

# The Plan for Kalamazoo College's Future

Spring 2008

"We do not want a college here that is as good as any one of a hundred similar schools; we intend to have a small college that is better than any of them."

*Kalamazoo College President Allan Hoben, 1922-35*

## Introduction

Kalamazoo College has long been and continues to be a thought leader in higher education. This legacy of educational innovation includes co-education in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Fellowship of Learning in the early 20<sup>th</sup>, and the Kalamazoo Plan ("K" Plan) in the early 1960s. In the changing landscape of higher education, it is both imperative and urgent that we hold to our historic principles of educational innovation and leadership not merely to be "distinctive" but because we know it is the right course for students today.

For the past two years, the broader Kalamazoo College community has worked to craft a comprehensive plan that will continue to place us at the leading edge of innovation in undergraduate teaching and learning. Under this plan, faculty, staff, students and alumni each have taken on the challenge to transform the educational experience at "K." We will accomplish this by building on our strengths as we develop new opportunities to educate our students for the demands of providing enlightened leadership to a richly diverse and increasingly complex world.

Kalamazoo College has always served exceptional students and has understood that to do so the College itself must be exceptional. Students today need more from their Kalamazoo College education than ever before: more depth and breadth of knowledge, greater facility with technologies, more experience in the community, the workplace and other cultures. The College has adapted – and will continue to adapt – to meet those needs, offering a remarkably rich undergraduate experience.

## Kalamazoo College Provides an Exceptional Education

Since its creation, the "K" Plan has provided a unique combination of educational experiences including rigorous academics; experiential learning in the form of service-learning, career exploration, and international study; broad and rigorous exposure to the liberal arts; and the opportunity for in-depth examination of an issue in the Student Individualized Project.

Our study abroad program, which celebrates its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2008, is distinguished both by its high level of academic and cultural integration and by the length of stays. More than 80 percent of Kalamazoo students choose to participate from among more than 40 study abroad programs on six continents.

How do we know a Kalamazoo College education works? We have evidence from a variety of measures.

- In 2007, “K” ranked first in the country for the number of students per capita who elected to join the Peace Corps over a 20-year period.
- “K” ranks 18<sup>th</sup> nationally among all colleges and universities in the percentage of graduates earning doctoral degrees. It is the only Michigan college or university among the top 20.
- In 2007, “K” ranked 7<sup>th</sup> out of 75 universities in the receipt of Fulbright awards.
- In 2005 and 2006, the College placed in the top 2.6 percent of 113 colleges and universities administering the Collegiate Learning Assessment, a test designed to measure students’ critical thinking, analytical skills and ability to write effectively.

Our students are also passionately engaged in our local community. This past year, more than 70 percent of “K” students participated in civic engagement and service learning programs with area schools, neighborhood groups, social service agencies, health care providers, and other organizations.

In light of these outcomes, it is clear that a Kalamazoo College education continues to be outstanding. We are challenged to differentiate ourselves, however, from liberal arts colleges and public universities that make the same promises we do about educational experiences and outcomes.

The Plan for Kalamazoo College’s Future has five priorities:

1. Enhance the distinctive nature of a Kalamazoo College education
2. Create an inclusive, student-focused environment
3. Increase the College’s prestige and visibility
4. Create stronger connections between alumni and the College and among alumni
5. Invest in our faculty and staff

#### **I. Enhance the distinctiveness of a Kalamazoo College education.**

Innovative curricular and co-curricular programs will provide our students with an experience in which the elements more clearly cohere and reinforce one another. We have proposed several new programs:

- Globally focused core seminars designed to foster integration of study abroad with the on-campus curriculum.
- An optional global studies minor obtained by taking the core seminars in combination with a foreign language and study abroad.
- Interdisciplinary minors that will allow students to examine a topic of their choosing from multiple disciplinary perspectives.
- Additional opportunities for incoming students to experience Kalamazoo College’s unique focus on experiential learning. Like Land/Sea, these “bridge” programs will set the stage and prepare them for their four years.

- Guilds, interdisciplinary communities of practice that will bring together alumni, students, faculty and staff who share a common interest in a broadly defined area. These voluntary associations will provide opportunities for networking, professional development, and the collective exploration of issues.

Most notably through the “K” Plan, Kalamazoo College’s hallmark has long been the thorough integration of experiential learning—study abroad, career exploration, senior independent projects—into a rigorous liberal arts curriculum. The creation of a Center for Experiential Education will allow the College to combine new and existing activities in ways that invite students to discover new and unexpected connections:

- Integrate the outstanding work of the Center for International Programs, Center for Career Development and the Mary Jane Underwood Stryker Institute for Service Learning with Guilds and student leadership development to provide a more holistic educational experience for students.
- Share “K’s” outstanding work in experiential education more broadly, enhancing our visibility nationally and internationally.
- Foster faculty development, pedagogical innovation, and scholarship in experiential education.

## **II. Create an inclusive, student-focused environment.**

We are committed to promoting a vibrant, inclusive campus community. Through the renovated Hicks Center and a new fitness center and natatorium, we will enhance the sense of community on campus and promote balance among students, faculty, and staff. By improving the quality of our playing fields and converting more coaching positions from part time to full time, we will provide a competitive and rewarding experience for student athletes.

We will increase the presence of matriculating international students; recruit about half of our students from out of state; and increase endowed scholarship funds to support international students, low-income students, and students from underrepresented groups. Having a student population on campus and in our community that is even more representative of the world in which our graduates live and work will powerfully augment the off-campus experiences we already provide.

We will increase the student body by 150 new students in the next six years. With a total enrollment of 1,500, we will create a more vibrant campus with sufficient numbers of students to fill leadership positions, productions and ensembles. It will also increase our ability to field competitive athletic teams. New leadership development opportunities and new programs will empower and engage students.

## **III. Increase the College’s prestige and visibility.**

We are conducting alumni and prospective student research in 2008 to discover current perceptions and to develop better ways to communicate the attributes that distinguish

Kalamazoo College's singular commitment to liberal learning, rigorous academics, and a vibrant intellectual life.

**IV. Create stronger connections between alumni and the College and among alumni.**

A more robust communication effort will expand connections with alumni. In addition to *LuxEsto*, the College's magazine for alumni and friends, we have launched a new electronic newsletter, *BeLight*, to increase our outreach. We will aggressively promote the Guilds and seek the involvement of alumni and friends for student mentoring, collaborations with faculty, speaking on campus, and opportunities for a broader group of alumni for career networking.

**V. Invest in our faculty and staff.**

The ability to serve our students with their varied gifts and interests has always required of the Kalamazoo faculty and staff a particular flexibility and willingness to innovate. Kalamazoo College provides a unique educational experience that joins academic rigor with experiential education. The quality of this combination depends on our outstanding faculty and staff who are committed to student engagement and experiential learning. To attract and retain the necessary talent, the College must address faculty and staff compensation, which is currently well below that of institutions with similar educational outcomes. We also must create a sustainable technology infrastructure for teaching and learning both inside and outside the classroom.

**Conclusion**

There is great excitement about the Plan for Kalamazoo College's Future on the campus and among our alumni and friends. As we implement this powerful educational plan, we invite you to join us by giving, volunteering, and championing Kalamazoo College's creatively evolving liberal arts education. We believe the plan and the involvement of our alumni and friends will ensure that Kalamazoo College lives up to President Hoben's vision of "a small college that is better than any other."