1.A - Core Component 1.A

The institution's mission is broadly understood within the institution and guides its operations.

1. The mission statement is developed through a process suited to the nature and culture of the institution and is adopted by the governing board.
2. The institution's academic programs, student support services, and enrollment profile are consistent with its stated mission.
3. The institution's planning and budgeting priorities align with and support the mission. (This sub-component may be addressed by reference to the response to Criterion 5.C.1.)

Argument

At a formal level, the college's mission statement has not changed since the Board of Trustees adopted it in 1987. The statement dates from the later years of the long (1961-1992) presidency of Mike Alexandroff, the architect of the modern-day Columbia College Chicago. One longstanding faculty member has described the Columbia that emerged from the Alexandroff era as less a higher education institution than a complex community arts organization built around three core, and at times competing, purposes: serving a student body focused on transactional skills acquisition in creative fields, engaging in community outreach, and providing employment to local artists. Under this model, Columbia was comfortable with the idea of students stopping in and stopping out, signing up for the courses they needed to advance their careers without necessarily focusing on degree completion. The model also gave extraordinary latitude to academic and non-academic stakeholders to launch entrepreneurial initiatives with minimal central oversight.

This was a singular, and in many ways an imaginative, vision. It was also very much a founder's vision, and as with many founders' visions was probably unsustainable once the founder departed from the scene, leaving those who came afterwards to carry on a legacy whose underlying assumptions they had never truly internalized. In many ways the history of the college since 1992 is that of an institution that, while adhering to the form of this vision, has gradually modified parts of its substance (sometimes without admitting this to itself). This discreet questioning of older ways of being and doing intensified with the adoption of the current five-year Strategic Plan in May 2015. The Plan affirms the imperative that "we design, implement, assess, and revise everything we do through the lens of our distinctive mission". But it emphasizes that "we must always remain attuned to the best practices of American higher education" and acknowledges that the plan's objectives and action items will "honor the college's long history and rich heritage, while giving us permission to let go of those legacies that no longer work or make sense for us" [all quotes p. 5].

From the perspective of 2018, then, it is helpful to assess which elements of the mission statement retain widespread legitimacy across the college and which are no longer as relevant. The statement defines the college's curricular model as one that blends a liberal arts core with major programs of study in creative disciplines. It affirms that Columbia "is an urban institution whose students reflect the economic, racial, cultural, and educational diversity of contemporary America" and that it "serves an important civic purpose by active engagement in the life and culture of the city of Chicago". It articulates an institutional commitment to "providing a practical setting, professional facilities, and the example and guidance of an inventive faculty who work professionally at the subjects they teach". And it positions the college not as an institution that trains the next generation of practitioners for existing creative disciplines, but rather as one that educates students to "discover alternative

opportunities to employ their talents in settings other than customary marketplaces," and to go beyond that to "author the culture of their times." These elements of the mission remain at the heart of the Columbia community's sense of itself and are broadly shared across the institution.

On the other hand, the college's stated commitment to "extend educational opportunity by admitting unreservedly (at the undergraduate level) a student population with creative ability in, or inclination to, the subjects of Columbia's interest" has been out of date as a matter of policy for several years. The narrative for Core Component 2.A addresses the historical origins of the open admissions policy in the early 1970s and the circumstances that led to its replacement, beginning with the fall 2013 entering undergraduate cohort, by a "generous" admissions policy that allowed for some selectivity. The 2015 Strategic Plan accepts the end of open admissions and replaces it with a commitment to "keeping a Columbia education available and accessible to the broadest range of students who are prepared to succeed here" [p. 29].

From a narrow operational perspective, the increase in selectivity under the new policy has been a matter of degree rather than kind: the acceptance rate for entering freshmen has hovered at around 88-90 percent since its implementation. Nevertheless, the abandonment of open admissions represented a fundamental change for Columbia in that it replaced an institutional belief in access to higher education as an end in itself with a focus on defining and facilitating the desired outcomes of that access for students. This has reframed a portion of the mission statement that defines Columbia's purposes as "[providing] a college climate that offers students an opportunity to try themselves out, to explore, and to discover what they can and want to do" and "[helping] students to find out who they are and to discover their own voices, respect their own individuality, and improve their self-esteem and self-confidence." This language is ambiguous about the ultimate ends to which this process of self-discovery is to be directed, a reflection of the institutional ethos of the time that did not place a high priority on degree completion.

The 2015 Strategic Plan affirms the validity of these same purposes by pledging that the college will "design a curriculum that encourages students' academic and creative exploration" [p. 7] and "build the student services infrastructure needed to support the emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being of a diverse student body" [p. 7]. In contrast to the mission statement's indeterminate sense of ends, however, the Plan links student development and persistence to graduation:

> Student success begins, but does not end, with a curriculum that facilitates structured exploration, purposeful major and career choices, and the completion of a degree program in a prescribed period of time. We affirm that employment is a desired outcome of a Columbia education, and we recognize that we must teach our students practical skills that help them to navigate the real world. We also must provide the necessary support services to prepare them for employment and help them find employment upon graduation [p. 7].

To support this restated commitment, the Strategic Plan sets out a blueprint for refreshing the college's academic programs and building an integrated network of student support services. As of the time of submission, the faculty and senior academic affairs leadership had completed 85 to 90 percent of a comprehensive curricular review, including a revision of the core curriculum and Integrated First-Year Experience program; an updating of existing majors, minors, and graduate curricula; and the establishment of new curricular design guidelines to ensure consistency in program rigor (by requiring an appropriate level of upper-division coursework) and facilitate student persistence to graduation (by limiting excessive elective choice and establishing clear degree pathways). Embracing a model that has become increasingly popular in higher education, it has shifted day-to-day academic advising responsibilities from faculty to professional advisors and assigned faculty to a mentorship role. In September 2016, it brought career advising, student "body of work" development, industry

professional mentoring, student internship, and student employment resources together under one roof in a new Career Center. It is currently building a new student center, scheduled to open in 2019, that will house student "maker spaces," collaborative spaces, and social spaces in a centrally-located facility.

The internal policy debate about the appropriate level of admissions selectivity for the college is ongoing. Even with modest selectivity, the college continues to enroll a cohort of academically marginal students who struggle to successfully complete college-level work. That said, there are students with weak high-school academic credentials and a creative bent who flourish at Columbia once they immerse themselves in its curriculum. In accordance with Goal 5 of the Strategic Plan, a cross-campus group has been working to identify potential markers of student success beyond the standard statistical indicators and incorporate them into Columbia's admissions standards, requirements, and criteria.

The Strategic Plan's commitment to advancing the mission is reflected in the FY17 and FY18 operating budgets, where funds have been allocated to key strategic initiatives even as overall expenditures have been reduced. In addition, a recent property rationalization, in which the college sold four buildings deemed surplus to institutional needs or no longer fit for purpose, raised approximately $80 million. Most of these funds are being spent on two mission-driven building projects, the construction of the student center ($50 million) and the comprehensive remodeling of the Getz Theatre ($12 million; re-opened spring 2018).

Sources

- CCC Strategic Plan 2015-2020
- CCC Strategic Plan 2015-2020 (page number 29)
- CCC Strategic Plan 2015-2020 (page number 30)
- FY17.SP.implement
- FY18.SP.implement
- MIssion.purposes statement 1987
- Retention Research Summary - Spring 2018
- Retention Research Summary - Spring 2018 (page number 13)
- UG.admissions.Fa10_Fa17

1.B - Core Component 1.B

The mission is articulated publicly.

1. The institution clearly articulates its mission through one or more public documents, such as statements of purpose, vision, values, goals, plans, or institutional priorities.
2. The mission document or documents are current and explain the extent of the institution's emphasis on the various aspects of its mission, such as instruction, scholarship, research, application of research, creative works, clinical service, public service, economic development, and religious or cultural purpose.
3. The mission document or documents identify the nature, scope, and intended constituents of the higher education programs and services the institution provides.

Argument

Columbia formally articulates its mission in its Board-approved mission statement, which is published on the college's website and in the printed and online versions of its course catalogue and student handbook, among other places. The mission statement says that Columbia offers undergraduate and graduate degree programs; that its curriculum combines a liberal arts core with major programs of study in various creative disciplines; and that it seeks to enroll an economically, racially, and culturally diverse student body.

The narrative for Core Component 1.A highlights the areas where institutional support of the tenets of the mission statement remains strong and vibrant, and those where time and circumstance have led the college to move away from older articulations of its obligations under the mission – in particular, the college's abandonment of its commitment to "extend educational opportunity by admitting unreservedly (at the undergraduate level) a student population with creative ability in, or inclination to, the subjects of Columbia's interest" in favor of a pledge set out in the strategic plan to "[keep] a Columbia education available and accessible to the broadest range of students who are prepared to succeed here" [p. 29].

As for other public documents, the introductory sections of the current strategic plan lay down a clear marker as to the mission's continued relevance to the college's aspirations:

> [T]he institution now known as Columbia College Chicago stands ready to launch an ambitious program of change that will allow us to fully meet the obligations placed upon us by our mission and by the promises we make to our students and to the wider world. [p. 3]

> Above all, [the plan] demands of us that we design, implement, assess, and revise everything we do through the lens of our distinctive mission. [p. 5]

> As we confront the common challenges facing so many institutions of higher learning, our collective response will be to elevate those features of our institutional culture that truly differentiate us, all of which are located at the level of mission and purpose. [p. 5]

The strategic plan's central initiative – the faculty's comprehensive review and overhaul, beginning in the 2015-16 academic year and ongoing as of the time of submission, of all elements of the curriculum (core curriculum, Integrated First-Year Experience, academic majors and minors) – has

been driven by a perceived need to strengthen and revitalize the college's mission-driven curricular model, which blends a liberal arts foundation with high-level immersion in creative disciplines. A revised template for the Integrated First-Year Experience has been in place since it was piloted in the fall of 2015; the first group of new and revised majors were launched in the fall of 2017; the new core curriculum will be implemented in the fall of 2019. The scope of the undertaking was enormous, the process was not always conflict-free, and it will take time, and a great deal of thoughtful reflection, to determine how well the work was done in the end. But the overarching vision behind the changes was consistent and firmly anchored in the mission.

The narrative for Core Component 1.C discusses the strategic plan's initiatives in the area of diversity, equity, and inclusion as they relate to the mission.

Sources

- Big Chicago Fall 2015 Assessment Report
- Columbia Core and IFYE Framework Approved by Senate
- Mission statement.website

1.C - Core Component 1.C

The institution understands the relationship between its mission and the diversity of society.

1. The institution addresses its role in a multicultural society.
2. The institution's processes and activities reflect attention to human diversity as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.

Argument

Mission Statement, Equal Opportunity Statement, and 2015 Strategic Plan

Columbia's mission statement includes the following sentence: "Columbia is an urban institution whose students reflect the economic, racial, cultural, and educational diversity of contemporary America." Its published "Equal Opportunity" statement notes explicitly that "Admission and practices of the College are free of any discrimination based on age, race, color, creed, sex, religion, handicap, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, and national or ethnic origin."

The 2015 Strategic Plan identifies Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: Engaging Difference as the third of its six key strategic goals. The plan sets out the following pledge:

> We will be known as a national leader in higher education for our systemic and comprehensive commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion as a fundamental basis for accomplishing our mission [p. 5].

It goes on to define the college's fundamental commitment in this area as one of embedding diversity, equity, and inclusion in the curriculum, curricular programming, and faculty expertise that are available to Columbia students:

> Columbia College Chicago's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion can be understood as our commitment to the principle of engaging difference. We believe that a community that brings diverse voices and experiences into close proximity is fertile ground for creating new ideas and new creative practice. The greater the variety of perspectives, ways of being, ways of evaluating truth, relationships to power and privilege and authority, and heritages that we assemble, and the more we bring that range of difference together and make it the setting for our core teaching and learning activities, the greater the likelihood that our students will begin to engage with ideas, concepts, and even entire bodies of work that they had never considered before. It is within this framework that we prepare our students to author the culture of their times [p. 19].

Institutional Initiatives

Following the Board of Trustees' approval of the 2015 Strategic Plan in May of that year, President Kim appointed an eleven-member campus-wide committee in January 2016 to oversee the initial efforts at advancing the plan's initiatives in the area of diversity, equity, and inclusion (hereafter, DEI). Among other actions, the DEI Committee crafted the following DEI mission statement for the college that the Faculty Senate approved in 2016:

> Columbia College Chicago actively promotes diversity, equity, and inclusion as vitally important

to its present and future success. These principles are essential to the educational experiences of our students, staff, and faculty. The present standing and history of systems of racial oppression permeate all levels of our society, and intersect with discrimination based on age, class, disability, ethnicity, gender, national origin, religion, and sexual orientation, among others. We believe these structures of power and privilege need to be studied and understood by all members of our community. We are committed to dismantling these systems within Columbia College Chicago by creating policies, programs, and opportunities that will ensure that diversity, equity, and inclusion thrive and are at the center of all that we do.

President Kim and Provost Stan Wearden also invited the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond, a New Orleans-based anti-racism organization, to campus to conduct a series of "Undoing Racism" workshops for full-time employees, with the expectation that all full-time employees would complete the day-and-a-half-long training by the end of the 2017-18 academic year. The first workshop was conducted in August 2016, and the People's Institute conducted 11 additional workshops in the 2017-18 AY. A total of 617 members of the campus community participated in the workshops over the two years: 366 staff, 222 full-time faculty, 15 part-time faculty, and 4 students. An institutional conversation about the appropriate follow-up steps for the college is expected to take place in the 2018-19 AY.

In July 2017, Dr. Kim created a new position of Dean of Academic Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and Special Advisor to the President, with membership in the President's Cabinet, to assume institutional leadership in the area of DEI. The Dean was charged with leading the College's mission in the area of diversity, equity, and inclusion (hereafter, DEI) by "dismantling ... structures of power and privilege ... within Columbia College Chicago by creating policies, programs, and opportunities that will ensure that diversity, equity, and inclusion thrive and are at the center of all we do." The Academic DEI website reinforces the primacy of building diversity in curriculum and creative disciplines as fundamental to the office's work:

> One of our central foci in the area of DEI is enhancing our curriculum to challenge the hegemonic emphasis on canonical cultural and artistic traditions, which often result in a lack of diverse narratives and a singular focus on specific value systems.

In the 2017-18 AY, the Dean of the School of Fine and Performing Arts (SFPA) created a DEI Workgroup that was tasked with preparing a situation report defining DEI challenges for the School (and the college), as well as a plan to address them. In order to assess current attitudes and perspectives on a range of DEI topics (including the "Undoing Racism" workshops), full-time faculty were surveyed. Seventy-one percent of the faculty responded and emerging themes from the results included a need for greater diversity in faculty and the impact of race in the classroom. Moving forward, the plan for 2018-19 begins with a 90-120 minute workshop at the SFPA faculty retreat in August, and then small, department-specific mutual mentoring groups. The plans for years 2 and 3 are to incorporate more adjunct faculty in the conversations and ultimately leading to concrete curricular offerings.

Curriculum

At the department level, each department in SFPA also developed plans to achieve the following:

- Scaffold knowledge about DEI issues as it pertains to CCC and higher education
- Build common DEI understanding and vocabulary within the department
- Share DEI resources and strategies
- Embed DEI into the pedagogy and curriculum

A model department for curricular revision based on concepts of DEI is the Dance Department and the curricular changes led by its new Chair in 2011. The department's Self-Study (part of its 2017-18 Program Review) describes the transformation of its curriculum (p. 3) from one anchored in Western dance traditions to one that acknowledges the equally foundational role of West African dance technique and ballet technique in the U.S. contemporary dancing body (or "American dancing body"). Simultaneously with this change, the Chair redirected discretionary funds to promote contemporary Africanist and Hip-Hop aesthetics in part-time faculty hires, programming, and guest artists. Finally, the department also looked with fresh eyes at established policies which, although intended to promote academic rigor and professionalism, were not serving students in a generous-enrollment institution.

When it is implemented in the fall of 2019, the new Columbia Core Curriculum will have a requirement for students to complete a minimum of two 3-credit courses that fall under the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion rubric. Faculty proposing courses to satisfy this requirement will need to include a completed DEI Proposal Form. These courses must address "issues of power as part of the core focus and content of the course. Students will develop skills for responsive engagement with social structures related to power, privilege, and social equity..... Each DEI designated course examines structures of power and privilege as they relate to the respective discipline(s) being engaged."

Faculty Cluster Hire

In academic year 17-18 the College launched a targeted cluster hire for four new tenure-track faculty members - one each in Cinema and Television Arts, History, Interactive Arts and Media, and Theatre - who would bring significant expertise on issues of race and diversity into the classrooms of their respective disciplines. Alongside the Dean of Academic DEI and the College's DEI Committee, these individuals are also expected to enhance existing academic programs and establish new academic initiatives that examine anti-racism and introduce students to a wider range of theoretical and knowledge based systems that can feed their respective creative practices. As of June 2018, the College had filled the History position and had extended the search for the other positions into the 2018-19 AY after, regrettably, losing extremely talented preferred candidates to other institutions. (The Interactive Arts and Media position will be re-designated for Fashion Studies.) The Theatre Department is also filling a DEI one-year theatre scholar position for 2018-19; the holder will have expertise in 20th/21st-century African-American theatre.

Diverse Curriculum

The list of courses from the 2017-18 catalog that satisfy the Global Awareness and US Pluralism course requirements within the LAS Core easily demonstrates how diverse the College's offerings are. A short sample from the Spring 2018 semester schedule includes courses such as Black Arts and Visual Culture; Story in Fiction and Film: International; African History and Culture Since 1600; Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender History in the U.S.; The Chinese City in Literature, Art, and Media; Revolution and Jihad in the Middle East; Native American Literature; and Caribbean Art, Literature, and Music.

In addition, the Dean for Academic Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) has been working closely with departments to more intentionally incorporate DEI components into both the new Columbia Core Curriculum (effective Fall 2019) and into the curriculum for all majors.

Office of Student Diversity and Inclusion

In fall 2017, the existing Office of Student Multicultural Affairs was revamped as the Office of Student Diversity and Inclusion, and charged with developing strategies for integrating all Columbia students into the life of the community. Under the new structure, individual staff liaisons are no longer assigned to the various student groups for under-represented populations on campus. Rather, Student Diversity and Inclusion staff members are trained to work with and across those populations. The goal is to align the office with the strategic plan's vision of a college that builds community around "an embrace of many voices and experiences" and to better prepare students for the outside world, where they must negotiate issues related to identity through interactions with people who are not necessarily like themselves.

Diverse Student Populations

The Columbia Community is a highly diverse one. Minority enrollment as a percentage of total enrollment has risen and has remained at 35% (since 2014). In addition, the international student population has grown 48% over the past three years, from 259 to 384, with 26 countries represented. The highest represented countries are China (141), South Korea (22), and Great Britain (19). While White Non-Hispanic full-time instructional staff is at 79%, and thus higher than minority enrollment, the percentage of White Non-Hispanic Full-Time Non-Instructional Staff is at 61%.

Campus diversity - both curricular and extra-curricular - is borne out by the results of student surveys. In the 2016 administration of the Your First College Year (YFCY) Survey, Columbia students expressed higher levels of satisfaction versus a set of peer institutions on the following items: "Respect for the expression of diverse beliefs" (80% to 77%), "Racial and ethnic diversity of student body" (79% to 47%), and "Racial and ethic diversity of the faculty" (65% to 46%). On the 2014 administration of the National Survey of Student Engagement, students replied more favorably than comparison groups (Arts & Media, Carnegie Class, and Market Peer) on diversity related items. First Year students noted higher levels of discussions with people of a "race or ethnicity," "economic background," and "religious beliefs" other than their own. Senior students responded reported more levels of engagement on the first two items (relative to Carnegie Class and Market Peer).

Contracting and Procurement

The Associate Vice President for Facilities and Construction's office is developing a plan to systematize institutional procurement and contracting. One of its objectives in this endeavor is to develop a larger pipeline of minority-owned and women-owned vendors, suppliers, and contractors for the college.

Sources

- 2016 YFCY vs Peer Institutions
- Academic Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Web Site
- Courses with GA_PL Codes AY17_18
- Dance Program Review AY17-18
- DEI and Curriculum B&E Plan 2017-18 AY
- DEI Course Proposal Form
- DEI Forum 11-2-17

- DEI Forum 12-7-17
- DEI Mission Statement
- Demographics Fac Staff Students
- Diversity Classes from SP18 semester
- FYS and Diversity NSSE
- International Student Population Factbook 2017
- Melanie Chambliss History Cluster Hire
- Senior Students and Diversity NSSE
- SFPA DEI Workgroup Summary 2017-18 AY
- Strategic Plan Goal 3- DEI
- Student Demographics 2003-2016
- Survey Responses 3-15-18
- Undoing Racism Program and Outcomes

1.D - Core Component 1.D

The institution's mission demonstrates commitment to the public good.

1. Actions and decisions reflect an understanding that in its educational role the institution serves the public, not solely the institution, and thus entails a public obligation.
2. The institution's educational responsibilities take primacy over other purposes, such as generating financial returns for investors, contributing to a related or parent organization, or supporting external interests.
3. The institution engages with its identified external constituencies and communities of interest and responds to their needs as its mission and capacity allow.

Argument

Columbia's awareness of its true public obligation is embedded in the language of its mission statement:

> Columbia's intent is to educate students who will communicate creatively and shape the public's perceptions of issues and events and who will author the culture of their times…Columbia conducts education in close relationship to a vital urban reality and serves an important civic purpose by active engagement in the life and culture of the city of Chicago.

The particular forms in which Columbia's relationships with public stakeholders manifest themselves are shaped primarily by the college's curricular focus on creative disciplines with real-world relevance. Columbia is unusual among American higher education institutions in that it does not regard either curriculum development or the assessment of student work as a responsibility that lies solely within the purview of its faculty, but rather as an enterprise that can and should incorporate the perspective and influence of creative industry partners. The strategic plan affirms the importance of such partnerships in several places:

> Faculty, working with external partners from industry and fields of creative practice, will define relevant learning outcomes for the core curriculum and academic majors that reflect current and emerging disciplinary and creative trends. [p. 12]

> [Columbia will b]uild relationships with external partners in creative industries and other creative communities that can advise the college on the currency and relevance of its existing curricula and learning outcomes. [p. 15]

In the comprehensive curricular revision that has occurred over the past three years, the Fashion Studies Department stands out for its willingness to reach out to the fashion industry for insight and guidance in the redesign of its degree programs. Several other departments routinely use external industry professionals to assess student work.

In addition, deepening and strengthening the college's collective endeavors in the area of community engagement is one of the six strategic priorities set out in the 2015 strategic plan. As the plan was starting to come together in the fall of 2014, President Kim, in an address to the City Club of Chicago, set out his vision for the community engagement project:

> [W]e're a little stuck in higher education when it comes to the idea of community. We have this

tendency to think of ourselves within our walls as superior, and we're motivated by a certain kind of benevolence. We look out at the world at *those* people, and we recognize that they might benefit from what we have in abundance. Every once in a while, we reach out, bestow our favor, and then come back home and pat ourselves on the back. That has nothing to do with community engagement. Community engagement is about establishing reciprocal partnerships with as many different partners as possible, many of them, hopefully, highly unlike on the surface. It's difficult, it's challenging, it's messy, and it's frightening, but the end goal is that everyone who participates grows in unexpected ways.

At the institutional level, subsequent progress in this area has lagged behind that on the other five strategic plan priorities, in part because of the complexity of translating the above vision into concrete initiatives. But the idea of identifying community engagement as a priority in the plan was attractive to the college community precisely because it built on existing work that continues to this day. Some of the most exciting projects are occurring in the School of Fine and Performing Arts and School of Media Arts, and involve initiatives relocated from the now-disbanded Center for Community Arts Partnerships (see below). The Community Schools program, which connects teaching artists to Chicago Public Schools students; the Arts Integration Mentorship Project, which brings together teaching artists and public school teachers to work on innovative curriculum development projects; and the Convergence Design Lab, which explores the transformation of society and culture by digital technologies, are all being reviewed and revamped to deepen their connections to Columbia's curriculum, students, and faculty.

Because of the college's curricular emphasis on creative disciplines, the public exhibition, presentation, dissemination, and sharing of the creative work of students, faculty, staff, and visiting artists is a fundamental part of the life of the institution. These diverse activities are essential to shaping the college's institutional identity and public profile, reinforcing its mission as an incubator of new creative practice, and building relationships and connections with external stakeholders and other communities of interest. A by no means comprehensive list of such programming would include the following:

- The college sponsors two campus-wide annual showcases of student work, the Manifest Urban Arts Festival which is held on the Thursday evening and Friday before Commencement Weekend, and the Wabash Arts Corridor Crawl, which takes place in mid-October as part of the college's parents' weekend. All academic departments participate in these showcases and the events are open to the public.
- Columbia is one of the leading presenting organizations in the city of Chicago. Its regular cultural offerings include performances by music students, faculty, and visiting artists; student theatrical productions; readings and other literary events in the Creative Writing Reading Series; the Museum of Contemporary Photography's exhibitions and public programs; the Dance Center's annual presenting series and visiting dance company residencies; and art exhibitions in the gallery spaces managed by the Department of Exhibitions, Performance, and Student Spaces (DEPS).
- DEPS also manages ShopColumbia, a retail outlet for work by Columbia students, degreed alumni, faculty, and staff, which has a bricks-and-mortar and an online presence. In May 2017, the ShopColumbia storefront moved out of a Columbia ID-access building and into a newly-renovated gallery space that opens directly onto South Wabash Avenue, thereby opening up possibilities for expanded foot traffic.
- As befits a college with strong media arts degree programs, Columbia's student broadcasting and journalistic organizations are unusually vibrant. These include the student newspaper, the *Columbia Chronicle*; the student radio station, WCRX-FM (88.1); and even a student-run television station, Frequency TV, which streams online and features original programming

developed by television students and faculty.

- The journalism program sponsors two online community news websites, ChicagoTalks and AustinTalks (based in the Austin neighborhood on Chicago's West Side), that publish news and features reporting by, as the ColumbiaTalks website puts it, "young journalists learning to cover their communities and community people with a story to tell". AustinTalks has also formed a partnership with the *Austin Weekly News*, a non-Columbia affiliated weekly publication, which regularly publishes AustinTalks stories in its print and online editions.
- The creative writing program sponsors an annual literary competition for high school writers, the Young Authors Writing Competition.

As regards the primacy of its academic mission and purposes, Columbia is an independent 501(c)(3) organization, so it has no investors to satisfy and no parent entity to serve, and it lacks structures such as intercollegiate athletic programs and Greek organizations whose stakeholders can at times wield disproportionate influence over American higher education institutions. That said, over the past decade the college has moved to undo legacy behaviors that had allowed its institutional priorities to be influenced by secondary functions and relationships that were not central to its core mission. The consequences of this have been most apparent in two areas.

Relationships with affiliated entities ('centers'): One of the hallmarks of President Alexandroff's administration was its enthusiasm for establishing college-affiliated entities – some of them independent 501(c)(3) organizations, some not – with missions that were broadly connected to the arts and media world. (In Columbia parlance these are referred to as 'centers', and this report will retain that usage.) These ranged widely in terms of function and purpose – a professional jazz big band, two academic presses, a photography museum, a dance presenting series, etc. – and their longer-term record of operational success was mixed. Most were the creations of single individuals, usually faculty, and hence were prone to running up against the limitations of the entrepreneurial model of new program development, in particular an excessive dependence on the founder's vision, level of commitment, and personal networks for their sustenance. The college was able to absorb their start-up costs in an era of steady enrollment growth, but most of them failed to develop longer-term strategies for achieving financial self-reliance, leaving them exposed once enrollments and tuition revenues began to decline after 2008. Most importantly, too many centers came into existence without adequate consideration being given to how they fit with the college's mission, or to whether entities of a type more commonly found at doctoral universities were appropriate for a primarily undergraduate institution with degree programs in creative disciplines and a teaching rather than a research faculty. Too often they operated as independent silos, with potential connections to Columbia's curriculum left unexplored or underdeveloped.

This was not a blueprint for sustainable success, and over the past decade, as founders have retired or departed and college operating budgets have been cut, a significant shakeout of the centers has occurred. Several – Anchor Graphics, the college's boutique fine arts press; the Chicago Jazz Ensemble; the Ellen Stone Belic Institute for the Study of Women and Gender in the Arts and Media; and the Columbia College Chicago Press – have closed. Others – the Center for Community Arts Partnerships; the Center for Book, Paper, and Print; the Center for Black Music Research; and the Science Institute – have been folded into the appropriate schools (Columbia is organized into four schools: Liberal Arts, Fine and Performing Arts, Media Arts, and Graduate Studies) or academic departments and restructured with a view to connecting their mission and work more closely with the college's academic mission and curriculum. Three centers – the Museum of Contemporary Photography, the Dance Center, and the Sherwood Community Music School – have established their long-term viability and possess a well-defined public profile. All three share features that their shuttered counterparts lacked: a broader

stakeholder base, more substantial and stable external funding sources, stronger connections to Columbia's faculty and academic programs, and deeper links with established creative communities in their areas of focus.

Property acquisition and development: Between 1996 and 2011, Columbia embarked on an [aggressive program of property acquisition](#) in its South Loop neighborhood to serve its growing enrollment, purchasing ten buildings and two parcels of land and receiving a third parcel of land as a donation. In so doing, it extended its core campus north to Congress Street and south to 16th Street. In many ways, this was a propitious development for the college. The comparative neglect of the South Loop for much of the post-Second World War era meant that property prices were affordable, and the college received favorable publicity for contributing to neighborhood regeneration.

The downside, however, was that the buildings were purchased opportunistically, often without a clear plan for their use, and then adapted for programmatic purposes. This did not pose a problem in isolated instances – many of the remodeling projects created highly imaginative fit-for-purpose spaces – but it can be argued that at times the institutional focus on property acquisition took on a momentum of its own that was not always aligned with the college's academic priorities (other than the need for gross square footage).

Since the late 2000s, however, Columbia has moved away from allowing property development to define the possibilities and aspirations of its academic and co-curricular programs. Its two newest buildings, the Media Production Center (2010) and the student center (under construction; scheduled to open in May 2019), are purpose-built structures whose programming priorities were established in a fully-realized design process. In 2017-18, the college renovated the Getz Theatre, the theatre department's home, to turn it into a more functional teaching and learning space; the renovation also allowed the theatre program to relocate its set shop to the Getz from an off-site location (which the college subsequently sold). In 2017, the college did something unprecedented in its recent history, selling a building at 820 S. Michigan Avenue that it had purchased in 2011 but left unoccupied after determining that the structure could not viably be converted into either the student center or a new college library (both were proposed as possible uses). Columbia is currently engaged in a comprehensive effort to rationalize its real estate portfolio; this may eventually lead it to shed additional properties that no longer adequately serve its programmatic needs.

Sources

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