Letter From The President

Dear Champlain Community,

In early October, our community came together for A Community Conversation: A New Vision for Champlain. In total, almost 400 community members participated in discussions at the Champlain Valley Expo, on campus and online. Click here for a brief visual summary.

The Community Conversation launched our new strategic planning efforts. This report summarizes our findings from the Conversation and outlines the next steps in the development of our 2025 Strategic Plan. We hope this report gives event participants—and those who may not have been able to participate—an understanding of what happened at the Community Conversation and our path forward.

We engaged in meaning-making sessions immediately following the Community Conversation, where Champlain colleagues reviewed the community feedback. As a result of this work, we have organized our findings into the foundations for the next phase of the process:

- Flourishing Community
- Academic and Professional Purpose
- Adaptive Infrastructure
- Thriving Students

We are also committed to weaving our strategies for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and for financial stewardship into all the foundations.

Our next priorities are to organize working groups for each foundation area, build on the Community Conversation data to further clarify the goals of each foundation area, and identify the enabling strategies required to fulfill these goals. Watch for more information from Laurel Bongiorno regarding Mission/Vision/Values work this fall and about engaging in the work of a Foundation Team. We will be tracking our progress throughout the year on the A Community Conversation: A New Vision website at www.champlain.edu/vision.

I appreciate your willingness to get involved, voice your support and concerns, and share your perspectives. In particular, I want to thank and recognize all of you who have helped with the planning for the Community Conversation and for your continued engagement as this work evolves.

I am confident that our collective wisdom will define our path forward towards a vision for Champlain College that positions us as a thriving institution in the higher education landscape, strengthens our community where faculty and staff flourish, and enhances the ways we support our students in achieving professional and personal success.

Sincerely,

Donald J. Laackman
President, Champlain College
The Report

A BRIEF HISTORY OF HOW WE GOT HERE

2012
Champlain’s 2020 Strategic Plan is announced.

2015
Champlain launches the Futures Initiative, holding more than thirty “Spyglass” sessions.

2017
Champlain College undertakes an extensive review of and update to the 2020 Strategic Plan, positioning us until the next strategic plan is developed.

January 2018
At Champlain’s Town Hall meeting, President Laackman invites the entire community to begin a conversation to reimagine Champlain in the future.

June 2018
A group of 50 Champlain College students, faculty, staff, trustees and alumni attends the World Positive Education Accelerator (WPEA) to consider the concepts of positive education and organization in the context of Champlain College. The group develops a draft aspirational statement and identifies five areas of focus for Champlain to consider.

September/October 2018
Laurel Bongiorno joins small groups across campus to provide information and seek themes for discussion at the Community Conversation. President Laackman hosts listening sessions to address questions, understand concerns and issues, and confirm themes for broader discussion.

October 2018
Champlain hosts “A Community Conversation” to engage in discussions about A New Vision for Champlain College and lay the foundation for the next strategic plan.

Fall 2018-Spring/Summer 2019
The Champlain community continues the strategic planning process and develops a new strategic plan for approval by the Board of Trustees at their October 2019 meeting.
WHAT WAS THE COMMUNITY CONVERSATION?

The Community Conversation was a step on Champlain’s journey to envision our future, begin our planning process for the next strategic plan, and enhance the ways we support our students in achieving professional and personal success.

The event brought together a cross-section of Champlain College community members. We sought to include as many voices and perspectives as possible so that our plan reflects the interests and needs of our whole community.

Participants included:

- Our Students
- Our Faculty
- Our Staff
- Our Trustees
- Our Alumni
- Our “Friends of the College” (external community members)

Participants were able to engage in the event in three different formats:

1. Champlain Valley Expo
   Attendees heard from President Laackman and community members sharing their Champlain stories and participated in cross-system working groups exploring the following:

   - Foundational elements and focus areas for the next strategic plan
   - Next iteration of Champlain’s aspirational/vision statement
   - Guidance on Champlain’s institutional values
   - Envisioning the future of Champlain as a thriving organization, including considering new ideas and innovations, examining ways to build on our strengths, and identifying areas for growth and change
   - Defining the actual work we want to engage in that will inform our strategic plan, with topics gathered from pre-event conversations with groups across campus

2. On Campus
   On campus attendees participated in Community Conversation activities in the Champlain Room, organized and hosted by Champlain College’s Communication and Creative Media (CCM) Event Management course students, including graffiti boards with questions aligned with other venues, postcards with ideas and feedback, food and fun.

3. Online
   Online participants contributed perspectives via a Google Form with questions aligned with the other venues, joined a facilitated Zoom session, and viewed a Livestream video from the Champlain Valley Expo.

Here are a few resources available to learn more about A Community Conversation:

- Slideshow with event overview
- Welcome remarks from President Laackman at Champlain Valley Expo
- Closing remarks from President Laackman at Champlain Valley Expo
- Working group topics and supporting materials from Champlain Valley Expo
“Events like this—a Community Conversation goes a long way!”

“Continue consistent reminders that diversity and inclusion are part of Champlain’s community. This helps ensure that Champlain is welcoming to everyone.”

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

FALL 2018

NOVEMBER
Begin work on Mission/Vision/Values

OCTOBER
Deliver Community Conversation Report

DECEMBER
Form Foundation Teams

2019

JANUARY
Host joint meeting of Foundation Teams

FEBRUARY
Foundation Teams work on goals & analysis

MARCH
Foundation Teams work on initiatives and metrics

APRIL
Write Strategic Plan from Foundation Teams recommendations

MAY
Host All-Community “CHARRETTE” (all-stakeholder feedback session)

JUNE
Provide draft to Cabinet; finalize Mission/Vision/Values

SUMMER
Finalize and design Strategic Plan

OCTOBER
Board of Trustees approve Strategic Plan

FALL 2019

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?
Meaning Making

The Meaning Making teams analyzed all of the data captured in the Community Conversation and worked to create context, themes and an overall statement of meaning. The teams organized the data into the focus areas we had created to guide the Community Conversation. They also identified specific enablers for the work ahead and initiatives to consider for implementation.

As part of Meaning Making, the data pointed to the need to review and reimagine our Mission, Vision and Values. Based upon the Community Conversation and the work of the Meaning Making team, members of the Cabinet crafted the Foundations of the new strategic plan that will enable us to fulfill our Mission and Vision. The following summary is organized by these Foundations and links them to the focus areas that were explored at the Community Conversation.

Each focus area includes examples of the raw data collected during the Community Conversation which help illustrate the content of the discussions. Take note of the interconnectedness of the data. This is not an exhaustive list and our process is continuing.

Click here for the full Meaning Making analysis.

Mission, Vision & Values

Community Conversation Focus Area | ASPIRATIONAL STATEMENT
The aspirational statement forms the basis for A New Vision for Champlain. The first aspirational statement was developed at the World Positive Education Accelerator and refined by the Community Conversation Steering Committee. It now reads:

We dare to cultivate a flourishing community of colleagues who work together to enable everyone to thrive in their professional and personal lives.

Community Conversation Focus Area | VALUES
The group reviewing VALUES indicated that they need more information and recommended an initiative to engage the Champlain community in a process that allows for re-imagining the Core Values, as they serve as a foundation for all other strategic planning processes. Discussion included recognition of the integration and interconnectedness of our values within all Foundation and focus areas. As an example, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion is an identified value as well as an integrated component of every Foundation area for the Strategic Plan.

Champlain College 2025 Strategic Planning Framework

Mission, Vision & Values

Lead Through Financial Realities
Thriving Students
Flourishing Community
Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
Academic & Professional Purpose
Adaptive Infrastructure

"Simply by being open to positive dialogue makes Champlain unique."

"I love the new Champlain Connect and that there is an event coming up in Boston soon! The ability to meet other students is really important in integration."
“It has been great to interact with students from all over the globe and get their unique perspectives in class discussions.”

“Anyone can start a club.”

**STRATEGIC PLAN FOUNDATION: Flourishing Community**

**Community Conversation Focus Area | WELL-BEING**

The group reviewing WELL-BEING developed an overarching statement to help define well-being for the strategic planning process: “Champlain is invested in the well-being of all members of its community in order to achieve its mission. While an inherently personal endeavor, the College has the ability to support and enhance the social, emotional, physical, financial, community, and career well-being of its members. The well-being of our community members will inform policy and resource decisions made by the College’s leaders.”

Well-being was focused on all members of the Champlain community and divided into ten directions for the consideration of the strategic planning process, including: Physical Well-Being, Spiritual Well-Being, Academics and Well-Being, Professional Development, Expanding Classroom Learning, Career Support, Mental/Emotional Health/Counseling and Support Services, Financial Well-Being, Community, Success and Systems and Systematic Well-Being Initiatives.

**Community Conversation Focus Area | SOCIAL**

The group reviewing the focus area of SOCIAL/COMMUNITY developed the statement: “Social well-being is prioritizing time and creating opportunities for connection and shared experience for the entire Champlain community, as well as building an extended family, creating the space to foster our relationships and feeling pride in the community we have built.”

The group identified four directions for consideration in the strategic planning process which included Connecting Across Boundaries, Communications, School Spirit/Community Engagement/Traditions and Gathering Spaces. Enablers included ideas such as a creating a cross-stakeholders event planning team, and encouraging all managers to support event participation.

**STUDENTS:** Ideas to consider included creating a digital newspaper, creating more opportunities for student voice, providing better communication about events, rebranding Family Weekend as Homecoming and diversifying use of spaces to give students access to common areas/buildings for faith-based, social, professional and educational events.

**Community Conversation Focus Area | THRIVING**

The group reviewing THRIVING synthesized this statement from the data: “Champlain College intentionally cultivates a ‘Culture of Thriving’ that fosters mutual respect, empowerment, and continuous investment in vision, values and members. Our community intentionally promotes learning, growth, communication, relationship-building and fun. While remaining vibrant and creative, we also consciously evaluate our pace, pay attention to our communications and work to ensure that all members of the community feel supported and engaged. In a thriving culture, Champalainers feel valued and respected, empowered, supported, resilient and able to enthusiastically engage with what’s ahead of them at Champlain and beyond.”

The group reviewing THRIVING identified three directions focused primarily on faculty and staff, with student-focused initiatives captured in the Thriving Students Foundation section below:
“We say our pronouns when introducing each other.”

“They [Champlain College Online] are distinct by truly having a key focus on students, where instructors, advisors, and deans work together to ensure the success of their students. I don’t see that collaborative process often in colleges.”

**CULTURE:** The concept of institutional culture as a crucial component of a thriving environment came through clearly in the accumulated feedback. “Culture is the underlying foundation for all that we do.” Descriptors of a thriving culture at Champlain spoke to communication, connectedness, collaboration, equity, respect, support and trust.

**COMMUNICATION:** Transparency and communication emerged as key components to a thriving culture. Feedback included the need to share “The Why,” even if it is not good news. Deep and engaged listening was viewed as important.

**SUSTAINABILITY OF EFFORT:** The group considered how we value the drive and creativity that is part of Champlain’s essential nature while at the same time feeling exhausted, overstretched and under-resourced. Feedback included paying attention to pace, making intentional choices, setting clear priorities and considering that when we take something up we may also need to put something down.

A variety of ideas were also identified:

**STAFF:** Ideas to consider included more staff social interaction; more collaboration and fewer silos; reinstating the Day of Service; creating a “results” culture; balancing large projects against daily jobs; supporting professional development and career growth; providing professional development funding; providing leadership development; providing Appreciative Inquiry leadership training; exploring job sharing, voluntary hours reduction and teleworking; doing a market-rate pay analysis; ensuring staff and faculty are treated equitably; improving parental leave policy; developing 360 reviews for managers; and holding a Staff Forum and brown-bag lunches with the President.

**FACULTY:** Ideas to consider included providing space, time and resources to allow faculty to spend time on priorities; supporting faculty/student research initiatives; clarifying workloads to address inequities; considering an alternative calendar; providing professional development regarding student emotional issues (perhaps in conjunction with Green Mountain Higher Education Consortium); providing professional development for working successfully with neurodiversity; and using the classroom as a diversity training environment where students expect the classroom to be a place where challenging conversations happen.

**Community Conversation Focus Area | POSITIVE ORGANIZATION**

The reviewers identified that POSITIVE ORGANIZATION is seen as an overarching focus area that will encompass other focus areas that ladder up to it. The data pointed to the strategic planning process as a series of concentric circles with positive organization as the outer ring. Positive Organization was broken into three topics: (1) Enhancing a Positive Organization, (2) Communication/Marketing and (3) Sustainability.

Under **Enhancing a Positive Organization**, the group identified five directions for the strategic planning process:

- Create and socialize a shared knowledge and common understanding of positive organization for community
- Promote a cohesive culture that works across institutional boundaries, is inclusive of all, and breaks down barriers
- Ensure that the College makes investments in ways that enable all community members to feel valued and supported
- Foster a culture of trust so that people feel comfortable speaking up/out and have the courage to have difficult discussions
- Create an environment in which every student and every community member feels they belong and has an equitable voice in governance.
“The Career Collaborative does everything to help set you up with an internship and career. First and second year students should meet with them and develop a better understanding of how they can help you.”

“Champlain offers a lot of Service Learning opportunities. We have solid partnerships in the community.”

For **Communications/Marketing**, the data is suggesting that the college builds a comprehensive and intentional communication strategy that allows for all audiences, means of communication, and content area of communication. Overarching themes of creating a culture of consistency, transparency, trust and relationship-building that is achieved through timely and effective communication strategies is prevalent throughout the data. An enabler mentioned in achieving this goal was to do an audit of our current communications, the effectiveness of those communications and perhaps a survey of how people might like to see communications enhanced for the future.

For **Sustainability**, themes of environmental, economic and social sustainability rose to the top.

**STRATEGIC PLAN FOUNDATION:**

**Academic & Professional Purpose**

**Community Conversation Focus Area | ACADEMICS**

The group reviewing ACADEMICS developed the overarching statement: “Champlain College students pursue and integrate knowledge through applied learning experiences to innovate within and across fields. We engage inclusively to make connections across the College, impact communities, change industries, and champion relevance.”

After reviewing the data, the group divided the very large ACADEMICS focus area into seven directions for the strategic planning process to consider:

**ACADEMIC INTEGRATION:** The Academic Integration data included key directions for the College to move toward, including integrating the Core experience with professional programs for more relevant connections for students; an increase in applied learning opportunities for students; re-considering the term divisions; and providing more integration between our residential campus and Champlain College Online. A key element of Academic Innovation was the identified need for an institutional brand audit to find existing synergies, niches and gaps before we innovate further.

**CURRICULAR INNOVATION:** The data regarding Curricular Innovation challenges us to consider our infrastructure from our on campus student scheduling course matrix to our four-year, 120 credit model and our on campus academic calendar. They identified an institutional task force as an enabler to this work.

**DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION:** The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion data called for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion to be part of a whole campus culture of inclusion and critical components such as staff, faculty and student training; the hiring of more diverse faculty and staff; the utilization of the existing Diversity and Inclusion Toolkit; the development of assessment methods; and education on Diversity and Inclusion competencies.

**GLOBAL INTEGRATION:** The Global Integration statement reads: “Create a more international experience both in Burlington and through international experiences abroad to prepare students to enter a global workforce as informed and compassionate global citizens.” Several initiatives were identified for consideration including ideas such as developing more service trips; studying “within” our borders to culturally diverse areas; creating scholarships for travel assistance; engaging local international community members with students; considering Champlain College Online opportunities and contributions; and differentiating ourselves as study abroad with a professional focus.
“Right from the beginning I have been amazed at how open students are online and how helpful the administrators have been. As for support from the College, I feel like I know everyone on a first name basis. That is how friendly and helpful everyone has been.”

“At Champlain, my learning has been dynamic, innovative and applicable to my current life, both personal and at work.”

**SERVICE LEARNING & CIVIC ENGAGEMENT:** The Service Learning & Civic Engagement statement reads: “Engaged civic learning is a prioritized and integrated experience for faculty, staff and students that enhances all of the College’s focus areas.” The data provided several initiatives, such as creating a “Day of Service” each semester for the whole Burlington campus community on a day that does not compete with classes; connecting internships with service learning; and building civic engagement into the InSight Program.

**CENTERS OF EXPERIENCE IN ACADEMICS:** The Centers of Experience statement reads: “Champlain’s Centers of Experience are interdisciplinary hubs that transcend academic divisions and are focused on social good to create meaningful experiences for students, faculty and staff that differentiate Champlain from other schools.” Several ideas to consider included monthly meetings of the Center Directors to increase communication and collaboration; integrating Centers into the fabric of the student experience; considering opportunities for Champlain College Online students; and focusing on the Centers as a differentiator for Champlain.

**Community Conversation Focus Area | CAREER-FOCUS**

The group reviewing CAREER-FOCUS developed the statement: “Champlain College will prepare students for the workplace of the future through classroom learning, internships, and external experiences so they can thrive in diverse settings culturally and globally long after they graduate.”

Five directions were identified for the strategic planning process including: Developing a Professional Mindset, Character Strengths, Becoming Citizens of the World, Collaboration with Employers and External Stakeholders, and Curriculum Specific to Career Building. Enablers identified in the data include doing research focused on the workplace of the future; doing research on labor market trends; expanding internship opportunities; using a strengths inventory; offering more internships beyond Vermont; and adding more flexibility in curriculum and majors to differentiate study in on campus and online spaces. Ideas to consider included creating a Career Club, integrating on campus students more into the Champlain College Online ecosystem and creating an employer advisory board.

**STRATEGIC PLAN FOUNDATION:**

**Adaptive Infrastructure**

**Community Conversation Focus Area | ECOSYSTEMS**

The group reviewing ECOSYSTEMS developed the overarching statement: “The College will develop and continuously improve systems, policies and procedures for all stakeholders that are integrated and aligned with processes, goals and aspirations in a way that makes optimal and humane use of time, space, financial and especially human resources to best promote student learning and community thriving.”

After reviewing the data, the group divided the focus areas of ECOSYSTEMS into seven directions for the strategic planning process to consider:

**CALENDAR OF EVENTS & PROCESSES:** The reviewers identified a cross-campus calendar action group and software integration as the enablers that allow for the creation of a master calendar of scheduled events that makes the best use of people’s time, avoids conflicting events, and plans business processes efficiently and effectively.
“Examples of how we are innovating now: Upside-Down Curriculum, Travel Abroad Programs, Eco-friendly Campus.”

“Small class sizes are effective.”

ACADEMIC RESOURCES: These include calendars, scheduling and course credits. The data supports the consideration of the Academic Calendar and instructional methods and pedagogies in a way that promotes student learning while offering flexibility for students and optimizing the use of campus resources and revenue potential. Enablers include the extensive use of Canvas and the development of accelerated, hybrid and online classes for on campus students. Ideas for consideration include trimesters, a co-op model, self-paced courses, maker courses and stackable credentials.

ALIGNMENT OF POLICIES, PROCEDURES & SYSTEMS WITH GOALS & ASPIRATIONS: The data supports the review, redesign and (re-)implementation of policies and procedures through engaged stakeholder input to produce integrated, humane and effective systems that balance efficiency and empowerment and are aligned with goals and aspirations. Enablers include data governance and data dictionary, systems integration, tools that do the job and mobile-friendly user interfaces for all student processes.

EXAMINE EXISTING ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE: The data supports examining organizational structure and discrete systems to determine where silos and dis-integration inhibit or promote the institution’s innovation and growth as well as community thriving. Enablers include leadership training, integrated cross-functional stakeholder engagement, Green Mountain Higher Education Consortium transparency, steering and oversight, and using a reliable widely-used and user-friendly communication system other than email.

CREATE TIME, SPACE & TOOLS FOR COLLABORATION TO SUPPORT INNOVATION: The data supports enablers such as remote access to meetings, accessibility and a process to vet innovative ideas.

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY: The group discussed financial sustainability as its own focus area as well as an integrated component of all of the focus areas for the strategic plan.

COMMUNICATION & TRANSPARENCY: There is support from the data to include students in communications on key areas such as the financial status of the College.

STRATEGIC PLAN FOUNDATION: Thriving Students

Community Conversation Focus Area | THRIVING
This meaning-making group focused on THRIVING also identified Diversity, Equity and Inclusion as a direction for the strategic planning process to prioritize.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION: Concepts related to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion are essential to a thriving community. The data promoted the community’s desire for a more diverse student/faculty/staff community; enhanced support for students of color, those with accessibility needs and other diverse populations; clear and broad messaging on how to access resources; and efforts to connect broad social issues, such as diversity, with what’s going on at Champlain.

Multiple ideas for consideration were identified for students:

ON CAMPUS STUDENTS: Ideas to consider included more funding for clubs; reinstating Peer Advisors; using Appreciative Advising; enhancing school spirit (e.g. dance team); more mental health support; including Diversity, Equity and Inclusion education in Core classes and majors; creating student leadership opportunities;
creating traditions for students which span faculty and staff participation; extending hours at the dining hall; avoiding random-triples in housing; and promoting well-being programs.

CHAMPLAIN COLLEGE ONLINE STUDENTS: Ideas to consider included fully integrating services for Champlain College Online students; making on campus student support services available to online students; giving a seat on SGA to an online student; establishing more cohesive business practices and processes between campus and online teams; creating opportunities for online students to study abroad; providing quicker paths to graduation; and continuing to prioritize affordability and access.

Watch for more information on how to get involved and click here to learn more.

“To be good at communicating you must also be excellent at listening.”

“As a recruiter, I’ve been personally referring all of my candidates that mention going back to school because I have loved my experience so much so far and believe in all that the school has to offer.”

“I never wonder if and when I will be registered for classes, because my adviser is always on top of things and reaches out to me first.”

“Give marginalized students time to adjust and keep their safe spaces for them.”

“Champlain is great about preparing students through internships. Classes should incorporate more professional skill development.”