

# Strategic Vision 2020

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GROW. DIFFERENTIATE. ADAPT



Metropolitan College of New York

In consultation with senior administrators, faculty, staff, students, and alumni  
March 2016

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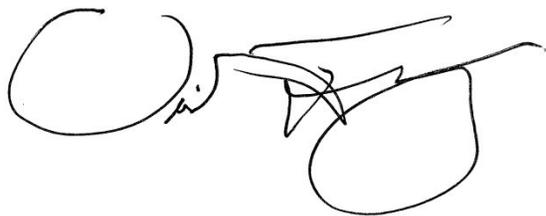
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## Message from the President

Strategic Vision 2020 comes at a pivotal time in the evolution of Metropolitan College. It outlines a vision for successful pathways for progress as the College relocates to new campuses in Manhattan and the Bronx. Every college constituency contributed directly or indirectly to its development over a two-year period, through an iterative process which planning went from the faculty and staff to the Board, back to the faculty and staff, and then back to the Board for final review and approval. It builds on the historical achievements of the College through its 50th anniversary in 2014 and projects prospects for growth, increased service to our communities, and innovative programming, as embodied in the goals set forth. With this plan we rededicate ourselves, in changing and challenging circumstances, to realizing the vision of our founder Audrey Cohen for a College that breaks with convention to educate those who most need service and will benefit most from our distinctive and effective educational programs.



Dr. Vinton Thompson, President



Audrey Cohen, Founder, in classroom – 1960's.

# Mission, Vision, Values

## Mission Statement

To provide a superior, experientially-based education that fosters personal and professional development, promotes justice, and encourages positive change in workplaces and communities.

## Vision

To be acknowledged as the college of choice for experiential learning and applied scholarship.

## Values

**Integrity:** Establishing and maintaining the highest standards

**Innovation:** Identifying and implementing creative opportunities to provide quality programs and services

**Empowerment:** Assisting ourselves and others to become more effective and

**Diversity:** Actively promoting and supporting a community of different people



“The fundamental principle of the educational system of the College is an emphasis on purpose. This Purpose-Centered System of Education is based on the premise that students learn best when they use their knowledge and skills to achieve a purpose that makes a positive difference in their lives and the lives of others.”

Audrey Cohen College System of Education: Purpose-Centered Education

## Introduction

### A strategic vision for the coming decade

During the period of the preceding strategic plan (2009-2014), Metropolitan College (MCNY) grew and stabilized enrollment, diversified the curriculum, and achieved financial stability. As a result the college has been able to undertake two major facilities projects, opening new campuses in both Downtown Manhattan and the Bronx. The new campuses are owned by the College, ending our historic vulnerability to uncertainties of commercial real estate leasing. They also present a major opportunity to establish the College firmly as a neighborhood asset in each location. At the same time the financial structure of these initiatives will subject the College to greater external scrutiny, while growing national concerns about student debt and academic outcomes will likely subject the College to greater accountability in other areas. All of this takes place against a background of upheaval in American higher education. A proliferation of alternative providers and online offerings combined with calls for “free” or “debt free” college education and a reworking of the whole system of accreditation threaten to upend long-standing assumptions, with unpredictable consequences.



In the face of these challenges and uncertainties, MCNY must do three things to put the College on solid footing for the next decade: **Grow, differentiate and adapt.**

**Grow:** The College’s current size of about 1,200 students is precarious in the long run - it needs to grow to about 1,500 students to be reasonably sustainable. Given the intensely competitive environment, new markets will be key to growth. These include new geographic markets (in the short run, the Downtown Manhattan and the Bronx), new demographic markets (for example high school students, direct immigrants, and Latinos), and diversified programming (including continued development of health-related programs and a move into Information Technology). Present markets with substantial upside potential include international students and direct marketing to agribusinesses.

**Differentiate:** The College needs to distinguish itself from other categories of institutions that serve overlapping constituencies, in part from proprietary and two-year colleges. MCNY needs to better project its genuine commitment to social justice, its unique educational philosophy, and its student-supportive non-profit culture. The College can do this by developing and publicizing programs that visibly address community needs, by repositioning itself as a neighborhood-serving institution in Downtown Manhattan and the Bronx, and by better publicizing the service MCNY students perform in the course of Constructive Actions. MCNY also needs to redouble efforts to develop academic programs that are visibly unique and distinctive.

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**Adapt:** New York City and higher education are rapidly changing. MCNY needs to adapt to the shifting demographics of the city. Immigrants in general and Latinos in particular form a much larger proportion of the city as a whole, and of economically disadvantaged residents, than they did in the formative years of the College. The demographics of the College have not evolved to reflect this change. The College has the curriculum adapted quickly enough to the changing educated workforce, in which the health professions and technology are the most rapidly growing sectors. Nationally, recent and proposed changes regarding accountability and financial aid policy threaten institutions that serve economically disadvantaged students. The College must bolster graduation/retention rates and move to moderate student debt burdens before external forces intervene to its detriment.

## The Plan

The Metropolitan College of New York Strategic Vision for 2020 is designed to meet the imperatives of growth, differentiation and adaptation. Building on a 50-year legacy of progressive, innovative education initiated by founder Audrey Cohen, it organizes College planning around five strategic goals and outcomes that will be used to measure progress towards those goals.

## The Process

This plan grew from meetings throughout fall 2014 and spring 2015 at every level and in every department of the College. Faculty, students, and alumni had opportunities to discuss and develop the priorities represented herein, followed by discussion by the Board of Trustees. It reflects a community that is deeply proud of the founding principles and methods of the College, and committed to maintaining them while addressing the challenges and opportunities of the present day. This plan is predicated on the convictions that our mission is as relevant as ever and that our goals are well within reach over the next five years.

## Fundamentals

The core vision is reflected in the philosophy and practice of Purpose-Centered Education (PCE). Courses revolve around specified performance areas to help students acquire and make use of the knowledge and skills needed to become effective professionals in their fields. The cornerstone of this unique approach to education is a process through which every student at Metropolitan College of New York conducts a Constructive Action (CA) every semester. Through the CA, students are challenged to test and apply theory related to a specific area of competence while simultaneously building interpersonal, analytic, and communication skills and organizational knowledge—usually in a workplace or community setting. The CA provides a comprehensive and integrated body of evidence for students themselves, faculty, field supervisors, and administrators to evaluate the student's growing competence. The CA is linked to Dimension Courses, which help students view that semester's purpose through the lens of self and others, systems, values and ethics, and skills.

At the conclusion of its last strategic plan in 2014, MCNY celebrated 50 years of community service and educational innovation. If it can build on the accomplishments of its first 50 years and successfully grow, differentiate and adapt, it will be well-positioned to embark on its second 50 years of service and innovation.

## STRATEGIC GOALS:



### 1. Institutional Strength

Establish financial, governance, and physical infrastructure that will allow the College to operate securely and sustainably for the foreseeable future.



### 2. Enrollment and Retention

Recruit and retain a larger and more diverse student body.



### 3. Student Success

Achieve optimal outcomes for students' personal, educational, professional and financial growth.



### 4. College-Wide Assessment

Develop and maintain a culture of assessment whereby faculty, students and staff understand the role of assessment and are engaged in its application for continuous improvement.



### 5. Enhanced Academic and Institutional Quality

Adapt the College's curricular offerings to meet changing societal needs while fostering the highest professional standards.



## Strategic Goal 1: Institutional Strength

Establish financial, governance, and physical infrastructure that will allow the College to operate securely and sustainably for the foreseeable future.

MCNY has achieved a remarkable milestone in the purchase and construction of permanent homes in Manhattan and the Bronx. The 6 West Street flagship building is particularly critical to the future of the College, allowing it to stay in Manhattan as rents rise. These new homes will contribute to MCNY's ability to achieve long-term financial sustainability. As the College moves forward in its new spaces, it needs to leverage the new facilities, and develop new strategies to recruit and retain students, in order to build enrollment and financial security. The College's programs, systems and facilities need to keep pace with an ever-changing technological environment. And the College needs to ensure that it can continue to recruit and retain talented faculty. Toward that end, the Trustees and other supporters are engaged to raise funds sufficient to relieve over-reliance on tuition and develop partnerships with agencies and organizations to establish new referral sources of students.

Expected outcomes:

1. A strong, diverse and dynamic board of directors to provide strong governance, guidance and leadership for effective fundraising, institutional partnerships, and strategic growth.
2. Established long-term financial sustainability through a combination of tuition revenue, fundraising, and new revenue streams.
3. Established full-service campuses in Manhattan and the Bronx.
4. Sustainable technology infrastructure and services provide the faculty with access to tools and training to enrich the learning environment, and the staff with real-time access to critical data to support decision making.
5. Annual positive net increase in assets before depreciation expenses.
6. Strong external partnerships for new student recruitment, grants, job placement and community improvement.
7. Increased visibility for the College and prominence as a neighborhood institution in Lower Manhattan and the South Bronx.



## Strategic Goal 2: Enrollment and Retention

Recruit and retain a larger and more diverse student body.

From its roots in the Civil Rights Movement and the War on Poverty, MCNY's core constituency has been drawn from economically disadvantaged, predominately minority communities, with women and employed adults comprising a large majority of our students. At the same time the College has also attracted men, more recent high school graduates, international students, and students from diverse backgrounds in New York City and the surrounding metropolitan area. The acquisition of two new campuses will expand the College's capacity to enroll 1,500 students. The growth of the College will depend in part on reaching more of the students it has historically attracted while exploring new demographic opportunities. Innovative marketing, creative collaborations, articulation agreements and open-ended recruitment strategies will coalesce in rising enrollment of an ever more diverse student body.

Expected outcomes:

1. Enrollment in undergraduate programs increased at the freshman level by 5% annually.
2. Latino, immigrant, veteran and international students represent a larger percentage of total enrollment, and the College continues to recruit at equal or greater levels from established constituencies.
3. MCNY has improved the speed and fluency of transfer student absorption into its PCE model.
4. Graduate student enrollment has grown; MCNY has attracted upwardly-mobile degree candidates by offering a diverse and relevant array of graduate degrees.
5. A fully implemented first-year experience retention program for all incoming students increasing retention for freshmen.
6. The College will have a one-stop enrollment model. Integrating all its departments, MCNY has established a neatly streamlined process of leading students from the very first point-of-contact with Admissions to a speedy and successful graduation.
7. The College developed and maintains institutional partnerships through which it attracts and enrolls students.
8. MCNY has clear, consistent and effective messaging across academic and marketing channels with demonstrable effect on enrollment.



## Strategic Goal 3: Student Success

*Achieve optimal outcomes for students' personal, educational, professional and financial growth.*

MCNY has always been a student-centered institution with the goal of providing access to people who have had fewer opportunities to advance through education. While a college education is more important than ever to attaining a secure financial future, resources to access higher education continue to shrink for most students and for higher education in general. The cost of college continues to climb, do the stakes for students who do not complete their education. It is incumbent upon MCNY to improve and develop new programs to ensure student success. The College will focus on special support for first year students and special attention to the financial needs of established students to increase retention and graduation rates and improve the student experience and academic outcomes.

Expected outcomes:

1. Graduation and retention rates are at levels appropriate for mission and consistent with external benchmarks.
2. Embedded academic support reaches all targeted course sections.
3. The particular needs of special groups, including transfer students, are met through targeted programming, including orientational curricular structure.
4. Student loan default rates continue to decrease.
5. Career Services has strategic partnerships and increased capacity to deliver internships, job referrals and career guidance to all students.
6. Student impacting technology that improves retention has been implemented with a sustainable plan for ongoing utilization and replacement. Students' experience of classroom technology is steadily improving.
7. Targeted financial support to help students to overcome life crises and complete their degrees is in place.
8. Alumni giving, participation, and engagement on behalf of the College achieve targeted levels.



## Strategic Goal 4: College-Wide Assessment

Develop and maintain a culture of assessment whereby faculty, students and staff understand the role of assessment and are engaged in its application for continuous improvement.

The Dimensions of Learning and Constructive Action remain as central and relevant to Purpose-Centered Education as when they were designed forty years ago. As an unconventional model of learning with direct application to the workplace, we need to ensure that our programs are up to date and remain relevant to the world of work in which our students are engaged. We have to improve our system of assessment, clarifying links between the learning objectives for students in each course, semester purpose, degree program, school and College. And, we have to engage our full time and adjunct faculty, as well as all staff, with our system of assessment so that it becomes integral to their teaching delivered program development.

Expected outcomes:

1. The Constructive Action serves as the focus and centerpiece of student assessment, supplemented by targeted assessment for general education and program-specific assessment, which in aggregate meet accreditation requirements and serve as the basis for self-evaluation, quality control and improvement.
2. Constructive Actions are gathered, analyzed, and results published on students achievements utilizing the Purpose-Centered Education model.
3. Programs and courses are evaluated for scholarly currency and the relevance and utility of learning objectives to the professional trends in the job market.
4. Non-academic areas have systematic processes in place to improve services, achieve or exceed internal goals, and to intensify College's effectiveness.
5. Degree programs are subject to scheduled review and revised to improve effectiveness and meet changing demands.



## Strategic Goal 5: Enhanced Academic & Institutional Quality

Adapt the College's curricular offerings to meet changing societal needs while fostering the highest professional standards.

MCNY began as a pioneer in teaching Human Services as a field of study. Later, the College successfully responded to market need by expanding to programs in other fields: public affairs, education, urban studies, business and emergency management. As the nature of work continues to change, with the introduction of new technologies and new methods of service delivery, our curriculum needs to adapt. MCNY must develop new programs, update existing ones and diversify methods of course delivery, within the context of Purpose-Centered Education. At the undergraduate level approximately two-thirds of our incoming students transfer from other colleges, disrupting the structured design of our programs. Changes in the nature of our student body and attendance patterns have also placed stress on the traditional cohort model. The faculty at MCNY is deeply committed to their students and to Purpose-Centered Education. As we grow and faculty members retire, the College will hire new full-time and adjunct faculty with the strongest academic and field credentials. The College will provide all faculty members with the tools necessary to develop as teachers, scholars, and practitioners.

Expected outcomes:

1. New degree programs implemented that reflect the changing economy and student demand.
2. Purpose-Centered Education applied consistently and creatively across all programs.
3. The curriculum and individual academic plans are coordinated to ensure students progress coherently through the curriculum.
4. Varied online course offerings are responsive to the needs of working students and expand enrollment beyond the limitations of physical space. Online course are benchmarked to national standards and integrated with academic and recruiting plans.
5. Faculty and staff are attracted to the College and retained with salaries and benefits that are at or above market level.
6. All faculty members and staff have increased opportunities for professional and career path development.
7. Adjunct faculty members are active participants in their academic programs and participate in the general life of the College.