

## CHAPTER 15—EUGENE LANG COLLEGE

The liberal arts are the foundation of the university's educational project. As Eugene Lang College with its dedication to liberal learning approaches its twentieth anniversary, the college has become the symbol of the university's future. With determination, the administration has turned its focus on the college. Presidential commissions, planning committees, and resources for scholarships and new faculty appointments mark a commitment to a new level of excellence.

### **Mission**

Eugene Lang College offers interdisciplinary liberal arts education distinguished by small seminar classes. Creative, self-motivated students develop skills in critical thinking, writing, and understanding theory as well as gain practical experience in an exciting urban environment. Intellectually adventurous graduates are thus equipped to take on leadership roles in fostering cultural and social change in a diverse, global society.

### **State of the College**

The 1991 Middle States Association Site Team identified eight areas for improvement (available as an Exhibit). Three areas remain a concern:

1. Long-range planning for the curriculum to provide greater stability, structure and depth and coverage of scientific understanding and quantitative reasoning.
2. A more careful process of curricular review, both in individual courses and the concentrations, and an articulation of minimum standards for a concentration.
3. Increase the number of full-time faculty to provide continuity in the curriculum and in advising.

Since the previous Middle States Accreditation review in 1991, Eugene Lang College has changed a great deal. Its enrollment has grown by 76% from 338 students in 1992 to 595 in fall 2001 with 80 joint B.A./B.F.A. degree students. Its students are better prepared academically. (Average SAT scores for enrolled students have risen from 1160 to 1192 in three years, 1999 to 2002.) Retention has improved. For enrollment management purposes, in tracking spring to fall attrition for all continuing students, the fluctuation has gone from 30.4% in 1991/92 to a stable average of 17% in subsequent years. Progress is, in part, due to improved curricula, a better system for monitoring student progress, the creation of a first year workshop and orientation, and the establishing of a professional internship and career development office.

For both the categories of full-time Lang-based and joint appointments, diversity has been a key factor in recruiting and hiring. Thirty-eight per cent of full-time Lang College faculty members are from under-represented groups as are one third of the joint appointments.

The importance of recruiting and retaining a high quality, diverse faculty remains our biggest challenge. The new five-year plan emphasizes building the full-time faculty. The president has recently committed to adding ten instructors in the next two years, a strategic decision making it possible to reach for a new level of quality.

With the creation of a Curriculum Committee, curriculum development is securely in faculty hands. Curricular planning has improved and the curriculum is tighter. For example, the number of redundant courses has been reduced. Average class size has risen from 10.7 four years ago to 14.7 in fall 2002 without sacrificing breadth and depth. In the same period, the college has expanded its offerings in the social sciences, philosophy, media, and urban studies. Three full-time instructors were added in science and mathematics, and the faculty developed a science-based Science, Technology and Society program as well as a program in Quantitative Reasoning (responding, in part, to a 1991 concern by MSCHE).

Enrollment growth has outpaced the growth in infrastructure with the consequence that clerical and administrative support for faculty and students is perceived as minimal and pressure on the staff is high.

The university has added undergraduate residence halls and centralized student affairs. It aims at creating a presence for the college and a sense of place for its students. The college has made great strides in improving its physical space, including a cafeteria, reading room, writing center, science laboratory, additional classrooms, and faculty offices.

Many challenges remain. Indeed, as the college gets better the areas that need improvement become more apparent. Two of the college's founding principles tied fulfillment of its mission to using university resources effectively: the college will build on existing university strengths in the humanities, social and policy sciences and the arts; the college will draw on all faculties of the university but about one-half of the instruction will be offered by teachers with primary appointments in the college.

True to its charter, the college has been a driving force in building collaborative relationships with other divisions. In particular, the college has a special relationship with the Graduate Faculty of Political and Social Science, which provides leadership in three concentrations as well as all course instruction in the social sciences and philosophy. While the relationship between the Graduate Faculty and the college has strengthened over the last five years, the structural, cultural and budgetary differences between the two divisions have become highlighted.

The college also depends on The New School, Milano Graduate School and Parsons School of Design and these relationships will need to be strengthened and rationalized in order to ensure Eugene Lang College students the best possible education. The issues that are emerging represent the university in microcosm. As the university continues to build a more centralized institution out of eight distinct academic schools, differences that exist among the schools become apparent. Success in forging strong interdivisional ties will complement the college's on-going efforts to improve its curriculum.

Excellence comes at a cost. The college faces financial strain in the next five years as the university invests in its future. Currently, the college has a small surplus. With the addition of full-time faculty, before projected enrollment growth is achieved, the surplus will be expended and the college will need university support. Even if the college is successful in reaching its enrollment goals, fund-raising will be increasingly important to the college in achieving both academic quality and financial solvency in the division. Key items in the action plan for the next ten years are: hire more full-time faculty; create a more fully developed, balanced curriculum; maintain a strong financial foundation.

## **STUDENTS**

### **Admissions**

The Admissions Office prides itself on its ability to represent and communicate the college's unique attributes to prospective students and their parents. Through colorful publications, aggressive recruitment strategies and the infusion of new technologies such as a redesigned website, the college has exceeded its enrollment goals in all but one of the last nine admission cycles. The recruiting strategy over the last two years has been streamlined, with detailed data analysis, to pinpoint prospective students that match the desired academic profile. To attract highly desirable students, the Admissions Office uses a blended approach of mailings, high school visits and college fairs to educate students about the opportunities that exist at the college. They organize campus events such as tours, interviews, class visits and information sessions to allow prospective students the chance to experience the college firsthand.

The commitment to diversity has been prevalent within the Admissions Office from its inception in 1985. Gradual increases in students of color have occurred over the past three years, but more progress can be made. Thanks to a presidential initiative, the introduction of full-package LaGuardia Scholarships in 2002 will attract talented New York City students of color for years to come. Also, the Admissions Office is developing for implementation fall 2003 an action plan to recruit and retain students of color.

Financial aid has been critical in attracting and retaining more and better students. The discount rate has hovered around 40% for nearly 10 years. As soon as the rate was increased the size of the entering class rose dramatically. Currently, 65 to 70% of the students receive aid, but lack of sufficient aid is the second most frequently stated reason for taking a leave or withdrawing. ("Academic problems" is the first.) Polls of students who decline offers of acceptance cite lack of aid. Financial aid is also the college's single largest expense, 44% of its overall budget. Keeping aid levels high and moving the expenses from operating costs to endowment is essential for the college's well being and diversity.

The following statistical overview of Eugene Lang College is taken from its most recent entering first year students, the Class of 2005.

- Average grade point average was 3.3 on a 4.0 scale.
- Average SAT Verbal was 621 and SAT Math was 577; total SAT was 1192.
- ACT score average was 25.

- Geographically, the majority of the students (38%) came from the Middle Atlantic Region (NY, NJ, PA, DE, MD, DC, VA). The New England territories were second with 22%; the West was third with 19%.
- The ethnic makeup was 49%-White, 31%- Unreported, 9%-Hispanic, 8%- Black, 3%- Asian, 0%- American Indian.
- Gender is 67% female.

## Profile

Eugene Lang College students are liberal, independent, self-directed, non-conformist and intellectually curious. They choose the college because it requires active engagement in the classroom and in creating an individualized educational program. As a consequence of their pursuit of self-expression, many students arrive at the college with good writing skills. These skills match the college's academic curriculum. The admissions office requires two written essays from all applicants. Essays and recommended interviews are key to the selection process. Students also choose the college because they are anxious to be taught in the seminar classroom environment. In general, they respect a professor's expertise, but they do not hesitate to disagree or question an instructor, or classmate's point of view. The pedagogy and curriculum are designed to refine, polish, develop and perfect oral and written presentation.

At Eugene Lang College, students come into a class ready to defend, debate, refute or applaud a topic as if it was their own. Many students have an active social conscience. Encouraged by a faculty dedicated to social justice, students bring their idealism to class and their values affect the way they approach their studies. Gaining knowledge is more important than working for grades. Eugene Lang College students prize their individuality. But a dynamic tension exists between individual expression and collaborative learning in seminars. It is one of the challenges of the college and its faculty to create an atmosphere in which collaborative learning can occur and in which students develop insight, understanding and openness to different perspectives and approaches to a problem.

Many students who attend Eugene Lang College possess artistic skills or interests that they wish to incorporate into their educational experience. New School's art schools—Mannes, Jazz, Parsons, and the Actor's Studio—attract students who want increased access to the rich offerings in other divisions. An emerging collaboration between the Arts in Context concentration and the Parsons Foundation/Fine Arts departments and Mannes College of Music is a promising pilot project.

Students are curious about the world beyond their immediate set of experiences. This is one of the reasons that they pick a college located in a large, diverse city. Students tend to be very resourceful, seeking out and finding what they need in the City. Internships, activist organizations, special interest groups, for example, are avenues that students often pursue on their own. The city's attractions make it difficult to create a sense of community.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> As the 2002 edition of *The Kaplan Guide to 320 Most Interesting Colleges* puts it: "Social life at Lang is centered around New York City itself, the reason most students came to the school in the first place, and the campus community can seem a bit diffuse...Once students move off-campus...they are likely to form their own social circles. The school does sponsor activities, but students are often more interested in doing their own thing." (183)

Lang student's liberalism and intellectual curiosity is reflected in their cultural awareness. (The data that follows was gathered in a questionnaire on diversity distributed in spring 2002.) Students are sensitive to differences in ethnic, cultural, and sexual orientation. They are extremely tolerant of difference. However, they do not believe that others should be defined by these differences. Students said that Eugene Lang College has to increase its efforts to attract poor and minority students. At the same time, a significant number of students reported concern with excessive political correctness on campus.

### **Life after Lang: Internships and Career Development**

Lang students tend to be less career-oriented than are traditional college students. In surveys that ask about plans after graduation, students respond that they make a distinction between the way they will "earn a living" and the goals that they truly wish to pursue. Lately, we are seeing a change in student attitudes toward careers and increasing numbers of students are taking internships and classes to prepare them for graduate school. The growth and evolution of the Internship Program is consistent with the increased interest in career development and planning. The Internship Program enrolled about 125 students during the fall and spring semesters, approximately 15% of the eligible population. In response to demand, career development services have been added. Students and alumni have access to an online job posting and recruitment service, which features résumé writing and job searching resources. Working with the University Office of Career Services and a graduate intern in the TLSC, services are offered in career counseling, assessment and job placement.

### **Advising**

One characteristic about the college that students prize is its flexibility. The centrality of individual choice makes academic advising a crucial function. Faculty mentors are responsible for academic advising. A small staff of administrators and students who serve as peer advisors assist and support them. The faculty advisor is key. Freshman year, students choose a course in which the instructor is their advisor for the first two years. After students choose a concentration in their second sophomore semester, they are assigned a faculty advisor who has interests matched to their own. Through private individual conferences with students, telephone and e-mail communication, the faculty advisor helps students refine goals and choose courses.

The structure of advising matches institutional goals for academic advising.<sup>68</sup> Key goals are: development of individual educational plans; selection of appropriate courses; a knowledge and understanding of institutional requirements; increased student awareness about educational resources available (e.g., opportunities to study in other divisions; internships, study abroad and

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<sup>68</sup> Academic advising staff is organized in the following manner. The Director of Academic Advising trains the faculty advisors and makes sure that all students are paired with faculty advisors within their main area of interest. The Associate Director of Academic Advising is a resource person for all first year students and oversees the First year Workshop and the Peer Advising system. The Peer Advising system is designed to give first year students more thorough and frequent access to academic advising. Freshmen get the benefit of working with older students who "have been there before" and can provide invaluable "inside" information. The Sophomore Class Advisor serves as a resource person for sophomore students. She organizes co-curricular, social and informational events designed to serve the needs of the class.

student disabilities office); fostering students' responsibility for their choices; and collection and analysis of data regarding student needs and preferences.

As a measure of the effectiveness of the new advising system, student participation in early registration has increased. In particular, there was a 20% increase in freshmen participation. Students show increased understanding and knowledge about institutional requirements, procedures, and the advising process. For instance, more students required to declare concentrations spring 2002 did so *before* the deadline.

## THE FACULTY

The faculty at Eugene Lang College has a complex structure. The college has 13 full-time teachers with appointments only at the college. It shares 14 full-time members (joint faculty) with other divisions, primarily the Graduate Faculty. There are 66 part-time faculty, 11% long-term part-time, about 33% adjunct, and the rest more persistent but not long term. In addition, 54 graduate students from the Graduate Faculty and two or three from other divisions teach at the college. (This snapshot is from 2001-02.)

The college has sought out teachers who are interested in multi or interdisciplinary work. It has attracted excellent scholars and artists despite the fact that it does not offer tenure-track lines, high salaries, subsidized housing (often lower-priced housing options), and substantial faculty development funding. Faculty salaries and benefits for full-time and part-time faculty have improved, but more is still to be done. The retention of qualified faculty from underrepresented groups has proved difficult in a highly competitive market. Diversity remains a high priority among current faculty in recruiting talented colleagues. The availability of tenure track joint positions might help retention if we can clarify and articulate roles and responsibilities carefully. But these positions will only be available in the Graduate Faculty departments of philosophy and the social sciences.

Faculty members across the institution have expressed concerns about governance, but feelings are particularly strong at the college. In the current system, faculty members are not content to have their role designated as "advisory," or to make decisions that are "recommendations" to the administration. Feelings of lack of involvement in decision-making and planning are intensified by inadequate feedback loops and communication channels regarding decisions made in meetings.

The introduction of a new type of faculty appointment, the joint appointment, continues to present both advantages and challenges. Part of the challenge is that the university must work with the schools to define the roles, responsibilities, review criteria and processes for joint positions. As a consequence of the new appointments, courses taught by Graduate Faculty instructors have increased—joint appointments are obligated to teach a total of 24 classes at the college. The number of courses taught rose from fewer than 10 per year at the beginning of the decade to 30-35 per year in the past two years. Joint appointments have more involvement with the college than most other Graduate Faculty. But because most are junior (10 out of 12), they have not been asked to take on leadership roles. In social sciences and philosophy it has been difficult identifying stable leadership.

The increases in courses taught by the Graduate Faculty have not kept pace with student needs and the size of the student body. To be able to offer a reasonable curriculum in the social sciences and philosophy, the college has had to rely on Graduate Faculty graduate students, who annually have taught additional 32 courses (on average) from 1999-2002. In 2001-02, graduate students taught 54 courses (nearly one fifth of the total number of classes), with very mixed results judging from student course evaluations. Eugene Lang College relies heavily on long term part-time and shorter-term part-time faculty. For the past four years, only 30% of Lang courses have been taught by full-time teachers, including short-term visitors and Graduate Faculty instructors who teach a maximum of one course per year.

The college has a well-articulated review and re-appointment process for full-time faculty. Review and evaluation of joint faculty and part-time faculty is a current priority. In the last five years, difficulties have arisen as the Graduate Faculty and Eugene Lang College faculties move closer together. Graduate Faculty instructors are struck by the fact that the university emphasizes teaching and formal advising with little credit given for scholarly productivity, and grantsmanship. Lang faculty are struck by the recent emphasis—attributed to the hiring of joint appointments between Lang and the Graduate Faculty—on scholarship, research and publishing in refereed journals and academic presses without additional faculty support or release time provided either by the division or the university. Given their workload, their own productivity and the perception that they must compete with junior faculty on tenure track lines, Lang-based professors (especially senior professors) are demoralized.

Teaching effectiveness is monitored through a qualitative and, as of spring 2001, a quantitative course evaluation. Assessments have proved useful in reappointments and in specific cases in which questions have arisen about the effectiveness of individual faculty member's teaching. However, course evaluations do not provide a means to evaluate the effectiveness of faculty as academic advisors, senior work supervisors, or to evaluate the overall effectiveness of a concentration's curricular offerings. The College Executive Committee is considering a more adequate full-time and part-time evaluation process.

## CURRICULUM

Students seek out Eugene Lang College because they want a broad liberal arts education and do not want to be trapped in one discipline. The curriculum features concentrations, not majors. Concentrations are *disciplinary*, Literature, Philosophy, or Psychology; *multi-disciplinary*, Social and Historical Inquiry; or *interdisciplinary*, Cultural Studies and Media, Education Studies, Arts in Context, Religious Studies, and Urban Studies. Two concentrations develop skills, Writing and Theater, but both approach skills from a liberal arts perspective. Science, Technology, and Society is also interdisciplinary. It has a well-developed track in biology. Because it does not have articulated tracks in a full range of topics, this is not yet a concentration. Unlike traditional majors, which emphasize narrow focus and depth, concentrations account for only 25% of a student's education. Concentrations require only 9 to 10 courses. Concentrations offer some focus and depth without sacrificing breadth. They are constructed to overlap and interlock, thereby, strengthening the whole curriculum, showing connections between subject areas and allowing students flexibility in the curriculum.

Recently, the faculty has been redefining concentrations. Faculty and students in the concentration, led by concentration chairs and program directors, critically examine each course of study. Recommendations for changes are brought to the Curriculum Committee, consisting of all chairs and program directors; the Curriculum Committee brings a recommendation to the General Faculty for debate and resolution. The General Faculty makes its recommendation to the dean. If the dean approves the change, she is responsible for putting in place the budgetary and faculty resources to accomplish the proposed goals. If she does not approve, she returns to the General Faculty to explain her decision. Collaborative programs with other divisions must go through that division's processes. Programs may also be subject to review by the Provost and/or University Budget Committee.

In 2001-02, the number of concentrations jumped from 5 to 12. Eight programs, writing, literature, arts in context, theater, philosophy, psychology, religious studies and science, technology and society, were buried within larger concentrations. Each of these programs had directors. Each, except Science, Technology and Society and Religious Studies, had a fully articulated curriculum. All had (or would have by 2002-03) full-time faculty leadership. Several, writing (92 students), arts in context (43), and psychology (17), were as large or larger than existing freestanding concentrations in terms of student enrollment, e.g., urban studies (18). In addition, a program, education studies, which provides students with critical tools to understand how we create democratic urban schools and communities, became a concentration.

The Curriculum Committee also recommended that a Media Studies program be added to Cultural Studies. Students will learn to assess the impact of culture and media on their lives through courses in cultural theory, history and criticism as well as through learning to interpret the formal properties of cultural texts such as newspapers, magazines or films. A new collaborative program with The New School in Media Studies will give students the opportunity to learn by doing, i.e., give them hands on experience in creating video presentations. Graduate study is possible. Social and Historical Inquiry, which provides an overview of modern social thought, addressing themes common across disciplines, will offer more disciplinary tracks in the social sciences as a result of student interest and faculty approval. Students may enroll in B.A./M.A. programs in all the Graduate Faculty departments.

Working with Milano Graduate School of Management and Urban Policy, the faculty redesigned the Urban Studies program, which provides the tools with which students can begin to understand the peoples and structures that make up cities both in the U.S. and internationally. The concentration is directed towards both the student who wants to think critically about the urban setting and the student who seeks graduate training or a career in education, law, community development, journalism, urban management, public policy, or the health professions. The concentration connects with departments at Milano.

All concentrations share a simple structure. At the 1000 level are first year seminars, which develop skills in reading complex texts, thinking in a sustained way, and develop skills in writing and other forms of expression, including seminar participation. Some courses deal with texts, figures, or issues from the vantage point of multiple disciplines; others clearly have a disciplinary base. Students are encouraged to experiment and explore in their first year. Then,

2000 level courses are broad, introductory courses suitable for freshmen and sophomores or for upperclassmen who have no background in the material. 3000-3499 level courses have no prerequisites. Some courses at this level serve as “core” within concentrations. They introduce students to methods and material necessary to proceed within the concentration. Courses at the 4000 level are advanced and 4500 level courses are cross-listed graduate courses. Utilizing graduate courses extends and deepens several concentrations, Social and Historical Inquiry, Urban Studies, Cultural Studies and Media, Philosophy, Psychology and the Science, Technology and Society program.

At Eugene Lang College there are “three exceptions to nearly every rule.” But there are no exceptions in two cases. Freshmen are required to take a first year writing seminar to improve their writing and to learn academic writing. Seniors are required to develop an independent project, scholarly or creative work as a culminating achievement. In areas that are usually covered by distribution requirements, scientific and quantitative reasoning, and information literacy, the college relies on the good judgment and motivation of its students. Faculty and staff advisors encourage students to pursue “well-rounded” educational programs. For instance, in science and mathematics, the faculty has designed a program, which focuses on problem solving and debates on social issues. Students become strongly motivated to develop the skills that they need, including mathematical and technological skills, to pursue more advanced studies in the sciences. In all subject areas, students (and the rest of us) remember and focus on what they believe they need for success. The same is true of gaining technological and information literacy competency. As faculty incorporate these skills into courses, students see the need to perfect them. Necessity is not only the mother of invention; it is the mother of competency.

### **Support for Undergraduate Writing**

The writing program has been the mainstay of the college. It provides a variety of courses informed by the conception of “the writer in the world,” that is, the idea that the artist has a vital relationship to culture, nature, and society and the she/he is shaped by and, in turn, shapes her/his environment in the pursuit of the craft of writing. Many students who have not selected writing as their concentration take writing courses. Eugene Lang College supports undergraduate writing with its Writing Center and Writing Fellows Program.<sup>69</sup> It is staffed with five tutors, all of whom are experienced college writing teachers. Writing Center staff work one-on-one with writers in appointments that can take from fifteen minutes to an hour and may address any aspect of the writing process, from first ideas to fine tuning to extensive revision. The Center receives about 35-45 visits per week during peak times, about 20-35 at other times, with an average of 350-400 visits per semester. About 60% of the appointments are repeat visits. The Writing Center also administers the Writing Fellows Program. Through this program, approximately ten juniors and seniors per semester receive training in tutoring skills.

Since 1993, Eugene Lang College has required all entering first time freshmen to participate in a first year workshop program. A required program is somewhat of a paradox at a college that prides itself with not having many requirements. Accordingly, freshmen often

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<sup>69</sup> Lang writing instructors have also been leaders in the new University Writing Center.

complain bitterly about it. The focus of the program is transition to college, in general, and transition to this college, in particular. This is a safety net. Freshmen attrition declined dramatically from 1992, 60%, to an average of 30%, after the program was put in place.

## **Recommendations**

1. One goal for the 2002-03 is to link internship opportunities to academic concentrations.
2. To track its graduates, the college will develop meaningful indicators of educational outcomes and collect data on job and graduate school placement.
3. The college will increase support for the faculty regarding advising.
4. Instruments that measure the impact of academic advising on student performance and track the quality of faculty advising will be developed.
5. Faculty governance structures will be improved to bridge differences between divisions.
6. The feedback loop to faculty and administrators on committee decisions needs to be improved.
7. To improve communication, documents that describe the roles and responsibility of faculty members need to be updated and re-distributed annually. The importance of new faculty orientation needs to be emphasized and better material distributed.
8. Systematic examination of credentials, workload and productivity in the various liberal arts divisions is necessary to rationalize workload expectations as well as re-appointment criteria for tenure and non-tenure track.
9. A critical mass of full-time faculty as well as core half-time faculty dedicated to undergraduate teaching is absolutely essential. The proportion of part-time faculty must be reduced.
10. To improve academic quality, the college needs consistent and clear promotion and reappointment standards for full-time, joint, core half-time and part-time faculty.
11. The college should move forward on a plan to promote a group of long-term part-time faculty in recognition of their role at the college and the unique strengths they bring.
12. To promote an interdisciplinary curriculum, the college will target interdisciplinary research projects that may increase grant opportunities.
13. The college and university should provide support, training and encouragement to faculty so that they might incorporate technology into the classroom where appropriate.
14. Systematic syllabus review and a clearer understanding of learning outcomes will help ensure quality and continuity in the curriculum.
15. The nature of “core” classes must be defined by the faculty because the term core means different things for different concentrations.
16. The faculty and leadership of Science, Technology and Society and Religious Studies need to create a plan for a course of study.
17. The integrity and excellence of concentrations must be subject to periodic review.
18. The college must strive to develop collaborative relationships with the other schools to improve the quality and variety of educational experiences available to Eugene Lang College students.