

BACKGROUND - December 2025

This is a background document informing the Priorities and Promises Petition, drafted because our system of shared governance no longer transmits our voices with sufficient clarity to promote the long-term good of the College. Many of us have dedicated decades to this College, undertaking its demanding but rewarding work because we identify with its mission. The excellence of the education we deliver is the College's most important asset and the foundation of its prospects for continued success. But many faculty and employees believe that our understanding of the good of the college is no longer shared by senior leadership. While they have not abandoned its mission, they prioritize competing ends, diverting resources that could secure greater resiliency, while taking for granted without adequately supporting our dedication. We ask that you recommit the College to its core educational mission by dedicating the resources required to maintain it in challenging times. And we ask for fair compensation for all.

What we're asking for is simple:

- (A) Austerity measures enacted over the last two decades have already damaged our pedagogy, effectiveness and institutional morale. This is reflected in poor retention of matriculated students. (According to *U.S. News & World Report*, many colleges with which we compare ourselves retain roughly 95% of first year students; our rate last year was 81%, and poor retention contributes to the current crisis.) Faculty and staff receive less institutional support than at comparable institutions and do more work than they were previously asked to do. There is no room for further austerity without doing further damage, which could further depress competitiveness and retention. So we urge that no further cuts be made to the College's core educational mission. For instance, reducing guest faculty, who play essential roles in the curriculum, frustrates our students, who cannot study subjects integral to their future plans.
- (B) Resource constraints resulting from a small endowment, limited fundraising, and a sharp decline in tuition revenue have already led to cuts that threaten the College's core mission. We recognize that sustained deficit spending and depletion of unrestricted endowment funds present a genuine danger to the College, but believe that precisely in these circumstances concentrating resources on core priorities to minimize further damage is the only prudent course. While we are not hostile to new ventures, directing resources to them at this juncture betrays a lack of commitment to us and the education we deliver. We also hope that donors who have supported new initiatives, or otherwise restricted their gifts, may allow their generous gifts to be redirected at a time of genuine institutional emergency.
- (C) Two years ago, the Planning and Priorities Committee (PPC) proposed, and the Trustees adopted, an Employee Compensation Plan, to be implemented over a three-year period. We were told that the plan's modest aims, and its neglect of measures to address long-standing under-compensation, were necessary for the Trustees to adopt this as a policy that would be rapidly implemented. Instead of honoring these commitments, this year, despite inflation, an inadequate COLA has been canceled, while increases in the cost of health benefits and decreases to HSA contributions amount to a substantial compensation cut. We remember the 2008 Compensation Task Force Report, its frank

acknowledgement of a long-standing compensation crisis and pledge of prompt redress. Those recommendations were never implemented. Another failure to meet clearly expressed commitments will further damage our morale and our trust in the College's leadership, and put in question the idea that our contribution to the College is adequately valued. We therefore call for the College fully implement the Compensation Plan in the 2026-27 academic year, extend the plan to guest and affiliate faculty, and implement true annual cost of living adjustments for all at the same time. We recognize how difficult this will be in light of the genuine threat to the college from protracted deficit spending. But we ask you also to recognize that betraying the faith of dedicated employees who have already sacrificed for the good of the College for decades represents a different kind of risk that, once breached, may be irreparable.