

Central Elements of Our Vision for New Paltz

Our thinking has begun to crystallize around an exciting—and focused—vision of where New Paltz is headed and what it can be. All of us are engaged in the same academic enterprise, whether we share knowledge directly with students, create new knowledge ourselves, or enable others' learning and discovery. We must always keep this unity and nobility of purpose in mind. Likewise, the central elements of our vision must drive our budget and operational goals, including new investments and reallocations of effort and/or resources.

- ◆ **Continue raising the academic quality and selectivity of our students.** We shall do this while remaining a very diverse institution in terms of student ethnicity, socioeconomic status, geography, and intellectual interests.
 - ◆ **Hiring and retaining faculty who are committed to both their scholarship and teaching.** New Paltz faculty will be gifted at (and care about) their teaching. But they will also be meaningfully and consistently engaged in scholarship and creative activity that is shared with (and evaluated by) scholars and critics in the broader intellectual community. The pace and volume of such scholarly/creative activity will be more modest than is the case for faculty at a research university, but the quality will still be high.
 - ◆ **Teaching a curriculum that prepares students for their lives and careers.** New Paltz students will be taught by faculty who take teaching and learning seriously, beginning with a general education curriculum (the proper focus of one's first years at the college) designed by our faculty to impart content and build competencies grounded in the liberal arts. There will be regular dialogue among faculty about effective pedagogy, and we will use technology and provide access to information that helps teachers teach and students learn. Part of our teaching responsibility is assessing whether students are in fact learning and growing at the high levels envisioned by our curriculum.
 - ◆ **Linking student intellectual growth with faculty scholarship.** Our faculty's excitement about their own research and creative activity should inspire students, both in the classroom and in focused capstone experiences for undergraduates (e.g., joint faculty-student research; faculty-mentored student research; internships; teaching practica; student shows and recitals). Connections between undergraduate student learning and faculty scholarship will be an important part of what makes New Paltz different from community colleges, research universities and less-distinguished comprehensive and liberal arts colleges.
 - ◆ **Our residential character will reinforce our educational goals.** Most of our undergraduate students will live on campus and many faculty/staff will live in close proximity to campus. We want to offer a rich and lively co-curriculum that (a) reinforces what students learn in the classroom; (b) responds to students' interests and (c) takes full advantage of New Paltz's extraordinary geographic location. The intellectual and social life of the campus should draw substantial numbers of faculty, staff and students to events during evenings and on weekends. And we must pay more careful attention to the campus' physical appearance and maintenance, which reflect our values and affect our morale.
 - ◆ **Meeting student needs.** Faculty and staff alike must appreciate—and demonstrate through our actions and attitudes—that meeting student needs is vital to the institution's success. We must understand the services that students require to achieve their goals and our administrative processes and policies must help us provide those services.
 - ◆ **Addressing regional economic and schooling needs.** We will be a willing partner—and supplier of talent in the form of graduates and faculty expertise—to local business and industry, school districts, and social service agencies. With the exception of our MFA programs that have national reputations, meeting such regional needs will be the principal focus of our graduate programs (whose quality we also seek to enhance).
 - ◆ **Being a cultural and intellectual hub for the mid-Hudson region.** Our fine and performing arts events, athletic contests and public lectures should be magnets that draw friends and fans to the college. We will proudly proclaim our cultural and economic impact, and aim to be celebrated as a regional resource and gem.
- What a New Paltz degree should mean.** Students will graduate from New Paltz (typically within four years) with: (a) a solid and substantive liberal arts/general education core upon which their academic major and their preparation for graduate study or a career rest; (b) intellectual confidence and curiosity; (c) a sophisticated understanding of the diversity and complexity of the world in which they will live and work; (d) having worked closely with a faculty member on a capstone experience that demonstrates intellectual maturity; (e) at least one faculty mentor with whom they expect to keep in touch; and (f) a genuine appreciation as alumni that their time here has changed their lives for the better.
- Reinforcing our academic quality.** Through our faculty's research and creative activity, new knowledge will be created and a richer understanding will emerge of our world and lives. This in turn will raise both the profile and reputation of individual faculty and the stature of the college, which enhances our ability to recruit talented faculty and students.

All of this is what I meant in my inaugural address when I said: "New Paltz is poised to be an elite, highly selective public college—the site of the finest and most intellectually engaging undergraduate education in the State University of New York and a worthy rival to fine liberal arts colleges across the nation." – Steven Poskanzer, President, SUNY New Paltz *June 2005*