

# Vision 2019

## *Imagining the Bay Path University of the Future*

### Executive Summary

The Vision 2019 planning process proved to be the most inclusive and comprehensive of any we have undertaken at Bay Path. Yet, as unprecedented as the process has been, the factors influencing the plan and the resulting strategies harken back strikingly to two decades ago.

Back then, in 1996, we drafted Vision 2001, naming it **Bay Path College: A Vision for the New Century and Millennium**. At the time, Bay Path was just recently a four-year institution with 14 associate's degrees and 3 bachelor's degrees; enrollment, which consisted primarily of traditional undergraduates and a few continuing education adults, barely topped 500; the residence halls were half-filled; there were only 19 faculty and no advancement functions; email did not exist on campus; growth and revenues had stalled; and the campus was desperate for human resources, technology, and capital investments. But the College had a strong endowment built on institutional reserves. Without that financial base, nothing envisioned would have been possible. The plan affirmed Bay Path's women's mission and established visionary goals, and the Board of Trustees made the bold decision to invest in the necessary assets that would enable Bay Path to innovate and succeed, in essence securing our future and laying the foundation for continued growth. The plan called for new baccalaureate programs at the undergraduate level, the first graduate degree, and growth in adult women students through an accelerated model.

The investments of Vision 2001 were fruitful as, over the ensuing generation, an entirely new Bay Path was created. Today, our future looks bright. In just the past three years, through *Vision 2016: Evolution to Revolution*, we became a university; built our first new academic building in over 50 years; drove double-digit growth in our graduate programs; and launched TAWC (The American Women's College), earning national recognition for SOUL (Social Online Universal Learning), our online delivery model. Enrollment across our diverse programs now exceeds 3,200. Yet in many ways, we stand at a juncture not that much different than we did in 1996. The horizon is promising. We are eager and optimistic as we *Imagine the Bay Path University of the Future*. But there is work to be done and investments that need to be made to fulfill the promise of our women's mission, to guarantee our sustainability, to become the institution we aspire to be, and most importantly to serve those students who will most benefit from a Bay Path University education.

Looking ahead to 2019 and beyond, we imagine the *Bay Path University of the Future* as one built on bold and aspirational plans. Through the planning process, we set out to develop a pathway which will build upon our promise to help students succeed in a constantly changing world. Most of all we want to insure that we tackle higher education's critical concerns: diversity and the changing demographics of our students; persistence to graduation; the cost of higher education; and a disciplined approach to measuring our progress with data.

Bay Path's Vision 2019, in essence, sets the stage for the next twenty years in our evolution. In all we do, we must keep what's right for students at the center of every decision, we must be innovative yet fiscally responsible as we execute our ambitious goals, and we must continue to create an environment that fosters the celebration of our unique position as one of America's last remaining undergraduate women's universities.

### **Vision 2019: the planning process**

Eighty volunteers, representing faculty and staff from every aspect of campus, first convened in November 2015 and then spent six months "*Imagining the Bay Path University of the Future*" by researching, evaluating and recommending a set of strategies to guide us through the next three years while also readying us for our longer-term aspirations. Four Trustees also participated in the planning process, representing the Board and serving as resources. The undertaking captured the attention and the energy of the entire Bay Path community.

The many factors influencing the higher education industry and the seismic shifts impacting the landscape, including competition; changing demographics; regulatory issues; technology; emerging trends in teaching and learning; and workforce demands were evaluated as part of this inclusive process. An assessment of Bay Path's Vision 2016 was undertaken. Information collected and analyzed during our NEASC accreditation self-study process provided a ready roadmap and we were all positively struck by the comments made by Dr. Paul LeBlanc, chair of the visiting team, in wrapping up the April 2016 NEASC site visit: "*It is useful to provide some context for the BPU story. In this time of general upheaval in higher education, BPU arguably resides in the most vulnerable sector of the industry.... Yet we found an institution that is financially secure, in full embrace of its commitment to women's education, innovative, and well managed.*"

Work completed during the Vision process was organized into five **Themes**, each of which focuses on a particular aspect of the University and articulates a set of strategies to achieve our goals. Based on industry trends, external pressures, effective organizational management, and most importantly the values that embody Bay Path and that are reflected in our mission, the Vision 2019 planning teams also determined that a set of paramount issues, referred to as our "**Overarching Questions**," must be

central to how we imagine our future. They will be incorporated into the planning and execution of each of our five themes and will be reflected across the institution.

In June, 2016, the five themes and corresponding preliminary recommendations were presented by Bay Path's Executive Staff and Vision team leaders at the Board of Trustees Retreat, held in Southport, Connecticut. The Retreat was kicked-off with a key note speech by Dr. Danette Howard, vice president for policy and mobilization at the Lumina Foundation. During her presentation, entitled "*Getting to Goal 2025: Equity, Attainment & Social Mobility*," Dr. Howard addressed the compelling imperative to educate more Americans and the specific challenges faced by diverse, low-income and first-generation college students – the very population served by Bay Path.

The Retreat also featured Lou Mezzina, partner at KPMG, who spoke about external pressures facing the industry, financial benchmarks, and Board Governance. Following the two guest speakers, Trustees participated in discussions regarding theme recommendations and charged the staff with solidifying strategies, developing a 3-year Vision financial plan, and drafting the narrative for presentation at the October 2016 Board meeting. Two priorities emerged at the Retreat: 1) strengthening Bay Path's infrastructure, with particular focus on technology; and 2) establishing a national platform (brand) for Bay Path University. Pat Pierce, Chair of the Board, appointed two "Trustee Resource Groups" to work with Executive Staff and delve more deeply into these priorities.

## **Vision 2019: structure of the narrative**

The Vision 2019 narrative is organized as follows:

- I. Discussion of the four Overarching Questions
  - a. How do we create a community that firmly embraces diversity and inclusion?
  - b. What can we do to increase the percentage of students who successfully graduate?
  - c. How can we best manage the cost of a Bay Path education?
  - d. What metrics should we be measuring to continuously monitor our progress?
  
- II. Presentation of the proposals in support of each of the five theme areas
  - a. Theme #1: *What will we be doing to build and demonstrate our Distinctive Purpose?*
  - b. Theme #2: *How can we ensure that the co-curricular experiences offered by Bay Path will meet our students' needs and prepare them to be successful in a constantly changing world?*
  - c. Theme #3: *What programs will we offer? What will we be known for?*

- d. Theme #4: *How can we best deliver the support and services, as well as the physical resources that students will need in the Bay Path of 2019?*
- e. Theme #5: *What will Bay Path faculty and staff need to help us realize our future?*

## **Acknowledgment**

We thank all faculty and staff for their role in helping Bay Path succeed and especially acknowledge those whose time, energy and insights resulted in Vision 2019. We extend gratitude, too, to the members of our Board of Trustees whose endorsement and support of Vision 2019 and commitment to our mission to be the leading women's university in America and creator of innovative work-force driven graduate programs, inspires us to imagine an extraordinary future for Bay Path University and our students.

The Executive Staff