Westminster College
Bill and Vieve Gore School of Business

Strategic Plan
2014-17
Introduction

In September 2013, the Bill and Vieve Gore School of Business celebrated our 25th anniversary. We marked this important milestone with roundtable discussions, an entrepreneur open house, lectures, and a “star alumni” panel. We also had many opportunities to interact with members of the Gore family, former students, W.L. Gore and Associates leaders, alumni, trustees, students, and faculty and staff from across the college. The celebration was educational and uplifting, and it rekindled a sense of pride in our unique history.

In January 2014, we learned that our application to become accredited by AACSB International—the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business—had been accepted. This decision marked the beginning of a three-to-five year journey to achieve accreditation from an internationally recognized and prestigious accrediting body.

The strategic plan that follows builds on our rich history, while paving the way to a bright future, including successful accreditation by AACSB International. Achieving this accreditation is central to many of our aspirations, including improving the quality of the education we provide to students, enhancing our reputation locally and nationally, and increasing the appeal of our programs in a changing and expanding competitive field.

Like many colleges and universities today, we are facing numerous challenges. However, we are confident that the strategic plan described in the following pages will position us to tackle the challenges head on.
Mission, Vision and Values

In January 2014, after a lively and collaborative series of discussions that included virtually all BVGSB faculty and staff as well as students, administrators, and advisory council and board of trustees members, the BVGSB faculty voted to adopt new mission, vision and values statements.

These statements capture our uniqueness and aspirations, and we believe they will lead us to a much higher level of quality and excellence.

Bill and Vieve Gore School of Business

Mission

We create an innovative, applied, invigorating and student-centered learning environment that prepares students to be leaders who add value to their workplaces and communities.

Vision

Our graduates will be principled, effective leaders who achieve their goals, make lasting contributions, and thrive in a complex and uncertain world.

Values

We value:

- Excellence and continuous improvement in our teaching, service, and scholarship
- Integrity and ethical behavior
- Strong relationships with colleagues and students
- Creativity and innovation
- Execution and goal accomplishment
- Personal learning and growth

As faculty and staff members of the Bill and Vieve Gore School of Business, we realize that it is one thing to agree to a set of ideals, and quite another to make the ideals a reality. The purpose of this strategic plan, therefore, is to translate the statements above into concrete plans that will enable us to fulfill our mission and lead us to our vision.
The BVGSB strategic plan contains actions designed to implement our vision, mission and values. The plan was developed based on suggestions from faculty and staff members who participated in a strategic planning session, offered feedback in two strategic plan surveys, or provided written recommendations. The plan is organized around four strategic goals, each of which contains several supporting initiatives.

**Goal 1:** Student learning and success will be our highest priority.

**Goal 2:** We will be outstanding teachers who create challenging, engaging, applied and relevant learning experiences for students.

**Goal 3:** We will engage in scholarship that enhances our expertise, credibility and teaching.

**Goal 4:** We will build new partnerships and strengthen relationships with businesses and the community to enhance student learning.

The strategic goals provide broad direction, whereas the initiatives contain specific actions and measurable outcomes. The faculty and staff members who volunteer to lead and participate in each initiative will describe the major tasks, completion dates, and expected outcomes, using a common template. We will closely track each initiative’s progress using the measures and milestones defined by initiative leaders.

We also will track our overall progress on the strategic goals using several critical metrics:

- Enrollment, retention, and graduation rate
- Net Promoter Score for students, alumni, faculty, and staff
- Student evaluations of our performance relative to our value proposition
- ETS scores
- Employer perceptions of BVGSB graduates
- Alumni engagement
- Number and quality of faculty publications
**Goal 1:** Student learning and success will be our highest priority.

To fulfill our mission and vision, we must prepare our students to achieve their goals and contribute meaningfully to their employers and communities. A crucial aspect of this preparation is the creation of a stimulating environment in which student learning and success are the centerpiece of everything we do.

**Initiative 1a.** Create and implement a coaching/mentoring model designed to enhance learning and strengthen relationships with students. We have learned a great deal about coaching in our competency-based programs, and this initiative will help us transfer some of that knowledge to our regular programs. This initiative will help us identify ways to (1) be more responsive to our students’ questions and concerns, (2) provide students with quicker, more thorough, and more developmental feedback, (3) offer higher quality coaching and mentoring to students overall, and (4) cultivate lasting relationships with our students.

**Initiative 1b.** Develop a comprehensive Assurance of Learning process in the BVGSB, including a definition of “student success.” The first step in this initiative is to define what “student success” is and select measures that will help us know when students have been successful. These measures will emphasize academic excellence and extend beyond students’ performance in class and on standardized tests. For example, “student success” could include succeeding in one’s career (e.g., finding an ideal job) or acquiring qualities needed to succeed in life (e.g., becoming a lifelong learner). The second step in the initiative will be to develop a comprehensive and systematic process to measure student learning and success. Such a program will allow us to address problems and continuously improve our teaching and learning approaches. The ultimate goal is to create a process that will give us confidence that graduating students have acquired the knowledge and skills needed to be successful.

**Initiative 1c.** Analyze and eliminate barriers facing transfer students. Students who transfer to the BVGSB from other institutions face a variety of barriers related to liberal education requirements or prerequisites. The purpose of this initiative is to explore ways to eliminate the barriers without reducing the quality of transfer students’ learning experience. This should make Westminster a more attractive option for transfer students, and it should accelerate the progress of the transfer students who do enroll.

**Initiative 1d.** Improve student writing meaningfully and measurably. Research continues to show that writing is a crucial skill for students, and that employers strongly prefer to hire students with strong written communication skills. The research also indicates that many students’ writing skills could be much better. This initiative will build on the work of the BVGSB writing initiative over the last four years by emphasizing new ways to strengthen and measurably improve students’ business writing skills.
Goal 2: We will be outstanding teachers who create challenging, engaging, applied and relevant learning experiences for students.

Superb teaching is the main strategy we use to prepare our students for their careers or further education. We believe we can prepare our students most effectively by using a teaching approach that emphasizes active involvement, practical application of concepts, rigor, and relevance.

Initiative 2a. Explore and define the indicators of “outstanding teaching” in the BVGSB and create a process to incorporate them into faculty selection, development and evaluation processes. The main purpose of this initiative is to identify the factors that exemplify outstanding teaching in the school. By researching best practices used in exemplary business schools and applying them to our unique situation, we will be better able to help our students be successful. Once the indicators are defined, a proposal will be created for incorporating the findings into our faculty searches, professional development, and peer reviews.

Initiative 2b. Realign the undergraduate curriculum to maximize the benefits afforded by the new liberal education curriculum and to better integrate liberal arts and business education. Our undergraduate program curriculum has not been redesigned for many years. With the recent reform of the liberal education program, now is an excellent time to explore ways to capitalize on the learning opportunities we have as a professional school located in a liberal arts college. The initiative will align our undergraduate curriculum with our mission, vision, values, and will also incorporate employer feedback, published reports, and research on best practices employed by excellent business schools. The goals of the initiative are to ensure that our undergraduate program (1) takes full advantage of the learning opportunities created by the new liberal education program, and (2) is rigorous, relevant, based on current research and practice, and closely aligned with the market. In this initiative, special emphasis will placed on analyzing and increasing enrollment and retention in the undergraduate program.

Initiative 2c. Redesign the graduate curriculum, and especially the MBA program, to address longstanding problems and increase the program’s quality and competitiveness. An effort to redesign our MBA program began in 2012-13, and this initiative is intended to bring the effort to completion. The goals of the redesign are to address known problems, increase the rigor and relevance of the MBA program, better align the curriculum with the market, and improve the MBA program’s competitiveness. The redesigned program should be consistent with our mission, vision and values, well-researched, distinct in its content, and forward-looking, such that it will remain relevant for three-to-five years. In this initiative, special emphasis will be placed on analyzing and increasing enrollment and retention in our graduate programs.

Initiative 2d. Develop a teaching seminar series, with particular emphasis on the use of applied learning. All regular and adjunct faculty will be encouraged to participate in these sessions. Facilitators will be teaching experts, faculty from other institutions, and BVGSB faculty who will showcase best teaching practices. The sessions may also involve observing teaching techniques in action. The best practices shared in these sessions will be documented, placed in a repository, and made available to all faculty.
**Goal 3:** We will engage in scholarship that enhances our expertise, credibility and teaching.

As we pursue AACSB accreditation, it will become increasingly important for all faculty members to be active scholars. Greater emphasis on scholarship will improve our reputations in the academic community, and by staying abreast of new developments in our disciplines, our teaching effectiveness should also improve.

**Initiative 3a.** Develop and implement a seminar series focusing on scholarship-related education and information sharing. All regular and adjunct faculty will be encouraged to participate in these professional development sessions, which will have four main emphases.

- Initially, the sessions will feature invited speakers from other colleges or universities or current BVGSB faculty, who will discuss strategies for getting started on writing, researching, and publishing.
- Later, the sessions will feature BVGSB faculty who will present and solicit feedback on their research and writing, with the goal of improving the quality and likelihood of acceptance.
- In terms of content, emphasis will be placed on applied research in organizations, the development of business cases with local companies, and research focused on innovative pedagogy.
- In terms of process, the sessions will bring together faculty from different disciplines, which will improve scholarship-related information sharing and create opportunities for collaborative and cross-disciplinary research.

The overall purposes of these sessions are to raise awareness of different research and writing approaches, share information that will help faculty improve the quality of their scholarship, and inspire discussions that may lead to co-authorship among BVGSB faculty.

**Initiative 3b.** Create and implement a plan to encourage and reward research and publishing, and foster an environment in which scholarship is valued in the school. Although teaching is our highest priority, scholarship is also important because it can enhance the school’s reputation, improve our credibility as academics, and deepen our expertise in our fields. The first step in the initiative is to design a process to help faculty in each program collaboratively develop a list of journals or other outlets they would like to target with their publications. A variety of tools and directories are available to facilitate this process. The second step is to analyze the BVGSB’s scholarship-related practices and processes, including gathering feedback from faculty. The third step is to propose a plan to elevate the value and rewards associated with scholarship, and the final step is to implement the plan.
Goal 4: We will build new partnerships and strengthen relationships with businesses and the community to enhance student learning.

Close connections with the business community will allow us to provide relevant and challenging learning experiences for students, learn from the experiences of business professionals, contribute meaningfully to the success of local businesses, and be a valued partner in solving business problems.

Initiative 4a. Create a process to collect feedback regularly from employers, alumni and the BVGSB advisory board, and use the feedback to better align our programs with the market. This initiative will enable us to improve the relevance of our curriculum and create closer ties with the business community. It also supports our “student success” strategic goal, because it will help us prepare our graduates for the challenges they will face in today’s business environment. This initiative would require the BVGSB Advisory Council to play a much greater role in helping us align our programs with the needs of today’s employers.

Initiative 4b. Explore, propose, and implement creative ways to use alumni expertise to enrich the learning experiences of our students. Collaborate with the Westminster Network and BVGSB Advisory Council to identify potential alumni participants. Alumni have the potential to be excellent partners and mentors in preparing students for careers, and many alumni are interested in staying involved with the college and school. This initiative will allow us to identify ways to help alumni stay connected with the BVGSB while also enhancing student learning. This initiative would involve researching best practices used in other top business schools. It also would offer opportunities for members of the BVGSB Advisory Council, many of whom are alumni, to become involved in mentoring or identifying potential mentors for our students.

Initiative 4c. Identify key professional organizations in the business community, and develop a process to encourage active faculty and student participation in the organizations. This initiative will raise the school’s visibility and help to deepen our connections to members of the business community. When the organizations allow for the creation of student chapters, BVGSB students could lead the effort.

Initiative 4d. Create a BVGSB Center for Innovative Organizational Cultures. This center will promote innovative organizational cultures by organizing and leveraging the knowledge, expertise and networks of Bill and Vieve Gore School of Business faculty, alumni and friends. The center will have three main purposes: (1) Enrich the scholarship and exchanges about innovative organizational cultures and practices within the Westminster community and beyond. (2) Provide a distinctive focus and develop “best in class” capabilities that elevate the reputation of the school. (3) Help change the arc of management practice to enable interested and committed organizations to learn from each other and thrive.