

# MILLS COLLEGE STRATEGIC PLAN

## 2007–08 to 2012–13

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***Mission of the College:** Mills is an independent liberal arts college for women with graduate programs for women and men. The College educates students to think critically, to communicate responsibly and effectively, to accept the challenges of their creative visions, and to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to effect positive change.*

### **BACKGROUND**

Since its founding in 1852, Mills College has been committed to providing women with access to education of the highest caliber and to empowering women to overcome the social barriers that exclude them from educational and career opportunities. In the 20th century, Mills recognized the importance of extending this access to women from diverse ethnic, racial, class, and religious backgrounds, to “resumer” women, to women with children, and to those in the first generation of their families to attend college. In the first decade of the 21st century, Mills students are more diverse than ever. They are citizens of a world that increasingly values the education and achievements of women. They seek access not only to an excellent undergraduate liberal arts program but also to graduate programs.

In May 2003, Mills adopted the *Strategic Plan for Mills for the 21st Century*, which charted a direction and set goals for the College to pursue through the close of 2007. The plan reaffirmed Mills’ dedication to undergraduate education for women and graduate programs for women and men, and endorsed the development of additional graduate programs designed for the advancement of women in positions of leadership in the community and in the professions.

The realization of the major goals of the 2003 plan was an extraordinary accomplishment. Mills is dramatically stronger in 2007 than it was four years ago. Enrollment has been stabilized, and undergraduate recruitment has achieved historic heights. New graduate programs have been established, setting the stage for further expansion of Mills’ presence in the graduate market.

## DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR 2007–08 TO 2012–13

As the 2003–07 plan neared its end, the College launched a new strategic planning process. In December 2006, President Janet L. Holmgren appointed a campus-wide strategic planning working group to draft a new five-year plan. The working group followed a streamlined process that incorporated input from constituents throughout the campus and alumnae community, the Strategic Planning Committee of the Board of Trustees, the WASC Accreditation Steering Committee, and the campus Diversity Committee. (*See the appendices for more information on this process*). The Board of Trustees discussed the draft plan at its meetings in October 2007 and February 2008 and suggested several changes. The Board endorsed the plan at its meeting in May 2008.

### VISION FOR THE STRATEGIC PLAN

In the next five years, all members of the Mills community will be guided by a shared vision:

1. *Academic Excellence and Education for Leadership*  
Enhance the excellence of Mills' undergraduate women's liberal arts college, expand its graduate and professional programs for women and men in the context of that undergraduate program, and strengthen the development of Mills students as leaders and innovators in their chosen endeavors
2. *Educational Access and Diversity*  
Enhance educational access for and retention of an excellent and diverse student body and enhance access for and retention of a diverse faculty and staff.
3. *Environmental and Fiscal Sustainability*  
Expand and maintain the College's physical environment, incorporating on-going concern for environmental sustainability, and pursue strategic goals while maintaining financial sustainability.

### INSTITUTIONAL VALUES

Underlying these strategic goals is a set of *institutional values*, principles and standards that express the character of Mills College. These interrelated values were invoked repeatedly during the planning process and shaped each goal.

1. **Academic excellence and innovation.** The Mills community holds high standards for scholarly and creative work. Academic excellence is understood as incorporating a high degree of innovation and rigor, intellectual curiosity and critical thinking, interdisciplinary and collaborative study, and thoughtful assessment of educational outcomes.

2. **Leadership and advancement of women.** Mills seeks to instill in all students, faculty, and staff the confidence to take initiative, assume responsibility, and act in an ethical manner. Mills is committed to empowering women to achieve their full potential.
3. **Social justice and diversity.** Mills supports engagement in thoughtful social change, especially change that leads toward a society that is more just and more inclusive of marginalized or underrepresented groups. Mills applies this value to the work of building a culturally respectful, diverse campus community.
4. **Wholeness and well being.** Mills values the wholeness and well being of individuals and the environment. A Mills education promotes intellectual, physical, psychological, and spiritual growth, as well as an understanding of self in relation to social and environmental contexts.

## STRATEGIC GOALS

### STRATEGIC GOAL 1: ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AND EDUCATION FOR LEADERSHIP

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Strengthen initiatives to **attract and retain excellent faculty and staff**, including maintaining competitive salaries and benefits.

Strengthen initiatives to **attract and retain excellent students**, including developing an innovative financial aid program that minimizes student debt.

Strengthen initiatives to **facilitate the development of leaders** and innovators who can use their Mills education to create change.

#### Objectives

1. Continue to commit to the fundamental principles of liberal arts education: Strengthen general education, support academic excellence in the disciplines by initiating new assessment tools, enhance programs for faculty development in scholarship and pedagogy, and support departmental initiatives.
2. Provide enhanced opportunities for learning outside of the classroom. Create a learning community that offers opportunities for growth both personally and professionally.
3. Create new relationships between undergraduate and graduate programs to emphasize lifelong learning and the connection between liberal arts education and the professions.
4. Build on Mills' existing culture of interactive pedagogy and enhance and support the College's focus on diverse learning styles, opportunities for

## MILLS COLLEGE

student research, and academic learning outside the conventional semester and course unit structure. Cultivate mentoring relationships.

5. Increase students' access to experiences, courses, and programs that enhance their capacity to make ethical decisions and enable them to become change agents.
6. Prepare leaders in all fields who are able to generate information and ideas from multiple disciplines. Support faculty and students in collaborating across disciplines.
7. Utilize alumnae expertise to enrich the educational experience at Mills and provide models of leadership. Strengthen the connection among alumnae and between the alumnae and the College. Increase alumnae participation in College committees, task forces, volunteer programs, and events. Engage alumnae by providing them with substantive information on current Mills students and College initiatives and by offering programs and events that appeal to a broad spectrum of graduates.
8. Strengthen connections to the community by drawing on the experience and expertise of community leaders and diverse community groups to help educate Mills students for leadership. Provide opportunities for community/student interaction.
9. Create an endowment to enable Mills to institute a loan-reduction program.
10. Identify areas important to the next-generation workforce—including benefits such as flex-time and telecommuting—to determine how to attract and retain employees. Identify cultural barriers at Mills that would need to be surmounted in implementing these benefits.

### **STRATEGIC GOAL 2: EDUCATIONAL ACCESS AND DIVERSITY**

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Enhance educational access for and retention of an excellent and diverse student body and a diverse faculty and staff.

#### **Objectives**

1. Strengthen Mills' leadership role in recruiting diverse undergraduate and graduate student populations while meeting target enrollment goals of 1,000 and 550, respectively, by 2013.
2. Develop outreach programs to educate first-generation students and their families on financial aid, branching out from Oakland to other areas with concentrations of traditionally underrepresented and underserved students, as well as "struggling" middle-class students.

## MILLS COLLEGE

3. Support diverse student populations with admission, financial aid, academic, and co-curricular programs that increase student retention and persistent rates.
4. Continue to focus recruitment strategies on attracting a diverse faculty and staff that embrace traditionally underrepresented groups. Provide appropriate role models for students, and enhance retention of this workforce through mentoring programs, multicultural sensitivity training, and community building activities.
5. Collect and disseminate baseline statistics. Articulate goals and chart institutional progress for students, faculty, and staff.

### **STRATEGIC GOAL 3: ENVIRONMENTAL AND FISCAL SUSTAINABILITY**

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Position Mills as a campus that renews and expands its physical and technological resources using sustainable technology. Maintain fiscal sustainability.

#### **Objectives**

1. Provide an outstanding accessible campus environment to support Mills' educational mission, and incorporate sustainable guiding principles in campus planning, building, and operations.
  2. Provide the academic and administrative technology needed to assure 24/7 access to resources and services that support the institutional needs of the College and the research needs of students and faculty. Create a technology endowment to enable the campus to achieve and maintain a solid and forward-looking technology position.
  3. Create a process for submission of funding requests for capital projects and establish criteria for the College Budget Committee to use in evaluating requests. Establish criteria and processes for the College to determine the priority and/or advisability of major facilities projects. Engage the campus community in ongoing dialogue regarding facilities projects. Fund deferred maintenance at two percent of the operating budget annually.
  4. Continue the College's commitment to financial sustainability by achieving balanced budgets, decreasing reliance on the quasi-endowment, and adhering to the endowment pay-out structure.
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## APPENDIX A

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### DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR 2007–08 to 2012–13

In December 2006, President Janet L. Holmgren appointed a campus-wide strategic planning working group consisting of representatives from the faculty, staff, students and administration (*see Appendix B*). The working group was charged with:

- identifying key goals as priorities for implementation in 2007–12
- developing implementation strategies and indicators of success to track accomplishment of the key goals and identifying the costs associated with each goal
- responding to accreditation standards identified by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC)
- infusing diversity objectives throughout the plan.

The working group followed an internally-facilitated process that incorporated input from the Strategic Planning Committee of the Board of Trustees, the WASC Accreditation Steering Committee, and the Diversity Committee. Members of the working group initially divided into five subcommittees, each charged with addressing strategic issues in one of five interconnected priority areas: academic development, student experience, faculty and staff, facilities and technology, and finance.

In spring 2007, each of the five initial subcommittees conducted a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis for its area, drawing input from diverse constituencies within the campus community through surveys and focus groups. Finally, each subcommittee submitted a report identifying goals and implementation strategies that was incorporated into an initial draft of a strategic plan in summer 2007. This draft plan was presented to the Board of Trustees in fall 2007. In response to feedback from Trustees and alumnae representatives, the plan was significantly streamlined. A revised plan was presented to the board in February 2008.

During the planning process, the campus-wide working group carried out:

- 12 meetings of the entire working group
- an extensive online student survey that elicited 302 responses regarding student priorities and ideas for the future of the College
- focus groups with student organizations and staff
- two all-staff meetings and one brown-bag lunch that focused on the planning process
- a faculty dinner and faculty discussions during two academic division meetings to address strategic planning issues
- a luncheon co-sponsored by the Diversity Committee to ensure that diversity concerns were infused throughout the areas addressed by the subcommittees; nearly 60 individuals, mostly students, attended this luncheon.

## MILLS COLLEGE

Throughout the process, the working group's meeting minutes, discussion materials, and reports were posted on a website ([http://www.mills.edu/strategic\\_planning](http://www.mills.edu/strategic_planning)) accessible to the campus community. The Strategic Planning Committee of the Board played an integral role in guiding the development of the plan including the work of the Campus-Wide Strategic Planning Working Group. The Strategic Planning Committee of the Board also reviewed, finalized, and submitted the plan to the full Board of Trustees for endorsement.

**APPENDIX B**

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**THE STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES, 2007-08**

Lorry Lokey, Chair  
Myra Strober, Vice Chair  
Earl Cheit  
Joan Danforth  
Thomas Ehrlich  
Jill Fabricant  
Jim Fowler  
Nan Gefen  
Merrill Kasper  
Alexandra Moses  
Susan Penrod  
Cissie Swig  
Toni Renee Vierra  
Vivian Stephenson, Ex-officio  
Janet L. Holmgren, Ex-officio  
*Staff: Ramon Torrecilha*

**THE STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES, 2006-07**

Lorry Lokey, Chair  
Myra Strober, Vice Chair  
Earl Cheit  
Joan Danforth  
Thomas Ehrlich  
Jill Fabricant  
Marc Fairman  
Jim Fowler  
Nan Gefen  
Merrill Kasper  
Alexandra Moses  
Thoraya Obaid  
Susan Penrod  
Cissie Swig  
Toni Renee Vierra  
Vivian Stephenson, Ex-officio  
Janet L. Holmgren, Ex-officio  
*Staff: Ramon Torrecilha*



**COMPOSITION OF THE CAMPUS-WIDE STRATEGIC PLANNING WORKING GROUP**

**Staff**

Ramon S. Torrecilha, Executive Vice President  
Dawn Cunningham, Director of Development and Alumnae Communications  
Gayle Hall, Executive Assistant and Office Manager

**Working Group Members**

Themy-Jo Adachi, Director of Athletics  
Giulietta Aquino, Dean of Undergraduate Admissions  
Joan Braun, Acting Vice President for Finance, Administration, and Treasurer  
*(resigned fall 2007)*  
Christopher Brown, Professor of Music  
Elizabeth Bachen, Associate Professor of Psychology  
Delaine Eastin, Senior Advisor to the President for External Affairs and Director of  
the Center for Civic Engagement and Women's Leadership (CCEWL)  
David Gin, Associate Vice President for Student Finance and Administrative Services  
Lilian Gonzalez, Student  
Bertram Gordon, Professor of History  
Tom Hannen, Interim VP for Finance and Administration, and Treasurer *(began fall  
2007)*  
Renee Jadushlever, Vice President of Operations  
Joseph Kahne, Dean of the School of Education  
David Keeports, Professor of Chemistry and Physics  
Alice Knudsen, Director of Institutional Research, Planning, & Academic Assessment  
Fred Lawson, Professor of Government  
Karen Maggio, Associate Vice President of Campus Planning and Facilities  
Virginia Rivera, Vice President for Development  
Katie Rogers, Student  
Cynthia Scheinberg, Dean of Graduate Literary Studies and Chair of the English  
Department  
Judith Silva, Assistant Vice President of Marketing  
Marianne Sheldon, Secretary to the Board of Trustees, Professor of History, and Mills  
Accreditation Liaison Officer to WASC  
Julia Sudbury, Professor of Ethnic Studies  
Nancy Thornborrow, Dean of the School of Business  
Courtney Young-Law, Director of Student Activities  
Andy Workman, Vice Provost

**Subcommittee Co-chairs**

**MILLS COLLEGE**

*Academic Development:*

Cynthia Scheinberg, Dean of Graduate Literary Studies and Chair of the English  
Department  
Andy Workman, Vice Provost

*Student Experience:*

Themy-Jo Adachi, Director of Athletics  
Courtney Young-Law, Director of Student Activities

*Faculty and Staff:*

Bertram Gordon, Professor of History  
Judith Silva, Assistant Vice President of Marketing

*Facilities and Technology:*

Renee Jadushlever, Vice President of Operations  
Karen Maggio, Associate Vice President of Campus Planning and Facilities

*Finance:*

Joan Braun, Acting Vice President for Finance, Administration, and Treasurer  
David Gin, Associate Vice President for Student Finance and Administrative Services