

Canisius College

A Plan for Academic Excellence

(Approved by the Canisius College Board of Trustees, May 10, 2004)

Born from the heart of the Church, a Catholic University is located in that course of tradition which may be traced back to the very origin of the University as an institution. It has always been recognized as an incomparable center of creativity and dissemination of knowledge for the good of humanity. By vocation, [it] is dedicated to research, to teaching and to the education of students who freely associate with their teachers in a common love of knowledge.

John Paul II, *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, 1.

Canisius College is a Jesuit Catholic university by tradition and by commitment. A Jesuit Catholic university's distinctive way of serving the greater glory of God is through academic excellence. For Canisius that means excelling both generally as a university and also quite specifically as a Catholic university. As a university Canisius "is dedicated to research, to teaching and to the education of students who freely associate with their teachers in a common love of knowledge" (*Ex Corde*, 1.). As a Catholic university community Canisius is animated by Christian conviction and ideals to reflect on and contribute to the whole range of developing human knowledge in the light of the Christian message handed on through the Church. This message grounds Canisius College's institutional commitment to the service of the human family.

As a Catholic university Canisius welcomes as members of the university community not only Catholics but also other men and women of good will committed to the search for truth and the higher education of students. Canisius sees itself as enriched, not diminished, by the opportunity for internal dialogue between differing intellectual, moral, and spiritual traditions. Indeed, Canisius takes it to be essential to its mission as a university and as a Catholic university to "foster an atmosphere of understanding and respect in dialog with other intellectual and spiritual traditions" (Canisius College *Mission Statement*). It is in that spirit of commitment, reflection, and dialogue that this plan states our academic ambitions and direction as a Catholic university in the first decade of the twenty-first century.

Our vision is simple but challenging. We see Canisius College standing among the best regional comprehensive universities and among the best Catholic comprehensive universities in the United States. In the next ten years academic programs at Canisius will reach a level of excellence never before experienced in the university's history. The result will be a university more widely known for the quality of its faculty's research and teaching, for its more selective and diverse student body, for its superior facilities, unique curricula and interdisciplinary learning opportunities, and for its deep commitment to humane reflection on the fundamental issues of contemporary culture and society in the light of the Christian message and in dialogue with other traditions.

The hallmark of a Canisius education will be a liberal arts core curriculum grounded in "a kind of universal humanism" (*Ex Corde*, 4.) that enables our graduates not only to enrich their own understanding and appreciation of truth and goodness and beauty, but also to assume positions of leadership and distinction in the regional community and the larger world. A grasp of histories, languages, cultures, philosophies, religions, art, music, mathematics, and the sciences will develop esthetic and moral sensibilities, give the perspective necessary to wise and probing judgment, and hone the skills essential to effective oral and written communication. Experiential learning opportunities such as internships, field studies, community research, service learning, or cooperative education will be typical elements in liberal arts courses and programs educating for both understanding and action. Our location in an urban community will provide especially rich and varied opportunities for experiential learning that also serves real social and personal needs. Our students will be "challenged to pursue an education that combines excellence in humanistic and cultural development with specialized professional training" (*Ex Corde*, 23.).

The border with Canada also shapes our local environment, and will give immediate reality to the international concerns that will permeate majors, courses, lectures, volunteer programs, and other learning opportunities at Canisius College. Canisius faculty will teach and do research abroad; many more students will study or volunteer abroad; and international enrollment will increase in all three colleges. Language studies, especially dual majors with business, education, and arts, will be common. Interest in Asia-Pacific, Latin America, and Africa will increase. Faculty will earn competitive public and private funding for international programs and experiences for themselves and their students.

Local and international experiences will also bring vivid concreteness to disputed moral and ethical issues in such realms as social justice, bioethics, professional ethics, and individual and social relationships. Faculty and students across the disciplines will reflect on the complexities of justice and other values in their varied cultural, economic, social, political, and personal manifestations. Serious exploration of the relative importance of individual goods, familial values, and the common good will bring light to the heat of burning social controversies and provide direction for individual discernment and decision. Faculty will lead

student reflection on the disparities of wealth, power, learning, and suffering that consume the world. The study of major religious, economic, political, and philosophical systems will all provide direction and stimulus to examination of key values in both theoretical and practical contexts. Religious faith and human reason will be mutually enriched by engaging in probing and respectful dialogue.

Thus our graduates will be ready to be active, competent, just leaders in a global context. They will have learned from their experiences and reflection at Canisius how to learn throughout life from experience and reflection. They will have a developed sense of the legacies of histories and cultures and religions. They will have an excitement for creating the new opportunities of the future. They will have an appreciation of the importance but also of the complexities of living well and justly in both local and global contexts. Concerned for others as well as for themselves, they will be committed to building a world more just and more humane than the world they entered.

The Canisius College of ten years from now will have grown from the present Canisius, improving academically in every respect—a stronger faculty, enriched programs, more extensive opportunities for dialogue between faith and reason, improved and expanded facilities, and a more highly qualified and diverse student body—as a Jesuit Catholic university working ever more effectively in pursuit of the greater service of God and the human family.

A Plan for Academic Excellence

Goal 1: Strengthen our faculty.

More than any other group, the faculty directly executes the mission of the college. Faculty teaching, research, imagination, creativity, and service animate the campus. Faculty members are role models for all who come under their influence. An excellent faculty is the single most important quality of any rigorous institution. Under this plan Canisius faculty will increase in number, will be supported by competitive pay, will have rich opportunities for faculty development, and will have professional staff and student assistants to increase their productivity. A Canisius education will come to life for students in interaction with faculty. To achieve this we will:

- a. Optimize the size, qualifications, and composition of the faculty for teaching.
 - i. Over ten years increase the size of the full-time faculty relative to the size of the student body by about 20%.
 - ii. Establish at least one endowed chair or professorship in each of the three schools.
 - iii. Integrate adjunct faculty as professional colleagues in the life and activity of our departments and programs.
 - iv. Provide competitive compensation for full-time and adjunct faculty.
 - v. Establish and achieve program-specific goals for the optimal use of adjunct faculty with an overall college goal of no more than 25%-30% of instruction by adjunct professors within ten years.
 - vi. Meet and exceed New York State requirements for full-time staffing in teacher-preparation and related education programs.
- b. Improve the quality of teaching.
 - i. Over ten years gradually reduce the basic undergraduate teaching load from twenty-four credit hours per year to eighteen credit hours per year.
 - ii. Annually increase the number of students engaged in course-related research or creative projects.
 - iii. Secure endowment funding to support the Peter Canisius Distinguished Teaching Professors Program.

- iv.* Provide an additional \$50,000 in annual operating funds for the Center for Teaching Excellence.
 - v.* Over the next ten years establish ten endowed departmental funds of \$100,000 or more to support lectures, educational travel, student research and travel to conferences, service learning, and community outreach.
- c.** Raise the level of research and creative activity.
- i.* Increase annual support for summer research opportunities by \$50,000.
 - ii.* Increase annual funding for travel to conferences or for research by at least \$100,000.
 - iii.* By the fall of 2008, increase the level of externally funded projects from the 2002-2003 level of \$800,000 to \$3,200,000 per year.
 - iv.* Increase the number of research projects involving Canisius student researchers.
 - v.* Increase the number of joint research projects with researchers at other institutions, especially on the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus.
 - vi.* Increase the number of graduate research assistants by 20 to 30 over the next ten years.

Goal 2: Improve curricular and other opportunities for learning.

All Canisius programs will increase in quality and reputation. Based on key opportunities in the regional environment and on current College strengths, we will target a set of programs for special resources. Chief among these are the sciences that will have their new home in an interdisciplinary science center in the Blue Cross/Blue Shield building. The opportunity for a life sciences economy implies the need for expertise in all the basic sciences. Canisius will fill the baccalaureate, entry level need for this economy, and will also send its graduates to universities where they will become the research scientists and principal investigators at the top of the pyramid. Because of the great needs of the public schools, Canisius will become a strong center for literacy and science/mathematics education for pre-K to twelfth grade teachers. The programs in international business, finance, and accounting will respond to opportunities in the economy for international trade, financial services, and auditing. The revised core curriculum will offer numerous opportunities for interdisciplinary offerings in the humanities and social sciences. The Honors Program will become even more selective and will attract the best faculty at Canisius College and the best students of all majors. Experiential learning opportunities will be ubiquitous. Interdisciplinary teaching and research will be encouraged. To achieve this we will:

- a.** Improve our curriculum and other learning opportunities.
 - i.* By the fall 2005 semester begin implementation of a revised and appropriately sized core curriculum.
 - ii.* Develop challenging and stimulating first-year experiences by 2006 and senior experiences by 2009.
 - iii.* Build an All-College Honors Program endowment to support program enrichment through travel, speakers, social and cultural events, etc.
 - iv.* Regularly develop new academic programs that strengthen the offerings of the college, exploit new opportunities, address new markets, and fit well with our mission.
 - v.* Each year identify one or two programs with demonstrated exceptional excellence and/or high potential demand to be targeted for extra resources.
 - vi.* For each of the next five years raise the level of financial support for library acquisitions by 5% over the library materials inflation rate .
 - vii.* Increase annually the number of students who participate beyond the classroom in student learning and leadership opportunities.
- b.** Judiciously expand mission-related uses of distance education.

- i.* Introduce distance education programs for Canadians in graduate business, graduate education, and continuing education.
 - ii.* Join the Jesuit distance education consortium JesuitNET for a period of two years and renew thereafter if productive.
 - iii.* Undergo the NYS Education Department's Institutional Capability Review to get approval to offer full degrees by distance education.
- c.** Develop a culture of constructive self-assessment.
 - i.* Open a central office of institutional research to support assessment activities and strategic planning.
 - ii.* Institute a fixed cycle of program review within each academic program and school, with regular oversight by the Academic Programs Board.
 - iii.* Maintain a log of programs that are changed, reformed, or eliminated as a result of assessment and program review.
 - iv.* Implement strategic planning as a regular activity in each school and major academic unit with routine reporting on progress and outcomes.
 - v.* Regularly use the results of our marketing research and analysis in the strategic planning of academic programs.
- d.** Achieve additional unit or program accreditation or recognition by appropriate external bodies.
 - i.* Achieve NCATE accreditation of our education programs by 2005.
 - ii.* Support faculty efforts to establish a chapter of Phi Beta Kappa.

Goal 3: Encourage research and study related to our Jesuit Catholic tradition.

The Jesuit Catholic identity and mission of Canisius College call us to transmit and nourish a rich intellectual tradition, to emphasize service to others, and to foster the development of a mature, self-confident religious faith open to respectful dialogue with other religious, spiritual, and ethical traditions. This orientation will be clearly evident in new courses, programs, research, lectures, faculty development, seminars, conferences, and community events. Many students will be engaged in service activity and reflect on its meaning for their lives. The theme of justice will be an important focus, but study and dialogue will be directed to a full range of issues related to religious traditions, religious belief and practice, morality, ethics, and spirituality. There will be more opportunities to explore Catholic belief and culture from many disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives. At the same time students and faculty of other faiths or of no faith will feel at home at Canisius and will contribute to open respectful dialogue on matters of ultimate importance. Reason and faith will mutually prod, provoke, and enlighten one another. To achieve this we will:

- a.** Strengthen opportunities to study the Jesuit Catholic heritage and other religious, spiritual, or ethical traditions.
 - i.* Over the next five years add at least ten courses across a wide range of subject areas examining various historical or contemporary issues in Catholicism and other major religious, spiritual, or ethical traditions.
 - ii.* Establish an interdisciplinary program in Catholic Studies.
 - iii.* Institute within the next two years a one-week faculty seminar each year to engage a representative group of faculty in dialogue on themes of contemporary or historical relevance to our mission and curriculum.
 - iv.* Support systematic library acquisition of print and electronic materials related to Catholicism and other major religious, spiritual, or ethical traditions, the Jesuit spiritual and intellectual heritage, morality, and ethics.
- b.** Foster research, creative activity, and dialogue on timely religious, spiritual, moral or ethical issues.
 - i.* Provide a stable and substantial base of support for the interdisciplinary Center for the Global Study of Religion.
 - ii.* Create an interdisciplinary Center for Ethics to encourage research, learning, and public discussion about moral and ethical issues.
 - iii.* Encourage and support research projects on religious, spiritual, moral or ethical issues.

- iv.* Support faculty and student participation in conferences and workshops on religious, spiritual, moral or ethical issues of contemporary or historical significance.
- v.* Review the academic reality of the college every five years in light of the apostolic constitution on Catholic Colleges and Universities (*Ex Corde Ecclesiae*).

Goal 4: Improve our instructional and research facilities.

Canisius faces a unique moment in its history. Having been a campus physically constrained and disconnected, it now looks to the Blue Cross/Blue Shield building as an acquisition that will fulfill many promises: a signature state-of-the-art facility for the sciences; a structural, physical, and psychological connector for the campus; an occasion to renovate and reassign vacated spaces in Health Science, Horan O'Donnell, Wehle Technology, and Lyons Hall. It will open the way to separate and distinct homes for the Wehle School and the School of Education and Human Services and an improved working environment in the Churchill Tower. Classroom technology, distance education, wireless zones, and electronic library resources will be transformed. To achieve this we will:

- a.** Develop a comprehensive science center in the BlueCross Blue Shield building.
 - i.* During 2003-2004 work with Cannon Design to develop a conceptual plan for a comprehensive science center.
 - ii.* By 2008 purchase the BlueCross BlueShield building.
 - iii.* By 2013 have the comprehensive science center in full operation.
- b.** Develop and implement plans for new uses for spaces currently occupied by departments that move to the comprehensive science center.
 - i.* Plan and develop a current facility to house the School of Education and Human Services.
 - ii.* Plan and develop a current facility to house the Wehle School of Business.
- c.** Improve and expand the remainder of our stock of faculty and departmental offices, as well as other instructional facilities.
 - i.* By June 2005 identify spaces for additional faculty and departmental offices that will be needed from fall 2005 to the opening of the new comprehensive science center.
 - ii.* By fall 2005 begin a ten-year project to reduce faculty density in Churchill Academic Tower from 120 to 99 for an average of 11 per floor in order to provide appropriate departmental spaces for common rooms, work-study students, secretaries, storage, etc.
 - iii.* By fall 2004 provide new classrooms and instructional centers on the ground floor of the Health Sciences Building.

- iv.* Establish by spring 2005 a regular cycle of inventory and review of classrooms in order to update annually our assessment of future classroom needs.
- d.** Support technology appropriate to excellent teaching and learning.
 - i.* Increase instructional and information literacy support to faculty members by professional staff in the library, information technology, and instructional design.
 - ii.* Improve instructional software through a major Blackboard upgrade.
 - iii.* Increase available network bandwidth to the Internet.
 - iv.* Implement wireless access throughout the campus at the rate of two to four buildings per year.

Goal 5: Strengthen and diversify our student body.

By traditional measures of SAT's, high school average, and rank in class, the student body will be modestly improved in five years and markedly improved in ten years. More students will enroll from more distant markets, and Canisius will be a "destination school." Students and parents will pass by competitors as they drive or fly the extra miles to Canisius. The quality of the Canisius experience will be so valuable that attrition will be negligible. Graduation rates will approach those of the most selective colleges. Higher retention and graduation rates together with first a stabilized and eventually a lower discount rate will result in more tuition revenue available to support program enrichment. Graduate programs will likewise become more selective and will enroll more students from distant and international markets. Learning community programs will attract and lead to successes for students in racial, ethnic, cultural, and socio-economic minorities. To achieve this we will:

- a.** Implement an integrated marketing plan.
 - i.* By fall 2004 prepare a comprehensive integrated marketing plan for graduate and undergraduate recruitment.
 - ii.* Implement appropriate measures to assess the impact of marketing expenditures, strategies and tactics on an ongoing basis.
 - iii.* Provide up to \$500,000 in increased operating funds over the next five years to implement new marketing initiatives.
 - iv.* Achieve a slow, controlled growth in full-time undergraduate enrollment from about 3100 in fall 2003 to about 3275 in fall 2008 and about 3400 in fall 2013 through recruitment and retention efforts.
 - v.* Stabilize the undergraduate discount rate within 3 to 5 years, and begin to lower the discount steadily in years 5 to 10.
 - vi.* Increase graduate enrollment by an average of about 2.5% per year from fall 2005 through fall 2009.
- b.** Raise the academic profile of the student body gradually over the next ten years.
 - i.* Raise the average freshman SAT score from 1109 in fall 2003 to approximately 1125 by fall 2008, and approximately 1200 by fall 2013.
 - ii.* Increase the average freshman high school average from 89.8% in fall 2003 to approximately 91% by fall 2008, and to approximately 92% by fall 2013.

- iii.* Increase the number of students who were in the top 20% of their high school graduating classes from 44% in fall 2003 to 50% by fall 2008, and approximately 55% by fall 2013.
 - iv.* Decrease the acceptance rate from 83% in fall 2003 to approximately 75% by fall 2008, and approximately 70% by fall 2013.
 - v.* Increase selectivity in graduate admissions.
 - c.** Increase the ethnic, cultural, and geographic diversity of the student body.
 - i.* Secure endowment and grant funding of \$5,000,000 by fall 2008 to fund the Urban Leadership Learning Community Program.
 - ii.* Increase full-time undergraduate freshmen from the secondary market (New York State outside of Erie and Niagara Counties) from 21% in fall 2003 to 28% by fall 2008 and 35% by fall 2103.
 - iii.* Increase full-time undergraduate freshmen from other states and countries from about 8% in fall 2003 to 15% by fall 2008, and 24% by fall 2013.
 - d.** Improve undergraduate retention and graduation rates.
 - i.* Increase freshman to sophomore retention from about 83% in fall 2003 to 87% by fall 2008 and 90% by fall 2013.
 - ii.* Increase the six-year graduation rate from about 61% in 2003 to about 66% in 2008 and about 70% in 2013.
 - iii.* Track special cohorts (e.g., developmental course enrollees, FYE participants, honors program students, targeted majors) to assess intervention opportunities and retention successes.
 - iv.* Improve undergraduate advisement for first-year students and for students who have not decided on a major.
 - v.* Identify and administer a student satisfaction instrument to assess student attitudes and perceptions at various stages in their Canisius experience.
 - vi.* Regularly evaluate academic policies and procedures from a student satisfaction/service perspective.
 - vii.* Regularly use the results of the National Survey of Student Engagement in order to identify and address areas of deficiency and to measure the subsequent effectiveness of strategies implemented to remedy those deficiencies.