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# Criterion One

*Cottey College has clear and publicly stated purposes consistent with its mission and appropriate to an institution of higher education.*

The mission of Cottey College is to "educate women in the arts and sciences to prepare them for transfer to programs beyond the associate's degree by enhancing their intellectual ability, their store of knowledge, and their personal skills and thereby their capacity for contribution to society and their chosen ends." Chapter 4 examines Cottey's mission and purposes in relation to Criterion One.

## Mission and Goals

Although articulated in various ways since its founding in 1884, commitment to the essential element of the mission of Cottey College--to educate women--remains firm.

In 1996, while reviewing the 1993 North Central Association visiting team report, the Campuswide Planning Committee, a representative campus committee dedicated to planning, determined that the goals accompanying the mission were problematic for assessment. This prompted further discussion involving the entire campus community that ultimately led to a revision of the mission and goals. The effort began in August 1997 prior to the beginning of the academic year, when faculty and selected staff and students met to discuss and record their responses to eight questions. The Cottey College Board of Trustees participated in a similar activity in late August 1997 with selected faculty and staff. (See Appendix 4-A for a list of participants and the list of questions for both activities.)

In October 1997, the President appointed three committees, composed of faculty, staff, students, and alumnae, to revise the mission and goals statement using information collected from the August 1997 efforts. Each committee was responsible for a different phase of the project. The Mission and Goals Task Force proposed a structural framework for expressing the College's goals by identifying the types of goals needed. The Mission and Goals Concept Committee defined and articulated appropriate goals. The Mission and Goals Drafting and Assessment Committee completed the final

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draft of the revised mission and goals statement. (See Appendix 4-B for a list of task force and committee membership.) The revised mission and goals statement received the approval of both the faculty and the Cottey College Board of Trustees in 1998. It reads as follows:

Cottey College will educate qualified women in the arts and sciences to prepare them for transfer to programs beyond the associate's degree by enhancing their intellectual ability, their store of knowledge, their personal skills, and thereby their capacity for contribution to society and their chosen ends.

To achieve its mission Cottey College commits its human, financial, and physical resources to the following goals:

To enhance their intellectual ability, students will develop their capacity to:

- Process and use information and ideas logically, critically, and perceptively
- Synthesize information and ideas
- Recognize the connections among fields of knowledge
- Express themselves creatively in intellectual or aesthetic endeavors
- Use quantitative reasoning and analysis
- Communicate clearly and effectively in English

To enhance their store of knowledge, they will study:

- Literature and the fine arts
- The history of civilizations, ideas, beliefs, and values
- Human behavior and social interactions
- The natural sciences and scientific progress
- Ethical and social issues
- The international and intercultural character of the global society

To enhance their personal skills, they will:

- Participate in programs contributing to physical fitness and personal health
- Experience growth in essential technological expertise
- Participate in opportunities for leadership development and for

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- active involvement in issues important to them
  - Live, work, and study in a nationally and internationally diverse residential environment

The new mission and goals statement differs in several ways from the old one. The new statement is longer and more specific about the College's purposes. The old statement describes the institution ("small, private nonsectarian two-year college for women"); the new one does not. The old mission had no specific language tied to goals; the new one identifies three broad areas in which students will enhance their skills and abilities.

The previous statement included six goals: promoting learning, fostering excellent teaching; cultivating an appropriate atmosphere for learning; encouraging diversity; promoting women's leadership; and enhancing the lives of everyone in the College community. While the previous statements were less focused on student learning, as a whole, they defined institutional values. The current goals statement covers 16 concepts, classified under three broad areas. The overarching statements express Cottey's aspirations for student progress in three areas--intellectual ability, content knowledge, and personal skills--all of which are consistent with the mission and the values of higher education.

The College chose to recast its goals to make them appropriate for assessing student academic achievement. The self-study process and assessment activities have revealed that while the new statements focus on what a student should acquire at Cottey, they are very specific. The careful consideration of the mission and goals brought about by the self-study process also raised the concern that 16 is too many goals. This does not seem to be a widespread concern, but it does present an issue to be considered in the future. Both the explicit nature of the goals and the number complicate the assessment of student academic achievement.

The mission and goals statement is the guiding force at Cottey. Two items from the PACE survey provide evidence that Cottey's mission guides its

programs and services. The following table summarizes the mean response of faculty and staff to two statements related to Cottey's mission and goals statement on the PACE institutional climate survey. (A five-point scale was used and Cottey's overall mean was 3.72.)

**Table 4.1 - Items Related to Mission**

<b>PACE Survey Item</b>	<b>Admin.</b>	<b>Admin. Support</b>	<b>Faculty</b>	<b>Technical/ Operations</b>
1. The extent to which the actions of this institution reflect its mission	4.5	4.24	4.29	4.17
52. The extent to which students' competencies are enhanced	4.42	4.16	4.36	3.82

The goals focus on the development of the student. The Lawlor Group, a marketing research, planning, and communications firm, identified Cottey's institutional focus as a strength in the Situation Analysis prepared after two visits to the College in spring 2002. The Lawlor Group used personal interviews with faculty, staff, and students to gather information about institutional focus. The report says, in part, "Cottey is focused on educating women...the College is focused on providing young women with a two-year experience that provides them with the intellectual tools...to pursue a greater breadth of educational and life choices." (A copy of the Situation Analysis is available in the Resource Room.)

### **Institutional Goals**

Cottey operates under a system of shared governance, and the statement of goals provides a framework for making decisions. The Campuswide Planning Committee is charged with regularly reviewing the College's goals and developing plans to carry them out. It is a representative committee including the President, the administrative council, the division chairs, student leaders, and the directors of the library, public information, physical plant, and food service.

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The publicly stated goals accompanying the mission served as the guide in developing the current strategic planning document, 2000 Strategic Plan. Cottey's long- and short-range institutional and educational goals are found in the plan, which outlines seven themes that express the College's aspirations--excellence, women's education, liberal arts and sciences, residential experience, diversity, transfer, and national and international reputation. There are also 12 long-term goals that provide a framework for selected recommendations and detailed strategies and action items (short-term goals) that will guide the College in its continuing effort to accomplish the mission and goals. The 2000 Strategic Plan is discussed further in Chapter 14.

### **Understanding of Mission and Purposes**

A survey of Cottey's internal and external constituencies--faculty, staff (professional as well as support), students, trustees, the executive officers of the P.E.O. Sisterhood, and a sample of P.E.O.s and alumnae--shows that Cottey's purposes are clearly understood. (See Appendix 1-F for a copy of the survey and Appendix 4-C for a summary of the responses by constituencies.) Since each group had a different number of respondents, the percentage of each group that chose the response "Clearly Understand: the meaning of this statement is very clear to me" is shown in the table on the following page.

**Table 4.2 - Understanding of the Mission and Goals**

Understanding the College Goals Survey Item	Percentage of College's Constituencies That "Clearly Understand" the Mission and Goals Statements						
	Trustees/ Officers	Faculty	Admin.	1st-Yr. Students	2nd-Yr. Students	P.E.O.s	Alums
Mission	100%	88%	79%	92%	88%	90%	91%
Process and use information and ideas logically, critically, and perceptively	100%	79%	75%	82%	86%	88%	91%
Synthesize information and ideas	66%	68%	52%	56%	66%	53%	68%
Recognize the connections among fields of knowledge	100%	85%	72%	79%	84%	80%	79%
Express themselves creatively in intellectual or aesthetic endeavors	100%	76%	55%	70%	75%	88%	83%
Use quantitative reasoning and analysis	91%	71%	62%	67%	71%	72%	79%
Communicate clearly and effectively in English	100%	91%	93%	92%	95%	97%	98%
Literature and the fine arts	100%	91%	81%	90%	93%	99%	100%
The history of civilizations, ideas, beliefs, and values	100%	88%	87%	86%	87%	92%	96%
Human behavior and social interaction	100%	88%	87%	86%	90%	92%	100%
The natural sciences and scientific progress	91%	85%	84%	80%	80%	86%	96%
Ethical and social issues	100%	79%	82%	79%	86%	91%	100%
The international and intercultural character of the global society	83%	59%	68%	80%	77%	84%	91%
Participate in programs contributing to physical fitness and personal health	100%	94%	91%	89%	92%	95%	98%
Experience growth in essential technological expertise	100%	74%	74%	79%	70%	78%	66%
Participate in opportunities for leadership development/active involvement in issues important to them	100%	79%	87%	87%	86%	92%	83%
Live, work, and study in a nationally and internationally diverse residential environment	91%	85%	84%	94%	94%	98%	98%

While clear understanding of the mission and goals is evident in each group, there appears to be less understanding of some goals. It is interesting

to note that in the areas where there is a decrease in clear understanding, it appears across every group, as in the goal statements "synthesize information and ideas," "use quantitative reasoning and analysis," and the "international and intercultural character of the global society." One exception to that is found in the goal "experience growth in essential technological expertise" where students and alumnae indicate less clear understanding than do the other groups surveyed. After the visit from the consultant-evaluation team, the College may want to conduct another comprehensive review of the mission and goals, and this survey provides information to begin that process.

The survey also asked respondents if the College's goals support the values of higher education, inform decision-making processes, and flow from the mission. The table below shows the percentage of each group that indicated agreement with the statements. The high rate of agreement is further evidence that the goals are a guiding force at Cottey.

**Table 4.3 - College Goals Support Values, Processes, and Mission**

Understanding the College Goals Survey Item	Percentage of College's Constituencies That "Strongly Agree" or "Agree" With the Statements						
	Trustees/ Officers	Faculty	Admin.	1st-Yr. Students	2nd-Yr. Students	P.E.O.s	Alums
I believe the College's goals support the values of higher education.	100%	97%	100%	98%	100%	100%	100%
I believe the College's goals inform decision-making at Cottey.	100%	85%	95%	95%	97%	96%	100%
I believe the College's goals flow from Cottey's mission.	100%	94%	98%	98%	98%	100%	100%

### **Freedom of Inquiry**

Cottey's policy on academic freedom is outlined in the Faculty Handbook (Section Five, I.) and in the Student Handbook (p. 63). While faculty are assured academic freedom as defined by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), the Faculty Handbook cautions them against discussing in their courses extraneous controversial matters not related

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to the subjects they are teaching. There have been no complaints or issues raised related to freedom of inquiry since the last accreditation.

### **Conclusion for Criterion One**

The self-study process provided evidence that Cottey College has clear and publicly stated purposes consistent with its mission and appropriate to the values of higher education. A recent survey indicates that there is clear understanding of the College's mission and goals by all constituencies. Cottey fulfills Criterion One and has identified the following strengths, concerns, and issues for the future.

#### **Strengths**

- The involvement of the campus community in writing the current mission and goals was extensive.
- Cottey's mission statement is widely distributed and all constituencies indicate understanding of the statements.
- Institutional focus on carrying out the mission and goals is strong.

#### **Concerns**

- The goals that accompany the mission are very specific and there may be too many.

#### **Issues for the Future**

- A comprehensive review of the mission and goals should be launched.