

ASSURANCE SECTION

REPORT OF A COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION VISIT

TO

GRINNELL COLLEGE
Grinnell, Iowa

9/15/08-9/17/08

FOR

The Higher Learning Commission
A Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

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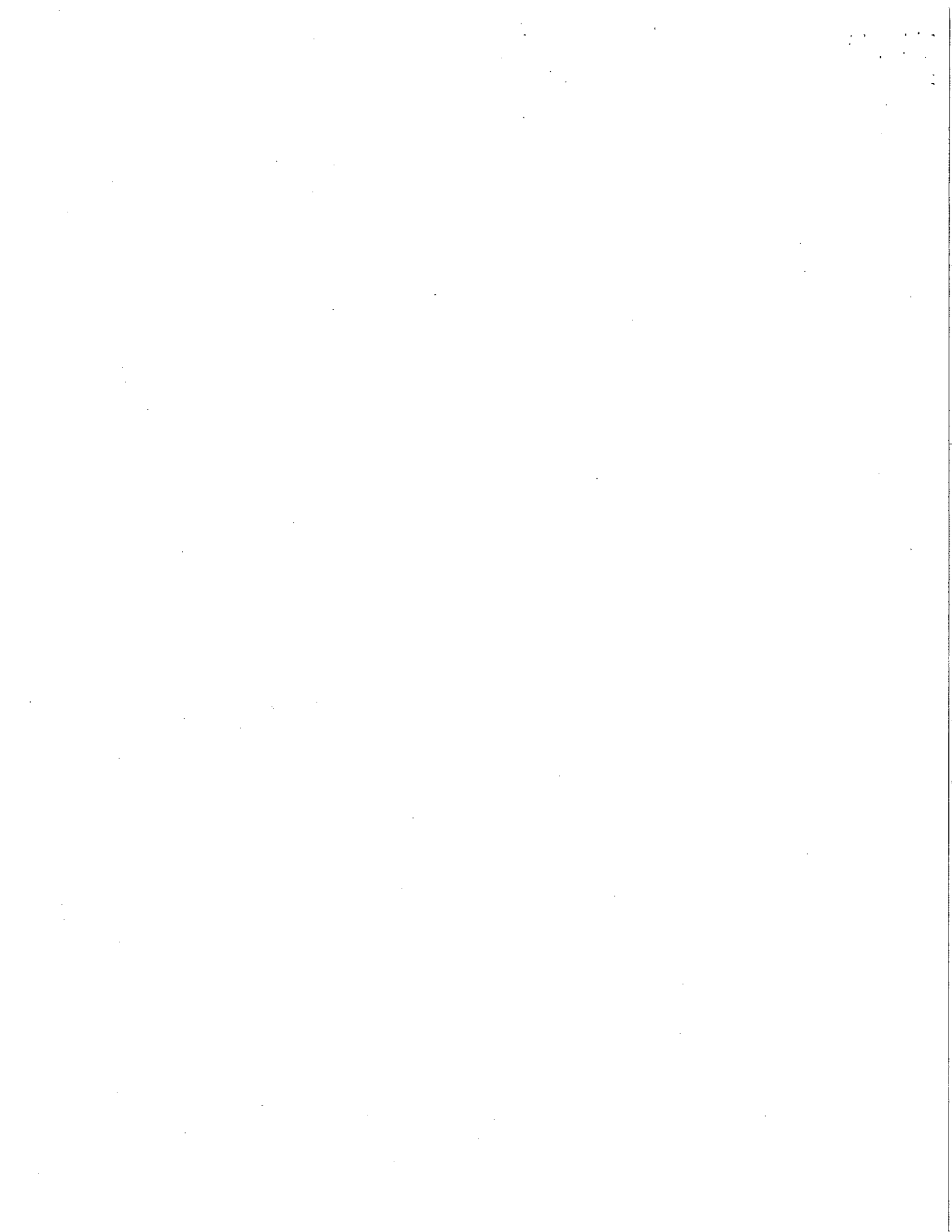
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Contents

I. Context and Nature of Visit	3
II. Commitment to Peer Review.....	6
III. Compliance with Federal Requirements	7
IV. Fulfillment of the Criteria.....	8
a. Criterion One.....	8
b. Criterion Two.....	9
c. Criterion Three	11
d. Criterion Four	15
e. Criterion Five.....	17
V. Affiliation Status	21
VI. Additional Comments and Explanations.....	24



I. CONTEXT AND NATURE OF VISIT

A. Purpose of Visit

The purpose of this visit was for the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) to conduct a comprehensive reaffirmation visit for Grinnell College in Grinnell, Iowa.

B. Organizational Context

The past, it has been observed, can serve as a prologue. Certainly this is true at Grinnell College, founded over 160 years ago in part as a response to the tumult present in mid-19th century society. To understand what the College is and what it continues to become, it is useful to look into this foundation, and history which followed it.

This history reveals a past in which the College has striven deeply to express the ideals of service and social justice, and to inculcate in the students a sense of individual responsibility. These ideals have been tempered by the turbulent years between foundation and the present moment, helped by the College's unique location; by a faculty that takes seriously the notion that they are here not just to teach students, but to guide them in the unfolding personal adventure a liberal arts education ought to be, and by a tradition of self-governance which encourages students to regard active citizenship on campus as part of their learning experience, and a preparation for a life of leadership and service that will continue after their graduation.

The origins of Grinnell College lay in the vision of a group of 11 young men, mostly Congregationalists from Andover Theological Seminary, who gathered in 1843 to head west to each found a church and together establish a college. Once in Iowa, this "Iowa Band" met Asa Turner, Reuben Gaylord, and Julius Reed, Christian missionaries with a similar vision. By 1846, the issue of slavery was already splitting American society, and the great struggle's early skirmishes were being fought out on the frontier of which the Iowa Territory was a part. That year, the "pioneers" organized the Board of Trustees of Iowa College (which would later be called Grinnell College) in the rough river town of Davenport to train the leaders this conflict required. As expressed in an 1855 address by George Magoun – then a trustee of what was called Iowa College, and later Grinnell College's first president – the institution was meant not just to educate the young, but also to provide a rallying point for American society's reformers.

In 1859, driven by "a strong local antipathy [among the citizens of Davenport] for [its] anti-slavery views and also for [its] hostility to ...intoxicating liquors," the College moved to the Congregationalist colony of Grinnell. The relocation came at the invitation of the colony's founder, Josiah B. Grinnell, the young abolitionist minister who claimed to have been the recipient of Horace Greeley's advice to "Go West, young man, Go West." Classes began at Iowa College's new location, Grinnell, in the fall of 1861.

In 1998, the year of the last Commission's site visit, Russell K. Osgood, Grinnell's twelfth president, came to the College from Cornell University, where he had taught for the previous 18 years, rising eventually to become the Allan R. Tessler Dean of the Law School. In the years since the site visit, the College has experienced significant physical,

financial, and programmatic growth. These programs and activities include the Fund for Excellence (FFE), re-articulation of the College's Mission Statement, reorganization of the institutional structure, reforming of the budget process, development of a Campus Plan and building campaign, and the formulation and implementation of the *Strategic Plan*.

C. Unique Aspects of Visit

The College proposed to the HLC in November 2006 that they be granted permission to conduct a special emphasis self-study. The HLC reacted positively to this request and began to negotiate a topic for this emphasis. Eventually Grinnell and the Commission agree to a "special emphasis self-study examining a question central to the College's mission: how can the College reinvigorate its traditional commitment to train leaders in public service and social justice as it enters the 21st century?"

D. Sites or Branch Campuses Visited

None

E. Distance Education Reviewed

None

F. Interactions with Constituencies

1. Director of Institutional Research
2. Special Assistant to the President for Diversity and Achievement
3. Vice President and Treasurer of the College
4. Vice President for Student Affairs
5. Director of the Center for International Studies and Associate Professor of French
6. Interim Director of Admission
7. Associate Dean of the College and Associate Professor of Religious Studies
8. Vice President for Institutional Planning
9. Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of the College
10. Vice President for College Services
11. Professor of Chemistry and Former Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of the College
12. Athletic Director and Associate Professor Physical Education
13. Students – 6
14. Staff Meeting – 40 exempt and non-exempt staff
15. Faculty Council – 6
16. Trustees – 5
17. Professor of Psychology
17. Director of the Library
18. Associate Dean of the College
20. Alumni – 14
21. Assistant Dean for International Students
22. Director of Human Resources
23. Vice President for the College and Alumni Relations
24. Director of Service and Social Commitment

25. Dean of Religious Life
26. Members of a SEPC
27. Faculty Chair
28. Budget Committee
29. Manager, CERA
30. Director, Center for Prairie Studies
31. Biology faculty member who teaches classes at CERA
32. Open Meeting with Faculty - 11

G. Principal Documents, Materials, and Web Pages Reviewed

1. Department 10-Year Reviews – Physics, History, Psychology, English
2. Guidelines for Three-Year Salary Reviews
3. Rubrics for Assessing Merit (from Budget and Personnel Committees)
4. Listing of MAP publications by students (1999-2008)
5. Administrative Procedures, Student Ratings of Instruction and end-of-course rating form
6. Pooled end-of-course bench mark statistics
7. Advisee survey results
8. Pooled Tutorial student ratings of instruction (fall 2003, fall 2005, fall 2007) and selected comments for fall 2007
9. Aggregate results on faculty reviews Fall 1999-Fall 2007
10. Survey of Faculty Activities and Perceptions
11. Results from Senior Snapshot Survey
12. Understanding the Research Practices of Incoming Students: an Institutional and Inter-Institutional Profile of Student Perceptions, Experience, and Proficiency
13. Sample of faculty personnel files
14. Lists of Grinnell courses using CERA
15. List of community and state-wide groups using CERA
16. Faculty Handbook
17. Grinnell Fact Book, Fall 2006
18. Institutional Snapshot 2008
19. Selected Assessment Reports, 2008
20. Has the Grinnell/New Science Project made a difference? A scattering of data and comments
21. IRO listing of departmental teaching and learning goals
22. Grinnell College Website (www.grinnell.edu)
23. Reaccreditation Self-Study Report
24. Grinnell College Institutional Snapshot
25. Grinnell College Strategic Plan
26. Grinnell College Fact Book
27. Grinnell College 2007-2008 Campus Directory
28. Grinnell College No Limits Marketing Pieces (3)
29. Grinnell Diversity Leaders Program brochure
30. Grinnell College First-Year Tutorial brochure
31. Grinnell College brochure on Financing a Grinnell Education

32. Grinnell College news release on "College Sets Plans to Reduce Student Debt"
33. Grinnell College 2007-08 Student Handbook
34. Grinnell College Financial Reports of June 30, 2006 & June 30, 2007
35. Admittedly (admissions piece)
36. Ins & Outs, Winter '08 (admissions piece)
37. Grinnell College Staff Handbook
38. Grinnell Magazine, Summer 2008
39. Comprehensive Campus Master Plan
40. Diversity Policy
41. President's Statement on Diversity
42. Staff Outlook Survey
43. Investment Policy
44. Endowment Spending policy
45. Review of Dining Services
46. Grinnell College Campus Climate Assessment Project (August 2008)

II. COMMITMENT TO PEER REVIEW

A. Comprehensiveness of the Self-Study Process

After the HLC authorized the Special Emphasis question in January of 2007, the President appointed a Reaccreditation Steering Committee. The Steering Committee spent several months discussing the Special Emphasis and making the question their own. They also sought to understand how the Special Emphasis intersects with the rest of the College. They drafted a Venn diagram that helped them envision how they would inter-relate the various elements of the College and their concerns. They consulted with various constituencies of the College community who helped refine the image that would guide the self-study. The self-study process was thorough and was viewed as a tool for analyzing and assessing the current status of the College.

B. Integrity of the Self-Study Report

The team found the self-study report to be accurate and straightforward in factual material, comprehensive in nature, and honest in presenting the College's self-assessment.

C. Adequacy of Progress in Addressing Previously Identified Challenges

The team considers the response of the institution to previously identified challenges to be adequate. **Previously identified challenges have been met.**

D. Notification of Evaluation Visit and Solicitation of Third-Party Comment

The requirements were fulfilled. The College adequately and appropriately solicited third-party comments. None was received.

III. COMPLIANCE WITH FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS

The team reviewed the required Title IV compliance areas and the student complaint

information and found them satisfactory.

IV. FULFILLMENT OF THE CRITERIA

CRITERION ONE: MISSION AND INTEGRITY. The organization operates with integrity to ensure the fulfillment of its mission through structures and processes that involve the board, administration, faculty, staff, and students.

1. Evidence that Core Components are met

- Grinnell College is guided in its operations and evolution by a quartet of documents; its Mission Statement, a statement of the College's Core Values, a document titled A Grinnell Education, which offers a concise statement of what four years at Grinnell ought to add up to, and the College's Strategic Plan. Collectively, these documents provide a consistent articulation of the College's mission, values, goals and current organizational priorities.
- The Mission Statement, Core Values, and Strategic Plan, which emerged from conversations involving Board members (who include alumni), administration, faculty and students, along with the statement of purpose represented by *A Grinnell Education*, have been and continue to be publicly distributed through the College's major publications. The development of these documents paved the way for the multi-year period of the Strategic Plan's implementation.
- A concern with diversity, both as it is expressed on the campus and in the understanding the College promotes of the world beyond the campus, pervades Grinnell's mission documents. In its Mission Statement, the College emphasizes that it strives to "provide a lively academic community of students and teachers of high scholarly qualifications from diverse social and cultural circumstances."
- *A Grinnell Education* emphasizes a model of "active learning [which] extends to participation in the global community...Grinnell offers a geographically and culturally diverse environment for living and learning." The document also emphasizes that the College's model of intense mentorship and student self-governance combine intentionally to provide students with "residence in a community of cultural and global diversity."
- Grinnell College's Mission Statement, Core Values, *A Grinnell Education*, and the Strategic Plan govern the visioning, planning and implementation of the College's educational efforts, budget process, and operations. For FY 2009, well over \$4,000,000 of new expenditures (salary, non-salary, and BM&E) supports the strategic plan. Additional support is provided for the need-based loan cap initiative, enabling graduates to serve the common good without the burden of a heavy educational debt limiting their post-graduation goals.

- Grinnell's mission documents also influence day-to-day operations. A *Grinnell Education* is a valuable tool for advising, as faculty work with students to craft a four-year academic plan. Departments use the Mission Statement, Core Values and the Strategic Plan in departmental self-studies. In presenting proposals for new programs, curricular changes, and hiring, applicants often invoke the Strategic Plan, making a case that their proposal is in line with College priorities. The College's recent Staff Survey as part of the accreditation process found that fully 82 percent of respondents said they understood Grinnell's mission. Seventy-seven percent said they value and believe in the College's mission, and 76 percent said they believed their work contributes to the mission's accomplishment. Increasingly, constituencies of the College understand and see their work in light of the language in the four foundational documents.
- The By-Laws and Policies of the Trustees of Grinnell College clearly delineate the roles and responsibilities of the Trustees, the officers of the Corporation, the President of the College, the Vice-President for Academic Affairs and Dean of the College, and the Faculty. In addition to these offices specified in the By-Laws, other groups participate in the governance and administration of the College, including students, and alumni. Each of these groups has its own governance and administrative structure with significant mechanisms for collaboration and communication.
- Student self-governance has a long tradition at the College, stemming from the time when the College became a residential campus during the early part of the 20th century. Then-president John Hanson Thomas Main decided to allow the students themselves to oversee the residence halls in their operations, seeing the residence halls as a laboratory for democracy-in-action which had the potential for teaching lessons in citizenship through living in community.
- The tradition of self-governance continues beyond graduation. The College has an active alumni Association that is governed by the Alumni Association Council and by class committees. The Alumni Association Council is a group of 26 Grinnell College alumni and two student representatives who meet twice a year on campus, whose purpose is to foster strong connections between alumni and the College, and among the 18,000 Grinnell alumni located in all 50 states and 55 nations.
- The financial integrity of The College is affirmed by its oversight by the Board of Trustees and external audits of the College's finances. The Board approves the College's audited financial statements each fall, and periodically reviews presentations on major expenditure areas of the College. Administrators report regularly to the Board about the status of the in-year budget, providing quarterly reports on current budget and variances, and provide a final report on June 30, at the end of the fiscal year.
- The College also strives to be open about its operations with audiences outside

the campus. Most recently, for instance, in February of 2008, the College responded to an inquiry by the U.S. Senate Finance committee directed to 136 colleges and universities concerning endowments and access to higher education.

2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention

None

3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up.

None

4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and require Commission follow-up. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)

None

Recommendation of the Team

The pattern of evidence for Criterion One is sufficiently demonstrated, and no Commission follow up is recommended.

CRITERION TWO: PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE. The organization's allocation of resources and its processes for evaluation and planning demonstrate its capacity to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its education, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.

1. Evidence that Core Components are met

- Grinnell College has created and staffed a new senior administrative position of Special Assistant to the President for Diversity and Achievement. This structural change will allow the Grinnell to better coordinate a college-wide commitment to promote diversity in faculty, staff and students, to maximize the graduation rate of its diverse student population and to support diversity in its curriculum and co-curricular life. Such on-campus diversity aims to mirror the diversity of the world today and in the future.
- Grinnell College is maintaining a conservative management strategy for its substantial endowment, thereby providing financial support for meeting future economic challenges. This strategy includes careful investment aimed at long-term returns, commitment to a 4% endowment spending rate, and use of endowment funds to support 70% of its recent \$275 million investment in new facilities.
- Grinnell College has engaged in a forward-thinking planning process that included development of a Strategic Plan that embodied six strategies aimed at preserving the College's traditional identity while adapting to the key challenges

of the 21st century. This Strategic Plan has guided the College in developing a physical infrastructure, human resources (especially faculty), marketing and admissions priorities, and a vital intellectual community (including students, academic curriculum, and a social community).

- Grinnell College has utilized its financial strength to implement its Expanding Knowledge Initiative. That Initiative served to strengthen interdisciplinary education by creating an Office of Interdisciplinary Studies, appointing a senior administrator as Director for that office, moving toward the addition of at least 12 new faculty tenure-track positions to contribute to this Initiative, and instituting a Second-Year Retreat to support students' reflection on their liberal arts education.
- Grinnell has strengthened the quality of its faculty by improving faculty salaries overall, developing initiatives (e.g. pre-tenure leaves) to recruit and support junior faculty, and investing in continuing scholarly development of faculty.
- The College established the Fund for Excellence to develop new curricular ideas. Innovations generated with this support included the Mentored Advanced Projects, the renewed Grinnell-in-Washington, D.C. program and creation of several interdisciplinary centers.
- The Office of Institutional Research produces a rich array of internal research data to support strategic planning and ongoing decision-making by the College and its constituent units. Some of these reports contribute to the assessment of student learning, including national comparative information (e.g. NSSE). Other reports have supported strategic planning for the institution as a whole.
- The Associate Dean and Vice President for Institutional Planning has worked with the Board of Trustees to develop a system of Strategic Plan metrics to assess progress on the strategic plan. Members of Grinnell's Board of Trustees are well-informed about and actively engaged in the planning and evaluation process.
- A wide variety of administrative and academic units have conducted unit reviews to analyze their effectiveness. Such reviews are done periodically by academic departments and programs, leading to curricular changes where indicated. The College Libraries have participated in the LibQUAL survey and are involved in the NITLE Research Practices Survey to assess students' information literacy.
- Grinnell College committed itself to a special emphasis self-study as part of its 2008 reaccreditation process. That mission-related special emphasis focused on how Grinnell can "reinvigorate its traditional commitment to train leaders in public service and social justice as it enters the 21st century." This special emphasis grew out of the confluence of Grinnell's planning process, data on its students, and its vision for how its mission should be projected into the future.
- The College created a new Mission Statement that has served as a foundation for articulating Grinnell's Core Values and for the development and implementation its Strategic Plan. There are many examples of the implementation of that Strategic Plan, including the Expanding Knowledge

Initiative, the Conard Environmental Research Area (CERA), revisions of financial aid policies, and adopting a new Diversity Policy.

2. **Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention**
None
3. **Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up.**
None
4. **Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and require Commission follow-up. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)**
None

Recommendation of the Team

The pattern of evidence for Criterion Two is sufficiently demonstrated, and no Commission follow up is recommended.

CRITERION THREE: STUDENT LEARNING AND EFFECTIVE TEACHING. The organization provides evidence of student learning and teaching effectiveness that demonstrates it is fulfilling its educational mission.

1. **Evidence that Core Components are met**
 - As supported by conversations with faculty and students and by checking a random selection of faculty files, it is clear that Grinnell carefully evaluates faculty teaching and scholarship, thus ensuring effective teaching and mentoring of students.
 - As witnessed by interviewed students and demonstrated in faculty files, student input regarding effectiveness of faculty is highly valued through required and thoughtful reports of SEPCs (Student Educational Policy Committees) for each faculty member's interim complete and tenure/promotion reviews. Knowing that their opinions and concerns are sought and valued, creates a cooperative learning environment that enhances student learning.
 - As evidenced by annual reports by the Chair of the Faculty (academic years 2003-2004 through 2006-2007) and by the documents titled "Rubrics for Assessing Merit" dated October 15, 2007, and "Guidelines for Three-Year Salary Reviews," Grinnell College places a high value on excellence in teaching and has designed a thoughtful and respectful process for awarding merit pay that has been thoroughly vetted by the Faculty.

- The recent completion of phase II of the Noyce Science Center has opened new and well-designed space for collaborative study, state-of-the-art research, and innovative teaching in the sciences, computer science, math, and psychology, enriching both student and faculty learning experiences.
- The Conard Environmental Research Area (CERA), celebrating its first 40 years and its new LEED gold-certified building, offers students, faculty, and the larger community a unique opportunity to study living prairie ecosystems, to explore their restoration and value, and to begin an investigation and appreciation of the interconnectedness of our lives with nature. For example, biology faculty report that over the past two years three sections of Biology 150 (the freshman inquiry course) and eight upper levels biology courses have used CERA. An added value is that the interdisciplinary nature of CERA and other activities of the Center for Prairie Studies, bring together students and faculty from programs as diverse as art (both drawing and sculpture), biology, archeology, geology, GIS, and anthropology.
- The Grinnell Science Project brings incoming students, whose preparation in the sciences is weak, including domestic students of color and women, to campus for a week of orientation to college science and college life. Results in the Self-Study and an interview with a science faculty member show that after a decade, the program has dramatically improved the percentage of domestic students of color and women graduating in the sciences.
- As witnessed by the faculty in open forum and other venues, Grinnell offers generous support of scholarship and pedagogy to its faculty, with the result that they have ample resources for the exploration of new or better ways to create and convey knowledge. Generous summer support for students carrying out MAPs and other independent projects creates exciting collaborations between students and faculty, thus enriching students' experiences in the academy of learning.
- As pointed out in the Grinnell Fact Book (Fall 2006) and in the Self-Study, impressive numbers of Grinnell students have earned prestigious national fellowships (for example, in the past 5 years: one Rhodes, 22 Fulbrights, 5 Goldwaters, 10 NSF graduate fellowships, 7 Watsons, and 9 others). Further, graduates of Grinnell College have earned an exceptionally high proportion of Ph. D. degrees in a number of fields (adjusted for institutional size: 3rd in Ph. D.'s in Anthropology, 9th in Biological Sciences, 6th in Chemistry, 2nd in Economics, etc.). These achievements on the part of Grinnell students are clear evidence that Grinnell is successfully fulfilling its educational mission.
- In the academic years 2003-2004 through 2005-2006, an average of 75% of Grinnell students who applied to medical school were accepted (Fact Book, Fall 2006). As the national benchmark for the American Association of Medical Schools is only 48%, Grinnell College graduates have appreciably higher acceptance rates, indicating a high level of success in learning outcomes for its medical school-bound graduates.

- Evidence presented in the Self-Study show that Grinnell students are achieving the college-wide goals embedded in Grinnell's Mission Statement (to produce graduates who "speak and write persuasively..., evaluate critically..., acquire new knowledge, and are prepared in life and work...to serve the common good." A couple of examples illustrate. Results of the Writing Assessment Rubric show significant improvement between the beginning of students' first semester and the end of the fourth semester in each of ten selected writing criteria. Although all Grinnell students do not carry out a Mentored Advanced Project (MAP), results from analysis of a newly designed rubric for these projects show that for the time period 2003-Spring 2008, a high percentage of the students have performed at Grinnell's identified "advanced level" for research and critical thinking skills. Evidence for achievement of the other goals is also presented, indicating that Grinnell is achieving its educational mission.

2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention

- Although Grinnell has over the past several years developed and begun using some tools that assess campus-wide learning goals (which are highly visible in the Mission Statement), student learning outcomes for departmental programs and majors that were developed some ten years ago are not visible today in the College's web site or publications. Further, there has been little recent data collection or analysis of departmental or program learning outcomes. Faculty perceive, via grading and other observations, that their students are learning, and some faculty assess their teaching methodologies in various ways; yet these assessments are largely anecdotal because there is no mechanism for collecting or sharing these data, and there is little evidence showing how these scattered assessments have contributed to improving learning at Grinnell.
- The college has generated substantial institutional-level assessment data from instruments such as NSSE, from the writing assessment project, and from grant-supported projects to assess the impact of international students on campus and to assess liberal learning outcomes. These data provide both substantial evidence of success and also indicate areas, including faculty/student interaction and student/student interaction, which would repay further investigation and, potentially, action. Grinnell College needs to clarify how such data will be used for planning and action.
- Conversations with the Dean of the College revealed that Grinnell currently does not have official transcripts on file for its faculty. What is on file are copies of transcripts obtained during the application process. When faculty members complete higher degrees, a letter from the granting institution has been deemed sufficient evidence of degree completion. As letters can be forged and only official transcripts give concrete evidence of degree completion, Grinnell College may not be in compliance with best practice in academe per this omission.
- The College has a well-established program of decennial departmental

curriculum reviews. These reviews include a self-study, visit by a team of external reviewers, and a departmental response to the reviewers' report. A sampling of these review documents indicates careful consideration of issues of curriculum, offerings, and staffing. There was less indication that assessment of student learning outcomes plays a significant role in the reviews. In light of the lack of comments on student learning in the external reports, it may be helpful to future reviews to make assessment of learning outcomes a more significant part of the charge to review teams.

- Grinnell has carried out extensive work in assessment, with a concentration of effort in recent years at the institutional level through internal initiatives such as the assessment of writing, and participation in externally-funded and collaborative projects. Members of the faculty and administration spoke to extensive work at the departmental level in the years following the last accreditation visit, but evidence of this work was not presented to the current team and the extent to which such departmental work was continuing was not clear. For Grinnell to make the most effective use of its current assessment efforts, greater institutional coordination would be valuable. Although the Executive Council is charged with this responsibility, it has many other competing charges and does not appear to feel that it truly has ownership of academic assessment. In the absence of central ownership, responses to the institutional data that the College has acquired through, for example, its participation in NSSE are less well defined, and a strong sense of forward direction is not apparent. The College would benefit from finding an organizational mechanism that allows for greater institutional focus upon assessment within the context of a highly decentralized campus culture. The Team is confident that Grinnell can be trusted to address these assessment issues without further Commission follow-up. They understand what yet needs to be done and are committed to appropriate follow-through.

3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up.

None

4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and require Commission follow-up. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)

None

Recommendation of the Team

The pattern of evidence for Criterion Three is sufficiently demonstrated, and no Commission follow up is recommended.

CRITERION FOUR: ACQUISITION, DISCOVERY, AND APPLICATION OF KNOWLEDGE. The organization promotes a life of learning for its faculty, administration, staff, and students by fostering and supporting inquiry, creativity, practice, and social responsibility in ways consistent with its mission.

1. Evidence that Core Components are met

- Grinnell College's Strategic Plan has six major foci, three of which support a life of learning: Inquiry Based Learning; Culture of Achievement; and Advance Diversity. The College has designed and, in many cases, already implemented strategies to achieve these goals. For example, it has established a Second-year Retreat to "help students understand their interdisciplinary and other course work in terms of their educational and life goals."
- Through establishing the Fund for Excellence, Grinnell College supported the faculty in developing a series of new curricular initiatives and academic programs that both consolidated pre-existing work in some areas and allowed for innovative new developments in others. A comprehensive evaluation of these initiatives resulted in some being made permanent and incorporated into the college's operating budget. Among the most significant of these permanent additions has been those of the Mentored Advanced Projects (MAPs), which institutionalize Grinnell's wide-ranging commitment to undergraduate research, and the Centers for Humanities, International Studies, and Prairie Studies, which all provide a focus for unifying strengths of the college.
- Grinnell provides exceptionally generous levels of support for faculty development and professional growth. This support, which also includes support for faculty-mentored student research, has risen to a total of more than \$1 million annually. International travel is funded on the same basis as domestic travel, and the College may wish to consider whether faculty members traveling overseas need a different level of support for their work. Since its last accreditation review, the college also has increased the variety of options for faculty sabbaticals, resulting in a doubling of the total sabbatical opportunities.
- Faculty development is supported administratively through the work of an Associate Dean with specific responsibilities in this area. This includes support to faculty working to develop grant proposals. More broadly, faculty work has also been given greater support through an overall increase in the number of support staff. Development opportunities for members of staff are less evident, and the College may wish to give some attention to enhancing its work in this area.
- Through the Expanding Knowledge Initiative (EKI), Grinnell has made a significant commitment to teaching and learning in new fields of knowledge and, in particular, in interdisciplinary studies. To support this initiative, the College has also created additional tenure-track positions since the last review and developed the enhanced faculty development support described above.
- Both as part of and in addition to creating new tenure-track lines, Grinnell has been actively engaged in diversifying the faculty through its leadership of and

participation in the Consortium for Faculty Diversity, sponsoring of Mellon-funded post-doctoral fellowships, and program of opportunity hires to recruit faculty of color. These efforts have resulted in significantly increased numbers of faculty of color since the last review. Given factors such as Grinnell's location, retention of faculty who bring diversity to the campus continues to be a challenge.

- Learning support – the Writing, Math, and Reading Labs as well as the Science Learning Center – is consolidated into a single reporting line to an Associate Dean, which has allowed for coordination between and integration of the work of these four areas. This consolidation has the potential to facilitate yet greater integration of this work during future conversations about the future of the library.
- The Burling Library, which is a dated facility and reflects the time of its building rather than any of the recent developments in library space and the integration of technology and print media in an environment that actively supports faculty teaching and student learning, has been identified by the Board of Trustees as a candidate for renovation or replacement, with a decision to be made on the facility in the coming years.
- Given the open structure of the Grinnell curriculum, academic advising has a larger role than at many institutions in ensuring that student learning is intentionally designed. The First-Year Tutorial program is long established within campus culture and is the vehicle through which the College provides structure to student learning. For many faculty members work with their advisees to develop a plan that will cover either the first two years and through the declaration of a major or even the entire four undergraduate years.
- Grinnell has made reflective use of transcript analysis to evaluate the breadth of its students' learning. It has also used transcript analysis as a learning tool during the Second-year Retreat to help sophomores reflect upon their own course selection decisions and better plan their ongoing program of study.
- Grinnell does conduct regular surveys of its alumni and recently took the innovative step of asking alumni to provide the names of employers who could comment upon their skills and abilities. This initiative has the potential to provide valuable insight into the lifelong effects of a Grinnell education, and it will be helpful to the College if it follows through and completes this study.
- Grinnell has policies, practices, and review mechanisms in place to ensure the ethical and responsible acquisition and application of knowledge. These include an emphasis upon academic integrity in the First-year Tutorial, a revised Copyright Policy, and, in addition to the institutional IRB, an Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee and Institutional Biosafety Committee.

2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention

None

3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up.

None

4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and require Commission follow-up. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)

None

Recommendation of the Team

The pattern of evidence for Criterion Four is sufficiently demonstrated, and no Commission follow up is recommended.

CRITERION FIVE: ENGAGEMENT AND SERVICE. As called for by its mission, the organization identifies its constituencies and serves them in ways both value.

1. Evidence that Core Components are met

- The mission statement of Grinnell College positions engagement and service at the forefront of its endeavors; it not only states that the mission of the institution is to educate young women and men but to educate students who "...are prepared in life and work to use their knowledge and their abilities to serve the common good" [catalog, inside front cover]. We found that to a remarkable extent, all constituencies of the college – students, faculty, administration, staff, alumni, local community leaders – are all not only aware of the mission but also support it wholeheartedly. That all of these diverse groups understand and appreciate this mission is a testament to the College's commitment to communicate with and to serve these various groups effectively. Grinnell College clearly fulfills all four components of Criterion 5.
- The Office of College and Alumni Relations successfully and efficiently engages alumni in a variety of ways and serves their need to remain contributing members of the Grinnell community. This office communicates with alumni through the publications produced by the College, events held specifically for alumni (e.g., coordination of regional meetings and activities), class reunions and letters, and alumni awards. Over one thousand alumni represent the College to prospective students around the world as Alumni Admissions Representatives; alumni volunteers also serve as class agents and committees, fund directors, and regional planning committees. Their commitment demonstrates the success of Grinnell College in maintaining its ties with this very important constituency. The Office of College and Alumni Relations is continuing to create new and engaging ways to connect alumni. The four-facet model currently in development, which includes College programming, fund-raising, volunteerism, and a variety of autochthonous

activities (e.g. "round-robin" letters, network participation in Face Book), attests to the efforts of this office to continue to develop new ways to serve this constituency.

- All constituencies of the College – both internal and external – understand and support the mission of the institution. To a significantly high degree, we found this understanding and support to be pervasive within all groups. When, in a general open meeting of staff, the question "what is good about Grinnell?" was posed, the second item mentioned (after benefits) was sharing the goal of educating students; heads nodded affirmation throughout the room.
- Grinnell has a very "open" campus: members of the greater Grinnell community visit the campus for a variety of reasons. Members of the local community are welcome to attend most College events without charge, they have free access to the library resources the College maintains, advanced high school students may enroll in College courses without fees, and a variety of local residents have felt free to take advantage of various kinds of special expertise employees of the College have.
- Members of the College community, particularly students, are encouraged to participate in a variety of volunteer and other activities in the local community. The nature of the activities varies, from the formal Grinnell-corps member assigned to spend a year working in the community to faculty, staff, and administrators who serve on local boards and organizations. One administrative staff member said, "we live our mission in our private lives as well." Most impressive are the variety of volunteer activities in which students engage. Some of these are general 'helping' endeavors, while others are more directly related to the academic interests of the students, who sometimes do research of interest and value to the community organization (e.g. the hospital) served.
- The College joins with the wider Grinnell community in significant joint ventures of benefit to both College and city. City and College have cooperated in joint ventures of various magnitudes to enrich the environment of everyone concerned. College offices help by participating in the planning of large projects such as the public library, hospital, preservation of the local "almost-antique" movie theater, and high school science laboratory renovations. Venues of cooperation of small scale include the Community Council, the Community Education Council, and the Grinnell Youth Conservation Corps.
- The College ensures that it hears, and sometimes responds to, the concerns and needs of the city by maintaining an Office of Community Enhancement. The charge of this office is to facilitate interchange between College and city and to provide a venue for communication and assistance. One of the major tasks of this office is to administer the Grinnell College Mini-Grant Program. Community members and organizations submit grant proposals for items that would significantly enhance some part of the community (e.g. a recent grant was given for playground equipment), and a committee composed of two faculty, two staff, and two students *from the local community* decide on the

competitive awards. But the assistance flows both ways, not just from College to community: a current project is to work with local day-care providers to ensure that faculty children have a place to stay when faculty meetings run late, past the normal "pick-up" time.

- Although the College is appropriately conservative with its relatively large endowment and financial resources, it chooses judiciously to support local projects with significant financial contributions. With major contributions from the College (totaling over \$1 million), Grinnell, Iowa is, among other things, able to construct a new library, build an extension on the high school, and renovate and refit the high school science laboratories. It is wonderful to have the resources Grinnell College has, but it can also present a problem: the various constituencies of the institution are more than aware that it is "a rich place" (a phrase we heard frequently), and the College must be cautious when members of these groups come with requests for funds. It simply cannot, and should not, respond positively to every request for funding. Negotiating these requests without alienating members of the constituencies is a delicate task that the College seems to do well.
- In its construction of "the common good," Grinnell College does not stop at the boundaries of the state of Iowa or even the United States: it instills in its students an awareness of their membership in what is tritely but accurately called "the global community." Although Grinnell College makes concerted efforts for students to appreciate the prairie environment and local history, it does not neglect educating for the wider world. Concentrations are offered in Environmental Studies as well as Technology Studies, both areas of global concern. The establishment of the Center for International Studies (as part of the Fund for Excellence) provides the focus for much of this effort. In addition to a variety of relevant majors (e.g., in various languages), concentrations are offered in East Asian Studies; Russian, Central European, and East European Studies; the Global Development Studies concentration combines international concerns with working for the common good. Support of study abroad programs is strong as well, and many departments offer relevant coursework (e.g. Sociology 350: NGOs: Organizing To Do Good). Thus, this concern is academically present throughout the curriculum. Furthermore, the College attends to this concern in non-curricular ways as well. Most impressive is the "Grinnell Corps," a group of 13 graduating seniors (chosen competitively) who are sent to various locations throughout the world to work in areas designated as needing assistance by the host country. The College pays for and supports all of these students.

2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention

- Although staff members expressed general overall satisfaction with their working environment, one issue arose that the College needs to consider and address: there is a significant element of distrust of administration on the part of staff. The focus of this mistrust appears to be the Office of Human Resources. Of special concern were examples given to us by staff members of breaches of confidentiality on the part of people in that office: a staff

member, for example, reported going to HR with an issue and then having her supervisor confront her about it when she returned to work. Staff generally and genuinely fears retribution from supervisors and administration. We were told that the relatively low response to the staff questionnaire on the part of service and trade employees (16.1% as opposed to 35.9% for support and technical, 45.2 for administrative staff) was that they feared reprisals. Staff generally perceives that the HR office works *for* the administration and does not represent their interests. The staff does have an elected committee to articulate its concerns, but most find it useless because (1) it is chaired by someone from HR, and (2) nothing ever changes because of its action. And even if the HR office were appropriately responsive to their concerns, it is now very difficult to go there because of its relocation in the Old Glove Factory. Informal "drop-ins" on breaks are no longer possible.

3. **Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up.**
None
4. **Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and require Commission follow-up. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)**
None

Recommendation of the Team

The pattern of evidence for Criterion Five is sufficiently demonstrated, and no Commission follow up is recommended.

V. STATEMENT OF AFFILIATION STATUS

A. Affiliation Status

No change

B. Nature of Organization

1. **Legal status** No change
2. **Degrees awarded** No change

C. Conditions of Affiliation

1. **Stipulation on affiliation status**
No change
2. **Approval of degree sites**
No change

3. Approval of distance education degree
No change

4. Reports required

Progress Report
None

Monitoring Report
None

Contingency Report
None

5. Other visits scheduled
None

6. Organization change request
None

D. Commission Sanction or Adverse Action

[Sanctions and adverse actions are only used in exceptional circumstances.]

On Notice
None

Probation
None

Denial or Withdrawal of Status
Rationale

E. Summary of Commission Review

Timing for next comprehensive visit (academic year – 2018-19)

Rationale for recommendation:

Grinnell College has paid careful attention to NCA/HLC criteria and standards during its long association with the Commission. The College has developed in significant ways over these decades, as it regularly responds to meeting the educational needs of its constituent groups in imaginative and well-executed ways.

The Team finds that the College continues to satisfy the five criteria for accreditation and provided evidence that these criteria are taken seriously and that they are readily

reflected both in academic and co-curricular activities throughout the College. As to the special emphasis of this self-study, the Team salutes Grinnell for choosing a complex and meaningful topic for their special emphasis and for tackling that topic in a thoughtful, creative and broadly inclusive fashion. The Team found their set of questions—centered on “How can the College reinvigorate its traditional commitment to train leaders in public service and social justice as it enters the 21st century?”—bold and relevant, capturing the College's traditions, values, and mission. In true Grinnell fashion, the inquiry challenged the campus to examine its past, its direction, and its choices. While the central questions in the special emphasis opted for provocative terms that cut against the grain of Grinnell's culture, the Steering Committee tailored methods of inquiry, effectively engaging various constituencies and respecting their existing commitments. Even the most skeptical of the people we spoke with acknowledged that the discussions were important and that conflicting views had moderated.

The ambitious agenda the College set for itself exceeded the time available to address every item originally envisioned. The wide array of Grinnellians interviewed by the accreditation team all look forward to continuing to explore and refine these questions, and we fully anticipate that they will be answered and acted upon to the benefit of the College in the coming years. The timing is right for this discussion for several reasons. First, a strategic plan has recently been adopted, enjoys campus support, and is already beginning to yield improvements. The special emphasis tapped into some of the Strategic Plan's themes, which provide a structure onto which additional or refined initiatives may be mapped. Further, a cohort of new leadership in the senior administration brings fresh voices to the conversation. Finally, the 21st century beckons Grinnell to continue to build on its illustrious history and to create new stories. The archetypal narratives of the College's abolitionist founding, its national leadership in the New Deal, and its contribution to the genesis of the digital age all took place before the rise of today's distinctively global, multicultural society. The best way to honor these remarkable accomplishments is to add the next generation of Grinnell success stories, demonstrating the ongoing impact of Grinnell's mission to serve the common good that has distinguished the school from its earliest days.

The Team encountered numerous examples demonstrating the College's readiness to capitalize on the confluence of propitious circumstances and its ethos of information-sharing and collaboration. Following conversation between the Admission Office and the Wilson Program staff, for example, the importance of graduating students steeped in ethical theory and practice who go on to careers in the private sector was recognized. Likewise, the presence of a more diverse administrative staff injects new perspectives and voices into important conversations, helping Grinnell communicate more effectively with all its audiences.

After the Team's initial puzzlement at the lack of definition of key terms in the special emphasis, we became persuaded that this very absence stimulated genuine conversation in a community that does not relish ideas and initiatives that are delivered

as final products. To have defined the terms would have been presumptuous; instead, campus constituencies posited and creatively grappled with diverse understandings of "train," "social justice," "the common good," and especially "leadership."

Despite the reluctance of students to call themselves leaders, vivid evidence of their leadership abounds, and compelling examples were shared by faculty, staff, students, alumni, trustees, and community members in every conversation we had. Often, this incongruity appeared to stem from a narrow notion that leadership means directing others. The egalitarian ethos at Grinnell was credited for exaggerating students' aversion to hierarchy and competition and to being singled out as "above" their peers.

Discussions with students teased out a more nuanced account. These students noted, as did the Admission director, that leadership is an important consideration in gaining admission to the College. In fact, many students have leadership experience and a sense of the varied forms leadership can take. Additionally, these are people who come to Grinnell because of its commitment to social justice and bring with them their conviction to make a difference in the world. In this environment, there are opportunities to exercise leadership in collaborative ways that are consistent with the prevailing ethos that draws many students to the College. In sum, the students spoken to articulated a sophisticated understanding of leadership, recognized it in their own activities and those of their peers, described the special environment of Grinnell College as a site for its exercise, and accounted for their preference to use more humble language that did not elevate them over their peers.

A number of Team members questioned why an exploration of reinvigorating Grinnell's mission to prepare leaders in public service and social justice ended in a discussion of staff morale and faculty overwork, common topics and experiences on campuses across the nation. Grinnell's Reaccreditation Steering Committee examined their survey data and genuinely let it guide their conclusions. One conclusion they reached is that faculty and staff who feel harried do not provide attractive role models for leadership. If their work-life balance is off-kilter, it does not encourage students to choose similar lives and career paths. As one person noted, "How we model leadership is a form of communication."

VI. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS AND EXPLANATIONS

[Optional]

