

Five Years of *Building on Strength*: Interim Report

February 2021

OVERVIEW

The Connecticut College Board of Trustees adopted *Building on Strength* in 2016-2017 to guide strategy over a ten-year period around three interconnected priorities: achieving greater academic distinction; creating a more robust student experience; and supporting a just and sustainable institution. This academic year, as we approached the halfway point, we invited the community to reflect on both the achievements of the first five years and the direction for the next.

To provide context for that discussion, progress reports from 2017-2020 were distilled and shared as a single document (Appendix A). We then administered a survey and conducted smaller focus groups (Appendix B) to allow individuals the opportunity to offer thoughts about which areas represent the greatest achievement in the past five years and which require still more work. The 160 students, staff, faculty, and trustees who participated saw important advances in educational excellence, full participation, and career development. They were encouraged by the momentum around fundraising and endowment growth, as well as efforts to improve the residential experience, but they also saw these as areas needing greater focus in the coming years, along with sustainability, athletics, research, and the arts. This report summarizes the most salient observations.

I. NOTEWORTHY ACHIEVEMENTS

Educational excellence

The College introduced its innovative model for integrative education, Connections, in fall 2016. It was a significant curricular renovation that provided the conceptual background for *Building on Strength*. The plan's first goal, "to become a recognized leader in integrative education," cites Connections as a primary objective in achieving academic distinction. In the past five years, Connections has come to represent what is unique about a Connecticut College education. Not surprisingly, when respondents spoke about the most notable achievements of the past five years, Connections was the initiative mentioned most frequently. Comments about the program's distinctiveness and impact were remarkably consistent across constituencies:

"The Connections curriculum has been essential in differentiating Conn from the competition and providing a clearer link between scholarship in the liberal arts with purposeful work aligned with student interest and passion. Connections clarifies the value and importance of a liberal arts education and sets the stage for a unique and satisfying direction post college and beyond." (Trustee)

“Highlighting and supporting the Connections curriculum provides Connecticut College with something that uniquely distinguishes it from other small liberal arts colleges, which is an asset in the challenging environment of liberal arts education today.” (Faculty member)

“The development of the new integrated pathways and the all-college symposium is notable. These are excellent opportunities for students to take their learning out of the box (or book, as it may be), and really feel invested in their work and scholarship.” (Staff member)

“I think the revised Connections curriculum, including centers and pathways, as well as the All-College Symposium, are important accomplishments because they support increased interdisciplinary study and engagement opportunities for students.” (Student)

“Establishing the new Connections curriculum, which sets the college apart from peer institutions with an innovative educational model.” (Staff member)

“Holding the All-College Symposium, in both 2019 and 2020 to showcase how students integrated courses, research, internships, and engagements in the community and around the world. What an amazing accomplishment to see the revised curriculum come to life and better understand how students found synergies in all of their learning.” (Staff member)

“Clearly the most impressive accomplishment has been the introduction, expansion and increased exposure of Connections. This has been borne out by the recognition and accolades the program has received. Not only is this a unique and novel approach to liberal arts education but it has the potential to increase the positive perception of the college.” (Trustee)

Deepening faculty and student engagement off campus and around the world, a key component of Connections, was also noted as an important advance, chiefly through the opening of the Walter Commons for Global Study and Engagement in January 2018.

“Establishing the Walter Commons [was important for] prioritizing global education opportunities that span the curriculum. Campus internationalization must continue to be a critical focus to stay on track with U.S. higher education trends.” (Staff member)

“The creation and the work of the Walter Commons has been integral to my time at Conn.” (Student)

“Encouraging a global liberal arts education that is holistic, with a focus on applying the ideas to the real world . . . helps students be better equipped to use skills they have acquired.” (Student)

In the same vein, participants cited the Academic Resource Center as an “incredible student resource” and its expanded menu of programs as an important educational achievement in the last five years. As one student commented, “If the Walter Commons is a reminder to look outward, the ARC gives you the skills to look inward to achieve your potential.”

Full Participation

Establishing an environment where all people can thrive, achieve their potential, and contribute to the thriving of others lies at the center of all three of the plan’s interconnected priorities. This is the meaning of “full participation,” the next most frequently noted accomplishment in the survey responses. Many participants remarked on the progress that the College has made through the

Equity and Inclusion Action Plan, with its specific actions aimed at enhancing faculty, student, and staff diversity; strengthening learning around social difference; and enhancing campus resources towards bias reduction. Among the areas specifically highlighted:

“The Agnes Gund ‘60 Dialogue Project and other relevant and timely efforts focusing on racial justice.”
(Staff member)

“Increasing enrollment of students of color and hiring more BIPOC tenure track faculty.” (Student)

“Many actions on equity and inclusiveness to build a better community as well as a social justice citizenship beyond Conn.” (Faculty member)

“Introducing programs that initiate a conversation about social differences and promoting campus wide participation.” (Staff member)

“Instituting mandatory bias trainings and the Social Difference and Power requirement. [These have been] a great way to increase student awareness and [create] a better campus culture.” (Student)

One trustee concluded: “In looking back on the plan, I believe it was prescient. . . . The demands of our times for equity, inclusion, justice . . . must be baked in to every facet of our operations. This moral center from which we operate will position us to create the kind of communities [and the] future leaders that are needed for our times.”

Career development

Creating future leaders relates to a third goal mentioned frequently by respondents, making Conn the leading liberal arts career program in the country. There was broad consensus that the opening of new Hale Center for Career Development on the ground floor of Fanning Hall represents an important achievement of the plan’s first five years, not merely for the renovation itself but also for the way it makes visible the central role career can and must play in a student’s four-year journey at Conn. A few memorable comments:

“Career preparation is a critical and often missing part of a college experience. Conn’s ability to deliver this allows students to connect the work they do in the classroom to their career aspirations and it gives them and their families reassurance that they will be employed soon after graduation from Conn.” (Staff member)

“[Among the most important accomplishments have been] the enhancements, relocation and name change of the Hale Center.” (Faculty member)

“Hale Center students now have [increased opportunities] to connect with the Conn alumni network [and this should continue].” (Trustee)

II. SHOWING PROGRESS/NEEDING PROGRESS

Financial Strength

Many other areas of accomplishment cited by respondents were also tempered by comments emphasizing the need for much greater progress. Financial strength was a case in point. Improving

the College's financial position through fundraising, financial aid, and enrollment was noted as a significant achievement. As important milestones, respondents pointed to:

"Financial Strength -- raising \$46.7 million in endowment. We have many goals, but most of them will need to be supported financially." (Staff member)

"The current campaign success to date, particularly assets raised for the endowment, is one of the most important accomplishments. Securing the financial underpinning of the College is essential." (Staff member)

"[Establishing] a merit scholarship program and strengthening and expanding of the philanthropic support for the College. . . [These have] directly impacted the student experience and helped to keep the College viable and respected among our peers. (Faculty member)

Understandably, financial strength was also called out as an area needing continued focus, because, as one respondent noted, "financial sustainability will be key to the College continuing to exist as a pre-eminent institution." Specific comments pointed to the need for continued endowment growth, strengthened admissions marketing, and new summer and winter programs, specifically:

"Summer programs that build upon Conn's good reputation [will] generate funds and share the campus locally and nationally." (Faculty member)

"Diversifying revenue streams through summer and winter programs and other offerings (such as pre-college and master's programs, academic consulting, and equity and inclusion programs for local institutions and businesses) should be among the top priorities for the second half of the strategic plan." (Faculty member)

"Summer 2020 showed that we can launch a successful set of online courses; the enhancement/enlargement of summer (and possibly winter) programs would generate revenue and get our name out there--both good." (Staff member)

Campus Living

The same kind of two-sided response could be seen in discussions of campus life goals. The planned-for renovation of the College Center at Crozier-Williams was called out by many respondents as an important strategy, along with the improvements already made to the first-year residence halls. At the same time, the state of residential spaces was also noted as a weakness. Comments were quite specific:

"Redesign of campus social spaces to facilitate greater contact among students, faculty, and staff - and at the top of that list is the implementation of the Crozier-Williams renovation. I'm concerned about the lack of physical spaces for students/faculty/staff to congregate and build community . . . A central community building will help with admissions - it is tough to get a feel for Conn during a visit without such a place." (Trustee)

"Improving the student experience — everything from living spaces, to places to connect/convene and multiple options of activities — because retention remains a key issue for us and we need to help students thrive, particularly in post-COVID world." (Staff member)

“Crozier-Williams renovation, residence hall upgrades . . . [and] the key spaces where students live and eat and recreate are in need of major improvement.” (Faculty member)

“Our infrastructures and residential amenities are woefully behind - as a residential college our students need [updated] residence halls, suites and more apartments, larger gathering areas, etc.” (Student)

“The student living experience needs to be improved through strategic renovation and construction of residential spaces - the current condition of these facilities hinders the College's reputation.” (Staff member)

“A major enhancement of the dining facilities has been needed for a while and, now that dining is not part of the College Center renovation plan, work to enhance Harris Refectory is vital.” (Staff member)

III. THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

These observations take us to the areas needing attention in the next five years. Two salient themes emerged from the campus-wide feedback. The first has to do with a desire to continue building on the progress already made. This is true not simply for the goals of financial strength and campus life, noted above, but also, overwhelmingly, for the gains made through the launch of our new curriculum, Connections, and through the work on equity, inclusion, and full participation. The second theme has to do with other areas of the plan—namely, sustainability, athletics, research, and the arts—where some progress has been made but even greater opportunities await.

Educational Excellence, Equity, and Justice

On the subject of the Connections, many faculty commented on the need to “finish the work” by clarifying structures and expectations, institutionalizing funding and staffing, and even making Pathways or Centers a requirement for graduation. Some respondents emphasized the need for the College to continue developing its offerings to bring them into alignment with what students want to study. Others were explicit about the importance of developing still other programs to build on our currently popular minor in finance and pathway in entrepreneurship. More than a few mentioned the potential for business, not just to stay competitive with peer competitors who offer it but, more importantly, to embrace business fully as a 21st-century liberal arts competency.

In the area of full participation, given the current national climate and increased sense of urgency around racial justice, many participants expressed the need for even greater institutional support, recruitment, and mentoring of BIPOC faculty and staff, as well as for programming, curricula, facilities, departments, and spaces devoted to “addressing head-on the racial issues and inequalities on our campus and in the world.” The general sentiment of the feedback was: we must accelerate the work that has already begun on our Equity and Inclusion Action Plan. As a faculty member concluded, “Rethinking how we recruit and support students, how we work to retain faculty of color, and how we rebuild a sense of community after the COVID crisis all deserve our serious attention.”

Sustainability

The notable advances in the College’s sustainability efforts—the establishment of a presidential council on sustainability, the publication of a sustainability action plan, and, as one person put it,

“the recent award of a coveted STARS rating”—were held up as achievements of the first five years of the *Building on Strength*, but sustainability also emerged as an important area of “work still to be done.” Comments emphasized the need for the College to operate sustainably by improving its utility infrastructure, and lifting up the physical and natural assets of the campus, including the waterfront and the Arboretum. One staff member commented, “reducing our reliance on fossil fuels to meet our campus goals and the targets set by the IPCC is an increasingly urgent imperative and will become only more important to students as we approach the ‘deadline’ of 2030.” Another saw advancing our sustainability goals as “an opportunity for relevant, important leadership – and we should seize it.”

Athletics

Athletics came up again and again as an area where accelerated progress would produce important gains for the College. The creation of a new Action Plan for Competitive Success was called out as a major step forward, giving focus to many of the themes expressed in the feedback, including the importance of renovated facilities, budgets for staffing and recruitment, the role of athletics in enrollment, and “developing a culture of excellence in all that Conn does.” As one faculty member put it, “Connecticut College cannot build on strength if we don't embrace athletics. . . . Our NESCAC affiliation has brought us prestige and kept us competitive for 40 years, now we have to invest like a NESCAC college.” Others spoke to the opportunity athletics provided the College to bolster enrollments through growing the size of teams we already have, something that could be an important strategy in an increasingly competitive admissions environment. Active fundraising to complete the facilities goals of the Athletics master plan was also seen as essential. As one faculty reasoned, “Not only will this increase the visual appeal of the College and make us more attractive to prospective students, these facilities will impact ALL students by enhancing their experience while they matriculate their four years.”

The Arts & Research

Two areas that received a less pointed feedback were the arts and research, reflecting perhaps the slightly less developed nature of these goals in the plan itself. In the case the arts, responses highlighted the Palmer renovation, now in progress, as an important achievement of the last five years, along with quality of our existing programs. As one faculty put it, “Elevate the arts! We have amazing arts programs which are not advertised enough,” a call that should be answered by the re-opening of Nancy Athey '72 and Preston Athey Center at Palmer Auditorium in fall 2021.

Faculty research has been supported by over \$3.5 million in federal and foundation dollars since 2016, owing in part to new College policies on sponsored projects. These were praised along with smaller student-centered programs, such as the sophomore summer research program funded by Susan Eckert Lynch '62. Areas where more progress is desired include endowing professorships, bolstering library materials, and renovating research spaces.

CONCLUSIONS

Overall, the collective discussion showed the value of our strategic priorities and goals for focusing the work of the campus. The responses by members of the community revealed strong consensus

around the areas of greatest achievement in the past five years: in the launch of Connections as a distinctive approach to integrative education, the opening of the Walter Commons, and the expansion of our Academic Resource Center to support student success; in the creation of the Agnes Gund '60 Dialogue Project and the advances of our Equity and Inclusion Action plan; and in the opening of the new Hale Center for Career Development and the enrichment of our integrated career program. In every case, these successes have been enabled by a combination of strong leadership, philanthropic support, and years of focused effort by faculty, staff, students, administration, and trustees. Progress on other goals over the next five years—in raising endowment, enhancing campus living and social spaces, especially the renovation of Cro, strengthening athletics, and advancing our sustainability goals—will require the same integrated approach.

The broad purpose of this strategic plan is to grow strength from strength—to make Connecticut College an even more vital institution by increasing our competitiveness; attracting and retaining stronger students, faculty, and staff; and producing 21st-century global leaders and change-makers capable of putting the liberal arts into action. External validation of this aim can be seen in the success of faculty winning ever more competitive external grants; in the many invitations received by staff, faculty, and deans to speak about the College's distinctive approach to integrative education, intergroup dialogue, and career education; in the recent invitation by the Watson Foundation for Conn to join their competitive post-baccalaureate international fellowship program; in our consistent ranking as a top producer of Fulbright Fellows (with a record 13 semi-finalists named in 2020-21); in the significant number of Conn alums named to the Forbes 30 under 30 list in the past several years; and in producing the first Marshall Scholar in the College's history.

Even more important, perhaps, is the internal validation we have seen during the past 11 months, as we faced the unfathomable economic, public safety, and social challenges of the global coronavirus pandemic, a context in which the plan's value became even clearer. As the pandemic disrupted every aspect of our residential operation, our strategic priorities continued to guide us, allowing us to develop our curriculum; improve the health, safety, and connection of the campus; advance our competitive success; develop new initiatives for anti-racist education; and lay the groundwork for post-COVID stability. These same priorities will ground the next five years, as we build greater academic strength, a more vibrant student experience, and the just community that will define the future success of Connecticut College.

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APPENDIX A



CONNECTICUT COLLEGE

FIVE YEARS OF BUILDING ON STRENGTH

ENHANCING ACADEMIC DISTINCTION

Since Building on Strength was adopted in fall 2016, Connecticut College has developed an innovative program of integrative education that seeks to deliver world-class academics to an ever-greater number of students. We have enhanced resources for centers for interdisciplinary scholarship and for research on campus and around the world. And we have commenced a major renovation of historic Palmer Auditorium into a new resource for excellence in the arts.

Goal 1. Education

To ***ensure the success of Connections***, the first objective related to this goal, we

- developed 14 integrative pathways, 78 new First-Year Seminars, 68 new ConnCourses, and a new team-based advising system, supported by \$1.55 million in start-up funds from Andrew W. Mellon and Endeavor Foundations
- held a major undergraduate conference, the All-College Symposium, in both 2019 and 2020 to showcase how students integrated courses, research, internships, and engagements in the community and around the world
- integrated a new social difference and power requirement into the four-year curriculum
- reorganized staffing in the Dean of the College office and the Registrar's office to oversee student success through Connections
- created a new visual identity for the program and a suite of web and print materials
- shared the Connections story with others in higher education through media coverage, presentations at national conferences, and campus consultations.

Connections was built on the strength of the College's centers for interdisciplinary scholarship, and so our second objective in the plan is to ***ensure the ongoing strength of these centers and all our centers for teaching, and learning***. In support of this goal, we

- developed new programming at the Holleran Center for Community Action and Public Policy, with a gift of \$2.5 million from Carolyn Holleran '60 and Jerry Holleran

- expanded the Ammerman Center for Arts and Technology with a \$2 million endowment gift from Judith Ammerman '60
- deepened the impact of the Academic Resource Center (ARC) with a \$10 million gift from anonymous donors, establishing Conn as a national leader in skills-building for life. In connection with this expansion, we
 - developed a quantitative reasoning program with a grant from Sherman Fairchild Foundation
 - co-located the Writing Center to the ARC with support from Pat Squire '56
 - appointed a new director of the ARC with expertise in STEM and multicultural education to work with the dean of academic support.
- moved the Center for the Critical Study of Race and Ethnicity to the new Walter Commons for Global Study and Engagement to signal its centrality to the curriculum (*see below*)
- developed our interdisciplinary program in Global Islamic Studies through new inter-institutional collaboration supported by \$806,000 from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

To ***deepen faculty and student engagement off campus and around the world***, the third objective, we

- created the new Walter Commons for Global Study and Engagement with gifts from the Otto and Fran Walter foundation, the Alden Trust, and Susan Lynch '65, in support of our mission of developing “citizens in a global society”
- appointed a new associate dean of the faculty for global initiatives to lead efforts providing global experiences for every student
- expanded our world language requirement and developed new resources for students to pursue language study on campus and abroad. 70% of all first-year students are now studying a language in their first semester
- enhanced advising for global experiences with a new online database of international programs and new pre-departure and post-return programming
- created direct exchange programs with Ashesi University in Ghana, Ewha Woman's University in Seoul, and Ashoka University in India (*see below*)
- developed Global New London summer practicum to give students a hands-on, experiential learning opportunity in New London
- became a founding member of the New University in Exile Consortium, with generous support of Ann Johnson '68, to support at-risk scholars around the globe
- received New York Times Award for Innovation in Education Abroad
- were honored with the first Marshall Scholar ever in the history of Connecticut College.

To accomplish the fourth education-related objective in the plan, ***broadening educational opportunities through new institutional partnerships***, we

- sent faculty and staff abroad to build relationships with Ashesi University, Collegium Civitas in Poland, the National Theater Institute/Moscow Arts Theater program, National University of Ireland in Galway, Ewha Woman's University in Seoul, and Ashoka University in India
- created a new dual B.A./B.S. degree program in environmental engineering studies in conjunction with Worcester Polytechnic Institute
- re-established our institutional partnership with the Watson Foundation, making Conn students eligible for \$30,000 postgraduate grants to support independent international research
- established partnerships with Tufts University and Northeastern to create direct pathways to master's programs in museum studies and business administration

Goal 2. Research

The first two objectives related to research are to **enhance funding, spaces, and technology for knowledge creation**, and to **multiply opportunities for student/faculty collaboration**. In support of these, we

- created a new sophomore research initiative for pathways and centers, through the generosity of Susan Eckert Lynch '62
- endowed new undergraduate research and travel opportunities in the field of history, with a \$120,000 gift from Linda Lear '62
- renewed Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship Program with a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation
- established Digital Scholarship Fellows program to support faculty and student research within the Division of Information Services
- enhanced support for faculty securing external grant funding through the Office of Corporate, Government, and Foundation relations, leading to \$3.4 million in new grants since 2016
- joined the National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity to support faculty success
- created a tenure-track line in bioinformatics to build stronger synergies between computer science and the life sciences
- established new President's Award for Creative Impact to recognize the extraordinary achievement of career faculty

- enhanced advising for post-baccalaureate fellowships resulting in 27 Fulbright scholars since 2016 and the College's first Marshall scholar in 2021.

To **enrich campus intellectual dialogue**, we

- established the President's Distinguished Lecture Series, bringing major public intellectuals to the campus and the community
- created, in partnership with The Day, the "Conversations on Race" series
- supported annual lectures for the campus and the greater New London community through the One Book One Region program
- launched the annual All-College Symposium as major culminating event for Connections
- mounted first annual winter-session conference on racial justice for January 2021.

Goal 3. Arts

To **enhance facilities and technology to match the excellence of the College's programs**, we

- undertook renovation of the historic Palmer Auditorium with generous support from Nancy Athey '72 and Preston Athey and the Sherman Fairchild Foundation
- appointed a new technical support specialist in the Art Department
- designated new teaching and studio space on Williams Street for the Ammerman Center for Arts & Technology.

To **develop academic offerings based on signature programs and centers**, and to **leverage artistic resources along the Northeast corridor**, we

- established a new master's degree opportunity in museum studies in partnership with Tufts University
- co-produced with the National Theater Institute, Yale Theater Studies, Brown Theater Arts and Performance Studies, Trinity Repertory, and New York Actors Studio María Irene Fornés' play *The Danube*, directed by Estelle Parsons '49.
- hosted artists from the Merce Cunningham Foundation and the former Cunningham dance company to mark the Cunningham centennial.

All of these achievements should lead towards the final objective of **attaining national leadership in collaborative arts practice oriented toward social change**. Initial steps towards this goal include hosting the 2019 [Re]Generation Summit to connect artists, educators, researchers, and activists working toward social change.

ENRICHING THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Since 2016, Connecticut College has improved its career program and opened the Hale Center for Career Development in Fanning Hall, renovated residence halls to enhance the first-year experience, developed a master plan for athletics along with an action plan for competitive success, and completed architectural designs for a major renovation of the campus center.

Goal 1. Life and Career

To **establish the premier liberal arts career program in the country**, we

- opened the Hale Center for Career Development in Fanning Hall with support from Robert Hale '88 and Karen Hale
- designed a four-year career program, integrated into Connections, that begins with the first-year seminar.

To **increase access to high-quality internships and other career-enhancing experiences**, we have

- infused new “career-informed learning” modules into 77 courses across the curriculum
- introduced a finance cohort breakfast series and a Bloomberg terminal to prepare students early for competitive internships in finance and consulting
- created a new interdisciplinary finance minor that has quickly become one of the College’s most popular
- developed employer relations function and increased employer visits to campus by 69% since 2016
- launched a new job shadowing program and held the sixth annual Fast Forward program in 2020 – a week-long career-intensive training lab
- established a new 7-week, credit-bearing career preparation course, available to students in their first semester, and new funding options for students who complete the course
- created “Advanced Career Exploration” (ACE) opportunities for students in partnership with alumni and parent industry specialists
- established the Foreign Language Internship Program with a \$165,000 grant from U.S. Department of Education.

To promote our work on the plan’s third life-and-career-related objective, to **educate students about the relationships among health, well-being, and success**, we

- developed collaborative strengths-based training to promote well-being among career office fellows and student wellness coaches
- enhanced services for mental health through a \$306,000 Garrett Lee Smith Grant
- launched the You@Conn online platform for wellbeing.

Goal 2. Campus Living

Because most of our students live on campus for all four years, our residential setting is a critical part of their experience. Our work to **implement a phased strategy for upgrading campus housing** has had two major components – one that shifts the residential patterns of our students by class year and one that invests in the facilities themselves. Specifically, we

- enhanced connections and engagement among first-year students by converting Hamilton House and Morrisson House into first-year residences
- created first-year-only floors on north and central campus
- established south campus as upperclass-only housing
- renovated the Plant common room through a gift from Class of 1969
- completed comprehensive upgrade of heating and cooling in the Plex.

To **redesign campus social spaces to facilitate greater contact among students, faculty, and staff**, we

- completed architectural plans for a major renovation of the College Center at Crozier-Williams
- programmed new collaboration spaces into the renovation of Palmer Auditorium
- developed a proposal in our campus master plan for new space in Smith-Burdick to support affinity groups.

To **expand high-quality social activity, leadership, and mentoring opportunities across four years**, we have

- substantially expanded student activities programming with \$100K in new and reallocated resources
- created new emerging leaders program between office of student activities and division of institutional equity and inclusion (DIEI)
- vastly expanded the student ambassador program in DIEI to create new pathways for leadership development.

To **increase student engagement with New London and the surrounding regions**, we

- launched an outdoor education program to increase resources and opportunities for student recreation in New England, and a partnership with the New England Science and Sailing organization
- created a first-year learning community in Plant House that focuses on engagement in New London

- established a Civic Scholars summer program in partnership with the Community Foundation of Southeastern Connecticut and a Global New London Summer practicum for students, in collaboration with four community partners.

Goal 3. Athletics

To **make strategic investments in infrastructure and operating support for varsity athletics**, we

- completed an athletics master plan envisioning the long-term renewal of fields, facilities, and waterfront
- appointed Mo White as new director of athletics, the first woman to hold the position in Conn’s history, and promoted two head coaches to associate athletic director
- created new position of assistant director of athletics for business operations
- hired new coaches in men’s soccer, men’s and women’s basketball, men’s and women’s lacrosse, men’s and women’s squash and cross country, and elevated several coaches from part-time to full-time faculty status
- increased strength and conditioning staff and retained Hartford HealthCare to provide expertise in sports medicine
- established the Camel Athletics Network to engage alumni, parents, and friends in the life of Camel Athletics and held well-attended events in Washington, D.C., Boston, and New York City, to garner further support.

To **develop club, intramural, and recreational programs for everyone**, we

- provided new funding, leadership, management policies, and staffing for club sports
- launched a new ice hockey club for women, hired a coach for men’s club hockey, and hired two new on-call athletic trainers to support both men’s and women’s hockey and rugby clubs.

To **strengthen connections among athletics, academics, and the co-curriculum**, we

- introduced the innovative “Coaching 2 Connect” program to the College, a three-year program in leadership and communications training
- established Connecticut College Athletes of Color Coalition fostering dialogue on equity and inclusion in athletics.

SUPPORTING A DIVERSE, JUST, AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY

Since 2016, Connecticut College has begun implementing a new Equity and Inclusion Action Plan, created new curricular and training requirements around social difference, launched an important program on intergroup dialogue, introduced a second Posse from New York City to join our longstanding Posse from Chicago, increased the number of domestic students and faculty of color, published a sustainability action plan, and took steps to increase financial resources for a Conn education.

Goal 1. Full Participation

To develop new policies and programs in support of full participation, we

- established the President’s Council on Equity and Inclusion to engage students, faculty, staff, alumni, and trustees in institutional dialogue and action
- adopted a new Freedom of Expression Policy as part of the Council’s work
- published a comprehensive Equity and Inclusion Action Plan, ratified by the Board in May 2019
- introduced mandatory bias training for all students, faculty, and staff
- introduced a new social difference and power graduation requirement with the Class of 2024
- engaged faculty leaders in strengthening equity pedagogy in the STEM fields
- launched the Agnes Gund ’60 Dialogue Project with a \$1 million gift to foster intergroup dialogue and anti-racist education. Highlights include a new First-Year Seminar “Conversations on Race” and major public lectures by Derald Wing Sue and Ibram X. Kendi.

To enroll and retain more students from historically underrepresented groups, we

- increased the percentage of U.S. students of color from 19.6% in fall 2017 to 23.1% in fall 2020
- developed new credit-bearing course “How College Works” in support of first-generation college students
- brought a second Posse from New York City to join our long-established Posse from Chicago, with generous support from John Zeiler ’74
- joined the American Talent Initiative, a coalition of educational leaders with a mission to expand access and opportunity to high-achieving, low-income students from across the U.S.
- became inaugural members of the Liberal Arts Colleges Racial Equity Leadership Alliance, convened by USC Race & Equity Center.

To support and retain an increasing number of faculty and staff of color, we

- enhanced training for hiring committees on mitigating implicit bias

- hired 16 faculty members of color out of 34 new tenure-track hires between 2016 and 2020
- joined the National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity
- launched a new series for chairs and directors on mentoring.

To **foster a culture of respect and recognition for all employees**, we

- created a new monthly Faculty-Staff Meeting as an inclusive forum for discussion and exchange on important College business
- created a new workshop series through office of dean of faculty to enhance the leadership capacity of department chairs and program directors.

To **improve the accessibility and safety of the campus**, we

- secured a \$750,000 pedestrian safety grant with the City of New London for improvements to Williams Street
- made all four floors of the 90-year old Fanning Hall accessible for the first time in its history with installation of an elevator with the Hale Center renovation.

Goal 2. Sustainability

To **solidify the institutional commitment to environmentally responsible and socially just practices**, and to **establish principles to guide future campus development reflective of College values**, we

- established President's Sustainability Advisory Council
- announced an ambitious goal to achieve a 45% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030
- completed the Campus Sustainability Plan 2018-2028, outlining concrete actions to be taken in the next decade
- received STARS silver rating from the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education
- installed a fuel cell to achieve financial savings and reduce our reliance on the electric grid
- designed a solar array for installation on the facilities administration building
- expanded the Sustainability Revolving Fund to over \$100,000 in collaboration with the Student Government Association.

To **leverage the natural assets of campus and region to advance the College's priorities**, we

- hired a new Arboretum director to expand the collection of curated plants, promote conservation efforts, and support long-term ecological study
- developed a vision for access to the Thames River waterfront area

- appointed a Goodwin Visiting Scholar in Botany to increase impact of the Sprout Garden facility in the curriculum and the broader community

To improve decision-making, conserve resources, and enhance outcomes through the use of new analytical tools, we

- created a strategic position review committee to scrutinize staffing requests for efficiencies
- implemented the Whitebirch platform to enhance financial modeling
- introduced a voluntary retirement offer in 2018 for long-serving staff and faculty and undertook divisional reorganization to maximize benefit of personnel resources
- spearheaded the CTW OneSource eMarketplace consortium in 2019 with Trinity and Wesleyan for more efficient procurement process across three institutions
- convened faculty and Board task forces in 2020 for fresh evaluation of cost structures at Connecticut College and across higher education.

Goal 3. Financial Strength

To double the size of the College's endowment, we

- redesigned the investment committee of the Board of Trustees
- issued an RFP to evaluate the feasibility of retaining an outsourced chief-investment-officer
- raised \$46.7 million so far in new endowment dollars through the campaign, 36% of the \$130 million endowment goal.

To strategically deploy operating resources for strong enrollments, we

- implemented a merit scholarship program
- expanded scholarship support for first-generation and low-income students seeking international study and internships, with support from the Gilman International Scholarship, Fund for Education Abroad, and other sources
- reorganized Admission staff to strengthen the College's advantage in national and international admission markets
- raised over \$100,000 from generous alumnae and alumni to support students with unforeseen educational expenses as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.

To explore new programming to diversify revenue streams, we

- piloted an online summer program to leverage faculty expertise in online instruction
- received accreditation from New England Commission of Higher Education to include online courses as a regular component of the Connecticut College curriculum

- applied for a Davis Educational Foundation grant to develop a business curriculum, based on the success of our new finance minor and entrepreneurship pathway
- developed new winter session programming in racial justice as a pilot for potential executive certificate
- established a new memorandum of understanding with U.S. Coast Guard Academy to share facilities, faculty, and courses.

Finally, to **strengthen and expand philanthropic support for College priorities**, we

- launched a comprehensive campaign that has raised \$130 million in the first three years of its silent phase
- received the largest gift in the College's history to support financial aid, career education, and athletics
- created the Camel Athletic Network to increase support for athletics
- improved outreach to 25,000 alumni by implementing Salesforce as the new enterprise system for Advancement
- set new records for the CC fund each year, increasing totals by more than \$500K since 2016.

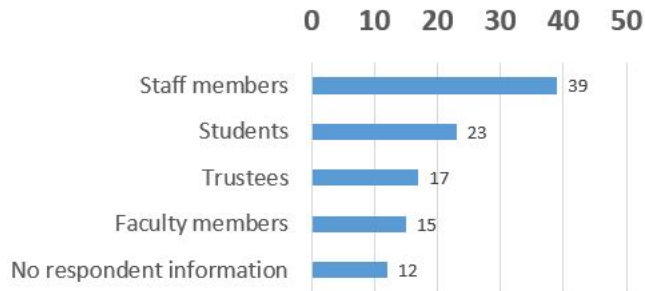
APPENDIX B

Survey and focus groups

Between December 2020 and February 2021, we administered a survey to students, staff, faculty, and trustees asking them the following questions:

- What is your primary role at the College? [student, staff member, faculty member, trustee]
- What do you think the most important accomplishments have been during the first four years of *Building on Strength*? Why?
- Which specific items in the plan do you think are the most important for the College to work on in the next five years? Why?
- Are there any specific goals or initiatives you think should have been included in *Building on Strength* that either weren't included or could have been emphasized more?
- Please use the space below to share any additional thoughts you have about Connecticut College's strategy for the future.

We received 103 responses as of February 11, 2021, as follows:



During the same period, we also convened a series of focus groups with a total of about 60 participants from key campus constituencies to discuss these questions in a more interactive, conversational setting. These discussions included the Student Government Association Executive Board (7 participants), Staff Council (~20 participants), the Priorities, Planning, and Budget Committee (~15 participants), Faculty members (8 participants), and Senior Directors (10 participants).