

Appendix B

**Educational Policy Committee  
Comments on the Strategic Plan**

(October 12, 1994)

The EPC appreciates the effort that went into the drafting of the strategic plan, as well as the need to make difficult choices. By and large, the EPC is in agreement that this is a good plan, and will protect the quality and integrity of the institution in these difficult times, as well as provide a vehicle for continued growth and innovation where those are prudent.

We will begin with areas where the EPC is in agreement with the document, then discuss areas of concern.

In our role as the faculty committee charged with oversight of the undergraduate curriculum in Arts and Sciences, a major focus of our present efforts is implementation of the new curriculum. This new curriculum was debated, discussed and designed by the faculty over the course of many years, and is in a very true sense of the word a community project. Although the debate process was lengthy, and it is perhaps true that no one faculty member agrees with all the provisions of the new curriculum, it is an important example of how this faculty can carry out reasoned debate, arrive at important decisions, and reform itself. The faculty fully supports the new curriculum, and it is vitally important that its implementation has been recognized as a high priority in the strategic plan. On this point, we are in full agreement with the strategic plan. We also agree that implementing the new curriculum will require new positions and encourage efforts to obtain such positions.

We strongly support the call of the strategic plan to provide more opportunities for undergraduate research, provided this is understood in a sense appropriate to each discipline. Although research means different things in different disciplines, the EPC is unanimous in its belief that an important aspect of the undergraduate experience here at William and Mary is the opportunity for individual study and one-on-one interaction between students and faculty. Such opportunities are a natural consequence of faculty involvement in the continued development of their respective disciplines. Hence, this goal is consonant with the institutional commitment to support faculty research as well. We suggest that the text of Goal 2 of Section IV could be reworded to reflect this concern.

We also support the call, under Goal 4 of Section IV of the strategic plan, to encourage the faculty from the professional schools to participate in the freshman seminar program and undergraduate research programs. The EPC welcomes such seminar proposals and will be glad to consider them.

The EPC stresses the need for the faculty to retain control over the content, pedagogic philosophy and goals of the curriculum. Our concerns revolve around the central issue of how the strategic plan is to be implemented. The strategic planning document as currently written is silent or vague on such details. It is always the case during the implementation of a plan that is so far reaching and complex that unforeseen consequences will occur, and issues which can only be dimly perceived at the present time will come into sharp focus. The EPC is painfully aware of this because of our key role in the implementation of the new curriculum. It is critical to the long term success of the strategic plan that the faculty be fully engaged at every stage of the process and that oversight of curricular matters be kept within the faculty's purview. The strategic plan must become a community project in the same sense as the new A&S undergraduate curriculum. Implementation should be done through the existing governance structure, and the EPC should continue to play its traditional role as the representative of the faculty in matters relating to the undergraduate curriculum.

Some more specific concerns the EPC has regarding the document are:

1] Currently, Master's programs contribute in important ways to the quality of the undergraduate program. The impact of the proposed cuts in the MA programs on the undergraduate program should be clearly understood, and every effort made to avoid any negative effects on the latter. The phasing out of MA programs should be done only as the resources become available to offset these effects. Adequate replacement for the graduate contributions to the undergraduate programs must be provided. On this issue especially, the EPC feels unable to give a fully informed and reasoned opinion on what effect the cuts in graduate programs will have on the undergraduate program. There is not enough time, nor enough information available, for us to make such an analysis given the synergy which exists between undergraduate and graduate programs.

2] Section IVA, Goal 6: "To review undergraduate programs on a regular basis in light of their centrality to mission, quality, demand and costs, phasing out programs and courses as appropriate, and consider making it possible for some students to accelerate their progress towards the degree." We urge that the document be modified here to specifically include the EPC as a key partner in the curricular aspects of this review process. Also, the EPC does not share the planning committee's confidence in the wisdom of shortening the time to degree. This is an important issue which the EPC feels must be discussed more fully.

3] The strategic plan calls for the development of televised courses and, more generally, the improvement of instructional technology. The EPC supports this and finds it in keeping with one of the goals of the new curriculum: encouraging innovation. However, we reiterate the need for faculty oversight and the EPC, in conjunction with the Charles Center and the Office of Assessment, must be kept fully informed and engaged on this issue.

4] The EPC has similar concerns with regard to the incorporation of public service into the curriculum. While we support the notion of inclusion of such issues and experiences, where appropriate and as a curricular innovation driven by the faculty, it is unclear from the strategic planning document precisely what the planning committee has in mind in this regard.

5] It is unclear at this stage what relevance the 'cluster' concept might have for the undergraduate program. The EPC would appreciate more information, and clarification of what the strategic planning committee has in mind.

Respectfully submitted,

The Educational Policy Committee