

**State of the College
&
Statement of Institutional Priorities for 2020-21**

Donal O'Shea, President
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2020 has been the most challenging year for higher education in my lifetime, and New College has not been spared the turbulence. Beginning in February, we encountered a series of unforeseen challenges and existential threats that we are currently navigating.

Our beacon continues to be the strategic plan that this board approved in October 2018 and that the Board of Governors subsequently endorsed. This year, I propose to focus on three interlinked priorities that touch all aspects of New College operations, and that will have deep consequences for the institution. A very brief description follows, with more details appended on the metrics we have begun to develop and the data we need to collect to measure success. The priorities are essential to attaining the goals in our strategic plan. In fact, they loosely mirror the three “hows” in our strategic plan: recruit more students, keep them here four years, and make their degrees more valuable.

I close with a few remarks on the challenges that arise in sustaining operations in these extraordinary times. We will have to execute very well, and I am confident that we will do so.

Priority #1: Build a Culture of Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging

An excellent New College requires that we be more diverse and inclusive. The demographics of our faculty, staff, and students do not reflect the diversity of Florida, which limits our ability to attract, educate and retain a diverse group of students who naturally look to faculty and staff for role models. Moreover, the best preparation for a diverse workplace and society is an educational institution that is diverse. We will heighten our efforts to increase diversity. We have begun to make gains here, but we will implement a number of procedures, such as implicit bias training for search committees, that will accelerate those gains. We will also explore ways to orient and develop an increasingly diverse group of individuals in ways that heighten their engagement and interest in being part of the community for the long term.

Under the guidance of our Chief Diversity Officer and our Assistant Vice President for Human Resources, we have made a start on addressing inclusion across campus, but have a long way to go. Attracting and retaining diverse students, faculty and staff requires creating a welcoming culture, consequently fostering inclusion. Universities are naturally places where one encounters different, inconsistent ideas and points of view. Disagreements are not only common, but vital to our educational mission. Open interchange of ideas requires that community members be secure enough to disagree and mature enough to be civil in these debates. This means not only welcoming difference, but ensuring that all feel included and that they belong. Several internal (and external) surveys indicate that the social climate especially, but not exclusively, among students could be improved. The Art & Science report indicated that students expect a campus that is diverse and inclusive. Societal events of the past year heighten this expectation.

To make progress on this priority, we will require agreement on metrics and identification and collection of the appropriate data.

Priority #2: Improve Customer Service

Although we pride ourselves on the way administration, staff, faculty and students — current and prospective — interact with one another individually, external and internal studies indicate that many individuals experience unusual obstacles obtaining help and what they need. We propose building a culture of

customer service in student- and staff-facing offices. This priority is clearly related to our first priority: we need to be serving all students and staff, whatever their backgrounds and needs.

In order to improve customer service, we will have each office and unit develop improvement plans with clearly stated outcomes and metrics. As importantly, my staff will work with those who report to them to develop metrics that measure progress towards the outcomes and collect the necessary data.

Priority #3: Instill a Culture of Data

The events of the past year have indicated that we often have difficulty collecting the information we need. We have gotten much better at forecasting where we will be on state performance metrics, but the data we need are still being collected in several offices across campus, and are not always easily accessible. We are not collecting some critically needed data. Faculty often lack the data they need to address student demand.

Moreover, executing priorities #1 and #2 depends crucially on being able to judge whether and how we are making progress. This, in turn, deepens the need to identify data and collection mechanisms. We want to go beyond a “best practices” approach to one focused on results, and this depends on creating a data-driven culture.

Remarks on Operating Challenges

The events of the past year have given rise to some unusual operating challenges that we are navigating, but that will require continued attention, care, and innovation. Here is a brief description.

Reopening. The CoVid pandemic has touched all aspects of campus life. In the early summer, we developed a detailed reopening plan that this board approved. Over the summer, we have developed and refined the details, both internally and in consultation with other SUS institutions and the Board of Governors. As of this writing, students are back. Nearly 400 are in residence halls, mostly in single rooms. Everyone has been tested, and we will continue to randomly test 10% of the population weekly. We will isolate residential students who contract CoVid, and have developed all manner of procedures for ensuring the safety of staff, faculty, and students. About 43% of our classes are in-person. All have provisions for students who must participate online. Should the pandemic make it necessary, we can move all classes online, either temporarily or until semester’s end. Unless absolutely necessary, we do not plan to close dorms. Our small size lends us some advantages not possessed by our larger SUS siblings. We aim to communicate these advantages and emerge from the pandemic stronger.

Accreditation. CoVid forced postponement of our campus reaffirmation visit until this Spring. In an abundance of caution, we are also seeking a substantive change so that we can continue to offer online courses to students who cannot return to campus. We are working through the details. The application is due September 1.

Budget and Masters Programs. CoVid has sharply reduced state revenues, which has in turn affected New College. The governor vetoed over one billion dollars in programs that were state funded. These included two critical New College programs (our CEO program and our Data Science Masters program) that were in proviso language. Financially, this amounted to a \$1.5M cut to the recurring funds that we received from the state. In addition, all state institutions have a 6% holdback on funding. So far, we have been able to absorb the cuts with some painful belt-tightening, but without layoffs or furloughs. Ameliorating the programmatic effects, especially of the graduate program veto, has and will continue to require attention. Well-chosen masters’ programs, the Data Science program in particular, are critical to the college’s future. We are seeking authorization at this meeting to appropriately amend our accountability report. This will allow us to continue the process with the BOG and with accreditors to replace the Data Science masters and to add two others.

Enrollment. Despite the pandemic and the threat of a legislatively mandated shotgun merger, we have more than a dozen new incoming students than at this time last year. This achievement owes much to changes

introduced by then Interim Dean, David Rhodes and even more to the hard work of Dean Sonia Wu and her team. Although the number of graduating students is about equal to the number of incoming students, our total enrollment will decrease on account of attrition, some CoVid related. We expect that this is the last year that we will sustain a decrease. To increase enrollment for 2021-22, we will fully implement the Art & Science recommendations (applied liberal arts opportunities, integrated career development, individualized learning) and enhance communication of these efforts to potential students. In addition, we will explore bridge programs, expedited admissions and increased scholarship support from designated local high schools with student populations we would like to attract, and articulation agreements with the institutions of the Florida College System to increase transfers. Dr. Damon Wade, our new Vice President for Enrollment Management, will provide leadership in our student recruitment efforts. Dr. Damon Wade will join us as new Vice-President for Enrollment Management, beginning half-time in September and full time in October.

Career Services. Covid has required changing some of the ways in which students interact with potential employers. We will continue to create online modalities to facilitate internships and have first year courses challenge students where appropriate to think about and explore possible careers.

Mission Committee. At the direction of Chair Felice Schulaner, Vice-Chair Mary Ruiz has led a Mission Committee charged with making sure that New College's story and role as the state's honors college is fully known to legislators. The committee has met regularly and made substantial progress. The goal is to make sure that we are never again threatened with a legislatively-mandated merger. A full report will be given at this meeting, so details are not included in this report.

Institutional Priorities for 2020-21

Guiding Strategy

New College of Florida prepares intellectually curious students for lives of great achievement.

Our long term goal is to be recognized among the top 20 liberal arts colleges in the nation.

To reach 1200 students by 2024-25 and an 80% four-year graduation rate by 2027-28, we will:

1. Recruit more students who will thrive at New College
 - a. Tell the New College story
 - b. Target intellectually curious, high-ability students
 - c. Enroll students who reflect Florida's racial and economic diversity
2. Keep them here four years
 - a. Make campus a place where students want to be
 - b. Immerse students in curricula that inspires
 - c. Work with students to help each knit together a superlative education
3. Make their degree more valuable
 - a. Build pathways for academic and career success
 - b. Make Sarasota an educational destination
 - c. Intensify links with alumni and communities

We will not promote silos and we will not duplicate when we can collaborate.

Priority #1: Build a Culture of Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging

Enhance retention of faculty, staff and students — and increase the attractiveness of NCF as a destination for learning and working — by building awareness of social dynamics such as unconscious bias, privilege, and systemic racism; enhancing communication skills; strengthening community connectedness; and increasing “social safety.”

Tactics:

- a. Execute phases 2-3 of our Inclusive Campus Climate initiative, integrated with complementary efforts from Human Resources and the Faculty of Color and Underrepresented Groups.
- b. Define and implement an action plan (including measurable outcomes) to improve communication and the relationship between the police and the campus community.
- c. Implicit bias training for search committees; evaluate faculty hiring guidelines implementation.
- d. Stabilize student affairs programming (through fiscal support) to enhance the student experience and allow Student Affairs to provide leadership in hot-button issues.
- e. Implement an Enrollment Management Plan that includes a campaign to attract and provide personalized communication to underrepresented students.
- f. Establish the the Initiative on Diversity and Equity in Academics (IDEA) to further mature how racial diversity, equity, and inclusion are addressed in the academic program at New College
- g. Implement and evaluate SET SAIL seminars and the first-year Slack channel to build community among first-year students.
- h. Improve civil discourse; enhance intergroup dialogue.

Indicators of success (by March 2021):

- a. Diversity of applicant and admit pool (compared to previous year; Florida)
- b. Diversity of faculty and staff; job applicant pools (compared to previous year; Florida)
- c. Student Fall-to-Spring retention (compared to previous years)
- d. Staff retention (reduction of “regrettable losses”)
- e. Other metrics to be developed

Priority #2: Improve Customer Service

Build a culture of customer service — one focused on responsiveness, quality of interactions, problem-solving, and accountability — to meet the expectations of students, their families, and the community we serve. Listen and respond appropriately to student feedback.

Tactics:

- a. Develop, implement, and evaluate multi-year Improvement Plans within each unit of the College that identify how each unit will measure and improve customer service. Progress on the implementation of these plans will be reported following the end of each calendar year.
- b. Develop service competencies among staff.
- c. Ensure the ncf.edu website meets student and parent expectations
- d. Fully implement the online student complaint & suggestion system
- e. Work with and listen to students to determine how NCF can better serve all students, including commuter, transfer, non-traditional and, possibly, part-time students.

Indicators of success (by March 2021):

- a. Baseline customer service data (from unit improvement plans)
- b. Progress reports on initiatives to improve customer service (from unit Improvement Plans).
- c. Number of student complaints/suggestions; time to respond and resolve complaints
- d. Website SEO/usage data
- e. Student satisfaction survey data (net promoter scores compared to previous years)
- f. Student Fall-to-Spring retention (compared to previous years)

Priority #3: Instill a Culture of Data

Make data-informed decisions by identifying data needs, developing systems to collect and report that data, and actively seeking/using that data. Proactively provide the data faculty and staff need to make informed decisions.

Tactics:

- a. Develop metrics and data collection/reporting systems to measure progress made on Priorities #1 and #2.
- b. Ensure that hiring, budgeting, and new academic program creation decisions are informed by relevant data. Budget requests will be more clearly aligned with evidence of need, efficiency, and effectiveness.
- c. Develop tools (e.g., dashboards) to push data and simplify ways for individuals to pull the data they need to make informed decisions.
- d. Use data to assess the effectiveness of initiatives implemented to improve student outcomes, including data-developed initiatives within Student Success, Enrollment Management Team, and PBF Metrics team.

Indicators of success (by March 2021):

- a. Metrics and benchmarks to evaluate progress on Priorities #1 and #2
- b. Student Fall-to-Spring retention of students identified as being at-risk (compared to previous years)
- c. Availability of online data tools for internal use

Overall goals

Beyond the PBF metrics and enrollment goals from our Accountability Plan (approved by the BOT in April) and the employment/enrollment diversity goals from our Equity Report (considered for approval at this meeting), we are establishing the following goals for 2020-21:

1. Admissions Funnel goals (to enroll 250 new students in Fall 2021)

	FTIC & New Transfer Student Admissions Funnel through Week 34 (beginning of March)			
	2018	2019	2020	2021 Goals
Inquiries	9,828	13,047	15,508	TBD
Applications completed* (% of inquiries)	1030 (10.5%)	966 (7.4%)	1203 (7.8%)	TBD
Students admitted* (% of completed applications)	691 (67.1%)	619 (64.1%)	845 (70.2%)	TBD
Net deposits* (% of admits)	40 (5.8%)	48 (7.8%)	55 (6.5%)	TBD

* = as of 3/1/2021

2. Secure Performance-Based Funding for 2021-22.
3. Fundraising goals: Raise \$7 M (including \$550k for the New College fund)
12% alumni participation rate
4. Administrative overhead: Faculty-to-Administrator ratio higher than that in 2019-20
Lower administrative costs per degree than that in 2019-20