Everyone at the University, including prospective students were “Targets,” defined as the individuals who must actually experience change. They sometimes were the people who needed assistance in realizing the vision and actually putting change in place. They often were the ones who needed to be “converted,” as one faculty member said. The interview participant continued to explain that the current faculty and staff needed encouragement to:

. . . Feel comfortable, valued and secure to get them [students] on board with the mission, then bring in, as you have the opportunity, new people who have the same ideas and vision.

The Advocates for the GC&SU change process were the Board of Regents, legislators, foundation board members and alumni board members, University alumni, the community members, and friends of the University. The Advocates helped the change happen by advising or giving input about how the mission could be implemented. The role of Advocate was held by people who sporadically came in and out of the

process. They provided input and resources in both tangible and intangible ways in support of the change.

Because of the strong leaders who served as Sponsors and Agents, GC&SU was able to move at a rapid pace of change. Faculty, staff, and even administrators often felt pushed by the Sponsors to make changes more quickly before they were ready and they expressed frequent concern about the multiple layers of change that were being implemented simultaneously. However, the final consensus of faculty, staff, and administrators was that the speed and forcefulness of the changes were the driving forces behind the successful transformation. The pervasiveness of change created a fluid environment in which the Targets were able to accept the change more easily as the process progressed. The organization and individuals engaged in the dynamic change process became resilient because of the strength of the change leaders. One GC&SU administrator offered this comment related to leaders' role in the change process:

We have done it in a logical manner; no one has dictated it. I will say this for both our President and Vice President, they have tried to get it done by coming up [through the ranks of faculty and staff] rather than pushing it down on us. They have come into some resistance that way because it was not going fast enough.

Some of the Targets who demonstrated resistance to change uncovered several barriers and obstacles that needed to be addressed by University leadership. Fear of the unknown was a major factor of resistance. Faculty and staff were unsure initially as to whether the professional schools would survive, in spite of reassurances from the President. Some of the resistance to change was demonstrated by faculty saying that nothing had changed on campus since the adoption of the mission. Refusing to recognize needed change also may have slowed the process. A lack of understanding about the

meaning of the mission was probably the most far-reaching reason for opposition to the change.

Organizations may need to address change based upon the “Burning Platform Theory” (Conner, 1995, p. 7). An Atlanta consulting firm adopted this analogy from the British Petroleum oil disaster in the late 1980s. The premise for change is related to members of an organization standing on a burning oil platform in the middle of the sea. The driving forces may be strong to make the individuals want to stay with what is familiar, as related to staying on the platform, but burning in the fire. The alternative option is to jump into the sea, representing the unknown, but it offers the chance to compete for survival.

From the interviews and data collected, it seems that the “burning platform analogy” was descriptive of the reactions of some of the faculty, staff, and administrators. One administrator provided insight into the fear factor demonstrated on campus by saying, “It’s that kind of ‘jump in with both feet and then look where you are going’ kind of thing. That part sometimes has been kind of scary.” A staff member stated, when offered the option to express commitment to the mission, that the impression they received from the President’s message was, “There was no Plan B.”

Also, changes in leadership, institutional name, and campus structure combined to slow the pace of people’s acceptance to change. These examples of resistance to change are supported by Westhead’s (1996) model for “Responses and Reactions to Change,” (See Appendix H). In periods of great change, people typically move through several stages of reaction, incorporating immobilization, denial, and anger before moving into an acceptance mode. When individuals and groups reach the acceptance stage, the change

becomes part of their professional culture. People then are able to become comfortable with the current principal changes as well as becoming resilient to future change. After resistance was lightened during stages of the change process, the GC&SU leaders were able to regain momentum and even accelerate the pace when acceptance by faculty members, staff, and administrators was demonstrated.

### **Defining Moments for the Institution**

The final conclusion presented by the researcher relates to the critical nature of collaborative communication and decision-making among faculty, staff, and administrators essential for the fast-paced change that GC&SU experienced. The authentic defining of the University mission began with the arrival of President DePaolo. The goal of the President was to create an environment in which all participants in the change process could fully and clearly understand the mission and therefore be able to implement it in visible ways across the institution. Offering everyone on campus the opportunity to be involved in the defining of the mission was identified in each interview and focus group as a driving force in the success of the transformation. The surprise to almost everyone interviewed in this study was the extensive length of time required before the majority of people on campus could grasp the meaning of the mission. It was the first year after President DePaolo's arrival before there was a general understanding and consensus about the proper definition of a liberal arts university, as applied at GC&SU. As in Conner's theory, the change advanced at a slower pace than expected for a while, but once the critical message was communicated, the speed of change accelerated greatly.

This collective understanding about the implementation of the change process was instrumental in propelling the process forward. The researcher proposes, as a result of this study, that an “institutional defining moment” is a specific occasion during an organizational change process that is recognized by the key members of an organization as a turning point that directly defined the institution’s mission. An “institutional defining moment” is recognized because an event or series of actions correspond with a collective realization about an aspect of the change process. This notion of a “defining moment,” identifying a critical point in the change process, must be visible in a substantial way or through some tangible event that was documented to imply “ownership” of the process. The event or series of actions is recognized by a group of individuals or a division of the organization. “Defining moments” punctuate the change process, allowing leaders and others to build momentum in accomplishing the intended change and lead subsequently to a significant change in direction or nature of an organization.

As illustrated in Chapter 4, many symbols of change facilitated collective understanding from among faculty, staff, students, and administrators. Some examples of “institutional defining moments” discovered in this study were as follows: A) open forums to answer questions about the mission change; B) leadership and campus retreats to solicit input on communicating the message and implementation of the change; C) the hiring of more than sixty new faculty to decrease student-faculty ratio and to enhance the classroom experience; D) key financial decisions supporting actions to change the physical campus; E) The new resident life facilities plan which allowed the campus to begin to create housing to attract students and enhance the living-learning environment;

F) faculty incentives and awards to recognize excellence in teaching to match the liberal arts mission; G) the mission card which symbolized the mission being visible on campus; H) exceeding the institutional goals related to S.A.T. and G.P.A. within four years; I) the addition of Convocation as a visible connection of faculty and students; and J) the combining of the College of Arts and Sciences with the John H. Lounsbury School of Education to represent the congruence of liberal arts philosophy with the methodology of the professional schools.

### **The Importance of Relating the GC&SU Story in Cultural Change**

Georgia College & State University adopted a new mission and immediately its administrators, faculty, staff, and students began to create history by telling the story of the mission change. Some of the institutional history was generated within the framework of difficult decision-making. Both negative and positive accounts were equally significant in the transformation of the campus culture. Telling the change stories helped “manage the speed of change.” The stories also perpetuated the defining moments as people passed them on and began to connect people with the University’s mission. As people told the story, the campus culture evolved. Continuity, organizational congruence, and continued improvement of processes occur at the same time that students are gaining an education. The stories illustrated the mission and “story-tellers” and the characters depicted demonstrated the mission. A mission can be embedded in all aspects of the University if it becomes part of the legendary oral history passed down through the university community. The GC&SU story has been told informally even by those who were not committed originally to its validity. The continuing GC&SU story is

telling about the institution's progress and how the University maintains the vision for the future.

The President has offered narrative accounts to the State Legislature. Multiple stories were communicated among the administrators with faculty to emphasize the change of mission. Faculty members told the stories of the changed mission and how it has affected learning. Staff recognized differences on campus and passed the word to fellow employees.

Several parts of the GC&SU story showed the congruence of multiple facets of the University in one series of direct observation. To illustrate the importance of telling the story throughout the entire campus, the researcher recounts this personal experience as observation while conducting focus groups and interviews on the campus. The researcher offers this account with thick description that sums up how this institution's mission and substantiation of the organizational behavior are aligned. The researcher recounts:

After the staff focus group session, the employees had made it clear that the mission of this University worked because people on this campus are aligned and committed to the mission, though they may implement it in very different ways. Following this staff focus group, there was a challenge for the researcher moving to the next focus group location. The Library's construction in the center of campus placed a barricade across one of the green spaces now turned construction site. While trying to carry the equipment, people across campus not only smiled, but also asked to help and hold doors open. The grounds crew members temporarily turned off the weed eaters as people passed. Realizing that to avoid the construction taking place on two sides of the campus and not wanting to carry the equipment around three other large buildings, the researcher hailed a student driving a University golf cart. In asking for a ride from the student who was running errands for a University department, the researcher asked, "Is it against the rules to help a visitor while on 'official business'?" The junior student, answered without hesitation, "At GC&SU, those are the rules!"

The inconvenience of building is part of the story of adopting and implementing a mission at GC&SU. Individuals' stories transform the institutional mission from a written document into the "fabric" of this university, as one of the interview participants had mentioned. The perspectives of faculty, staff, administration, students, and external Advocates, both positive and negative, blended to connect meaning to a University's mission. Only in qualitative research could this aspect of the transformation of GC&SU be captured. The "thick description" provided by the interview and focus group participants exemplified what statistical research could not have demonstrated in this case study. The institutionalization of the GC&SU mission was demonstrated by the congruence of aligning "an exuberance for learning" with the systematic operation of the University. The stories told from individual perspectives ensured that the changes on campus were adopted as permanent parts of the way that the University educates students and its public, the story of one University's transformation must continue to be told.

### **Conclusions and Implications for Higher Education**

This study was conceived and conducted to discover the following points: 1) how an institution gives meaning to its mission in definable ways and 2) to identify how a change of mission is implemented on campus. The third set of critical research factors gathered from this research were the lessons learned by one institution that could be adopted by peer institutions. The future implications for higher education were developed by the findings identified through interviews and focus groups with the administrators, faculty, and staff members who made the change of University mission at GC&SU a reality.



### Clear Expectations Promote Ownership

Although strategic planning was a critical factor in implementing the new mission at GC&SU, planning processes were kept fluid to accommodate frequent changes.

Allowing the opportunity for continual, yet decisive, input created the process for the University's transformation in a relatively short time period. Expectations and responsibilities were communicated clearly. A unified leadership team was critical for implementing the mission.

Allowing all of the involved "Targets" to have ownership in the process also was a key factor. The involved participants in the process then are motivated to create a structure and make the expectations of that structure apparent throughout all aspects of the institution. Universities are traditionally hierarchical in their structure, but continuously require both positive and negative feedback clarifies actions along the way.

In making recommendations to another campus reviewing the consistent implementation of an institutional mission, the researcher recommends that the college or university first study its communication structure. The leadership should study the lines of communication among academic and functional units to provide for open communication. To instigate a plan for constructive communication, open forums must be hosted to include representatives from across the campus. The campus wide communication is integral to fully implementing a mission. Also, the communication involving the defining of the mission and the tangible ways in which it will be implemented must be reciprocal, not only coming from the senior leadership. Intentionally designed retreats, open forums, interdepartmental meetings, and one-on-one discussions are required to create ownership across a campus culture.

### Flexibility and Resilience in Institutional Decision-Making

The study participants reiterated the need for flexibility in order to be resilient for future change. Even within the midst of planning, administrators found that being willing to change and adopt new plans of action were critical to progress. Also, being prepared for the unknown allowed the administrators to respond vigorously rather than react aggressively. The surprise events and chaotic periods were often later identified as catalysts for change.

In offering recommendations to another campus, the researcher suggests that the senior leaders must display a penchant for flexibility in order to create a culture in which people are willing to make mistakes and change ways of thinking. To implement this mindset, the senior leaders must not only talk openly about trying new ideas and implementing new programs, but must be open to discuss with other leaders, faculty members, and staff how the implementation will be approached. Creating plans for action as a collective campus, as well as facing the challenges and setbacks together, creates a culture conducive for sustainable change.

### Building an Image

GC&SU leadership acknowledged immediately the need for communicating the message not only across campus, but also across the State of Georgia. The approach far exceeded the realm of public relations alone, but took the approach of involvement in the state. The GC&SU faculty, staff, and administration invested time in communicating the message internally to be assured that the external message was consistent. GC&SU believes in “selling their product” which is not a comfortable phrase in higher education,

but the participants are confident that raised awareness with external Advocates, parents and prospective students prompted University support.

Another campus needs to create a consistent message that promotes the mission, whether new or old. Marketing is now a very real part of recruitment and donor relations for a college or university. The researcher recommends that a campus that is serious about implementing a mission should diligently develop a consistent message and deliberately deliver the message to stakeholders, both internally and externally.

### Thanks and Celebration

The GC&SU leadership determined that thanking people often and celebrating small and large successes was a strong element of the successful change process. People were asked to work long hours, attend events outside of their area, serve on multiple committees, and extend their responsibilities in order to make the mission materialize. People were thanked often, informally and formally, and individual and group achievements were celebrated to inspire future change.

In addition to the job requirements of administrators, faculty, and staff, the members of the campus community must be encouraged to further their efforts to implement the mission by consistently being thanked for their service. This concept of continual gratitude must be evidenced within each campus unit and should be publicly demonstrated by senior leadership. A campus will only be able to show evidence of a meaningful, consistent mission if people feel motivated to be involved in that mission. Their efforts will multiply only if the faculty, staff, and administrators receive sincere acknowledgement of their work to create positive change.

### Carefully Managing the University Resources

Though it is not of popular appeal in the field of higher education to refer to a University as a business, the GC&SU administrators agreed that making strategic business decisions facilitated the accomplishment of objectives. Sacrificing some programs or aspects of the University (i.e., off-campus centers) returned the focus to the central operations. Improving quality without affecting students or other “Targets” negatively was the driving force for change.

Any campus, including GC&SU, must make sure that attention is paid to the fiscal details not only during the change of mission, but going forward. At the time of this study, the University System of Georgia was experiencing significant budgetary cutbacks, at a time when additional funds were needed to implement the mission. This financial challenge required GC&SU to approach financial decisions from a seemingly entrepreneurial approach, as in the development of the residential housing projects, funded by bonds. Fundraising has to be expanded for a public college or university, with the same commitment as a private school. Likewise, fiscal accountability must be approached at times from a business standpoint, determining critical expenditures and closely watching time lines. The business, finance, and institutional advancement divisions need to work collaboratively with operational units to create an understanding that the business side of educating students must be aligned with the academic and student services aspects of higher education. Sharp attention must be given to the financial approach to higher education.

### Assessing Processes

The GC&SU administrators, faculty, and staff learned that after decisions were made and processes were established, it was important to continually assess processes to see how systems might be improved to make future decisions. The study participants found it difficult to want to retrace their implementation steps. However, they found the process of analyzing the more difficult problems to be excellent preparation for the future. One administrator said, “We should have done a lot more research than we did, I guess, if I had to think about it backwards.”

Other campuses approaching a pervasive implementation of mission should create different types of systems in which different individuals check processes and functional units of the college or university. In order to continually assess progress, the earlier recommendation of open communication and decision-making must be established. However, it is critical to keep assessment functions balanced with actual action steps and movement toward specific and measurable goals. Too much assessment, with little active response can slow progress. Momentum toward the mission’s implementation and collective goals is a driver in the strategic change process. Energy applied to the change process is directly related to the level of goals achieved.

### Acknowledging and Addressing Obstacles

Numerous obstacles were clearly identified in this study of cultural change through mission implementation. At GC&SU, the obstacles identified were: A) fear of the unknown on the part of the campus community related to leadership style and the implications of the early change in administration; B) lack of definition of the mission

which caused uncertainty and confusion C) lack of willingness by some (initially) to change teaching or functional approaches, D) additional time required by faculty, staff, and administrators which caused poor attitudes, E) the current student body required advanced understanding about the mission and the implications of it before change could occur; F) people on campus did not think there was a need for change, that the status quo was acceptable; G) fear of the known; trepidation existed because of the changes that were imminent on a campus where mistrust was evident and decision-making had been hierarchical; H) the speed of the change; the fast pace created fear; and I) fear of the potential loss of professional schools and programs.

GC&SU claims the designation of a public liberal arts institution as defined by COPLAC standards, which is a small group of campuses selected on the national level. Not only is pressure applied for a liberal arts institution to produce students who can think critically and analyze problems effectively, but also to produce citizens who will become an active part of the state's democracy, referring back to the Jeffersonian ideals of a liberal education. The expectation of the State of Georgia is that GC&SU is to produce graduates who will serve the state well, professionally and through public service.

The other expectation of a public institution is that it is a strong member of the University System and offers reciprocity of offerings along with its 33 cohort campuses within the System. A distinctive liberal arts campus must offer a curriculum that is different from the comprehensive colleges and universities. In trying to create more of a liberal arts core curriculum specifically, GC&SU has found difficulty because of the transferability requirements placed on all state institutions. Previous attempts to overhaul the core curriculum have been squelched by the limitations of State requirements. This

obstacle poses a poignant question for the GC&SU campus as well as other public liberal arts institutions.

Earlier references to the writings of Delucchi and Breneman identified the school of thought that curriculum is coupled with a true liberal arts education. A liberal arts institution, as designated by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, is required to award 40 per cent of its degrees in Arts and Sciences. Liberal education is also expected to be strongly reflected in its core curriculum in order to distinguish itself from other public institutions. Breneman (1994) argued that liberal arts institutions are constantly in a struggle to offer both liberal education and practical education. GC&SU must address this issue of curriculum, especially related to their core courses, to create a curriculum unique to the University System of Georgia. To clearly establish itself as a distinctive liberal arts university, the researcher suggests that GC&SU must change its core curriculum.

How this campus approaches curricular changes in the next few years will be vital to the university's success in distinguishing itself as a liberal arts campus, varying from the other 33 campuses in Georgia. The National Survey for Student Engagement (NSSE) reinforces measures of success by including evaluations of the curriculum and the emphasis on research and writing (i.e., writing research papers of 20 or more pages). To accommodate both curricular needs and external expectations, GC&SU may need to consider "infusion" of specific aspects into the current curriculum in order to meet current student needs and expectations. Infusing new educational components into the current courses could change the learning outcomes of the course, but not interfere with transferability.

Identifying the relatively large number of obstacles in the mission change process does not complete this study. A categorical listing of the obstacles is not included to create anxiety for the college administrator attempting a mission change or recommitment. The researcher suggests that a critical step in the mission implementation process is to honestly and openly acknowledge obstacles in order to address them constructively. A college or university environment in which mistakes or problems are denied or ignored will not easily produce a culture that is driven by a meaningful mission.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

This study may inspire future research in higher education related to the topic of mission-driven change on university and college campuses. Some suggested future studies include:

- A) Descriptions of mission implementation at other types of institutions and mission;
- B) Analysis of the impact of liberal arts education on career advancement in the twenty-first century;
- C) The impact of liberal arts colleges as sources of employees for the private sector;
- D) A longitudinal study on the impact of liberal arts colleges on the economic development of the state;
- E) Profiles of leaders as champions or visionaries specifically related to mission implementation;



- F) Analysis of how customization of out-of-classroom experiences can influence the momentum of a campus responsive to change;
- G) Study of how a public liberal arts university can adopt the fundraising patterns of a private liberal arts college;
- H) The branding of a public liberal arts institution and the importance of a consistent message in the field of higher education;
- I) Strategies for reducing limitations at public institutions where core curriculum is mandated; and
- J) The critical differences between public liberal arts education and private liberal arts education.

### **Closing Comments**

To pursue a fully realized liberal arts mission, the following recommendations for the University were developed at a recent leadership retreat on the GC&SU campus, with the researcher returning to a facilitator role. GC&SU must focus on the following challenges in the immediate future.

1. To further its approach toward reducing the faculty-student ratio to under 20:1 for all classes, the topic of class size and faculty/staff workload must be addressed. With the additional 80 faculty members hired in the 2001-2002 school year, this adds a large number of first year faculty, who will not carry the full load of teaching in their first semester, which does not address the faculty-student ratio problem. Even though GC&SU has added faculty

members, additional challenges develop due to the need for staff support and physical space to accommodate the additional professors.

2. The GC&SU campus must implement an aggressive funding initiative related both to state support and private funding. To continue to move toward the goals set for the campus, financial support is required at a level higher than ever faced by the campus. Both state and private support for programs and private funding for scholarships are vital to the continuing recruitment of the top-level students. The University's strides in raising their S.A.T. and G.P.A. requirements also pose a challenge in that they now attract even more scholarship students with a 1200 S.A.T. score or above. Attracting the students and being able to enroll them usually is a function of available scholarship funds.
3. GC&SU has received acclaim because of its movement from Tier 3 to Tier 2 in the U.S. News and World Report rankings of colleges and universities. The researcher encourages GC&SU to not only aim for higher rankings on paper, but to continually assess actions and behaviors on campus to ensure that achievements in rankings translate into improved educational practices and services for its students.

This study offers a breadth and depth of findings related to the experience of one university campus. This campus not only adopted a new mission, but a new way of educating students from an inclusive campus approach. The GC&SU administrators, faculty, staff, and students did not agree to be a part of this research under the assumption that this campus had created a solitary model for institutional mission implementation.

However, this campus offered an environment that provided rich content for this research. The lessons learned in the GC&SU process may provide insight to other colleges and universities focused on creating a mission meaningfully applied throughout all aspects of campus life. Also, the findings and conclusions may provide valuable data for policy makers in the field of higher education

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## **APPENDIXES**

**APPENDIX A**  
**CONSENT FORMS**

**CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN INTERVIEWS RELATED TO  
THE RESEARCH OF GEORGIA COLLEGE & STATE UNIVERSITY**

**by Genie Snyder, Ed. D. candidate, Institute of Higher Education, The University of Georgia**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree

(full name printed)

to take part in a research study titled “ Making Meaning Out of Mission: A Case Study of Georgia College & State University.” This research is being conducted by Genie Snyder, Institute of Higher Education, Meigs Hall, The University of Georgia, Athens, GA 30602, tel: 706.353.3578. She is conducting the research under the direction of Dr. Ronald Simpson, faculty advisor, Institute of Higher Education, Meigs Hall, The University of Georgia, Athens, GA 30602, tel: 706.546.8385. I do not have to take part in this study; I can stop taking part in this study at any time without giving reason, and without penalty. I can ask to have information related to me, returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

I understand that I will be offered a member review of the transcripts of my interview prior to the researcher using the information in the study.

The reason for the study is to provide a case study for researchers in the field of higher education. The topic is the transformation of a university during the process of applying a new liberal arts mission. As an observer of the process, I will be able to offer my unique perspective about the changes on campus resulting from the redirection of the GC&SU mission. I will not be compensated for my involvement in the research, but am offering my expertise as a volunteer.

As a participant in this study, I will be asked to participate in an individual interview for approximately one hour in length that will be taped only for this research. The interview will take place in a mutually agreed upon location. I will also have the opportunity to review the transcript of my interview. The interview will be audiotaped in order to prepare transcripts. The interview tapes will be destroyed three years after the completion of the project.

No discomforts are expected. No participant risks are expected. My name and directly associated comments will be held confidential, though some of my responses may be included as part of the comments from the GC&SU Senior Leadership Administrative Team.

However, records and transcripts will be seen only by the researcher and transcriber. No names with direct comments will be released to anyone else, but the compiled information will be used in the direct study only. All information will be kept private.

The researcher will be happy to answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project, and can be reached at 706.353.3578.

My signature below indicates that the researchers have answered all of my questions to my satisfaction and that I consent to volunteer for this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Researcher, Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant, Date

For questions or problems about your rights, please call or write Chris A. Joseph, Ph.D., Human Subjects Office, University of Georgia, 606A Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, GA 30602-7411; telephone 706.542.6514; email: [IRB@uga.edu](mailto:IRB@uga.edu)

**CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN FACULTY FOCUS GROUP  
RELATED TO THE RESEARCH ON  
GEORGIA COLLEGE & STATE UNIVERSITY**

**by Genie Snyder, Ed. D. candidate, Institute of Higher Education, The University of Georgia**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree

(full name printed)

to take part in a research study titled “ A Case Study of Georgia College & State University: The evolution of a regional comprehensive college to the state liberal arts university of the state of Georgia.” This research is being conducted by Genie Snyder, Institute of Higher Education, Meigs Hall, The University of Georgia, Athens, GA 30602, tel: 706.353.3578. She is conducting the research under the direction of Dr. Ronald Simpson, faculty advisor, Institute of Higher Education, Meigs Hall, The University of Georgia, Athens, GA 30602, tel: 706.546.8385. I do not have to take part in this study; I can stop taking part in this study at any time without giving reason, and without penalty. I can ask to have information related to me, returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

The reason for the study is to provide a case study for researchers in the field of higher education. The topic is the transformation of a university during the process of applying a new liberal arts mission. As an observer of the process, I will be able to offer my unique perspective about the changes on campus resulting from the redirection of the GC&SU mission. I will not be compensated for my involvement in the research, but am offering my expertise as a volunteer.

As a participant in this study, I will be asked to participate in a focus group session with other GC&SU faculty for no more than 1.5 hours in length that will be taped only for this research. The focus group session will take place in a location on the GC&SU campus. The focus group session will be audiotaped in order to prepare transcripts. The interview tapes will be destroyed three years after the completion of the project.

No discomforts are expected. No participant risks are expected. My name and directly associated comments will be held confidential, though some of my responses may be included as part of the comments from the GC&SU faculty focus group.

However, records and transcripts will be seen only by the researcher and transcriber. No names with direct comments will be released to anyone else, but the compiled information will be used in the direct study only. All information will be kept private. The interview tapes will be kept by the researcher for three years.

The researcher will be happy to answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project, and can be reached at 706.353.3578.

My signature below indicates that the researchers have answered all of my questions to my satisfaction and that I consent to volunteer for this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Researcher, Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant, Date

For questions or problems about your rights, please call or write Chris A. Joseph, Ph.D., Human Subjects Office, University of Georgia, 606A Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, GA 30602-7411; telephone 706.542.6514; email: IRB@uga.edu

**CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN STAFF FOCUS GROUP  
RELATED TO THE RESEARCH OF  
GEORGIA COLLEGE & STATE UNIVERSITY**

*by Genie Snyder, Ed. D. candidate, Institute of Higher Education, The University of Georgia*

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree

*(full name printed)*

to take part in a research study titled “ A Case Study of Georgia College & State University: The evolution of a regional comprehensive college to the state liberal arts university of the state of Georgia.” This research is being conducted by Genie Snyder, Institute of Higher Education, Meigs Hall, The University of Georgia, Athens, GA 30602, tel: 706.353.3578. She is conducting the research under the direction of Dr. Ronald Simpson, staff advisor, Institute of Higher Education, Meigs Hall, The University of Georgia, Athens, GA 30602, tel: 706.546.8385. I do not have to take part in this study; I can stop taking part in this study at any time without giving reason, and without penalty. I can ask to have information related to me, returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

The reason for the study is to provide a case study for researchers in the field of higher education. The topic is the transformation of a university during the process of applying a new liberal arts mission. As an observer of the process, I will be able to offer my unique perspective about the changes on campus resulting from the redirection of the GC&SU mission. I will not be compensated for my involvement in the research, but am offering my expertise as a volunteer.

As a participant in this study, I will be asked to participate in a focus group session with other GC&SU staff for no more than 1.5 hours in length which will be taped only for this research. The focus group session will take place in a location on the GC&SU campus. The focus group session will be audiotaped in order to prepare transcripts. The interview tapes will be destroyed three years after the completion of the project.

No discomforts are expected. No participant risks are expected. My name and directly associated comments will be held confidential, though some of my responses may be included as part of the comments from the GC&SU staff focus group.

However, records and transcripts will be seen only by the researcher and transcriber. No names with direct comments will be released to anyone else, but the compiled information will be used in the direct study only. All information will be kept private. The interview tapes will be kept by the researcher for three years.

The researcher will be happy to answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project, and can be reached at 706.353.3578.

My signature below indicates that the researchers have answered all of my questions to my satisfaction and that I consent to volunteer for this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Researcher, Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant, Date

For questions or problems about your rights, please call or write Chris A. Joseph, Ph.D., Human Subjects Office, University of Georgia, 606A Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, GA 30602-7411; telephone 706.542.6514; email: [IRB@uga.edu](mailto:IRB@uga.edu)



**CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN STUDENT FOCUS GROUP  
RELATED TO THE RESEARCH OF  
GEORGIA COLLEGE & STATE UNIVERSITY**  
by Genie Snyder, Ed. D. candidate, Institute of Higher Education, The University of Georgia

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree

(full name printed)

to take part in a research study titled “ A Case Study of Georgia College & State University: The evolution of a regional comprehensive college to the state liberal arts university of the state of Georgia.” This research is being conducted by Genie Snyder, Institute of Higher Education, Meigs Hall, The University of Georgia, Athens, GA 30602, tel: 706.353.3578. She is conducting the research under the direction of Dr. Ronald Simpson, student advisor, Institute of Higher Education, Meigs Hall, The University of Georgia, Athens, GA 30602, tel: 706.546.8385. I do not have to take part in this study; I can stop taking part in this study at any time without giving reason, and without penalty. I can ask to have information related to me, returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

The reason for the study is to provide a case study for researchers in the field of higher education. The topic is the transformation of a university during the process of applying a new liberal arts mission. As an observer of the process, I will be able to offer my unique perspective about the changes on campus resulting from the redirection of the GC&SU mission. I will not be compensated for my involvement in the research, but am offering my expertise as a volunteer.

As a participant in this study, I will be asked to participate in a focus group session with other GC&SU students for no more than 1.5 hours in length which will be taped only for this research. The focus group session will take place in a location on the GC&SU campus. The focus group session will be audiotaped in order to prepare transcripts. The interview tapes will be destroyed three years after the completion of the project.

No discomforts are expected. No participant risks are expected. My name and directly associated comments will be held confidential, though some of my responses may be included as part of the comments from the GC&SU student focus group.

However, records and transcripts will be seen only by the researcher and transcriber. No names with direct comments will be released to anyone else, but the compiled information will be used in the direct study only. All information will be kept private. The interview tapes will be kept by the researcher for three years.

The researcher will be happy to answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project, and can be reached at 706.353.3578.

My signature below indicates that the researchers have answered all of my questions to my satisfaction and that I consent to volunteer for this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Researcher, Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant, Date

For questions or problems about your rights, please call or write Chris A. Joseph, Ph.D., Human Subjects Office, University of Georgia, 606A Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, GA 30602-7411; telephone 706.542.6514; email: IRB@uga.edu.

## **APPENDIX B**

### **INTERVIEW GUIDE**

*Submitted in conjunction with Human Subjects Application for Genie Snyder, Ed. D.  
candidate in Higher Education*

#### **Senior Administrative Leadership Interview Questions**

1. How have you been involved/what role did you play related to the change of mission for GC&SU over the past four years?
2. After the decision was made to change the mission, what were the most important driving forces that propelled the process forward related to the GC&SU mission change?
3. How did the campus as a whole (or as specific parts) begin to buy in to the new mission and its ramifications?
4. How did the people/groups in your area conduct the process of adopting the new mission as a liberal arts university?
5. What were the obstacles/causes for resistance?
6. What were the easiest paths?
7. What are the most significant changes in the GC&SU culture in the past 4-5 years? What culture changes would show objective viewers that you have changed your mission?
8. What does GC&SU status as a liberal arts university mean for the State of Georgia?
9. What are the lessons learned from this process that others in higher education need to know about?

### **Current President Interview Questions**

1. What were your perceptions of the mission or culture of GC&SU prior to the change of mission?
2. What were the factors that led to the designation of GC&SU as the public liberal arts university of Georgia?
3. How did you begin the process of changing the mission in tangible ways?
4. What were the key variables you studied before the change?
5. How did you implement your role as the leader of the change of mission for GC&SU over the past four-five years?
6. After the decision was made to change the mission, what were the most important driving forces that propelled the process forward related to the GC&SU mission change?
7. How did the campus as a whole (or as specific parts) begin to buy in to the new mission and its ramifications?
8. How did the faculty, staff and students conduct the process of adopting the new mission as a liberal arts university?
9. What were the obstacles/causes for resistance?
10. What were the easiest paths?
11. What are the most significant changes in the GC&SU culture in the past 4-5 years? What culture changes would show objective viewers that you have changed your mission?
12. What does GC&SU status as a liberal arts university mean for the State of Georgia?
13. What are the lessons learned from this process that others in higher education need to know about?

### **Former President Interview Questions**

1. What were the factors that led to the development of Georgia College as a regional comprehensive university?
2. How did you lead the changing of the culture in tangible ways during your early years?
3. What were the key variables you studied before the change to a university from a college status?
4. How did you implement your role as the leader in growing the GC campus?
5. What were the most important driving forces that propelled the growth of GC&SU during the 80's and 90's?
6. Please describe the culture of GC&SU in 1992-1997.
7. What changes happened to create the culture of GC/GC&SU in the 90's?
8. What are the most significant changes for Georgia College during your tenure?
9. From your perspective now, what lessons learned by GC&SU offer insight into the larger scope of higher education?

## **APPENDIX C**

### **FOCUS GROUP GUIDE**

*Submitted in conjunction with Human Subjects Application for Genie Snyder, Ed. D.  
candidate in Higher Education*

#### **Student Focus Group Questions**

1. How do you define liberal arts?
2. What does it mean to be a student at a liberal arts university?
3. What are the most important driving forces that you have witnessed related to the GC&SU mission change?
4. How did students buy in to the new mission and its ramifications?
5. What were the key differences that you have witnessed over the past four-five years for students related to the new liberal arts mission?
6. How has your interaction with faculty changed since your freshman year?
7. How would you describe the culture of GC&SU now (what would you tell a prospective student?)
8. What are the advantages to graduating from GC&SU, a liberal arts university, related to your career plans?
9. Any disadvantages?

#### **Faculty Focus Group Questions**

1. After the decision was made to change the mission, what were the most important driving forces that propelled the process forward related to the GC&SU mission change?
2. How did the campus as a whole (or as specific parts) begin to buy in to the new mission and its ramifications?
3. What were the key changes over the past four-five years in academics related to the new liberal arts mission?
4. What were the key changes over the past four-five years for faculty related to the new liberal arts mission?
5. What were the key changes over the past four-five years for students related to the new liberal arts mission?
6. How has your student body changed?
7. What were the obstacles/causes for resistance?
8. What were the easiest paths?

9. What are the most significant changes in the GC&SU culture in the past 4-5 years? What culture changes would show objective viewers that you have changed your mission?
10. What are the lessons learned from this process that others in higher education need to know about?
11. What are the lessons learned for a liberal arts campus exclusively?

### **Staff Focus Group Questions**

1. After the decision was made to change the mission, what were the most important driving forces that propelled the process forward related to the GC&SU mission change?
2. How did the campus as a whole (or as specific parts) begin to buy in to the new mission and its ramifications?
3. What were the key changes over the past four-five years for staff related to the new liberal arts mission?
4. How has your interaction with students changed?
5. What were the obstacles/causes for resistance?
6. What were the easiest paths?
7. What are the most significant changes in the GC&SU culture in the past 4-5 years? What culture changes would show objective viewers that you have changed your mission?
8. What are the lessons learned from this process that others in higher education need to know about?

## **APPENDIX D**

### **GEORGIA COLLEGE & STATE UNIVERSITY SENIOR ADMINISTRATIVE**

#### **LEADERSHIP TEAM**

#### **STRATEGIC PLANNING RETREAT SUMMARY, JULY 16-17, 1998**

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The members of the Georgia College & State University Senior Administrative met on Thursday & Friday, July 16-17, 1998, for a strategic planning team retreat. The retreat was facilitated by Genie Snyder, Snyder Remarks. The group met to begin the strategic planning process and to discuss the priorities that will match the mission of GC&SU and move the team forward into FY99 and beyond. The discussions also centered on the team's wanting to move to an even more effective level of teamwork and communication than they have experienced.

After an introductory exercise related to teambuilding and student needs, the group began discussing their expectations of the retreat. Their responses are listed below.

#### **What do you expect of this retreat or this team?**

- Teambuilding needed
- To develop improved communication
- To refine the mission
- To expand the mission
- To set goals
- Focus on what we're doing
- To deal with some of the issues
- Come out with a plan; have clear direction on where we are going
- Attempt to remove perceived threats

Following a discussion about their expectations of the retreat and each other, the group began to discuss the importance of their communication with each other. They each committed to making this retreat as successful as possible by developing a meeting code. The following guidelines represent how they agreed to communicate both in this meeting and on this team.

## Meeting Code

- Civil discourse
- Don't be defensive
- Be positive
- Be constructive
- Be supportive of ideas
- Be risk taking
- Bring up ideas
- Even if we don't agree, support the innovation of others
- Look at options
- Pool our resources
- Don't point a finger; lend a hand
- Exhibit tolerance
- Have fun! (not at the expense of others)
- Get to know people better & their workstyles
- Working with our bosses
- Work on communication styles
- Agree on a common set of expectations
- Share with each other how to bring about a culture change as a team
- Let go of the past!
- Give and receive constructive criticism
- Remove the fear

They then reviewed pre-retreat questionnaires. After discussion about each question, the participants divided into small groups and reviewed the questionnaire responses. One group reviewed each question. They were asked to report to the group the patterns and significant issues they identified in each question. Their responsibility was two-fold. They were to summarize the information, but simultaneously, they worked together in an exercise of reporting accurately their colleagues' ideas and comments. The summaries are as follows:

### **1. In order to accomplish the mission statement of GC&SU, what are the issues that we need to address?**

- We have an understanding, but we need to operationalize what we are going to do
- A lot of confusion about the mission
- Must talk about it, but we must do something about the mission so we can meet the other issues
- State who we are, what are our resources — then we can move forward

- Need cooperation from all

**2. As a part of our mission, we describe ourselves as “student-centered.” How do you define this term and how does it relate to our mission?**

- It is not our only responsibility to set standards for students, but to support them to meet standards.
- It is our reason for being, essential
- Without it, there’s nothing to distinguish us
- Reason, respect & responsibility— they are all important for students; we must expect the best for students and give them our best
- Investigate everything we do on campus to serve students; become partners with students; learn from them
- Emphasis on learning, not teaching
- Teaching students, not subjects, in and out of classroom

**3. What is the function/purpose of a liberal arts university?**

- Integrate knowledge
- Critical creative thought
- Problem-solving; thinking
- Lifelong learning
- High academic quality
- Communication skills
- Personal, as well as career development
- Learn by participating in dialogue
- Responsible community involvement
- Ethical values orientation - social responsibility
- Being a fully engaged human being
- Pioneering skills & tools
- Risk taking
- Appreciative of diversity
- Strong general curriculum
- Freedom of mind
- Receptive of unpopular ideas



#### **4. What aspect of our mission is most exciting or challenging to you?**

##### Challenging

- There is a lack of understanding of liberal arts particularly among our external audiences, etc.
- Need to buy-in to the mission
- Need funding adequate to accomplish the mission (in all areas)
- Fear of change

##### Exciting

- Liberal arts distinguishes us
- Statewide mission offers the opportunity for greater outreach
- Change is exciting; need to explore new world
- New leadership & clear direction
- We're going to walk the talk

#### **5. What is your greatest frustration related to implementing our mission?**

- Physical facilities
- Perceived lack of resources (from staff to pencils)
- Lack of clarity of what mission means
- Fear factor within the system
- Resistance to change & its speed
- Competitiveness & lack of teamwork
- Lack of clarity in outreach (off-campus programs, concepts of distance learning, continuing education, etc.)
- Our decisions affect each other

After discussing the patterns that were evident in the corporate responses on the questionnaires, the group then began to identify some of the issues related to communicating their mission and purpose. The group was aware not only of the complexity of the GC&SU mission, but also they were keenly aware of the need for the senior administrative team to have a well-understood mission.

The participants then divided into different subgroups and worked to write several mission statements. Through a group process, they then determined collectively the key phrases and ideas that were created by the different groups. They created, after much editing and rewriting, a mission statement for the Senior Administrative Team. This mission statement is to guide them in supporting the University's mission.

**Mission:**

**We foster a climate that engages the University community in creating a learning environment for accomplishing our student-centered liberal arts mission.**

The group then began to move forward in their planning by envisioning the University in five years (2003). Through a creative exercise, each participant began to envision specific changes they would want to see throughout the campus — related to programs, students, faculty staff, physical plant, curriculum, etc.

After the entire group created an image of where they wanted the campus to move, they then concentrated on where they wanted to see this team as a part of the progress — and focused on changes they would like to see in the next three years. By responding to phrases lifted from their new mission statement, they listed the points to “put feet” to their mission. They listed on flipcharts what they were willing to be a part of to further the mission of this team and GC&SU. Their responses are listed below:

**Fostering**

- Mission focused faculty developments
- Faculty-student research
- International experience
- Giving tangible encouragement
- Team building exercises for all faculty/staff (to build trust)
- “My” students are “our” students
- Emphasis on education inside and outside the classroom
- Faculty-staff interaction

**Climate**

- Work - play hard
- Trust will be natural
- Respect for differences
- Cohesive
- Support of others
- Enthusiasm
- Relaxed & risk-taking
- On-going scholarly discussions
- Appetite for learning
- Asking, “How can I help?”
- Encouraging positive attitudes
- Friendships

### **Engaging the University Community**

- Service learning as part of academic courses
- Challenge grants & awards for mission supportive activities
- Letting everyone have a say
- Respect for diversity
- Partnerships with City/County
- Milledgeville community frequently comes out to front campus
- Broad community
- There will be less of “we vs. they”
- Creating forums for discussion of issues
- Involving staff in decision making

### **Communication**

- Meeting regularly
- Talking regularly, openly
- Talking with each other, not about each other
- Frequent, informal conversation beyond the classroom
- Monthly published updates related to mission
- Priority setting body
- More meetings/productive ones
- Web site for sharing activities of each unit
- More regular communications with faculty & staff about issues on campus
- Get a handle on what the mission means for all employees
- All fully involved; all contributing in their own way
- More than one way to do things; my way is not always correct
- Listen to another point of view; walk in some else’s moccasins
- Let go of ego
- What is best for the student?
- Demonstrate understanding; not be instantly critical; give feedback

### **Learning Environment**

- Academically-oriented students
- Hi-tech and hi-touch
- Service learning opportunities
- Respect for ideas
- Interdisciplinary projects
- Cross-disciplinary teaching
- Happening in & out of classroom
- Residential living/learning units with resident faculty/staff leaders

- How can staff get more involved in learning process?
- Greater challenge & support

### **Student-Centered**

- Making sure everyone makes the time to help students when needed
- Senior year experience
- Student involvement in decision making
- CUR/student-faculty collaboration
- Expanded faculty office hours
- Residence hall upgrades
- Students & faculty together at meals/events
- Attending students events regularly
- Expanded library hours in new library
- Scheduling revised for student needs
- Student access to facilities

The group then was able to create a vision statement, driven by the mission, to move them toward their goals for the next five years. The vision statement for the Senior Administrative Team is listed below:

#### **Vision:**

**We will be the leadership team that facilitates the change of GC&SU from a comprehensive University to a premier liberal arts institution.**

Following the creation of the vision, Dr. DePaolo presented to the group some statistics related to the rankings of GC&SU. The statistics reported on all facets of the University including admissions, graduation rate, retention, faculty/student ratio, etc. The main emphasis was that all of the information brought was related to student satisfaction at GC&SU. If the University is going to truly move forward to meet significant change and the mission of a liberal arts institution, the group must take ownership in the fact that they need to address the critical factors and issues. They agreed to work to not only raise their ranking to third in some statewide categories but also address more effectively student needs. 1999 is a strategic year.

\*It was determined that methodology statements be retrieved in order for the team to understand better the indicators and their sources. Senior staff will follow up on this matter.

Following Dr. DePaolo's presentation and an extensive discussion, the participants began to set 5-year goals related to improving particular aspects of academic & student life at GC&SU. The goals are listed below, taking the team from 1999 to 2003 in manageable incremental stages.

**GC&SU Goals**

	<u>1999</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>2001</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>
<b>Graduation Rate</b>	45%	50%	55%	60%	65%
<b>Avg. SAT</b>	1010	1020	1040	1060	1100
<b>Avg. GPA</b>	3.0	3.1	3.2	3.3	3.4
<b>Faculty/Student Ratio</b>	22/1	20/1	19/1	18/1	17/1
<b>Retention</b>	85%	88%	92%	94%	95%

With these goals being clearly defined, the group then brought their focus specifically to 1998-99. Individually they wrote specific actions that they would like to see take place in the 1998-99 University year in order to take GC&SU to a first tier school in the rankings and related to student satisfaction indicators. They divided their specific statements into categories through a group process (affinity mapping) — then were able to identify seven areas on which they plan to concentrate this year.

The categories were placed in priority order through a relationships diagram. They were reviewed according to which issues influenced the others more. In other words, if improvements were made in one category, would other areas improve as a result of the actions? The categories for creating action plans are listed below with the responsible team members assigned to each. Three of the categories and the initial stages of creating action plans were addressed at the retreat. The team members are working following the retreat to create additional plans prior to the August 13 follow-up retreat.

- 1. Teambuilding**
- 2. Planning**
- 3. Financial Resources**
- 4. Review Academic Programs**
- 5. Reward Structure**
- 6. Student Distinctives**
- 7. Advisement/Recruitment/Retention**

Action plans for some of the areas were begun, though work will continue and new plans, dates for completion and responsible parties will be added after the August 13 retreat.

### **1. Team Building Action Plans**

Meet at least once each month with every other meeting off campus  
 Hold annual overnight retreat  
 Maintain rules of conduct in meeting (and all other interactions)  
 Celebrate successes  
 Display a unified front (This will lead by example)  
 Provide opportunities for all types of training (people skills, team building skills, customer/student service)  
 Make field trips to other successful liberal arts schools  
 Make one phone call before you mail

### **2. Planning - Action Plans**

#### **Mission Issues**

- Review University mission
- Clarify the term “liberal arts”
- Create a newsletter on the web once per semester

#### **Planning**

- Task groups meet for planning before the 8/13 meeting
- Plan a follow-up retreat for 8/13
- Develop planning goals university-wide
- Develop divisional strategic plans
- Identify expectations for student/community outcomes
- Address the Student Satisfaction Survey
- Develop a technology plan

#### **Benchmarking**

- “ Set the bar”-- benchmarks, goals to become a Tier One institution
- Quantify Student/Community outcomes
- Set admission goals
- Report benchmark data accurately
- Make team visits to other schools

### 3. Financial Resources Action Plans

#### Advancement

- Expand advancement team; hire new advancement team members
- Develop a financial plan
- Promote annual giving
  - Introduce faculty giving for student scholarships
  - Implement “Golden Slipper Campaign -- class-based, decade-based

#### Campus Projects

- Participate in new faculty SFI (Chancellor’s plan)
- Hire consultant to promote library building/books endowment
- Build coffee house
- Build intramural fields through lumber sales
- Work with private developers to develop Nesbitt Woods
- Develop plans for wellness center
- Present health sciences annex to Fine Arts Center to Board of Regents
- Plan strategy for fine arts center
- Discussion/planning for courthouse
- Hire firm to do campus master plan
- Make plans for University formal entrance

As the retreat concluded, the participants understood the importance not only of this meeting but also of the significance of the planning and communication that would be products of this initial work. The entire team made a commitment to their ownership of the mission and vision of this team. It was identified that each person on the GC&SU faculty and staff must join in the effort to move the institution to a new level— to distinguish Georgia College & State University as something unique. They agreed to build on the past but make clear what “liberal arts” means in 2000 and beyond. Their parting motto was:

**GC&SU — It’s a Total Experience!**

## Teambuilding

- Continue teambuilding
- Put commitment in place to begin working on Thursday objective
- Throw a “party”
- Set regular meeting times
- Set another meeting for us
- Share information
- Stay in touch
- Meet, talk, work together
- Reduce paperwork
- Do our thing and watch others for help
- My faculty are our faculty
- Smile
- Say hello
- Be positive
- Call with problem - don't e-mail and copy
- Visibility: attend, participate
- Promote each other
- Listen
- Relax
- Get faculty and staff on board
- Stimulate a feeling of “community” on campus
- Train all staff in service attitude
- Get on the green
- Eliminate internal barriers
- Collaborate: cross unit lines
- Plan quarterly day long strategy sessions with this group away from the office
- Keep communications going with this group at least once a month

## Planning

- Team visits other colleges
- Involve everyone in recruitment and retention
- Involve all faculty in recruitment
- Collect baseline data
- Develop a technology plan
- Put the mission into all operations
- Establish a mission newsletter
- Develop University wide vision street
- Get a clear mission statement written



- Re-write Georgia College & State University mission statement
- New mission statement
- Establish specific objectives campus-wide
- Plan together
- Set the bar
- Update 5 year strategic plan
- Identify goals
- Update divisional strategic plans
- Develop plan to address survey results
- Develop expected student outcomes for University
- Report benchmarks favorably
- Set admission goals

### **Advisement, Recruitment, Retention**

- Create intervention system
- Freshman seminar
- Career oriented program
- Career development tracks
- Better class schedule
- Upgrade residence halls
- Reform food services
- Expand recreational hours
- Involve students/alumni in the change
- Make time with students count - clarify what to accomplish
- Conduct student focus group on library
- Partner with high schools to attract students
- Improve advisement
- Identify/remedial students at risk
- Advisors become mentors
- Early warning intervention
- Revise/evaluate advisement process
- Student advisory groups
- Retention task force
- Set up early intervention program
- Establish student assistance task force
- Try to have lunch with a student at least once a month
- Change the culture from regional service to student-centered
- Increase student involvement in decision making
- School/college new student receptions
- “Adopt” a student
- Call best students

- Increase recruitment
- Work to eliminate reasons students leave
- Work on tutoring program

### **Review Academic Program**

- Redirect
- Bring closure to some projects
- Eliminate off-campus programs
- Eat a “frog”
- Decide about off-campus programs
- Consolidate in Milledgeville
- Look at programs with low student satisfaction
- Initiate process for academic program review
- Review of all programs
- Review academic programs
- Develop program review process
- Review degree programs
- Bring undergraduate program back to campus
- Add faculty

### **Student Distinctives**

- Give each person a chance to identify successes and problems
- Smaller classes
- Establish our chapter
- Infuse liberal arts distinctives in majors
- Attend more campus events
- Institute campus wellness program
- Incorporate service learning
- Senior project/paper
- Begin development of intramural complex
- Arts requirement
- Back campus habitat chapter and other service groups
- Expand cultural offerings
- Senior - 4 year experience
- Plan for senior experience tied to alumni loyalty
- Decrease average class size
- Develop/support more faculty-student research
- Service learning in the curriculum
- Service requirement
- More ritual

- Lead by example - make sure we attend at least 5 events outside our area of interest on campus this year
- Create coffee house
- More interest in interacting with students

### **Reward Structure**

- Reward interaction with students and mission - promotion
- Develop reward system for mission oriented behavior
- Establish P & T criteria
- Alter reward structure: find new rewards for participation
- Match awards for faculty/students with university values
- Recognize, reward, honor students/faculty/staff
- Augment Promotion & Tenure to reflect student/community mission
- Develop reward system that supports mission
- Fund the 2% faculty development program

### **Financial Resources**

- Get library funded
- New travel car
- Funds from foundation to schools/colleges for faculty/students
- Secure new money to support change
- Gulp! Share resources
- Focus on Building Scholarship funds
- Increase funding for faculty development
- Implement capital campaign for scholarships and library
- New funding

**SALT** (We're the shakers!)"  
Senior Administrative Leadership team

Identify, prioritize university needs, allocate resources, and facilitate institutional communication and change

- (1) advance and sustain a collaborative student-centered campus culture
- (2) promote the academic goals of the institution
- (3) provide total education experience that fosters lifelong learning & critical thinking

We share ownership in the university with global society through collaborative spirit and leading by example.

We encourage creativity and experimentation in fulfilling the university mission.

We participate in civil discourse and respect the ideas of others.

Our mission is to develop a collaborative understanding of the GC&SU mission and a strategy for engaging the university community - faculty, staff, students, and alumni - in realizing our goals/mission

We see ourselves as:

Role Models

Facilitators

Resource Managers/Providers

Advocates

Emissaries - Ambassadors represent the message

**APPENDIX E**

**GEORGIA COLLEGE & STATE UNIVERSITY SENIOR LEADERSHIP**

**1998 PRE-RETREAT QUESTIONNAIRE**

*Please complete and return by fax the following questionnaire prior to the retreat. All responses will be compiled in their original wording and presented at the retreat for team review. Please be candid; responses will be kept anonymous.*

- 1. *In order to accomplish the mission statement of Georgia College & State University, what are the issues that need to be addressed by the Senior Leadership Team?***

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- 2. *As a part of our mission, we describe ourselves as “student-centered.” How do you define this term and how does it relate to the GC&SU mission?***

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- 3. *What is the function/purpose of a liberal arts university?***

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4. *What aspect of the GC&SU mission is most exciting or challenging to you?*

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5. *What is your greatest frustration related to implementing the GC&SU mission?*

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6. *Any other comments?*

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## APPENDIX F

### GEORGIA COLLEGE & STATE UNIVERSITY SENIOR STAFF

#### 1998 PRE-RETREAT QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

1. *In order to accomplish the mission statement of Georgia College & State University, what are the issues that we need to address?*

**Public Relations/Communication**

- Greater visibility
- Developing an “attractive product” for sale
- How can we extensively market the mission and attract good students?
- \*\*\*Publicizing/marketing the mission for student recruitment purposes
- Statewide perceptions of the liberal arts - are they “practical”? Can you get a job with a Liberal Arts degree? Will you be technologically literate?

**Mission**

- Common understanding of our mission
- How long will it take us to get there?
- \*\*\*Making sure faculty and staff understand the mission and their role within it and that they support it
- What is the role of research?
- Can we be a senior comprehensive institution and the Public Liberal Arts University of Georgia at the same time?
- We need to develop and agree upon an operational definition of the new mission. This means we should clearly articulate the mission in a way that every faculty and staff member understands his or her role. In other words, we must know what we are doing and who is doing it. The next logical step seems to be allocation of funds to accomplish these tasks. One word of caution is appropriate at this point. Organizational change is difficult to achieve which explains why there was a tendency at some of the planning meetings last year to define the new mission in terms of what we have always done. This is a natural territorial response, but one we will have to get beyond if we are serious about business not continuing as usual.
- Georgia College & State University has operated these past two years on a liberal arts mission description that is traditional and which evolved in the U.S. over the past 100 years. Is this description of liberal arts going to serve the institution well in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century? Perhaps we should get out of this trap and define for ourselves what liberal arts is in the changing technological world?
- Examine each aspect of the institution - programs, majors, core, student experiences to determine if/how it meets the mission
- \*\*\*First, we should rewrite the mission statement - too long, too much information. Sounds like an advertisement rather than a mission statement. Then ... off campus programs, planning, assessment, budget allocations, community involvement and support

**Facilities**

- Make residence halls inviting to high quality students
- Facilities concerns (old buildings ... need for lots more money)

## **Funding**

- Increased scholarship support
- What will it take to accomplish our mission (resources, money, etc.)?
- Making a philosophical and financial commitment to support the higher academic standards that must accompany this mission.
- Funding the academic support infrastructure (computer labs, library, science labs) at a level that will support excellence in the academic programs.
  
- Significant increase in external funding
- \*\*\*\*Obviously, we need to be concerned about the financial situation. If we raise standards too high, too quickly, we will lose students and revenue. To compensate, we must do a better job of packaging the university, selling the public on the quality of our programs and environment, and recruiting qualified students. A substantial portion of this burden will fall on Enrollment Services, and improvements in these efforts will be necessary

## **Faculty/Staff Support & Commitment**

- A more positive attitude on everyone's part - greater support for one another
- \*\*\*Making sure faculty and staff understand the mission and their role within it and that they support it
- How to work together as a team. Move from it's not my job mentality.
- Commitment by faculty and staff to be part of the team - be here!
- How can we make sure faculty and staff are committed to the mission?
- Morale, attitudes, and methods of operation must be changed and improved. Decision making efforts must be improved and supported. The whole tenor of the campus community must be improved.
- Faculty and staff must act as a relatively happy in order to create the student-centered environment we desire. In other words, we must clean up our own act in order to truly implement the mission.
- Faculty culture

## **Program Retention & Deletion**

- Determine what programs, majors, core aspects, student services, experiences should be retained; what phased out, what added
- What is the role of graduate programs?
- The role of Graduate and Professional Programs in the Public Liberal Arts University.
- What academic programs are consistent with the mission, which ones should be phased out and which ones should be added? What is the status of campuses and programs in Macon, Dublin & Warner Robins?
- GC&SU offers far too many academic programs to be a high quality liberal arts university. Need to begin focusing on eliminating academic programs which are not of high quality or do not support the mission. These resources should then be "redirected" to strengthen programs more central to the new mission.
- \*\*\*First, we should rewrite the mission statement - too long, too much information. Sounds like an advertisement rather than a mission statement. Then ... off campus programs, planning, assessment, budget allocations, community involvement and support
- Off-campus course offerings

## **Recruitment & Enrollment**

- Revision of recruiting, admissions, and enrollment operations and philosophy
- Publicizing/marketing the mission for student recruitment purposes
- \*\*Concern about the financial situation. If we raise standards too high, too quickly, we will lose students and revenue. To compensate, we must do a better job of packaging the university, selling the public on the quality of our programs and environment, and recruiting qualified students.
- Improvements in Enrollment Services



- Recruit different kind of student body.
- The recruitment of students needs to be aligned with the expectations we set for students should be part of our message to prospective students.

### Faculty-Student Interaction

- Faculty/student ratio (smaller classes needed)
- Faculty/staff more open and receptive to students concerns and more willing to accept criticism.
- The meaning of “student centered” - a review of how we provide a meaningful quality education to every student who graduates a Georgia College & Southern University degree. The specific outcomes and behavioral goals need to be delineated and interpreted within and across disciplines.
- What does it mean to be “student-oriented”?
- Infuse critical thinking/communication skills/values - intensive discussion across the curriculum
- **Technology**
- Role of technology - is the tail wagging the dog?
- **Reward System**
- Reward system for faculty & chairs

## 2. *As a part of our mission, we describe ourselves as “student-centered.” How do you define this term and how does it relate to our mission?*

### Service to Students

- “Everyone” provides excellent service to students
- I think the definition of “student-centered” is fairly simple, although the principle may not be applied as often as it should. “ Student-centered” means, or should mean, that virtually **every decision on campus should be made with the welfare of the students in mind**. Their welfare should be the #1 priority. Everything else is secondary.
- The institution is focused to assist/facilitate personal development of students as healthy, contributing individuals in a society
- Focusing actions and decisions on providing the best, most challenging experience. This involves academics and “life” in general. In order to be “student centered”, we must be **preparing them for their future** - not our past!
- \*\*\*The institution has a personal concern and responsibility to each student to assist him/her in reaching their potential
- To paraphrase another statement, I’m not sure I know how to define “student-centered,” but I know it when I see it. A student-centered campus is one in which everyone realizes that the **students are our reason for continued employment**. Students feel **challenged by the academic program, involved** in campus and community activities, and enriched by **positive relationships with faculty, staff and administrators**. This is not to say that students run the university or control decision-making. That would not be a healthy or
- Being “student-centered” means that **service to students** should be first and foremost. An attitude of showing respect for students while also encouraging them to assume **responsibility for their own education** needs to be cultivated. It does not mean students should make all the decisions and do whatever they want, but they should be **challenged to grow in developing their capacities. Opportunities for them to learn how to serve** others in the community should be provided. However, they must truly understand that every decision that is made is made with their **best interests at heart**.

- **\*\*\***Being student centered and upholding high academic standards means **making decisions that are in the best “educational” interest of the student** even when the decision does not accommodate their wishes and plans.
- It should go without saying that we should be **courteous and considerate** of the students and everyone with whom we interact. Being student centered means **giving our best and expecting the best from our students**. It means **upholding high academic standards and helping students achieve these standards**. The reputation of the university rests upon these standards. Our students will have several careers during their lifetime, but their degree will always be from Georgia College & State University.
- To me, “student-centered” means that we should provide the **facilities, environment, instruction, guidance and leadership that students need to grow personally and academically**. We should not “pamper” students, but we must treat them as young and growing adults and expect (and help) them to live, learn and act as such.
- Everything we do should be focused on benefiting students. This does not mean that students are always right, but be willing to work with students in **helping foster their educational experiences** at GC&SU and being willing to listen and help with their concerns.

### **Mission**

- Making this campus student centered is the key to making this a true liberal arts university.
- The easy part to being student centered is recognizing that the students are central to our mission and that the students, faculty, and staff are partners in the learning process.
- All of our efforts in every unit should be related to and in support of students **meeting the educational goals** we set for them. These goals are what should distinguish us as a liberal arts institution. Instead of driving decisions from a business as usual historical perspective (we have always done this), we should ask how does this action help us to better prepare students for their life after college.
- Perhaps “learner-centered,” recognizing that students/staff/faculty/administration can all be learners

### **Advising**

- Develop an advisement system that benefits student, not just faculty

### **Faculty-Student Interaction**

- Create “out of class” interaction between faculty/staff and students
- We should see ourselves as role models to students for what it means to be an educated person.
- Expectations that faculty/staff get involved with the whole student experience
- Student centered means the education of the “whole” student, both in and out of the classroom. Faculty becoming not only instructors but also mentors and role models for students.
- **\*\*\***The institution has a personal concern and responsibility to each student to assist him/her in reaching their potential
- Learning methods that play to students’ abilities

### **Academics/Programs**

- Offer enough core courses for freshmen (at times they want them)
- We must have high-quality faculty and academic programs in place; our reputation rests on the “liberal artsy” appearance of the campus and, hopefully, the positive experiences our students enjoy during their academic careers.
- Programs, courses, services are focused to meet student needs as opposed to serving the convenience of faculty and staff
- Students learn by participating
- Constant “invitations” to participate to students

- **\*\*\***Being student centered and upholding high academic standards means **making decisions that are in the best “educational” interest of the student** even when the decision does not accommodate their wishes and plans. (For example, a student requested permission to take 28 quarter hours during the abbreviated summer quarter so she could graduate on time. Her request was denied.)
- All resources should be directed toward improving the learning opportunities for students that includes small classes, quality faculty and facilities.

### 3. *What is the function/purpose of a liberal arts university?*

#### Teaching/Learning/Thinking

- To teach students to “think outside the box”
- To help students “learn how to learn”
- To provide students with the ability to be “creative problem solvers”
- To create a lifelong learner with good communication skills, critical thinking skills, social responsibility *and* work skills.
- To develop critical, qualitative thought; not just “how-to’s”, but the ability to thoughtfully analyze “why-to” and “why-not-to”
- **\*\*\***It should also provide a **total educational experience that fosters an appreciation for life-long learning and critical thinking.**
- The university should help students learn to think critically, understand diverse cultures as well as their own and become informed, responsible citizens with a broad knowledge of human life and the skills to make a living.
- The purpose of a liberal arts university is to **provide the students with a “broad liberal” education that prepares them for the five different careers they will likely have during their lifetime.** This means a sound **grounding in communicational skills**, the fine arts and humanities, and the social and natural sciences. It is hard to imagine a liberal arts university that does not require all of its students to study a foreign language.
- To promote dialog, critical thinking and creative learning in everything we do, regardless of the major. Provide a learning experience that will allow a person to be able to adapt in any situation they may encounter throughout life.
- To prepare students with the skills, values and knowledge base to establish themselves as thoughtful and effective leaders in their community.

#### Academics/Programs

- The function of a liberal arts university is to provide a very **high-quality general education** in those subject areas in the sciences, social sciences, and humanities that are traditionally considered to be part of a liberal arts curriculum. Beyond the formal curriculum, it should also provide a **total educational experience that fosters an appreciation for life-long learning and critical thinking.** The liberal arts university also provides quality professional education that is grounded in the liberal arts educational experience.
- The purpose is to provide Georgia citizens with access to a quality liberal arts education for students who would not otherwise have that opportunity.
- Interdisciplinary approach

#### Creating a Culture of Lifelong Learning

- Purpose/function of a liberal arts university is to serve individuals and as a result, improve and enhance society. Consequently, liberal arts institutions should develop individuals with enhanced concerns about making the world a better place to live. They continue the culture, skills and traditions that have been won and developed over the centuries while changing and increasing knowledge that seem, sometimes, opposed.
- To prepare the student to be a student of life and a citizen of the world. This involves developing skills of inquiry, research, communication, questioning and dissonance, innovation, commitment, experimental learning and involvement and life long learning.

- We must prepare students to be critical thinkers, creative thinkers and life long learners. To say these are things we have always done, however, sounds more like an attempt to maintain the status quo than to bring about the necessary curriculum changes. We must also teach students to accept the responsibility and consequences of their decisions and actions. To do otherwise does not prepare them for the world of work or to be a responsible citizen in our community.
- A liberal arts university should help students make substantial progress toward self-actualization. It should help students become aware, contributing, competent citizens with the skills needed to function as leaders in their communities. A liberal arts university should prepare students to **make well-informed decisions and communicate comfortably with other educated individuals**. Equipping students with the skills to be lifelong learners, and instilling in them a love and thirst for knowledge are also important functions of such a university. Students would not only be provided with the skills necessary to earn a living, but to enjoy living once it has been earned.
- The basic purpose of a liberal arts university should be to “free” students so they **can learn to live worthwhile and productive lives in society**.
- (I have been told!!) That a liberal arts education is to provide a broader base of knowledge to our students. And education beyond the confines of business, health sciences or education. It makes sense to me, but will be a “tough sell” to some students and parents.
- Focus on humanitarian values

#### 4. *What aspect of the GC&SU mission is most exciting or challenging to you?*

##### **Public Relations/Communication**

- Most challenging - educating the public as to what “liberal arts” means
- Most exciting - the new image of “quality” that is associated with the new mission
- We have an opportunity to distinguish ourselves from our sister institutions and develop a unique and excellent reputation among the state universities in Georgia.
- The most challenging part is getting everyone to understand the meaning of a true “Public Liberal Arts University”. This includes the university community.
- The creation of a unique educational experience for the only public institution charged with this mission in the state. Helping mold a completely different educational experience from what we were used to.
- The telling of the Georgia College and State University story and living it.
- Creating a distinctive niche in the USG

##### **Academics/Programs**

- The opportunity to embed liberal arts traditions, skills and appreciations into our particular programs
- The opportunity to become a unique institution, developed for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century using the strong foundations of the liberal arts
- The new mission has opened up a wonderfully exciting new area of programming for us in Continuing Education & Public Services. Three years ago, we established a high quality dance program for children and adults. With the new mission, we are working to expand our culturally related camps, conferences, continuing education courses, and performances. We have redirected funding for a position from an area of low priority, the Macon Campus Conference Center, to support this higher priority initiative. We plan to maintain our professional development, personal enrichment, outdoor education, and recreation offerings while significantly increasing cultural programming.
- Development of a first-rate Honors and Scholars Program would be a major achievement as part of our mission.

**Leadership Support/Commitment**

- What is most exciting to me is the energy, vision, and dedication President DePaolo has brought to GC&SU and her commitment to our mission. Her enthusiasm is contagious and critical to our success. I also believe this is exactly the right mission of this school at this point in its history, provided we are prepared to match deeds with words.
- The most exciting part of the new mission is developing a focus for the university that everyone supports and does his or her best to achieve.
- I am excited over the new leadership potential at Georgia College and State University
- The creation of a “can do” attitude among the entire community

**Faculty-Student Interaction**

- Most exciting — the increased involvement between students and faculty and the opportunity to be more of a University family.
- Challenging -To bring about a cultural change for a University which has served everyone - everywhere with an expectation of good teaching and research only to one of overall involvement with students.

**Creating a Culture of Lifelong Learning**

- Creating an ideal learning environment
- Facilitating dramatic impacts in the lives of students rather than merely credentialing them

**5. *What is your greatest frustration related to implementing our mission?*****Public Relations/Communication**

- The lack of clarity about the future of our campuses outside Milledgeville
- The most frustrating part is getting everyone to understand the meaning of a true “Public Liberal Arts University”. This includes the university community.
- Fearful responses to the term “Liberal Arts”

**Recruitment & Enrollment**

- Lack of recruiting staff/support staff

**Funding/Resources**

- Lack of budget for supplies, postage and support personnel
- Lack of time and, to some extent, budget limitations to focus on what the mission has the potential to do for my area
- My frustration would be the same regardless of our mission. Not having sufficient resources to address all of the facility issues that arise during the year.
- Once the new mission is fully operationalized, funding priorities will have to be adjusted accordingly. Although we received generous budget increases from Atlanta the past two years, we have been so far behind in obtaining faculty positions, a significant increase in additional funds will be required.

**Technology**

- Lack of technical support and badly needed reports

**Leadership/Support/Commitment**

- Fear of failure among some people - the fear that we cannot do.
- Individuals’ fear of resistance to change
- The lack of a desire to look forward and take a chance
- If the new mission is too broadly defined, some may be tempted to define what they have always done in terms of the new mission, thus, maintaining the status quo and producing little substantive change.

- People's willingness to change and for them to stop being so defensive (faculty and staff). Also, the lack of flexibility faculty and staff are willing to demonstrate to help make this happen. Stop being defensive and basically do your job!
- The pace of change on this campus. We have had this new mission for nearly two years and few significant changes have been made. This is due, in part, to people focusing on maintaining the status quo and defending territory rather than working together to implement needed change

#### **Reward System**

- Developing a reward system that will bring change.

#### **Creating a Culture of Lifelong Learning**

- The lack of focus on "life beyond the classroom"

#### **Teamwork**

- The slow pace of decision-making, endless turf wars, and bureaucratic red tape. Also, I see little evidence of real teamwork or care about what's best for GC&SU.
- The lack of the understanding that it takes the entire university community to "raise a student"
- Too much concern on "territory" and not focused enough on working together to implement the mission evident in recent campus-wide decisions made. We sometimes spend more effort in backtracking or making sure that everyone's space is not invaded, than we do on moving forward with decisions.

### **6. *Any other comments?***

- Hope we can be open and honest with each other and be willing to accept criticism. We have a lot of work to do in a very short period of time.
- For my area, Georgia is undergoing so much constant change, it makes it difficult to do anything but react
- I truly believe that the continued existence of this institution depends on our making a successful transition from a regional senior college into a high quality liberal arts university. If we can't make this transition, then it will be difficult to argue with those who do not see the need for two institutions (Macon State College and Georgia College & State University), located 40 miles from each other and offering similar programs and services. In such a situation, it would be logical to eliminate one institution or combine the institutions into one. If we can make a successful transition, however, we could become a jewel in the crown of the University System of Georgia.
- I feel that a major need at this point is to "operationalize" our mission through a statement of tangible values - we can then base our discussions on those values rather than the amorphous concept of "liberal arts". If we put the mission into terms that the public, students, staff, faculty and administration can easily grasp, and with which they can identify, we have the basis for making those "seamless" connections between the in-class and out-of-class experience that we often extol.
- A new President, new academic Vice President, new name, new mission!!! I see this as a prime "new opportunity". Can we all work together, plan well, and take advantage of the opportunity we have been given?
- It would be a good idea to review the current statutes and general structure to make sure they are workable and acceptable.
- According to COPLAC case statement, the "liberal arts" should not just be in the mission statement, but should be the focus of the mission statement. At this point, it appears that "liberal arts" is just in our mission statement.

## APPENDIX G

### SAMPLE FROM INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Participant NM412\*

\*Some sections have been omitted to protect anonymity of the participant.

**EMS:**

**After the decision was made to change the mission, (obviously the mission was put in place before Dr. DePaolo came) but after the mission was changed and you started implementing it, what were the most important driving forces that you see that propelled that process forward to really make the mission visible?**

**NM412:**

Well, I think a couple of significant things happened. First of all, when we changed the mission, it needed to be something significant other than just a mission change so I think this came all about the same time with the name change and the name to university status; we changed colors; we looked at changing mascots; we looked at just a complete change of what we were doing. Around the same time I think the current president at the time (Speir) realized that if it was going to be true effective change that he needed to step down. So his decision to retire shortly after (I would say within a year) of all of this happening was very significant. A search process began to find a new president. In the interim, of course, Dr. Hemphill who was the Vice President of Academic Affairs at the time, because an interim leader and so it was a matter of before really any implementation of this new mission could formally take place because no one really new what all this meant, we spent about a year even before we got a new president just trying in kind of a "status quo" type thing. The real shift did not take place until the new president came on board.

**EMS:**

**Once Dr. DePaolo got in place were there other things that you saw as main driving forces in addition to leadership change?**

**NM412:**

Yea, I think we looked at everything we did from the standpoint of academic offerings (we couldn't be all things to all people); we had three satellite campuses; we had split faculty teaching at two to three campuses. In order to the types of things we needed to do with this mission and this liberal arts based education, we needed to focus our efforts and Milledgeville. I think without strategic thinking/planning processes that she had her administration, as well as faculty, staff, and everybody, start thinking about what was

significant in helping us make this shift. We all had to be on the same page and understand what this meant and we could not continue to do business as usual.

We were more of a regional university and southern, primarily in the middle Georgia area, and to make that shift to a state-wide admission involved making significant changes from an operational standpoint—that included academics, housing, how we conducted business on campus, financially, and looking at those off campus centers. We make the strategic decision to pull out of Dublin and Regents helped us with the decision to move onto the Macon State but then from a financial standpoint it helped us as well too; because we weren't paying those large rents and renting space so we didn't have the funding to do the shift so we had to do a lot of re-direction and re-direct our financial resources as much as possible to the main campus.

**EMS:**

**So now off campus, other than the central campus, where are activities or classes at GC&SU happening now?**

**NM412:**

In Macon and Warner Robins and most of those are graduate programs. That wasn't the case before we made that shift; it was a lot of undergraduate offerings in business, education, nursing -- they were everywhere.

*(The next question (3) was omitted from this Appendix in order to avoid disclosing participant identity.)*

**EMS:**

**How did the campus (from your perspective) as a whole begin to buy in (or not buy in) to the new mission and its ramifications?**

It was hard. It was a mixed bag which was I guess a good thing -- you wouldn't want 100% because people did think seriously think about how to make that shift. Any time you talk about change, change is hard. It is hard for people to think differently. Just because we've always done it this way, it has worked for me so why should I change? For some people particularly if this is all they know. You have some faculty and some staff who this is the only place they have ever worked. For those it was probably more difficult than for others. . . [deleted comment to protect anonymity] Just the horror of when Speir announced that he was stepping down, and the fact that we were going to have a new president, and even during that interim time with Hemphill, there was some real nervousness amongst people (seniors, as well as junior leadership) who were concerned about -- is a new president going to come in? Are you going to survive the . . . transition? . . . They were concerned about the fact that she was going to come in and clean house, get rid of all the deans, get rid of everybody and start all over, fire all the vice-presidents and all those kinds of things.

[Section omitted for anonymity.]



**EMS:**

**Anything else about how people “bought in” [to the concept of the new mission]?**

**NM412:**

I think that really helped . . . having people think about their roles and what this mission meant and really going through that whole process of having retreats, one particular that one large retreat that we had over in the Centennial Center, where you had 125. It was a lot of work and a lot of agony for folks but I think in the long term in looking back on it that was probably one of the most significant things that could have ever been done around here. No one had really taken the time to get that amount of input, to have people feel that they have that kind of level of input and being able to be listened to, whether or not their suggestions were taken or not (and a lot of them weren't but some were), but the fact that they had the opportunity to participate in something of that magnitude was very significant.

**EMS:**

**How were the people selected for that particular retreat? I know staff council, but I don't know how the other folks were selected.**

**NM412:**

I'd have to go back and look but I want to say we made a concerted effort to try to involve as many people as possible. I think all department chairs were involved. I think the Staff Council, all the officers of Staff Council; I think we made a concerted effort to include deans, assistant deans, and even some other faculty who weren't deans, like Faculty Senate I guess. As many of the different committees and things that we could possibly bring together under one umbrella she tried to do that.

[Section omitted for anonymity.]

**EMS:**

**What were the obstacles/causes for resistance?**

**NM412:**

With college students, I think faculties have a hard time accepting the fact that they are just getting nothing from the classroom and that the students should automatically get it. That may have been true 20 years ago but with the all the changes that have taken place in higher education and students change; you have just got dynamics change and some people may thrive in that environment where you can get up and lecture before 400 students and they will get it or get it on their own but others more need more personal attention that this mission is designed the bring and I think those faculty that were hired when we were just under a regional, focused on how many publications you do and how much research you do. They had some that were just having a difficult time making that shift.

So the newer faculty that we are bringing on now as part of this mission love it. They understand it; they love it because they know that they are not here to be solely into

research. The research that they do involves students and so if that is the kind of teaching that you enjoy doing this is the place for you. If you enjoy doing more just research and worried about a grad assistant helping teach the class then you probably need to be at a research university. Those are some of the issues that have been going back and forth, and discussions back and forth in particularly with faculty. Even from a staff standpoint, I would say that those staff that work for a lot of those faculty also had a difficult time making that shift because they were used to doing things that particular way, whereas the staff that have really appreciated this a lot because of the personality of the president now -- she gets out and meets people. There are those staff that are not highly paid . . . these people have a more human feel about this and can really appreciate and, to a certain extent, articulate the importance of this mission because they realize that they are educating students as well too. More things are happening now that I didn't see happening before. When grounds crews are out blowing leaves off the side walk of the front campus and students walk by they will stop and let the students walk by and not blow leaves on them. I didn't see that kind of stuff happening before; they could have cared less before -- they would have continued to be in their little zone and all they were worried about was cleaning up their little space. That is not the case now. I think people are friendlier, they smile, they are happier. Not a lot has changed from the standpoint of pay because pay is still a problem (I think that is still an issue) but I think just the appreciation is the things that really help from the staff perspective -- to feel like someone cares. I think even a little bit of that has turned some faculty around because they are not used to seeing that. But I think those that have noticed and appreciated do thank people and thanking people is important.

**EMS:**

**What were the easiest paths? What were the easiest changes to make?**

**NM412:**

The easiest change for me personally was just the challenge. [Section omitted for anonymity.]

I saw this as an opportunity to really elevate this place to a different level. I like challenges and the day I become bored and not enjoying what I'm doing is the day I find another job. It is challenging; it is exciting -- and that was the easy part about accepting this mission.

**EMS: What were the easiest things for the campus as a whole? What changes were the easiest to make?**

**NM412:**

Easiest from the standpoint that it needed to happen but not necessarily easiest from a financial standpoint was the physical condition of the buildings externally. We had some columns that were rotting and cabling holding up stuff; what needed to happen to make this campus really as picturesque as it is today is that we really needed to do some painting, do some replacing of columns, and make it from a picturesque standpoint what it should be. So that was the kind of "no-brainer" decisions that needed to happen.

Now getting the funding to make it happen was a challenge but it was something that I think enough people saw the need to have happen and when you have a lot of historic buildings like this it is just expensive. But the Regents realized that and gave us the necessary funding to make that happen, so I think that was probably the easiest from a physical/visual standpoint that people all could agree needed to happen. I don't think we had any controversy whatsoever when someone said, why don't you fix up those columns.

**EMS:**

**What are the most significant changes of GC&SU culture that have resulted in the past four to five years? What culture changes would show objective viewers that you have changed your mission?**

**NM412:**

I think, right off the bat, it is the quality of the students. If you were here five years ago prior to the change of mission, you just saw a different type of student and you saw a different level of activity on campus. We shut down on Friday afternoons and some people didn't even make it to Friday morning classes. Now you can come in on a Friday afternoon or on weekends and see students. You can go to the cafeteria, you can go around campus and you see students. That wasn't always the case. So I think that is something that is pretty visible. If you did a snapshot of campus in 1995-96 and campus today, those are two things that are pretty loud and clear. I think the demographics of the student body -- all you have to do is look at the car tags. If you looked at car tags in 1995-96 you would see mostly Baldwin, Bibb, Putnam, and Washington counties. Now you see those but you also see a lot of Gwinnett, Rockdale, Fulton, DeKalb, Cobb.

**EMS:**

**How many out of state tags do you see?**

**NM412:**

You still don't see a lot but you see more than you did 1995-96. I would say maybe 20 but I don't think you see a whole lot but you will see some. I think that is going to increase over years because we are now starting to see people coming from South Carolina, Alabama and Florida.

**EMS:**

**What does GC&SU status as a liberal arts university mean for the State of Georgia? You've talked about building our statewide image, but what does it mean that Georgia now has a public liberal arts university?**

**NM412:**

I think it means that people in Georgia have a place to send their sons/daughters that is a quality liberal arts based school that is comparable to the best private liberal arts schools in other states. The whole issue was we felt that we were losing a lot of students to Davidson's, schools out of state that had quality programs/small classes, but were much more expensive. With the Hope scholarship, and what that has done piggybacking on that

for Georgia, has really been a boom for GC&SU. The quality of the students that are coming in, the majority of them are Hope scholarship so it is a no-brainer for a parent to say if you are going to be on a Hope scholarship you can go to this good quality school in Milledgeville just as easily as you could go to school a Furman or Davidson or even Berry College. We get kids that want to go to Berry and they look at the price tag and think, "I can go here instead of Berry or Mercer." Before our competition was a little bit different, but now we are competing strongly with large schools.

**EMS:**

**Do you think we are competing yet with the Davidsons and out of state schools?**

**NM412:**

To a degree. I still think that we have a way to go yet. I think we still need to get our class sizes a little bit smaller. And with the faculty coming in, I don't think we have got all the state-of-the-art facilities that a lot of these schools have but we are close, a lot closer than we were a few years ago.

**EMS:**

**If you were talking to people in higher education (not necessarily liberal arts researchers, university administration or faculty/staff) about the lessons learned from this process what would they be? Not just about changing to liberal arts but about the implementation of the mission.**

**NM412:**

I think the first lesson that I would emphasize is the buy-in. You have got to get buy-in early on to be able to take the necessary steps to make sure that before you even start thinking about any type of external promotions or movement you have got to get your own house in order. If you are going to make a shift of a mission change like we did, a drastic shift, you've got to do the internal work necessary to make sure that everybody, if not on the same page, are close to being on the same page -- enough that they at least understand it and respect it.

You know you won't get a 100% agreement on things, but at least you have taken the time to explain it and help people understand why you are doing it a certain way. If you don't have that internal buy-in, you cannot go out and do a smooth transition. How can you expect someone else to understand if people internally can't help explain it? I don't care if you are the president or . . . whoever, you need more than just a few people out there saying things, because that how this thing has mushroomed.

I will be the first to admit that it just hasn't been President DePaolo out there doing what she has been doing. It has been a lot of hard work from faculty, administrators, and others who have bought into this and through their networks have gone out there and our reputation has really improved because of that network. Networking is very important. So from a "lessons learned" standpoint, I would say internal communication is key in trying to

develop that networking which is very important with internal folks working with their colleagues in their particular fields. Then you have the external side of it, the selling and marketing of your product; a lot of people in higher education don't like to use that term (selling/marketing) but you've got to sell your product. Once you have got a product that is good enough to sell and people will buy it they will come and that is what is starting to happen here. I think it is happening even quicker than we had all even imagined.

**EMS:**

**That is the last of my official questions. Is there anything else you would like to add about how a university implements a mission . . . or how you make a change from one mission to another?**

**NM412:**

One thing I probably haven't touched on . . . a lot of this has been done without any additional funding and that is good and bad. It is good from the standpoint that you know you can do it. From a taxpayer's standpoint, that has probably been important for the state because we haven't really cost the state a lot of money other than recently when they have given us money to hire new faculty and done some things they should have done anyway with resources. We didn't really get any new money, per se, to help implement this mission. When people hear that they become surprised. But it just goes to show you if you start thinking about higher education as a business. And that is what we did from the standpoint of looking at our resources with all of our off-campus locations and how important it was, what could be cut back, what could you do without and still not losing impact on students--and at the same time, improving quality. That was our sole goal was to be able to improve quality and offer classes in a smaller context. But, at the same time, we knew we needed financial resources. That is where the private side has come into play, in being able to need more emphasis placed on a fund raising perspective and that's something that I'm sure you will get into with our [Vice President for Advancement] about how important a role that is. That is something that I don't think a lot of people realize because that is how private schools make it. If we are going to act like a private school, we need to be playing in those same fields and levels. We are a long way from being there, but we are making great strides in that direction.

APPENDIX H

RESPONSES AND REACTIONS TO CHANGE MODEL (N.T. WESTHEAD, 1996)

