

BOLDLY ASCENDING

**RAMAPO COLLEGE STRATEGIC PLAN
2023-2029**

MESSAGE FROM THE COLLEGE PRESIDENT

Dear Students, Colleagues, and Friends,

Ramapo's Strategic Plan, *Boldly Ascending 2023-2029*, will provide us with direction and priorities; however, the real power of the plan has been the community engagement throughout the planning process; it has been an engagement marked by deliberation and intentionality that only comes about within a culture of trust cultivated through practices of inclusivity and respect. I encourage everyone to review the addenda, which tells the story of how we took a critical look at Ramapo's past, present, and future; and how, by learning together and from one another, we reaffirmed our mission and values, and revised our vision statement. Thank you to the Strategic Plan Writing Team to include its co-chairs: Joseph Connell, Naseem Choudhury, and Brittany Williams-Goldstein.

Ramapo's roots are its liberal arts education, student-focus, inter-cultural and global understanding, and experiential learning. For over fifty years, Ramapo, which started as a commuter school, has been a tight-knit, innovative, and relatively uniform community that took pride in its students' accomplishments and meaningful mentor-mentee relationships. As the world has become more complex, connected, and modern, Ramapo leaned into new programs and new opportunities, while exploring ways to become more affordable, accessible, diverse, and equitable.

As we look to the future, it is important to acknowledge that Ramapo has changed as a result of the pandemic, becoming even more attuned to the needs and well-being of its community members, capitalizing on technology in terms of pedagogy and administrative tasks, learning new ways of accomplishing our mission, and valuing the power of human engagement. By embracing the liberal arts as foundational, we launch students who are equipped and empowered to thrive in a changing world, no matter their field, bolstering their reach and impact. The liberal arts primarily teach how to think, rather than what to think, and students of the liberal arts learn to think critically, posit a worldview, ensure equity, thrive in a changing world, serve with inclusivity and humility, and lead with empathy and kindness. Our complex world with its increasing pace of change, from a divisive political culture to accelerated climate change, to health crises to educational deficits, and global conflict, puts our liberal arts mission in sharp focus.

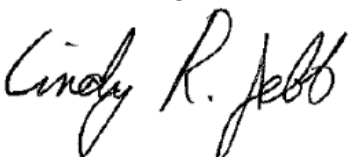
Our democratic society requires ethical, empathetic, inclusive, and responsible leaders who can build and lead diverse teams across all sectors and be the change agents necessary to innovatively elevate the human condition in NJ and beyond.

This plan's success will only be achievable if we use it. In that spirit, we approach implementing this plan with the same all-hands-on-deck mindset we used when developing it. Everyone must see themselves in this plan. As we continue to assess our goals, context, and risks, we must be open to adapting and adjusting our strategy, that is seeing how best to integrate the means to achieve our ends. Our proximate ends are the plan's goals: **Academic Excellence and Student Success; Inclusive Community; and Agile Stewardship**. However, let's not forget our aspirational ends: that is making our mark for graduating empathetic problem solvers, ethical change agents, and responsible leaders who make a positive impact on the human condition and thrive in a changing world.

As we move not just forward but upward, our all-hands-on-deck culture requires leadership at all levels to ensure everyone is equipped and empowered to envision possibilities, achieve our mission, implement our goals, and ultimately invest in our future one student at a time. I look forward to serving alongside each of you as we continue to be bold, kind, and good teammates: ***Boldly Ascending 2023-2029!***

Go Roadrunners!

With sincere gratitude and enthusiasm,



Cindy R. Jebb



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OUR MISSION

Ramapo College is New Jersey's Public Liberal Arts College, dedicated to providing students with a strong foundation for a lifetime of achievement. The College is committed to academic excellence through interdisciplinary and experiential learning, and international and intercultural understanding. Ramapo College emphasizes teaching and individual attention to all students. We promote diversity, inclusiveness, sustainability, student engagement, and community involvement.

OUR VISION

Ramapo College delivers a transformative education in a diverse community dedicated to welcoming and mentoring students who bring with them a range of lived experiences. We will achieve national distinction for developing empathetic problem solvers, ethical change agents, and responsible leaders who make a positive impact and thrive in a changing world.

OUR VALUES

Ramapo College is the public liberal arts college of the state of New Jersey. The work of the College and its members is conducted with integrity. Our values are:

- Teaching, learning, and mentoring– we are actively engaged in and out of the classroom.
- Developing the whole person– we are scholars, we are creators, we are local and global citizens, and we are individuals.
- Respecting each other and our environment– we are an open, inclusive, supportive, and sustainable community.

OUR CONTEXT

Ramapo's liberal arts mission and our purpose as a state college are centralized by recent events such as pandemics and geopolitical shifts, and by our commitment to respond to enduring changes brought about by climate, economic, and social trends. To these ends and many others, Ramapo is a highly consequential institution inclusive of:

- our inspiring students and alumni who are prepared to make a positive difference at local, national, and global levels because they are uniquely equipped to thrive in a changing world;
- our passionate faculty and dedicated staff whose mentorship of students, service, teaching, and scholarship have local roots and international reach; and
- our generous friends with whom we are forging agile environments, bold partnerships, and enduring relationships that empower us all to navigate the present and embrace the future.

OUR TRAJECTORY

Uniquely bordering NY and nestled in the foothills of the Ramapo Mountains with easy access to New York City, Ramapo has a geographic and mission-centric advantage to make a distinctive impact that can grow nationally and internationally.

Ramapo College of New Jersey can be the national exemplar for public liberal arts higher education, investing in the future of our democracy, our industries, and our communities, one student at a time. To make this bold impact together, we must commit unapologetically to an all-hands-on-deck approach to student success that will:

- further academic excellence,
- secure long-term fiscal sustainability,
- reinvigorate a culture of interdisciplinarity,
- grow a service-oriented ethos,
- embrace accountability as a resource for growth,
- prioritize community well-being: elevate traditionally underrepresented voices, embrace diversity, and foster a culture of trust and sense of belonging, and
- raise our visibility and generate collaborations and partnerships.

As we learn, we are beginning to more fully present ourselves as a dynamic, distinctive, highly impactful and empowering learning community; and we must ensure the transformative power of a Ramapo College education is as known as it is revered.



OUR GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal 1: Academic Excellence & Student Success

Achieve academic excellence and student success through the advancement of intercultural, global, and interdisciplinary education, experiential learning, and individualized student-centered resources.

Objectives:

- a. Provide learning environments and opportunities that encourage the development of deep content knowledge that leads to discerning engagement in work and in the world.
- b. Increase high-impact practices that promote creative expression, scholarly research, and applied learning.
- c. Grow service opportunities and civic engagement to explore personal identities and diversity, and make a positive societal impact locally, regionally, and internationally.
- d. Strengthen our culture of mentorship through integrated and individualized support systems and resources that help students succeed.

Goal 2: Inclusive Community

Foster a diverse, empathetic, and vibrant community that inspires a culture of inclusivity, accountability, and collaboration.

Objectives:

- a. Prioritize personal well-being by promoting healthy practices and environments.
- b. Advance a culture of belonging, equity, inclusion, and trust by embracing diversity, access, and accountability.
- c. Promote an environment that elevates voices, examines structures of power and privilege, and creates justice-oriented actions and solutions.
- d. Develop future leaders who gain self-awareness, mentor others, and emerge as change agents.
- e. Foster school pride by building relationships and partnerships, amplifying creative collaboration, and enhancing community engagement.

Goal 3: Agile Stewardship

Drive institutional distinction, sustainability, and pride by galvanizing our community members and partners, and building organizational agility, accountability, and resilience.

Objectives:

- a. Drive institutional distinction through student and alumni satisfaction and success, faculty scholarship, thought leadership, national and international collaborations, and organizational expertise.
- b. Bolster Ramapo pride through serving as both a public college of choice and an employer of choice.
- c. Secure long-term fiscal sustainability through the entrepreneurial management and development of resources at every level.
- d. Strengthen organizational resilience and agility through sustainable practices and data-informed SMART¹ choices (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Time-bound).

¹ Doran, G. T. (1981). "There's a S.M.A.R.T. Way to Write Management's Goals and Objectives," *Management Review*, Vol. 70, Issue 11, pp. 35-36.



OUR COMMITMENT TO CONTINUOUS LEARNING

As Ramapo College moves through the coming years guided by this plan, our shared commitments to advancing academic excellence and student success, fostering culture and community, and driving sound stewardship and service will be informed by meaningful and periodic academic and administrative assessment. Through our all-hands-on-deck approach to delivering on our promise to our students and our state, Ramapo College’s capacity to learn, adjust, take calculated risks, and boldly ascend is sure to grow.

ADDENDA

OUR PLANNING PROCESS

Affirmation of Mission and Values

Ramapo's strategic planning process began in November 2021 and concluded in January 2023. The nearly 14-month process featured an all-hands-on-deck, future-centered, data-informed, and strengths-based approach to envisioning the College's future via four key components: *The Future Series*, Needs Statement Process, Campus Facilities Master Planning, and Writing Team: *Boldly Ascending*. As the 14-month process ensued, the learnings derived from the components reaffirmed:

- a. the College's existing Mission accurately:
 - defines our purpose: providing students a strong foundation for a lifetime of achievement through an experience founded upon the liberal arts;
 - advances our students' needs: individualized attention, inclusiveness, engagement; and
 - articulates clearly what we endeavor to accomplish: academic excellence through interdisciplinary and experiential learning, and international and intercultural understanding; and
- b. the College's existing Values continue to guide our conduct through demonstrated commitment to:
 - teaching and learning
 - integrity
 - mentorship
 - engagement
 - development of the whole person
 - respect
 - inclusion
 - sustainability



Component 1. Exploring our Context: *The Future Series*

The Future Series was a series of dynamic summits that set the conditions for the College's reimagined and disciplined planning process. Each summit featured broad participation by students, faculty, staff, and trustees. In addition, the summits included pre-readings, data resources, a keynote address, small group facilitated activities, and opportunities for reflection. The summits were designed to help members of the College arrive at understandings and generate ideas that would position Ramapo's liberal arts mission and its public good as a state college as both guide and ballast throughout the planning process. From November 2021 through to April 2022, five *Future Series* programs were conducted. Following the keynote remarks and Q&A sessions, participants worked together in small groups on facilitated activities that were shaped by a range of pre-readings and resources. The outputs of the activities were broadly shared and used to inform the College's revised vision statement and strategic direction. The five programs included:

- ***The Future of Thought: Strategy & Uncertainty***

Facilitated activity prompt: What is Ramapo College best at? Why is being best at __ important beyond Ramapo College? What is one strategy members of your group can do/support together to help Ramapo College be the best at __ nationally?

- ***The Future of Society: Conflict, Culture, & Character***

Facilitated activity prompt: Identify up to two specific examples of opportunities that Ramapo College provides for our students or colleagues to develop a service/socially responsible orientation. How might these examples be used to cultivate an organizational culture at Ramapo that derives its future successes by being, foremost, in the service of others?

- ***The Future of Learning: K-12 Insights***

Facilitated activity prompt: We are learning that how students learn and think is becoming more important than what students learn and think. Further, we are learning that the physiological, safety, belonging, esteem, and cognitive needs of today's learners are increasingly complex. As a state institution of higher education, what is Ramapo's obligation to K-12 learners and educators? How might our College, in partnership with K-12 districts and/or community organizations, enrich this obligation for the mutual benefit of all of NJ's learners and educators?

- ***The Future of Work: Learning & Labor***

Facilitated activity prompt: As we consider the future of work at Ramapo College, what do you believe are the top three external factors driving change at our institution? As a contributing member of the College community, what are some actions you would like to take in order to be able to effectively manage change and better foresee upcoming challenges and opportunities?

Facilitated activity prompt: In *Getting Ready*, William Adams argues that disciplinary specialization is inadequate to our circumstances. He advocates instead for "integrated understanding" and suggests that connecting a liberal arts curriculum to prominent issues, questions, and challenges is one way to foster "work readiness" (i.e. "knowing about" as well as "knowing how"). What opportunities exist at Ramapo College to connect our curriculum in this way or what current connections may exist that we can leverage as models to replicate across disciplines?

- ***The Future of Ramapo: Readiness & Resolve***

Facilitated activity prompt: What have we learned we can be best at? What have we learned we are passionate about? What have we learned is our resource engine? What is our Hedgehog Concept?²

In addition to the five summits, multiple gatherings were provided for participants to reflect and provide additional input on the prompts. The final *Future Series* program, *The Future of Ramapo: Readiness and Resolve*, took stock of the many understandings, suggestions, and challenges that had been discussed at the earlier summits and served to illuminate key elements of the College's Strategic Posture Statement. In May 2022, a draft strategic posture statement was shared with the community. Input was collected and, in June, the final Strategic Posture Statement was released. The Strategic Posture Statement captured Ramapo's story, strengths, context, opportunity, and trajectory and served as the foundation from which the Strategic Plan Writing Team began its work in the Fall of 2022.

2 Collins, J. (2001). *Good to great*. Random House Business Books.

Component 2. Igniting our Passion: The Needs Statement Process

Shaped, in part, by what was being learned from *The Future Series*, running parallel was the College's new Needs Statement Process. The Needs Statement Process served to ignite the passion across the College with the opportunity for faculty and staff to develop and advocate for centers, programs, initiatives, and projects that could achieve three things: (1) attract external resources, (2) lead toward a better understanding of issues that affect the lives of citizens in the 21st Century, and (3) widen and deepen the reputation of the College.

With passions ignited, the Needs Statement Process yielded 17 proposals, many of which featured interdisciplinary or inter-core collaboration. Nine proposals advanced and work began in earnest to secure resources from gifts and other sources to seed fund the greenlit proposals. Representing a range of needs, understandings, passions, and collaborations, greenlit proposals included: Center for First Generation Students, Presidential Scholarships, EOF Student Scholarships, Berrie Center for Performing and Visual Arts, Gross Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, Digital Humanities Projects, ENHANCE Therapeutic Support Program, Investigative Genetic Genealogy Center, and the Center for Data, Mathematical & Computational Sciences.

Component 3. Envisioning our Environment: Campus Facilities Master Planning

In the Spring of 2022, the College began a Campus Facilities Master Planning process that was concurrently being shaped by what we were learning about ourselves and our future through *The Future Series*. The College's last Facilities Master Plan was completed in 2013 and much was achieved through it.

During the Spring, the Campus Master Planning Committee was established and charged. It completed a review of the 2013 Master Plan through which it evaluated gains and components considered worth keeping in the new plan. Phase One of a campus-wide Facilities Condition Assessment (FCA) was completed in April, and in the Fall of 2022 Phase Two of the FCA was launched. The FCA, an updated inventory and condition assessment of all existing campus buildings and major infrastructure, together with learnings gleaned from *The Future Series*, the greenlit Priority Needs Proposals, and the Strategic Posture Statement helped shape the emergent Campus Facilities Master Plan.

Component 4. Making a Bold Impact: *Boldly Ascending*

The Strategic Plan Writing Team was established and charged in September of 2022 to draft the College's next Strategic Plan. The Writing Team's membership was inclusive of faculty, staff, and students who actively contributed to the 2021-2022 year-long series of strategic planning activities. The affirmation of Ramapo's mission and the Strategic Posture Statement were foundational to the Writing Team's efforts.

The Team was responsible for generating a cogent, ambitious, and actionable Strategic Plan that would position the College to emerge as a national exemplar for public liberal arts higher education by advancing a vision, goals, and long-term objectives that, borrowing from the Strategic Posture Statement, would serve to:

- ensure the transformative power of a Ramapo College education,
- compel the development and strategic allocation of resources,
- foster agency, leadership, and belongingness among community members,
- articulate Ramapo's competitive advantage, and
- galvanize support and advocacy for Ramapo's students and mission.

Team members were required to actively contribute to Team activities during and between meetings, share the work of the Team with their colleagues and peers and bring forward input from those groups, and model collegiality, mutual respect, and integrity throughout the writing process.

Following a series of campus-wide dialogues and presentations on the draft *Boldly Ascending: Ramapo College Strategic Plan 2023-2029* in November and December 2022, a penultimate draft was provided to the College President, and later advanced to and unanimously adopted by the Board of Trustees on January 30, 2023.

WITH GRATITUDE

Strategic Plan Writing Team members:

Naseem A. Choudhury, Co-chair

Professor of Psychology & Neuroscience
Teaching & Learning Core

Joseph Connell, Co-chair

Assistant Vice President of Student Success
Outreach & Engagement Core

Brittany A. Williams-Goldstein, Co-chair

Chief of Staff & Board Liaison | Vice President
for Policy, Research, & Governance | College
Spokesperson
Executive Core

Kevin Brenfo-Agyeman

Academic Advisor
Outreach & Engagement Core

Regina Clark

Associate Professor of Journalism
Teaching & Learning Core

Judith Green

Director of the Center for Health & Counseling Services
Student Well-being Core

Susan Hangen

Interim Dean of the School of Humanities
& Global Studies | Professor of Anthropology
& International Studies
Teaching & Learning Core

Paolo Miyashiro Bedoya '23

President of the Student Government Association

Jack Nesmith '14

Coordinator for Student Activities
Student Well-being Core

Peter Rice

Senior Director of Constituent Relations
Outreach & Engagement Core

Barbara Smith

Assistant Director of Student Accounts
Fiscal Health Core

Malavika Sundarajan

Associate Professor of Management
Teaching & Learning Core

Kostas Svarnas

Construction Project Manager
Operational Integration Core

Special thanks to: Melanie Alston Balaputra, Rui Dionisio, Leslie T. Fenwick, Antonio Garcia, Thomas Gorman, LTG Laura Potter, Eileen Shafer, H. Patrick Swygert, and Pat Wadors '87

