



## **Strategic Priorities: 2008-2011**

The Colleges of Worcester Consortium, Inc., founded in 1968, is an effective mechanism for cooperation among institutions of higher education in central Massachusetts and beyond. Given this role, and recognizing the important challenges that educational institutions face in our society today, the Consortium has defined its mission as follows:

### **Mission Statement**

*The Colleges of Worcester Consortium, Inc. is a not-for-profit association of public and private accredited colleges and universities located in central Massachusetts. We are committed to working cooperatively both to further the missions of the member institutions individually and to advance higher education regionally.*

The Consortium:

- Serves as a mechanism through which member and partner institutions share resources and cooperate for the benefit of current and potential students, faculty, staff and the greater community;
- Provides a forum for members and community leaders to explore ideas and concerns affecting higher education;
- Promotes the role of higher education in the region's educational, economic and cultural vitality; and
- Promotes communication and cooperation among its members and local, state and national governments.

### **Vision Statement**

In 2007, the Board of Directors discussed the demographic challenges in meeting their future enrollment goals. In addition, the Board recognized the ongoing challenge of marketing Worcester and the region to potential students and their families. As a result, the Board adopted the following vision statement:

*To position Worcester and the region as a premier destination for undergraduate and graduate students as well as college and university faculty and staff.*

## Strategic Priorities

In 1999 and again in 2004, the Board of Directors reviewed the strategic priorities for the organization. The Board of Directors takes pride in and endorses the benefits the Consortium brings to its many constituencies. The Consortium is committed to creating value for students, faculty, staff and its sustaining member institutions.

In defining these strategic priorities, we identify what for this Consortium, at this time in 2008, come to the forefront as important areas of focus.

Our intent is to strengthen the Consortium by continuing to focus on three areas of strategic priority:

1. **Enhancing the educational experience:** The Consortium will work collaboratively with its member institutions to enhance and promote the educational experience for current and potential students (including students served through the Consortium “access” programs) faculty and staff.
2. **Employing economies of scale:** The Consortium will enhance benefits to members through increased emphasis on programs and services that provide cost savings and efficiencies.
3. **Increasing impact on Greater Worcester and the state:** The Consortium will help its member institutions to increase and communicate their economic, intellectual, educational and cultural impact on Greater Worcester and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, with special emphasis on serving the local region and its people.

### Strategic Priority 1: Enhancing the Educational Experience

The Consortium will work collaboratively with its member institutions to enhance and promote the educational experience for current and potential students, faculty and staff.

One of the original motivations for the Consortium was to enhance cooperation among member institutions in order to best take advantage of the strengths of each and build a stronger network of opportunities for students, faculty and staff at all institutions. Working collaboratively, member institutions have benefited from such programs as cross-registration and curriculum sharing, and there are opportunities to do more in these academic areas. In addition, directors of student affairs face increasingly complex challenges as the student population becomes more diverse and campus/community relations take on higher profile roles. Strategies for enhancing students’ intellectual, cultural and social development and for creating networks of support among students, faculty and staff are vitally important.

Building on its strong reputation, the Consortium has the opportunity to create signature programs in academic cooperation and professional development. In addition, it is well positioned to augment its support for cooperative activities in Student Affairs.

*Strategic Priorities include:*

- Become a leader in academic cooperation through such programs as cross-registration (including utilization of technology to offer cross-registration opportunities for students online); curriculum sharing; and academic resource sharing
- Maintain information resources such as the Master Course List and Master List of Majors and Degrees, resources that both promote a clear understanding of the richness of curricular offerings available to potential and current students throughout the region and enable students and members of the larger community to access those offerings
- Expand the Gerontology Studies Program into an institute with three focus areas: 1) undergraduate studies; 2) research; and 3) community outreach and education
- Create enhanced opportunities for professional development for faculty and others in the institutions' academic communities
- Use mechanisms like the biannual Research Showcase to highlight the intellectual capital of the region to key, targeted constituencies
- Create and sustain networks for the sharing of experiences and expertise across academic disciplines and in student development
- Maintain an online database for employers and students to communicate internship and employment opportunities, supporting workforce development in the region
- Emphasize intercollegiate social programming among member institutions to enhance students' out-of-class experiences and to build student networks and social opportunities across the campuses
- Maintain day and evening shuttle service among the Worcester-based campuses to promote intercollegiate educational, cultural and social programming
- Support student and faculty development through community-based learning experiences, multi-campus communications and both on- and off-campus activities.
- Maintain Consortium standing committees as mechanisms for the sharing of intellectual resources and to promote collaborative activities
- Encourage and support partnerships between and among Consortium standing committees

## Strategic Priority II: Employing Economies of Scale

The Consortium will enhance the economic benefits to members through increased emphasis on programs and services that provide cost savings and efficiencies.

Resource sharing that enhances the academic missions of member colleges and universities is a fundamental principle on which the Consortium is built. Indeed, for some institutions this is a principal reason for their membership. Programs such as joint purchasing, shared library resources and/or shared training resources provide significant economic benefits to members. In an environment where tuition increases must be minimized, all institutions are looking for new and creative ways by which they might reduce expenses while not compromising quality. Organizations like the Consortium are well positioned to help their members improve their operations through resource sharing strategies of many types.

### *Strategic Priorities Include:*

- Maintain and develop programs for the sharing of curricula across institutions
- Explore the potential for joint faculty appointments and shared staff, to provide both flexibility and economic benefits
- Promote multi-institutional faculty and staff recruitment to highlight higher education employment opportunities in the region
- Continue to support and pursue professional development opportunities for faculty, administrators and staff on a shared-cost basis
- Support planning and implementation of programs for shared hardware, software, networking and training for applications that enhance member academic, administrative and service functions
- Maintain and expand joint-purchasing strategies to reduce costs, increase staff efficiencies, and improve quality control of goods and services in all areas of member and Consortium activities
- Explore the possibility of sharing some “back office” functions as a means of increasing efficiency of institutions and eliminating redundancy
- Explore the possibility of cooperative services in college admissions and financial aid from pre-college through matriculation, including shared marketing efforts
- Continue and expand the activities, services and events for students of member colleges to experience central Massachusetts, including the evening shuttle, Woo Card, programming at the Hanover Theatre for the Performing Arts
- Investigate a consortial approach to assisting members during the assessment process using best practices
- Explore using the economic development in downtown Worcester and the region to enhance the educational experience and highlight the higher education community

### **Strategic Priority III: Impact on Greater Worcester and the State**

Recognizing that the future success of institutions of higher education is closely tied to the health of the communities in which they operate, the Consortium is committed to playing a leadership role in strengthening the region and the state through educational opportunities. This is an expansive role that positions the Consortium to build on its educational capital and use its resources to reach out and engage the surrounding communities. Working with local, regional and state leaders, the Consortium can build on the strengths of its members to further influence the economic, educational and cultural development of the region and the state.

A significant regional need is for enhanced access to higher education services. This has been an area of major growth for the Consortium because of increased federal funding as well as partnerships with local and state agencies. The Consortium benefits from these programs by their reputation, their services inside and outside the region, and their financial contribution to the overhead support of the Consortium infrastructure. There are, however, opportunities to expand the breadth of access and to reach out to other funding sources that may serve a greater array of students. This would allow member institutions to more directly participate in these programs and would enhance their ability to help qualified students who might not otherwise be able to access higher education.

#### *Strategic Priorities Include:*

- Partner with key regional industries, government and community agencies to ensure appropriate higher education programs are offered to meet anticipated and future workforce needs, including Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) areas
- Design and implement programs to retain a higher percentage of area graduates to meet local and regional workforce needs
- Serve as a liaison to local, regional and state governmental agencies on issues of shared concern among member institutions
- Conduct research by drawing together factual information in part or in the aggregate to represent the significance of higher education in the region—e.g., the economic impact study, the master list of majors and degrees, the higher education facts sheet, the summary of institutional financial aid to students in the region, community engagement by students
- Work together with member institutions to raise awareness of the need for higher education and the benefits it can provide to residents of the region
- Continue to house and support the federally funded TRIO programs—Educational Opportunity Center (EOC) and Educational Talent Search (ETS)—and the federal GEAR UP Program, for central Massachusetts and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.
- Enhance programs for higher education access statewide, while maintaining the Consortium’s mission focus as the “parent organization”
- Facilitate partnerships between higher education and public school systems to ensure college readiness and success