

Values and Goals

Overview

The mission of Vassar College is to make accessible “the means of a thorough, well-proportioned and liberal education” that inspires each individual to lead a purposeful life (Vassar Student Handbook, 2016). The College makes possible an education that promotes analytical, informed, and independent thinking and sound judgment; encourages articulate expression; and nurtures intellectual curiosity, creativity, respectful debate, and engaged citizenship. Founded in 1861 to provide women an education equal to that once available only to men, the College is now open to all. Vassar supports a high standard of engagement in teaching and learning, scholarship and artistic endeavor; a broad and deep curriculum; a community diverse in background and experience; and a residential campus that fosters a learning community." Given the College’s history and future goals, the CMPC identified the creation of an inclusive learning community, sustainability, and stewardship as three core values that should shape all campus master planning discussions and decisions made by the College.





Sustainability

Sustainability will be a core feature of all campus planning and development efforts. In the summer of 2016, Vassar College President Catharine Bond Hill endorsed the Vassar Climate Action Plan, which articulates clear institutional goals and best practices meant to guide the College toward carbon neutrality by 2030. Meeting our Climate Action Plan commitments requires the improvement and refinement of the College's existing physical plant infrastructure so that it continues to deliver the heating, power, and communication vital to our facility operations. The College will work aggressively to improve energy efficiency in operations and facilities, including pursuing contractual obligations for efficiency (see "Green Building Guidelines" in the Appendix), reusing existing infrastructure, and minimizing new square footage.



The College must also study and consider ways to promote low-energy transportation, such as walking, bicycling, electric vehicles, and public transportation. A commitment to sustainability also means that the College will strive to develop a walkable campus and reduce the amount of central areas dedicated to parking by relocating a majority of parking to peripheral parking lots. The campus master plan (CMP) must establish strategies that minimize environmental contamination and reduce negative impacts on local waterways that pass through campus by having permeable pavement throughout campus and reducing road salt use in the winter. The College is extremely fortunate to have an abundance of natural open space that was conceived and implemented as an arboretum; this lush and verdant landscape greatly enhances the quality of life on campus and must be preserved and enhanced for future generations.



Fostering an Inclusive Learning Community

The College will continue to create academic facilities that support and enhance new approaches to how faculty, students, and members of the community teach, learn, gather, and interact over the next decades. Access, diversity, and equity, as shared values of the Vassar community, must be reflected in and help shape all decisions on campus planning. Ultimately, the design and development of campus facilities enriches and benefits students, faculty, and administrative personnel. The creation of an inclusive campus also means that campus planning recognizes the important role that college facilities and landscapes play in the immediate and surrounding neighborhood. More broadly, the College will take appropriate steps to ensure that college-owned properties serve to enhance the College's relationship with the extended community.





Stewardship

The College must prioritize the renovation and reuse of buildings in ways that recognize their historical importance while ensuring that they support current and future needs. The maintenance, repair, and rehabilitation of existing spaces aligns with the College's sustainability efforts and Climate Action Plan (See Appendix) and preserves valuable assets for future generations. The commitment to an aesthetically beautiful campus implies that the College will preserve historically important buildings whenever possible, even as energy efficiency is upgraded, contemporary design approaches are implemented, and ways of teaching, learning and working evolve. Vassar's commitment to excellence in all things should be embodied in the quality of craftsmanship, creative purpose, and humanity reflected in its facilities and landscape.



