

Vaughn College

Strategic Agenda

October 25, 2012

Introduction

Vaughn College was founded in 1932 to provide training to aviation mechanics to support the burgeoning aviation industry. This small, proprietary aviation maintenance school has transformed over the past 80 years to become what is now a private residential, not-for-profit college offering master's, bachelor's and associate's degrees in a variety of aviation, technology, engineering and management fields. Today Vaughn is dedicated to providing a distinctive education to a diverse population of students in an environment that cultivates personal growth and leadership to create lifelong learners who make significant contributions to the industries they serve. We are particularly proud to support many men and women who are primarily first-generation college students and first-generation Americans. Our graduates will possess the communication, analytical and critical-thinking skills their professions demand.

Vaughn is an institution that is keenly aware of the need to be nimble, dynamic and ever-mindful of the markets in which we recruit students, faculty and staff. The College's 2000-2001 strategic planning process was a seminal experience for the institution. The resulting strategic agenda brought clarity and direction to critical questions about the institution's positioning and focus, and along with the plan's update in 2004, spurred significant change in the institution. With a commitment to data collection and analysis—and maintaining a vigilant eye on the external environment to support ongoing strategic decision-making—the College was prepared to respond effectively to extremely challenging times resulting from the national tragedy of 9/11 and fundamental changes to the primary industry we supported at the time. The College weathered those difficult times and emerged a new institution with a more diversified offering of academic degree programs and, as a result, is embracing the future from a much stronger position. Our enrollment has grown, our finances have stabilized, we have just completed a comprehensive program evaluation, and we have initiated a multi-million dollar campus construction and renovation project. With this exciting activity as a backdrop, Vaughn is prepared and eager to take the next bold step in our growth and development.

Process

We launched the current strategic planning initiative in the fall of 2011 with the desire to develop a shared new vision and strategic agenda for the next phase of the institution's future. We actively solicited input from all areas of the institution—students, faculty, staff, trustees, administration, alumni, and external stakeholders. Through individual and small group interviews, we collected more than 400 strategic issues to consider in the process of designing our future. During a full-day retreat, a cross-section of internal and external institutional stakeholders worked together to craft from the strategic issues seven institutional questions to answer. We then developed these questions into charges and formed work groups who formulated answers from December 2011 through May 2012. These work groups were composed of a broadly representative cluster of about 60 members of the College community.

Three times during this period the work groups met with the Vaughn community in open campus meetings to test and revise their thinking on these institutional questions. The work groups also met with the board of trustees in February and May 2012 with the same goals in mind. Further, these work groups reported regularly to an equally representative steering committee, on which the chair of each work group served. During the remainder of the spring and summer, with the president's leadership, the steering committee developed this strategic agenda from the work group reports and utilized the College's financial planning model to test our vision.

The Environment

Vaughn College enjoys strong leadership that has led the institution to notable advances and financial stability in recent years. The College is located in New York City, a key advantage for students seeking internships and employment positions. Students use state-of-the-art laboratories, are sought after by companies upon graduation and have achieved enrollment in graduate programs at such institutions as Columbia, New York University-Polytechnic and Texas A&M. Our diverse student population enjoys small class sizes and a high level of interaction with faculty who bring personal commitment to the students and professional, real-world experience to the classroom. We provide rigorous curricula that incorporate the latest information and technology students will need as professionals in their field. The College has invested in improving the physical environment on campus, including a new residence hall, redesigned classrooms and simulator laboratory, upgraded administrative offices, and an upcoming technology-enabled library. We are also in the midst of an extensive renovation of our main campus building and by early 2014 will have invested \$26 million to provide a learning environment that matches

the quality of the education we provide. Significantly, Vaughn has kept its spending rate from the endowment low while successfully obtaining \$19.3 million since 2006 in financial funding from federal and state grants to support numerous major projects, including \$1 million specifically for the endowment.

Our recent enrollment growth has resulted in a student/faculty ratio that is currently above both peer- and next-tier institutions and our ratio of full-time to part-time faculty is higher than our competitors'. This surge in enrollment has also pushed our facilities to the limits of their capacity and students are now experiencing the downsides of an insufficient number of classrooms, laboratories and parking spaces, limited spaces for gathering and socializing, and competition for space with the expanding number of co-curricular activities. We are essentially "landlocked" on our current six-acre campus. Given our long history as a commuter institution (until 2007), there is a shortage of school spirit on campus and a desire to increase participation in campus activities and events. In addition, while the number of women on campus has increased in the last 10 years, female students only account for approximately 15 percent of the total population. Our use of technology is not consistently up to the expectations of some students. Salaries are very competitive with our peer institutions but not competitive with where we aspire to be in competing with next-tier institutions. The composition of our staff and board does not match the diversity of our student body. We need to achieve fundraising success in the area of corporations, foundations and individual gifts. Finally, the messages in our promotional materials need to build upon our success in areas beyond aviation, allowing us to develop our brand and our academic reputation in the marketplace.

Encouragingly, we have identified potential new programs that will enhance our program quality and reputation and also open new student markets for the College. As these programs are developed, we will attract new faculty who will bring new skills and ideas to Vaughn. While we have made some progress recruiting more women faculty to the College, we can do much better. We have proven our ability to deliver our programs abroad and can expand these efforts to develop a greater international presence. There are many returning veterans who have an interest in our programs and are able to take advantage of the Post 9/11 GI Bill to fund their Vaughn education and this population has grown significantly in the last three years to almost 10 percent of the total population. Although space is at a premium during peak times on campus, there are times when our facilities are not utilized at full capacity, which may provide an opportunity to attract external constituents to use them after our intensive construction period ends.

As we move further into the academic arenas of engineering and other competitive disciplines, we face increasing competition from larger, established institutions more well-known for such programs. The

cost of living in New York and the salary expectations of faculty make it difficult to recruit new faculty. The competition for market share in online learning is crowded and fierce, and requires newer entrants in particular to differentiate their offerings to attract students. Many institutions have more physical and financial resources to commit to supporting co-curricular activities that create a sense of community on campus we cannot yet provide, and the New York City market for real estate is prohibitively expensive. The lingering economic downturn continues to cause financial hardship to many students, some of whom have to put working ahead of their education and many of whom find it increasingly difficult to find aid to finance their education. This financial backdrop also makes fundraising even more challenging from individuals, foundations and corporations. Meanwhile, our alumni base has not been a traditional source of strong financial support to the institution given our proprietary background and lack of higher-level degrees for most of Vaughn's history.

We have worked diligently for many years to transform Vaughn College into a more traditional residential institution. As a result of this collaborative College-wide planning effort, we have learned that our aspiration is within our grasp. We are now committed to *realizing our transformation as an academically dynamic institution distinguished by:*

- *An innovative and rigorous curriculum,*
- *A transformational educational experience that prepares students for degree completion, and*
- *A deeply engaged community of trustees, staff, faculty, and students committed to excellence.*

Vision

With our vision of *realizing our transformation as an academically dynamic institution* informing all that we do, over the next five years we will:

- 1. *Update our mission and establish our brand as an institution of academic excellence that provides a transformational experience to students***
- 2. *Enhance the depth and breadth of the curriculum, reinforce our emphasis on academic excellence, and continue the strong growth of our academic support services to reinforce learning***
- 3. *Optimize our current facilities while continuing efforts to secure new space to support growth and create a thriving campus community***

4. *Use technology to improve teaching, learning and customer-service across the campus*
5. *Become an institution of choice for new trustees, faculty and staff while promoting and enhancing our diversity*
6. *Move from financial stability to financial security through thoughtful investment in programs and facilities and expanded fundraising*

1 - Update our mission and establish our brand as an institution of academic excellence that provides a transformational experience to students

We will review our mission statement and ensure that it reflects our contemporary identity. We must keep our mission relevant and true to the nature of the College as it exists, especially as we continue to undergo significant change to survive challenging times. We will appoint a cross-functional committee to review the mission periodically and assess whether, and if so how, it should be revised. The committee will undertake an open, inclusive process of information sharing and discussion prior to the president making a recommendation to the board of trustees for approval.

We will create a new brand in the marketplace that reflects our mission and identity. We are no longer the “little aviation maintenance school” we have been known as for too long. We have dramatically grown our programs from aviation-centric and purely technical to include rigorous undergraduate and graduate degrees in management, engineering technology, and engineering, among others, and we offer a residential experience. We are committed to providing the transformational educational experience that helps students progress to professional and life success. Our students are highly diverse and motivated and Vaughn needs to provide them with the exceptional support they need to achieve their dream of a college degree. This commitment to student success, coupled with an unparalleled education delivered by a dedicated faculty, is the reputation we seek.

We know who we are, but much of the market does not; we will bridge the gap between reality and public perception by articulating our value proposition and conveying what makes Vaughn distinctive and attractive to our target markets. As we take these steps, we will shorten the name of the institution to Vaughn College, completing the evolution in our name that recognizes and affirms our identity beyond the specific fields of aviation and technology. We will ensure that all marketing materials, including our web site, collateral print materials, and other media are updated and consistent with the new brand messages and themes.

While aviation maintenance training is one of our founding programs and enrollment is currently strong, we have struggled to integrate our Aviation Training Institute (ATI) and academic programs in one physical space. The ATI program competes for space with academic programs in a time when we are near or at capacity of our facilities and, even at current enrollment levels, net income from this program is negative on a full-cost basis. Despite these challenges, we maintain our commitment to training aviation

technicians to serve the industry. However, we must now solve the issue of facility usage by developing a second campus and a model that will allow both tracks to flourish.

2 - Enhance the depth and breadth of the curriculum, reinforce our emphasis on academic excellence, and continue the strong growth of our academic support services to reinforce learning

We will continue to actively identify and develop new high quality academic programs that will complement and enhance our existing programs while broadening our curriculum and attracting new students. We will introduce bachelor's degrees in electrical and mechanical engineering, both of which are highly marketable, relatively inexpensive to implement, and will greatly enhance the College's academic profile and reputation. Next, we will consider offering a bachelor's degree in graphics/gaming, which will attract an entirely new type of technology-savvy student to the College while complementing our existing associate's in applied science degree. We will consider adding other graduate-level programs to continue to enhance the quality and scope of our graduate offerings.

We will delve deeper to ensure that our academic programs are infused with the excellence required to earn recognition as a next-tier institution. This includes implementing new learning designs, using assessment measures to continuously improve course and program outcomes, and providing faculty members with the incentive and momentum to provide a new breadth and depth to student engagement. We will appoint a cross-functional committee to regularly review our programs to ensure their quality, marketability, mission-centeredness, and financial viability—following the model we used in the recent academic program review process—and ensure that we maintain a laser focus on continuously improving all programs.

We will enhance our support of and commitment to research and scholarly activities by investing in our research infrastructure, encouraging faculty to pursue research projects, and engaging students by integrating research and teaching. We will reorganize the first-year experience structure to integrate it into the daily lives of freshmen and expand the program to the sophomore year and beyond to extend its benefits further into students' academic career. We will also update the general education curriculum to include mastery of well-defined competencies, offering greater flexibility not only in terms of the choices students have in the courses they take or the experiences they choose (such as study abroad), but also in our ability to be more attractive to transfer students.

The Teaching and Learning Center (TLC) is at the heart of our efforts to support students academically and assist them in the achievement of their degree. We will continue to strengthen this critical area, creating a model of best practice by actively engaging faculty in the development of a scaffolded system of support that enables students to excel in their coursework.

3 - Optimize our current facilities while continuing efforts to secure new space to support growth and create a thriving campus community

We will continue to grow at a modest pace, to a maximum of approximately 1,800 total students on the current campus with the potential to grow to 2,200 over time upon securing a second facility, while maintaining our emphasis on providing an intimate learning environment for students. We will focus on attracting more women and students who are prepared to succeed in our increasingly demanding academic programs, and broaden our target markets to include international students through collaboration with partner institutions abroad.

We will fulfill the long-envisioned goal of acquiring a second campus site, which will be within a reasonable commute of the current campus, include parking and access to public transit, and have learning spaces sufficient to accommodate the ATI program, plus additional room for co-curricular programs such as athletics.

Optimization of the current campus will require a variety of strategies. First, we will re-examine our class schedule to determine if there is an opportunity to grow courses on the weekend. As enrollment has grown, learning spaces are at capacity, new classroom and laboratory space is the priority in further reconfiguration of the existing campus in the short term and the new campus thereafter. We will also integrate improvement of faculty offices into the facility update process as current faculty cubicle offices are not conducive to faculty recruitment, retention or interaction with students and other faculty.

We will expand our residential capacity beyond the current 200-bed configuration of the residence hall. The residence hall has been a major factor in the evolution of the College and is nearly full; we must expand residential capacity to meet anticipated demand and support our continued transformation into a more traditional college that offers a residential experience.

We will develop new and better spaces for students to gather for academic and social purposes. We will provide more space for club and student government offices, lounges, and wellness services, as well as

recreational space such as an exercise facility to allow students to have space on campus where they can relax and interact. Food services should be a pleasant and integral component to students' on-campus experience. We will move the cafeteria to a larger, more centralized space and create a design that will be appealing and functional. With parking spaces already at a premium on campus, any future growth compels us to find a way to offer more parking to students, faculty, and staff. We will consider acquiring additional parking spaces near the existing campus, as necessary and available.

Equally important to the physical campus infrastructure is providing high quality programs and services to engage and support students. Students who are engaged in college activities form more cohesive bonds with the institution and are more likely to persist; this is particularly true for our large population of first-generation and low-income students. We will build on our recent investment in our student services infrastructure to ensure that we offer a vibrant, more traditional campus environment. We will provide students with compelling activities and events to participate in, such as expanding our community service and student leadership programs and offering cultural programs that promote our diverse student body and take advantage of our location in New York City—all of which will contribute to a sense of community and *esprit de corps*. To further support these efforts, we will reinforce an institution-wide commitment to customer service. Our goal is to provide superior customer service at all times to all students interacting with any department and we will ensure all faculty and staff are trained and motivated to achieve this level of service.

Finally, we reaffirm our commitment to exploring athletics programming and moving to NCAA Division III, which will enable us to recruit more students with interest in participating in collegiate sports and greatly contribute to campus life. To support both the athletics program and the student body as a whole, we will provide athletics facilities to both train and compete, as well as workout facilities for all students.

4 - Use technology to improve teaching, learning and customer service

We have done an excellent job over the years obtaining and utilizing technology with the infusion of significant funding from grants throughout the institution even in the face of tenuous finances and competition for organizational resources. Yet the role of technology in society continues to grow, inserting itself into the daily lives of individuals, organizations and industries. Attempting to *keep up* with industry trends and the expectations of our students is no longer sufficient. Commensurate with our growth size, quality, and stature we now commit to using technology to differentiate our educational

experience. With a strong infusion of technology into how we teach and provide service to students, we can join those next-tier institutions with whom we aspire to compete.

We will fully integrate technology into the management and delivery of our courses. We already have many of the tools and equipment we need, but we do not consistently and effectively utilize them. We will set high expectations, provide the requisite training, and create incentives to fully engage faculty. We will evaluate opportunities for online only education, targeting programs such as a bachelor's of professional studies, and increase our commitment to offering online and hybrid courses to existing students. This will add to our institutional capacity, could reduce the need for classroom space, and will provide our students significantly more flexibility as they attempt to balance their college, work and family commitments. We will also evaluate expanding our distance education corporate partnerships, which can be a source of greater tuition revenue and create crucial relationships with a variety of industries. These relationships, as well as those we maintain via our advisory councils, are the lifeblood of our ongoing efforts to keep our curricula in alignment with industry needs.

We will utilize technology to automate and improve our student services and administrative functions. We will put as many student services online as possible, from the recruitment process through matriculation and graduation and maintain our full wireless coverage of the campus with sufficient bandwidth to meet students' growing demand for Internet access and speed. This will require building our information technology technological and staffing infrastructure to ensure a higher level of support and fast response times when issues arise. Similarly, we will look for opportunities to automate our internal business processes to improve efficiency and our ability to serve students better.

Finally, while technology has been a part of our name, it has not been sufficiently emphasized in our brand. As we build on our commitment to infusing the use of technology in all that we do, we will ensure that this becomes a significant component of our branding initiative so that potential students and employers think *technology leader* when they think of Vaughn College.

5 - Become an institution of choice for new trustees, faculty and staff while promoting and enhancing our diversity

While our employees report a high level of satisfaction at Vaughn, we can and must do even better to make Vaughn a great place to work. We must be able to attract and retain high quality trustees, faculty

and staff to serve our students well, especially as we strive to enhance our academic reputation and seek recognition as a next-tier institution.

In order to compete with next-tier institutions, in terms of faculty and staff, we will need to increase salaries for certain positions. We will conduct a faculty compensation analysis, in coordination with the faculty leadership, and develop a plan to increase salaries to be competitive. We will also conduct an analysis for staff salaries that keeps us competitive with next-tier institutions. For all employees, we will also re-evaluate our benefits structure in order to enhance our total compensation package. We have a relatively high percentage of adjunct faculty and have survived on thin staffing levels in some areas. We will work to increase both full-time academic faculty and ATI instructors commensurate to the recent increase in enrollment in support of our commitment to academic excellence. Similarly, we will identify those areas in the organization that are understaffed and increase staffing levels when it is necessary to provide superior customer service.

We will enhance our commitment to making the community aware of major institutional issues and re-emphasize the collaborative culture and shared governance principles we espouse, including instituting regular meetings with director and chair-level staff and faculty as well as continued periodic open campus meetings. For new employees, we will establish an orientation and mentoring program, to be developed by a cross-functional committee of current employees, to help new employees learn and integrate into the Vaughn community and culture.

We will establish institutional policies and develop standard operating procedures manuals for all departments, which will be published online and promote consistent application of policy *across* departments and communication *between* departments. Similarly, we will create an on-going review process to assess the equality and effectiveness of our tenure, non-tenure, and instructors policies.

We remain committed to serving a diverse student population and provide opportunity to those who come from difficult economic circumstances. While we provide the academic programs and support they need to achieve their degree, we do not provide adequate role models to guide and inspire them. We will actively recruit more diversity to our board, faculty, and staff to more closely represent our student population. In our attempts to recruit more women, we will develop outreach and support programs that recruit female students and create the co-curricular environment that will retain this important constituency. The board of trustees will continue its work to improve in key areas such as the process of recruitment, orientation and development of new board members. Those goals, including greater

engagement by the board in fundraising initiatives and understanding of academic affairs, are critical to the long-term success of Vaughn College.

6 - Move from financial stability to financial security through wise investment in programs and facilities and expanded fundraising

Our recent financial success has been facilitated by enrollment growth, the ability to obtain grant funding from state and federal sources, and a steadfast focus on cost control. Key to our success in managing our financial resources has been use of the tools and metrics we have developed to monitor closely our situation and assess new initiatives carefully. We have recently added a revenue center analysis tool to the financial planning model and key financial indicators we have relied on for years. We will continue to use these and other data-based techniques to diligently and intelligently manage our financial equilibrium. Our mantra as we take action to *realize our transformation as an academically dynamic institution* will be to *measure, monitor, manage, and report*.

We also must create and develop new and enhance existing non-tuition revenue streams. We will explore maximizing the use of the current and expanded residence hall use during off-peak months and developing partnerships to create non-traditional education programs that may appeal to members of the external community such as continuing education.

We will continue to control costs diligently and explore new operational cost-saving initiatives. We will develop and disseminate purchasing guidelines to ensure we get good prices on large or recurring purchases. We will explore appointing a committee on sustainability and efficiency to look for cost-saving or even revenue opportunities related to our energy usage and waste disposal practices, and periodically conduct energy audits of all campus facilities.

Meanwhile, we will take a systematic and comprehensive approach to continuing to build our fundraising efforts. While our alumni giving has not been strong due to the reasons outlined above, alumni and board of trustees giving is crucial to demonstrate to other potential donors how these stakeholders are committed to the institution and willing to contribute. In the area of alumni, we must build upon the past decade of bachelor's of science degree graduates to create a *culture of giving* among students and alumni alike. We will also engage the board of trustees in a more substantial role in fundraising for the institution and use the recent investment in staffing in the development area to support efforts in both areas. We will set aggressive annual fund targets and do everything in our power to realize them.

In addition to the state and federal sources we have been so successful in soliciting, we will identify and contact private foundations and corporations who specifically target education, and in particular science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) programs that are so relevant to our curriculum, for their giving. Finally, we will again investigate our capacity to launch a capital campaign to support achievement of our exciting yet ambitious vision for the future of the College.

Next Steps

Through operational planning, we will develop a detailed list of tasks, required capital and operating expenditures, revenue sources, priorities, responsible parties, timelines to deliver on our vision of *realizing our transformation as an academically dynamic institution*.

Our president and steering committee will lead the implementation of this agenda and the tasks required to implement it; they will create evaluation systems to assess our progress with our implementation and they will report to our campus community, board, and external stakeholders regularly. They will also continue the process begun in the fall of 2011 to scan our environment, assess strategic issues, and develop strategies for updating our vision and operational plan.

We know from our experience that the process of creating a shared vision is as important as the plan itself. We are confident that together as a community we will be successful in *realizing our transformation as an academically dynamic institution*.