

## **The College of the Atlantic MAP of Institutional Priorities**

College of the Atlantic is a school of Human Ecology. As such, we seek to understand the relationships between human beings and their built, social, and natural environments. We work in an interdisciplinary setting free of departmental boundaries, where students design their own curriculum, where theory is artfully and consciously tied to practice, and where friendship and affection help define our community. Through both teaching and the creation of new knowledge, ideas, and works, we cultivate the ability to make improvements to the world, from the most local to the most global.

As we approach our fiftieth year we have both a substantial past as well as an unlimited future. Our history has not been a monolithic establishment of precedents, but a rapid and continual evolution, a dialectic of tradition and innovation. The MAP follows that trend of continuous iteration between planning and doing. It is a collaborative production of the COA community and outlines a set of prioritized goals taking us from the present to our 50<sup>th</sup> Convocation in September 2021. The priorities below all underscore the need to (1) provide additional structure and predictability to the curriculum, (2) ensure institutional financial sustainability, and (3) improve the quality of the COA experience for students, faculty, staff, and alumni as life-long learners.

### **Cardinal Direction #1: Our Learning Environment.**

#### *THE FOUR TOP ACADEMIC PRIORITIES*

1. Regularly review and update the curriculum and degree requirements.
2. Strengthen teaching and learning of receptive and expressive communication skills (verbal, non-verbal) across the curriculum.
3. Maintain a 10:1 student:faculty ratio (in FTEs) and continue to prioritize faculty from national searches over temporary faculty to achieve that ratio.
4. Foster a creative, collaborative, diverse, and interdisciplinary faculty, staff, and student body.

Immediate next steps in support of these four top academic priorities include a) establishing targets for **faculty salaries** that align more closely to peer-group averages; b) more **planning** and communication of **academic offerings**; c) more emphasis on **advising**; d) a clear plan for **faculty hiring priorities**; e) a plan to refine and support our **field-based courses** while managing how those courses impact the other parts of the curriculum; f) behavioral and structural changes to provide faculty with the space, flexibility, and funding to **balance** teaching, advising, research, creative work, and administration; and g) increased attention to **writing and communication**.

### *OTHER LEARNING ENVIRONMENT PRIORITIES*

- 5.** Emphasize the relationship between in-class and out-of-class learning as a way to build leadership, empathy, work ethic, and identity.
- 6.** Revise fall orientation to incorporate an intensive and required seminar that combines an academically robust introduction to Human Ecology with our existing OOPs experience.
- 7.** Assess our graduate program.
- 8.** Deepen existing relationships with key MDI partners, especially Acadia National Park, the Jackson Laboratory, the MDI Biological Laboratory, and the local schools.
- 9.** Staff teach (to lesser or greater degrees; some formally, most informally). We will train and retain current staff and hire new staff with this expectation.
- 10.** Ensure the COA community acquires the technical and social literacy to enable the appropriate use of computer-based tools and digital networks consistent with the college's shared academic values and goals.

### *CAMPUS INFRASTRUCTURE*

- 11.** Build a facility that will a) meet our academic needs for science teaching space, studio space, and multi-purpose space; b) improve our ability to teach and learn while enhancing the integration of the arts, sciences, and humanities; c) help raise the college's profile as an institution dedicated to the integration of knowledge across disciplines; d) inspire more applicants who matriculate and graduate.

### *IMPROVING EXISTING SYSTEMS*

- 12.** Implement COA's Energy Framework to eliminate fossil fuels in COA buildings and vehicles through hands-on experiential learning opportunities and broaden these experiences to impact the energy future of MDI through community partnerships and collaboration.
- 13.** Provide pedagogically sound and predictable language learning opportunities to support our individually designed, collaborative, student centered curriculum in human ecology. Provide every student the opportunity to learn a new language and hone and deepen existing language skills by strengthening our programs in Spanish and French and, as appropriate, offering language learning supporting other COA programs.
- 14.** Increase the connections between the food we consume and our understanding of the human ecology of food systems; increase the percentage of COA-grown food to TAB (in dollars); increase attention, infrastructure, and curricular offerings around food preparation, storage, and literacy; align food purchasing power toward admirable food-production operations; and use a 9R model (reduce, reuse, repair, remake, reach-out, research, redesign, refuse, recycle) for food and other discarded resource management.
- 15.** Intellectually diversify and improve the utility of our islands, wilderness preserve, and farms so they become nationally recognized models for field-based teaching and learning.

### **Cardinal Direction #2: Our Enrollment.**

**16. Number:** Ensure a close-knit, collaborative, and interdisciplinary COA community that operates effectively within our physical space by maintaining a student body of 350.

**17. Admission:** Continue to build an academically strong, creative, diverse student body and admit only those students who we believe will succeed here. This will involve strategically growing the applicant pool and managing yield.

**18. Retention:** Increase first to second year persistence rates from 81% to over 85% and increase our six-year graduation rate from 71% to over 75%.

**19. Financial aid and net tuition:** Ensure the long-term economic viability of COA by decreasing the discount rate to 50% while continuing to offer robust financial aid for our students.

### **Cardinal Direction #3: Our Story.**

**20.** Have greater name recognition and improved name association with an education based in human ecology, innovation, selectivity, interdisciplinary learning, "creating for credit," learning by doing, and self-governance.

**21.** Launch a website and other print and visual materials to authentically reflect who we are as an institution, facilitate improved name recognition and name association, and attract more prospective students, staff, faculty, donors, and partners to the college.

### **Cardinal Direction #4: Our Alumni.**

**22.** Have more complete and more accessible alumni data.

**23.** Strengthen the opportunities for alumni engagement as volunteers for the Alumni Association Board, regional contacts, event organizers, career mentors for students and fellow alumni, life long learners, and ambassadors for COA.

**24.** Rely on alumni for 15% of the financial contributions to the annual fund and have 50% of graduates making financial contributions to COA each year.

### **Contour Lines: Cross Cutting Themes.**

**25.** Intentionally and regularly refocus our internal dialogue on ideas happening *outside* of COA without compromising needed discussion about the college.

**26.** Hire great people and provide them with the resources they need to do great work.

**27.** Have a business model that balances budgets, manages cash flow, and controls workload.

**28.** Nurture a community that supports learning, emphasizes a campus culture based on the deepest respect for each other, and finds effective ways to address violence in all its forms.

**29.** Develop a 50th anniversary fundraising campaign around these and other goals.