

## Midyear Report, Task Force on Positioning The College of New Jersey

The Task Force on Positioning The College of New Jersey convened for its first meeting in October of 2002. The Task Force was composed of the following members:

Lisa Angeloni, Admissions Office  
David Blake, Department of English  
Cindy Friedman, College Relations, Administrative Assistant to the Task Force  
Tom Hagedorn, Department of Mathematics and Statistics  
Kevin Hickey, Student  
Richard Kroth, Department of Music  
John McCarty, School of Business, Chair of the Task Force  
Kevin McHugh, Department of Athletics  
Beth Modica, Development and Alumni Affairs  
Kim Pearson, Department of English  
Jesse Place, Student  
Jesse Rosenblum, College Relations, Convener of the Task Force

The Task Force was provided with the following charge:

*To develop an implementation plan in response to the Lipman Hearne Integrated Marketing Plan for The College of New Jersey. The Task Force should develop a “case statement for institutional premiership” (What do we mean by it? Why do we want to be seen as such? What do we do that enables us to make such a claim?). The report will consider specific recommendations included in the Lipman Hearne report, such as public relations strategies that highlight student, faculty, and staff successes, authoring a monograph on the “Transformation of Trenton State College to The College of New Jersey,” and strategies for national placement of institutional spokesmen in defining our model of higher education.*

The group met numerous times during the fall semester. The initial meetings were devoted to broadly discussing the marketing approach presented in the Integrated Marketing Plan prepared by Lipman Hearne, Inc. Joselyn Zivan of Lipman Hearne attended the second meeting of the Task Force to answer questions and clarify parts of the report. Later meetings of the semester were devoted to developing a positioning platform, preparing the case statement, and considering each of the strategies of the Lipman Hearne report.

The Task Force has developed a positioning platform and rationale (attached) and prepared a case statement (attached). It has also considered each of the strategies discussed in the Lipman Hearne report and has made recommendations for most of them. (Action on a few of the strategies has been tabled until the spring). This report presents the Task Force's recommendations and suggestions and/or status with respect to each of these strategies.

In general, the Task Force endorses the marketing approach that is recommended by the Lipman Hearne report. The Task Force suggests a positioning platform that is generally consistent with the Lipman Hearne report, with some significant modifications. Most of the marketing strategies of the report have been endorsed by the Task Force with the suggestion that the appropriate administrative areas begin implementing them.

The Task Force will hold a series of open forums in the spring so that different stakeholders (e.g., faculty, students) can provide their reactions to this preliminary report.

**TASK FORCE'S RECOMMENDATIONS AND/OR STATUS OF THE STRATEGIES  
PRESENTED IN THE LIPMAN HEARNE INTEGRATED MARKETING PLAN**

**OBJECTIVE ONE:     **ARTICULATE AND COMMUNICATE THE COLLEGE OF  
NEW JERSEY'S DISTINCTIVE CHARACTER AND OFFER****

**Strategy 1:   Develop a positioning platform**

The Task Force agrees with the recommendation of the Lipman Hearne Report that The College of New Jersey should develop a positioning platform. As the report notes, every institution has a position in the minds of stakeholders, whether or not a positioning platform is developed. Without a clearly articulated positioning platform, however, the position in the minds of stakeholders may be amorphous, vague, and inconsistent. Developing a positioning platform will allow the college to influence the perceptions of stakeholders in a manner that is consistent with the position that the college would like to hold and has the capability of holding.

**Strategy 2:   Adopt the positioning platform**

The Task Force recommends that we adopt the following positioning platform:

*The College of New Jersey positions itself as a highly selective and unique public undergraduate college. It provides a transformative educational experience with the intensive faculty-student collaboration and inviting campus environment associated with the most prestigious private colleges.*

This platform is generally consistent with the thinking of Lipman Hearne with one notable exception. Lipman Hearne recommended that the College position itself as a public honors college. The Task Force members felt that we should not limit the College to this or any specific category. A set of related reasons led us to conclude that the College should emphasize its uniqueness among both public and private institutions:

- §   The College of New Jersey is an exceptionally unique institution and does not fit neatly into one particular category
- §   The terms used to categorize institutions of higher education are generally too broad. For example, terms such as comprehensive institution, regional institution, and masters institutions are all applicable to The College of New Jersey; however,

The College of New Jersey also shares traits in common with liberal arts institutions.

- § The categories of “Public Ivy” and “Public Honors College” are often used too informally and inconsistently. The term “Public Ivy” has been informally applied to a variety of institutions, some of which are very different from The College of New Jersey (and very different from the Ivy League universities). After a good deal of research and discussion, the Task Force concluded that the term Public Ivy is often used by schools that are aspiring to be something that they are not.

The term “Public Honors College” does not have a clear and consistent meaning. In some cases (e.g., St. Mary’s College of Maryland, New College of Florida) the state has designated a particular college as the Honors College for the state. In other cases, institutions have decreed themselves as being a Public Honors College. As noted in the Lipman Hearne report, the term “honors college” is sometimes used to refer to a college within a large diversified state university.

- § The set of schools with which we are aligned differs according to context. As a publicly funded undergraduate institution, the College is similar to Truman State University in Missouri and the University of Minnesota - Morris. If our goal is to attain a higher national profile, however, there is clearly little advantage in explicitly aligning ourselves with such schools. The College’s aspirational set includes a broad variety of institutions such as the College of William and Mary, the University of Richmond, etc. The College, moreover, competes for students with such schools as Boston College, NYU, and Villanova. Some of these schools are regional, some are research universities, some are liberal arts colleges. For these reasons, the College should promote its unique brand of excellence rather than limit itself to the category recommended by Lipman Hearne.

### **Strategy 3: Develop and disseminate a “Communications Guide”**

The Task Force endorses the Lipman Hearne recommendation that a communications guide be developed to ensure that the positioning is communicated in a consistent manner. This is critical to the successful implementation of the positioning platform. The Task Force recommends that such a guide should be implemented by the appropriate administrative office of the college.

**Strategy 4: Adopt name conventions that eliminate formal use of the “TCNJ” acronym**

The Task Force concurs with the following naming convention prepared by the Office of College Relations:

*The use of "The College of New Jersey" on first reference is preferred. Use of "The College of New Jersey" or "TCNJ" or "the College" (not "the college," lower case) is recommended on second and subsequent references. If "TCNJ" is used on first reference, "The College of New Jersey" should be used on the second reference. Periods between the letters TCNJ should not be used. "TCNJ" should not be used without prior reference or second reference to "The College of New Jersey." Other shortened forms of the name such as "CNJ" should not be used.*

**Strategy 5: Promote the College’s membership in the “public honors college” category**

The Task Force members disagreed with the Lipman Hearne recommendation that The College of New Jersey explicitly promote itself as a public honors college. The members felt that there is not a clarity of meaning of this category at present. Furthermore, in some states, such as Maryland, a specific school is designated as the public honors college of the state by the state college and university system.

The Task Force consequently recommends that the College promote its exceptional contribution to undergraduate education. The quality of an undergraduate institution should be independent of the public/private category.

**Strategy 6: Create an effective new visual identity**

The Task Force recognized the importance of a visual identity to a successful positioning. It endorses the Lipman Hearne recommendation that a new visual identity be developed and this identity should be consistent with and express the positioning platform. The Task Force acknowledges that its implementation is underway.

**Strategy 7: Develop visual identity guidelines and applications**

The Task Force endorses the recommendation of Lipman Hearne to develop guidelines with respect to a visual identity program and acknowledges that its implementation is underway.

**Strategy 8: Incorporate the new positioning and graphic identity into the College Web site**

The Task Force endorses this recommendation. It is important that the positioning is communicated consistently in all college communications; a web site is an important communication device for the institution, therefore, the web site should communicate the positioning and have a visual identity consistent with the new visual identity that should be developed.

**Strategy 9: Redesign *The College of New Jersey Magazine* and commit to a consistent publication schedule**

The Task Force endorses this strategy and recommends that the appropriate administrative areas begin implementation.

**Strategy 10: Enlist the help of the College community in marshaling evidence in support of the new positioning to be used in developing materials, issuing press releases, and creating other communications**

The Task Force recognizes that the ultimate success of a consistent positioning for the college will require the support of the entire college community. Therefore, the Task Force endorses this strategy and will be discussing ways of enlisting college community participation.

**Strategy 11: Cease producing and selling “Trenton State College” merchandise**

The Task Force endorses this strategy and recommends that the appropriate administrative areas take action. The Task Force endorses a plan to phase out the availability of “Trenton State College” merchandise and should now begin diminishing the variety of products available.

**Strategy 12: Introduce the brand system on campus**

The Task Force endorses this strategy recommendation. The Task Force recognizes that a college-wide acceptance of the positioning platform is extremely important to the success of the endeavor. The Task Force will consider internal branding activities in during the spring meetings.

**Strategy 13: Develop a case for giving around the positioning goal**

The Task Force tabled this strategy for discussion during the spring semester.

**OBJECTIVE TWO: DEVELOP INTERNAL CONSENSUS AROUND HOW THE COLLEGE WILL ACHIEVE THE ROLE OF THE NATION’S PREMIER PUBLIC UNDERGRADUATE INSTITUTION****Strategy 14: Refine and concretize current strategic planning initiatives in light of the goal of “premier public undergraduate institution”**

The Task Force endorses this strategy and acknowledges that its implementation is underway and recommends that the appropriate administrative areas continue the implementation.

In particular, current curriculum changes that are underway and will be implemented in the next year are consistent with this strategy.

**Strategy 15: Establish institution-wide and department-specific goals, benchmarks, and measures for success that will guide the College toward achieving the “premier” position**

The Task Force endorses this strategy and acknowledges that its implementation is underway and recommends that the appropriate administrative areas continue implementation.

**Strategy 16: Eliminate the honors program**

The Lipman Hearne report recommended that the College eliminate its Honors Program on the basis that it seemed to contradict the highly- competitive nature of the institution. "In focus groups conducted for The College of New Jersey," the report reads, "prospective student participants spoke at length about this contradiction and the skepticism it would inspire in them as they consider colleges." In short, every student at The College of New Jersey should be regarded as an honors student. Lipman Hearne recommended that in place of the current program the College should develop performance-based honors in majors and concentrations. Such an approach would create a more meaningful system of academic recognition and eliminate the contradictory message the current program creates.

The Task Force understands the magnitude of this decision and appreciates its many academic ramifications. At the same time, we are keenly aware of the serious marketing problems created by the College's Honors Program. According to the admissions office, in recent years, the Honors Program may have been detrimental to the student recruitment efforts. The academic qualifications of average first year students enrolling at the College far surpass the qualifications of those students initially admitted to the program. The Task Force hopes that the administration will address this important issue in the near future.

**OBJECTIVE THREE: RESPOND TO NATIONAL INTERESTS IN PUBLIC UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION, PUTTING FORTH THE COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY AS THE MODEL TO EMULATE**

**Strategy 17: Position President Barbara Gitenstein as a leader in defining the new model of public undergraduate education**

The Task Force endorses this strategy and recommends that it be implemented as soon as feasible. The definition of the new model of public undergraduate education should incorporate the curriculum changes that are currently occurring on campus.

**Strategy 18: Conduct a national op-ed campaign to challenge all fifty states to establish a public honors institution on “The College of New Jersey” model**

The Task Force endorses the strategy of conducting a national op-ed campaign to challenge all fifty states to establish public institutions dedicated to providing a truly outstanding undergraduate education. We recommend that the appropriate administrative areas address this as soon as possible.

**Strategy 19: Host a symposium on campus for public honors college leaders**

The Task Force endorses the idea of hosting a symposium on campus, but recommends that the subject matter and the potential participating institutions be explored further. The Task Force suggests that a symposium drawing leaders from the highest quality public and private undergraduate institutions would be more consistent with the positioning platform it has recommended. It would ultimately be more advantageous not to make a distinction between public and private institutions in planning a symposium which should be of value to leaders of the best private and public colleges.

**Strategy 20: Develop a monograph on “The College of New Jersey Transformation”**

The Task Force concurs with this recommendation and is in the process of developing a monograph.

**Strategy 21: Re-orient and focus the College's media outreach activities to support the public honors positioning**

The Task Force recommends that the appropriate administrative areas develop outreach activities that will support the positioning recommended by the Task Force once it is approved.

**OBJECTIVE FOUR: CONTINUE TO ENHANCE THE COLLEGE'S STUDENT BODY PROFILE**

The Task Force felt that the strategies of Objective Four (strategies 22 to 29) should be initially considered by the Office of Admissions.

**OBJECTIVE FIVE: ENHANCE ALUMNI RELATIONS TO INCREASE AFFILIATION AND AMBASSADORSHIP**

The Task Force endorses these strategies and felt that the Office of Development and Alumni should consider implementing these as soon as feasible.

## Positioning Statement and Rationale

### Statement

*The College of New Jersey positions itself as a highly selective and unique public undergraduate college. It provides a transformative educational experience with the intensive faculty-student collaboration and inviting campus environment associated with the most prestigious private colleges.*

### Rationale

- Why “unique?” Trying to define TCNJ’s market position inevitably produces lots of comparisons. A survey of terms ranging from “public ivy” to “public honors college” quickly leads to the realization that no single category adequately explains the institution. Rather than force TCNJ into a restrictive category, the college should promote its singularity, its unique brand of excellence.
- Why “transformative educational experience?” What differentiates TCNJ from nearly all of its public peers is the care and attention it gives to undergraduate education. Graduates of the college find that their experience here has substantially changed them. TCNJ students do not simply attend classes and pursue a degree. They study in Spain and teach in England, South Africa, and Puerto Rico; they perform with orchestras and choirs throughout Europe. They win both national engineering contests and NCAA championships. All of these experiences (and we expect them to grow) lead to a dramatic transformation in which students of exceptional ability become adults of extraordinary achievement. In conjunction with our new curriculum, we should promote this aspect of our institutional identity.
- Why “intensive faculty student collaboration?” Students who attend The College of New Jersey have the opportunity to work with faculty who will challenge them to make the greatest use of their talents. Emphasizing faculty student collaboration allows us to emphasize the heart of our curriculum: the young biologist who works with her professor on different treatments for cystic fibrosis; the political science majors who help plan and attend a debate between leading senate candidates; the communications student who presents his research at a national scholarly conference. Making these experiences part of our market identity (and hence, our promotional material) is essential to our strategic positioning.
- Why “inviting campus environment?” Visitors to the College regularly comment on its physical beauty and welcoming community. The classical academic buildings, the purposefully-built small classrooms, the open quadrangles, the wooded walkways, all these things appeal to prospective students, faculty, and donors. The College has done a good job advertising the campus’ aesthetic and residential appeal. The next step is to

demonstrate how the physical environment contributes to the overall value of the TCNJ experience.

- Why “most prestigious private colleges?” In promoting its uniqueness, TCNJ does not need to compare itself to a private liberal arts college. What it can do, however, is nurture an association that already exists in many people’s minds. Incorporating this strategy will not threaten our public identity and mission, for they are important to all that we do. The strategy arises from the recognition, however, that students who come to The College of New Jersey frequently consider us alongside such colleges as NYU, Villanova, Boston College, and Bucknell. In a similar vein, our athletic teams regularly compete for national honors against such schools as Williams, Middlebury, and Emory. Building upon these associations will both consolidate what our applicants already think and help us attain a more national reputation.

## CASE STATEMENT THE MARKET POSITION OF THE COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY

Nationally, The College of New Jersey holds a unique position as a highly selective public institution that offers a transformative education. There is no other institution quite like TCNJ. The College can offer a limited number of top students throughout the nation a superior education comparable to the finest institutions, without the financial burdens associated with private education and with outcomes comparable to the finest institutions in the nation. Our students have been Marshall Scholars, Truman Scholars, Fulbright Scholars and Udall Scholars. Our graduates are pursuing professional and graduate studies at the finest research universities in the nation, including Columbia, Yale, Harvard, Stanford, Princeton, New York University, University of California, University of Michigan, University of Notre Dame, and University of Pennsylvania, etc. The College has also enrolled over 80 National Merit Scholars in all categories.

The College's transformation has been so successful that it has become a model for quality public education. A number of public schools are attempting to emulate the TCNJ transformation, utilizing TCNJ's approach. Some call themselves "honors colleges" and others suggest that they are "public ivies," but none have attained the overall quality and academic environment of The College. The College of New Jersey, by its example, has set a trend and thereby raised the quality of public higher education throughout the nation. It has also enhanced the reputation of New Jersey.

New Jersey has the dubious distinction of being a leading exporter of high school graduates who leave the state for their higher education. According to a report by the New Jersey Commission on Higher Education, a "...total of 60 percent of the state's recent high school graduates who attended a four-year institution within 12 months of graduation did so out of state." Our own studies indicated that high academically achieving students leave the state at a greater rate than the average student. In 1997, 63 percent of students scoring between 500 and 690 on the math and verbal portions of the SATs left the state and 72 percent of students scoring between 700 and 800 on the math and verbal portions of the SATs left the state. We also know that those who leave New Jersey for their higher education tend not to return upon graduation, resulting in a brain drain for the state, not to mention the millions these students spend in other states during the years of their higher education. Some would suggest that New Jersey's residents have more wealth than the national average and thus the reason of the migration. Such a suggestion does a disservice to the residents who are middle class and to those struggling to reach the middle class. Ninety Five percent of TCNJ students are from New Jersey.

The College of New Jersey offers high-achieving students from all income categories the opportunity for a personalized and transformative education without having to leave the state for an expensive private education. The College has demonstrated that it can retain the highest-achieving students in the state in large numbers, and it has become the school of choice for such students. This can be documented as follows: The enrolled general admits which comprises 80%

of the entering first year class averaged 1295 on the SAT's and ranked in the 91<sup>st</sup> percentile of their graduating classes. An impressive 40 percent of the class consisted of state sponsored scholars. When our entire first year class, which includes those students admitted through the state sponsored financial program (EOF) are included, TCNJ has the highest standardized test scores and rank in class in the entire nation for a comprehensive public undergraduate college (1240 SAT and 88<sup>th</sup> percentile rank). We know from an extensive survey process that applicants to TCNJ would have gone to schools out-of-state if they had not received admission. Those schools include Villanova, New York University, University of Delaware, Bucknell University, Lehigh University, and The University of Pennsylvania.

The College of New Jersey has achieved significant success and recognition because of the education it offers and because it fills a void by offering an education that no other public institution in New Jersey or the nation offers. This recognition is based on substantive outcomes such as the fact that 98 percent of our education majors passed the Praxis teacher examination required for certification. This pass rate is among the highest in the nation. Similarly, our first time pass rate on the Certified Public Accounting (CPA) examination is consistently among the highest in the nation. Now many of the best students will be educated in New Jersey and will remain in New Jersey as teachers, accountants, physicians, nurses, etc, to add to the educational, cultural, business, and intellectual life of the state.

Strangers to the campus often remark that there is a certain energy on campus. A typical comment by evaluators and consultants is that The College is not satisfied with itself and that all of its constituents seem to be committed to its greater destiny. That energy runs deep at TCNJ. Its faculty are not only scholars but are engaged in a process to transform the curriculum into a national model for undergraduate education. Its students are not only achieving in the classroom, they are achieving in service to the community by having contributed 180,000 hours to service in the past six years. On the playing field, our NCAA Division III athletic teams are the best in the nation. In the past seven years only two schools finished in the top five for the "Sears Cup" (best athletic program in the nation): Williams College and TCNJ. Only the College of New Jersey has the most NCAA Division III championships and runner-up trophies. The College produces an average of more than 40 All-Americans each year, and in the past 13 years its student athletes have earned 38 Academic All-Americans. In every area of its organization, The College is either at the top or near the top. This has not gone unnoticed. TCNJ continues to get recognition for its achievement from a host of national publications. To be the national exemplar for a public college, holding a unique market position, is the logical result of the institutional energy.

The nation needs The College of New Jersey as an exemplar, New Jersey needs The College of New Jersey as its premier public college to retain its finest students and to bring recognition to the state, and The College of New Jersey needs this unique market position as the logical destination for its internal energy.