

Expanding Carleton's Reach

Task Force Report 6/1/23

At a time when support for higher education and respect for educational expertise is in question, the Expanding Carleton's Reach Task Force has explored how Carleton can not only become but also be recognized as a more thoughtful, consistent and responsible contributor to civic life. Our recommendations are rooted in the ideas that Carleton's strong sense of place, authenticity, commitment to sustainability and its reputation for teaching excellence coupled with a deeply curious and intellectually-engaged student and alumni population are key differentiators that will secure Carleton's leading position among the top Liberal Arts colleges nationwide.

Community Connections

The College has an opportunity to more fully engage with a number of community constituencies in and surrounding Northfield, Rice County and the Twin Cities metropolitan area. Through the Carleton Center for Community and Civic Engagement (CCCE), the college has made significant progress connecting current students and the larger community via classwork, community outreach and volunteer efforts. This is a proven, replicable model upon which to build. By expanding our work in academic and civic engagement, the College has a unique opportunity to strengthen the connection between theory and practice, increase collaborations with area businesses and nonprofits, and further the breadth and value of a Carleton education.

Enhancing National/International Awareness

Carleton needs a more strategic messaging campaign to elevate its national/international reputation and celebrate its excellence. We know from the market study that Carleton's location is a rate-limiting factor for many students. We cannot change our rural Minnesota location, but we can address and reframe advantages: proximity to the Twin Cities; access to the outdoors; generous financial aid packages; successful career outcomes and the overall value of a strong Liberal Arts education. As society faces increasingly complex problems and as technology advances, critical thinking, empathy and context will be more valuable than ever. A Carleton education hones these and other qualities integral to fulfilling lives that contribute to progress in society. More broadly, telling the compelling stories of our alumni and their impact on all aspects of life would provide an outcomes-oriented roadmap for prospective students and their parents. This will also help to activate and reinforce the value of the worldwide Carleton alumni network.

Life After Carleton

Improved alignment of college-wide programs, classes and operations with the Career Center will provide current students a more formal path towards a career post-Carleton. Alumni engagement is a core element of a more robust approach. Student-alumni connections can

strengthen the Carleton network, enhance individual relationships across generations and offer additional meaningful pathways for alumni engagement with the College.

Primary Recommendations:

- 1) Establish the Carleton Center for Sustainability. By naming Sustainability as a core value, the College will be able to increasingly align Environmental Studies, Interdisciplinary Studies, Co-curriculars, Research, and the work of the Arboretum. This will also be a natural extension of existing work to conserve energy, invest in renewable energy, reduce waste, and decrease reliance on fossil fuels. Taken together, our leadership position in sustainability could be expanded as we accelerate our path to carbon neutrality and extend our work beyond campus.

Goal/Outcome: To reinforce our commitment to sustainability and climate action, be a responsible steward of resources, and strengthen Carleton's position as a national leader and resource in sustainability.

- 2) Celebrate Carleton's stellar reputation in teaching by expanding on the success of the Perlman Center for Learning and Teaching and creating a more outward-facing Center for Teaching & Learning Excellence. By elevating Carleton faculty's leadership in pedagogical innovation (including integration of teaching and research) through summer institutes, other professional development opportunities and online programming, we will contribute to the field and amplify our reputation for excellence in teaching.

Goal/Outcome: To amplify Carleton's stellar reputation for teaching excellence as a key differentiator among premiere Liberal Arts colleges.

- 3) Establish some kind of physical Carleton presence in the Twin Cities designed to provide support for academic programming, civic engagement, alumni networking, career readiness, industry partnerships and urban studies.

Goal/Outcome: To grow Carleton's connection to the Twin Cities and create a stronger pipeline between businesses and nonprofits in the region and provide a venue for curricular use, civic engagement events, and for alumni, student and faculty interactions.

- 4) Better connect to our deeply curious and intellectually-engaged alumni by expanding and deepening our life-long learning programs. Use this programming to reframe the Carleton educational experience as one that extends beyond the completion of the degree. Current and Emeriti faculty and alums who are leaders in their particular fields might be considered faculty for this program which could be accessed remotely or, when appropriate, on campus or in person as a means of staying informed, engaged and connected to the issues of the day.

Goal/Outcome: To continue to provide alumni with connections to Carleton that will enhance their lives, and create deeper engagement with the college, the community, and each other.

- 5) Align programming and operations (career center, alumni connections, center for civic and community engagement, student work, entrepreneurship) to more fully support career preparation through new programming, increased academic and civic engagement opportunities, alumni and parent partnerships, a stronger connection to the curriculum and more direct translation between a Carleton liberal arts education and the skills and competencies that students will need in their lives and careers.

Goal/Outcome: To address the changing expectations of students and families by equipping students to translate a Carleton education to meaningful careers and lives of purpose.

Secondary Recommendations:

- 1) Create an outreach strategy that focuses on Carleton's mission, guiding principles/values, and key differentiators with a specific emphasis on recruitment. Develop messaging pillars to raise Carleton's national and global awareness with special emphasis on elevating our strength in teaching and learning, as well as reframing location, cost and financial aid, outcomes, and the value of a liberal arts education.

Goal/Outcome: Build regional, national and international awareness by telling Carleton's story more strategically, authentically and consistently.

- 2) Improve transportation options to the Twin Cities to improve access to internship, civic engagement and research opportunities. Engage partners such as St. Olaf and the City of Northfield in this work.

Goal/Outcome: Facilitate the movement of students to the Twin Cities and ease the transportation friction currently limiting our ability to engage with these local institutions.

- 3) Consider producing a series of alumni profiles designed to be shared on social media as a means of celebrating Carleton's diverse graduates and the impact they are having on society while reaching non-traditional populations that might be less familiar with Carleton and/or Minnesota.

Goal/Outcome: Improve and enhance Carleton's awareness particularly among populations less familiar with the college as one means of improving the diversity of the applicant pool. Strengthen alumni pride and potentially alumni giving by reminding fellow alums of their impact and success.

- 4) Establish stronger, more formal connections to regional employers that could allow for additional research and internship opportunities. Target key Minnesota industries such as life sciences, clean tech, med tech, renewable energy and food and agriculture.

Goal/Outcome: Grow the pipeline of internships/externships for students and recent graduates to help elevate the career opportunities upon graduation and beyond.