

Wheaton: A Place to Live, to Work, and to Grow

Student Budget Priorities,

Presented to the President's Budget Advisory Committee,

March 28, 2008

Introduction

Wheaton is a vibrant community in transformation. But as we transform, we must remember the everyday lives of students. In this document, we show how we students live today and the challenges that we face. By highlighting these issues, we hope to offer an insight into the student experience, which should serve as a guide for planning Wheaton's future.

Wheaton as a Place to Live

The Number One student concern is housing. Quality of life is suffering and students feel as if they are being taken advantage of. Therefore, Wheaton needs to take immediate action to ensure the long-term future of our living-learning community.

Living-Learning Communities

43% of first-year students live in forced triples, quads, or in lounges. This is clearly unacceptable. But what is less evident is the extent to which these housing issues affect the entire community and our Wheaton experience. Only 2 of the 10 lounges in the YMCA quad are currently free for student use. Within Meadows, the situation is the same. All lounges that can possibly be occupied are being used as residences instead of community spaces. Without them, students are deprived of that indescribable residential experience of college. In response to the housing problem, students have begun to move away from campus in greater and greater numbers. This exodus undermines Wheaton's living-learning community. Moreover, it damages our increasingly fragile campus community by removing upperclassmen, who are looked to as leaders and upholders of tradition. Looking forward, there will be a further erosion of unity as more people move off-campus to escape the poor housing conditions.

A New Residence Hall: The only solution is the construction of a new residence hall. This will improve the quality of student life, return community spaces in the dorms, enhance the college's academic mission, and bring students back to campus.

Community Spaces

Just as there are a lack of community spaces within the dorms, there are precious few spaces available elsewhere on campus. These spaces are essential in forming cross campus connections between classes that enrich the Wheaton experience. We need to renovate and reinvest in these places.

Renovating the Café: SGA is currently working with Student Life and Dining Services to renovate the Café. We ask that the college prioritize this reinvestment to transform the Café into a true community space.

Reinvesting in the Lyon's Den: The Lyon's Den is a truly unique student space on campus. And in a time when we do not have enough student spaces, a reinvestment in the Lyon's Den is good not only for the Den as an institution, but also as a demonstration of the college's commitment to the campus community.

Club Sports Field

Over 600 students — or a full third of the student body — plays on one of the ten club sports teams. And they all have to share one field. But the field is not regulation size. It is unsafe to play on — it is rocky, uneven, and there is a well in the middle of it. There are no sprinklers, so there is no grass. And without lighting, the field is useless after dark. Often, two or three teams have to share this one field so that they get practice time, and no teams can host home games. Ultimately, this is a quality of life issue, a campus community issue, and an issue that students need to see solved.

Field Renovation: There are three issues to address with the Club Sports Field: 1) resurfacing the field, 2) adding a lighting system, and 3) beginning regular maintenance. All three are expensive, and we know we will not get everything right away. But we need to start somewhere, and soon.

Dining Services

Students recognize and appreciate the improvements that have been made to Chase Square over the past year, and likewise Aramark's continuing commitment to offer more dining options. But there is still work to be done.

Dining Services Contract: With the renewal of Aramark's contract on the horizon, it is imperative that students are involved in the negotiation process. The process must be open, accessible, and dedicated to continual improvement.

Dining Facilities Improvement: The quality of the entire dining experience depends upon Wheaton's dining facilities. Aramark cannot carry the burden alone. Therefore, Wheaton needs to continue to assist them by updating and upgrading the equipment required for food preparation.

Wheaton as a Place to Work

While Wheaton excels academically, the college does not always provide students the tools to maximize those opportunities. Such high standards demand matching institutional commitment.

Technology

Wireless, Wireless, Wireless: We recognize that Wheaton has begun to address the wireless issue. But we cannot wait to enhance what has become a fundamental component of a modern education. Incoming students expect it, and our tour guides should not have to avoid talking about it. Wheaton must be wireless as soon as possible.

Online Community: Wheaton's online presence has become as important as any other piece of the institution. The Wheaton website needs to be more attractive, more functional, and easier to use. We ask that the website be made an increasingly active part of the Wheaton experience, as a learning tool and as a way to connect members of the college to the greater world. This is an opportunity for Wheaton to continue to be a leader in innovation.

Advising

Additional Staff Support: In Academic Advising, there is not sufficient staff to handle the volume of student interest in graduate and other programs beyond Wheaton. Students are guided to advisors who may be able to serve their needs, but they are often unable to receive the individual attention necessary to fully explore and take advantage of the opportunities open to them.

Commitment to Providing Test Preparation: Standardized tests are a reality for application to graduate school. The inaccessibility of adequate test preparation programs puts Wheaton students at a competitive disadvantage. Therefore, the college needs to bring test preparation programs to campus.

Electronic Portfolios: Life outside of Wheaton is complicated. It can be simplified by providing every Wheaton student with an electronic portfolio that includes all of the documents necessary for graduate school admission, job searches, and extracurricular opportunities. This service will put Wheaton students at a competitive advantage in the real world.

Wheaton as a Place to Grow

But the Wheaton experience is about more than just places or things. And it is not limited to a student's four years on campus. The Wheaton experience — and our education as globally aware citizens — lasts a lifetime. Therefore, we urge the college to give equal focus to those issues that go beyond the classroom.

Affordability

The realities of the Northeast Nine are changing. While we understand that Wheaton does not have the same financial resources as our competitors, we know that the college can — and must — get creative in addressing the long term costs of a Wheaton education. As with Project Scholarship, the college needs to find new ways to call upon the greater Wheaton community to directly invest in our students.

Financial Aid: Increasing financial is essential to the continuing life of the college. It allows us to attract the best quality students who would not otherwise be able to afford a Wheaton education. And once students graduate, it ensures that the enormous cost of their education will not prohibit them from taking full advantage of it. If we are caught under crushing loan debt, we will not be able to fully flourish, and that hindrance will undermine at least a generation of alumni's relationship with the college.

Beyond the Bubble: A Wheaton education is about more than merely major and minor requirements. It is also about learning the practical skills of life. Therefore, as students, we ask for greater institutional support for programs like "Beyond the Bubble" which help students transition from college to careers more successfully. The more effective we teach our students to be today, the stronger Wheaton's future will be tomorrow.

Sustainability

As we all know, going green is as good for Wheaton's reputation as it is for Wheaton's pocketbook. Earlier this month, Terry Metz reported to the campus that,

Based upon a trial Siemens previously ran on a subset of Wheaton's Windows computers, they estimate this effort will reduce the college's electrical consumption by over 268,000 KWHs annually. This would reduce our greenhouse emissions by 462,000 lbs annually with an energy saving of nearly \$30,000.

Wheaton needs to continue pursuing such energy-saving initiatives. They are simple and have profound effects. One simple change that students have requested is an expansion of electronic advertising on campus. As part of SGA's Café renovation proposal, we have asked that a television be placed in that space to continually display campus

announcements. This simple addition to community spaces — especially in buildings like Balfour-Hood — will greatly reduce Wheaton’s consumption of paper and other materials.

Conclusion

Investment in these issues is critical for Wheaton’s future. How we live, work, and grow today is how we will remember Wheaton tomorrow. And we hope to remember it well. Through these budget priorities, we have highlighted the issues that should serve as a roadmap for Wheaton’s continued excellence.

Sincerely,

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