

# STRATEGIC PLAN OF THE WEISSMAN SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

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## **Introduction by Dean Jeffrey Peck**

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## **Dean's Introduction**

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Following on the Baruch College Strategic Plan, the Weissman School of Arts and Sciences is pleased to present its own strategic plan for the next five years. The last half-decade was marked by a number of challenges, notably budget cuts that affected the entire college. Now, the stabilization of the budget and the hiring of twenty-four new faculty members by the Weissman School have encouraged the optimistic aspirations in our plan.

Every item in the document contributes to Weissman's broad goal of becoming a "destination school," that is, a place where an increasing number of students come specifically to study disciplines in the arts and sciences. In receiving this designation in the College's Strategic Plan, the Weissman School aims to flourish as a liberal arts school within Baruch, while simultaneously reaffirming its commitment to educating students

from the Zicklin School of Business and the School of Public Affairs. Above all, the plan emphasizes the advantages of studying the liberal arts in small classes with excellent faculty at a campus in the heart of Manhattan. At the same time, Weissman students have access to the added benefits of sharing the campus with first-rate schools of business and public affairs.

As Dean, I see this strategic plan as a leadership document, not only for Baruch but for CUNY. The plan emphasizes student learning, faculty and undergraduate research, civic engagement and global studies, as well as the development of interdisciplinary studies and additional graduate programs. Not every goal may be quickly reached, but the plan sets out a blueprint, with specific recommendations that we will do our very best to achieve. Some of our success will, of course, depend on funding, but the energy and commitment of faculty and students will go a long way toward achieving the objectives set forth here.

This document was drafted by a committee of Weissman faculty, who sought comments from colleagues, interviewed administrators, and looked into best practices at other institutions. Early versions of the plan were discussed at a faculty meeting and a subsequent town hall. Faculty members were also invited to submit their comments privately, and many did. The end result is a document that can stand alongside the College's Strategic Plan and those of the Zicklin School of Business and the School of Public Affairs. With Weissman's five-year Strategic Plan in place, we see a new beginning and a bright future.

My thanks to the faculty committee and the many colleagues who contributed to this dynamic and imaginative plan, which remains faithful to the mission of our school and our college.

## **I. VISION STATEMENT**

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The Weissman School of Arts and Sciences will be recognized as a leader in public liberal arts education, drawing on its strong faculty, small class sizes, and diverse student body. The Weissman School will emphasize deep learning, critical thinking, and a culture of collective inquiry and intellectual risk-taking. It will impart to its students the importance of mastering specific bodies of knowledge, preparing them for successful careers and rich lives. The Weissman School will provide students with intellectual breadth and depth, as well as the flexibility to adapt to a wide variety of careers.

## **II. MISSION STATEMENT**

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The Weissman School of Arts and Sciences at Baruch College/CUNY remains dedicated to its historical mission of increasing the social, cultural, and financial mobility of a diverse student body. Its thirteen departments and strong interdisciplinary programs offer liberal



arts excellence with a global perspective, preparing students for a wide range of careers and for graduate study. The Weissman faculty cultivates critical thinking, cultural awareness, ethical reasoning, and written, oral, and analytical skills for majors in its own departments and for students in the Zicklin School of Business and the School of Public Affairs.

### III. FACULTY DEVELOPMENT

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In keeping with its twin goals of excellence in teaching and research, the Weissman School must support its faculty in key areas by reducing teaching loads, providing research assistants, and building on college initiatives to mentor and develop new faculty. The School must strengthen existing processes for sharing teaching best practices and identifying and strengthening weak teaching. New faculty will be mentored by tenured faculty with regard to teaching, research, and service. The key initiatives are these:

#### *Reaffirm Its Commitment to Predominantly Small Classes*

Faculty members must be able to give students personal attention and treat them as individuals with a variety of needs. The Weissman School must continue to keep class sizes down. The School must also continue to hire more full-time faculty, who are best able to establish long-time relationships with students, mentor them, and provide them with guidance as they seek employment or consider graduate study. The School should maintain its long tradition of rewarding outstanding pedagogy among the junior faculty with a teaching awards program, which should be renamed the Weissman Award.

#### *Improve the Research Infrastructure*

A school that excels in faculty research provides necessary and strategic nourishment for scholarship, student research, mentoring, and teaching. Research-active faculty need support of the following kinds:

- Seed funding for both junior and tenured faculty to catalyze research questions and provide preliminary data for larger external funding opportunities.
- Weissman resources to augment the assistance available to faculty from the College's Office of Sponsored Programs and Research and to create a clear and fair policy on grant recoveries.
- Clear communication with the faculty regarding mechanisms for enhancing scholarship, including information on scholar incentive awards, internal funding opportunities, and the criteria for and timing of fellowship leaves.
- Research facilities bolstered to a level where high-quality work can occur and sufficient technicians and administrative staff are available to support faculty research, maintain equipment, and ensure that campus facilities for conducting grant-funded research are adequate.
- Increased internal support for research, particularly in those disciplines in which few large external grants are available.
- Identification of potential donors to create awards and programs for tenured faculty,



building upon programs now available to junior faculty.

- Hiring of work-study students and other students to support faculty research and engage in their own research.

Weissman should also encourage applied research and draw on its relationships with the Zicklin School of Business, the Lawrence N. Field Center for Entrepreneurship, and the Steven L. Newman Real Estate Institute to explore opportunities for cross- disciplinary studies and collaboration.

#### *Increase Diversity*

Weissman must encourage its departments to act forcefully to increase the diversity of its faculty. Outreach efforts should be strengthened; stronger incentives must be made available to persuade a diverse pool of potential applicants to apply. Incentives should also be offered to departments to encourage a deep commitment to diversity and to the actions that achieve it. New lines should be advertised more widely on multiple listserves (e.g., the Association of Black Sociologists). Funding from within the CUNY system and external sources should be sought for postgraduate fellowships that might be attractive to members of minority groups. The School will work to identify obstacles to tenure and promotion among its underrepresented faculty members and develop strategies to overcome these obstacles.

In addition, Weissman faculty should be encouraged to develop and share best practices that build on the diversity of the student body, making use of that diversity in classes to promote broader and greater learning.

#### *Increase Participation of Full-time Faculty in the Freshman Learning Communities*

Learning Communities is an exciting program designed to enrich academic and social experiences and opportunities for entering freshmen at Baruch, with common scheduling and small classes that enable students to connect with and rely on each other and to create a bond with faculty and friends. To achieve its ends, this program depends entirely on the willingness of faculty to get involved, and right now the number of full-timers who are willing to do so is small.

#### *Encourage Faculty Support for Online Education*

In light of the College's long-term plan to offer a significant portion of classes online or as "hybrids," Weissman must train faculty in the tools and procedures for converting their courses to an online/hybrid format. Because the time and energy needed to develop online/hybrid courses can be substantial, faculty must be provided with incentives (e.g., reassigned time, money) for developing such courses and guaranteed the opportunity to offer these courses in the future. The faculty must also be provided with the equipment and sufficient technical assistance needed to conduct online and hybrid courses. Faculty should be encouraged to collaborate in developing online courses. Appropriate caps on student enrollment must be set to ensure the feasibility of online/hybrid courses while safeguarding



the quality of the educational experience for students. The School must establish proper mechanisms for assessing the effectiveness of online/hybrid courses.

#### **IV. CIVIC ENGAGEMENT, PUBLIC SCHOLARSHIP, AND GLOBAL STUDIES**

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Weissman's location in one of the world's great cities and the remarkable global diversity of its student body position the School for exchange between the classroom and the world. The Weissman School should build on the work of faculty and departments in incorporating civic engagement and global studies into their teaching and scholarly activities. Civic engagement and global studies should be part of the Weissman School's identity.

##### *Civic Engagement and Public Scholarship*

The School should foster an intellectual environment that is supportive of civic engagement – a pedagogical approach that builds ties between the academic institution and the outside world and enables students to learn by participating in activities beyond traditional classroom settings – and public scholarship – scholarly or creative activity that joins serious intellectual endeavor with a commitment to public practice and public consequence.

Numerous studies have found that students learn more effectively if subject matter is taught both in and out of the classroom. Weissman departments and faculty should consider whether a civic engagement component is suitable to their disciplines and, if so, how to integrate civic engagement into the curriculum. If a sufficient number of departments and faculty develop civic engagement courses, the Weissman School should create an Office of Civic Engagement to support and coordinate these activities.

Faculty who engage in civic engagement and public scholarship may view these activities as one component of their portfolios for consideration during the reappointment, tenure, and promotion processes. But they should be aware and should be counseled by senior faculty in their departments that these activities may well be seen as a form of “service” rather than “scholarship.” Such civic engagement activities are not a substitute for traditional scholarship and publication. Indeed, it is the Weissman School's hope that civic engagement and public scholarship will give rise to traditional research and scholarship.

The Weissman School should also

- Develop partnerships in communities that will enable students to experience service learning. These partnerships may also provide opportunities for research by faculty and students.
- Hold an annual conference at which faculty, students, and guests present their work in civic engagement and share best practices and results, as well as smaller events and meetings throughout the year to stimulate thinking along these lines.

- Provide financial and logistical support for faculty and students who participate in field work. Transportation, food, and lodging that enable the Baruch community to engage outside its daily sphere would be particularly welcome.

### *Global Studies*

Global Studies is an interdisciplinary program that helps students develop an understanding of the nature and history of globalization. Global Studies investigates the forms of cultural contact and conflict that underlie the current geopolitical and economic makeup of the world and provides an overview of the historical developments that have knitted the globe together.

Weissman students often have significant life experience in foreign countries, and the School should build on this foundation; however, the diversity of experience that a student brings to campus is not sufficient in itself to guarantee a global awareness. In addition, students often have little experience of this country beyond the New York metropolitan area. To refer to programs that address both of these needs, this document uses the term study away rather than study abroad.

Many Weissman students face significant obstacles to studying away because of financial concerns or family and work obligations. The Dean will seek funding to assist in overcoming financial obstacles, and the School must begin convincing students early in their time at Baruch that study away, in different forms, is available to them and will be of substantial benefit. Such persuasion could be done via enhanced advisement, public events that students are incentivized to attend, and more work with student clubs and the Office of Student Life.

Faculty should be encouraged and provided support to develop and teach study away programs in conjunction with the Baruch Study Abroad Office.

### *Curriculum Integration*

To foster global awareness, the Weissman School will move toward a program of curricular integration. With the support of the Office of Study Abroad, individual departments will identify partnerships, both international and domestic, that allow students to make study away an integral part of their curriculum. The School will aim to integrate students' study away experiences into their education through a variety of institutional approaches that foster the rigor of disciplinary, interdisciplinary, and cultural learning (the Global Studies minor will form a part of this project). While policies and practices will necessarily vary from department to department, the School should observe and implement certain best practices at other colleges in the U.S.:

- Departments should assume “ownership” of specific study away and civic engagement programs that are recommended to their majors, identifying and approving specific universities and departments whose curricula align with that of

the Weissman department in question. Individual departments will retain full authority for approval of course equivalency for all study away destinations.

- Departments might consider whether the existing curriculum can be modified to encourage study away.
- Where appropriate, departments should emphasize the value of an integrated study away experience during the advisement process and in promotional and informational materials for prospective and current majors.
- Weissman should develop honors courses in civic engagement.

Weissman departments should consider whether civic engagement, study away, or both, might be a required component of the curriculum for its majors. Students could fulfill the requirement in a number of ways – for example, by completing a study away program, or by

- Completing an internship program, approved by the relevant faculty, in New York City or elsewhere.
- Participating in student-led and student-initiated service learning trips and activities sponsored by the Office of Student Life.
- Completing a course with a “civic engagement” designation, much as students are currently required to take certain courses designated “communication intensive.”

## V. CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

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The Weissman School’s curricular planning must focus on developing students’ critical and creative capacities and their written and oral communication skills, while adhering to CUNY’s historic mission of expanding access to quality higher education. A strong liberal arts and sciences education prepares students for full engagement with their own potential as individuals and as members of the many communities they will belong to and influence. In an entrepreneurial era that rewards creativity and critical thinking, there is no better preparation for adult life than a rigorous liberal arts and sciences education.

A major goal should be strengthening the teaching not only of methodologies and knowledge areas but of writing, communication, creativity, scientific reasoning, and critical thinking. The Weissman School should enhance programs that work toward this goal, such as Writing Across the Curriculum. Curricular development should focus on these efforts:

### *Encourage Students to Double Major*

Encouraging double majors could provide students with an enriched education and strengthen the appeal of Weissman by making it more desirable for those who want a heightened profile upon graduation. The ability to major in a business or public affairs area with a liberal arts bachelor’s degree would provide a uniquely powerful educational experience for students facing today’s tough job market. Double majors should be promoted in advisement materials.



The Weissman faculty should identify natural pairs among its majors and encourage students who are declaring majors in one of the paired programs to consider majoring in the other as well. The Weissman School should impress upon its colleagues in the Zicklin School of Business and the School of Public Affairs the advantages of enabling their students to double major with a liberal arts and sciences area of study.

#### *Strengthen the Minors*

The school should strengthen current minor requirements, which vary considerably across departments (e.g., 50% of minors allow any 4000-level course to be the capstone, whereas others are more prescriptive). Particular attention should be paid to whether appropriate prerequisites exist for 4000-level capstone courses.

Creating subcategories of popular minors might help students focus on a particular area of interest and should be considered by departments with large numbers of minors. Strengthening the minor, if possible within the Pathways regime, should be considered, along with ways to make an “enhanced minor” or an “honors minor” with additional credits attractive to students.

#### *Strengthen the Honors Programs*

A stronger honors program would help to make the Weismann School an attractive alternative for students considering study in the arts and sciences at a small private college. In particular, expansion of the Provost’s Scholars program, both in numbers and in level of support, would encourage students who have proven their ability in our classes to remain at Baruch. Students should also be encouraged to earn honors through the completion of an honors thesis, and faculty should receive enhanced compensation for supervising such a thesis, either in the form of payment or increased workload credit.

#### *Promote Undergraduate Research*

Studies repeatedly show that undergraduates who engage in research express greater satisfaction with their education, graduate at a higher rate, and experience better post-graduation outcomes. The Weissman School will reaffirm its commitment to undergraduate research by creating an Office of Undergraduate Research, which will coordinate with the Provost’s Office on Undergraduate Research and the College’s Faculty Advisory Council on Undergraduate Research. The Weissman School and its faculty will create a culture that values and promotes undergraduate participation in research and creative inquiry. This effort will involve

- Inspiring students and faculty to collaborate on research projects driven by mutual interests, fostering a mentoring environment that encourages and rewards collaboration;
- Disseminating best practices and models for undergraduate research;
- Assisting in the development and evaluation of curricular and co-curricular structures that support undergraduate research;



- Establishing a School-wide task force to consider all aspects of undergraduate research at Weissman, including its role in student life, undergraduate internship programs, civic engagement initiatives, and programs and external learning experiences. The task force will be charged with ensuring that every Weissman undergraduate is given the opportunity to engage in research.

In support of these goals, the Weissman School should invest creativity, resources, and a measure of administrative flexibility in support of undergraduate research.

- The School should establish an overall set of learning outcomes that promotes a schoolwide culture of research.
- Each department should examine and, if necessary, refocus its curriculum to ensure that students go through a program of structured learning, which first ensures they have the underlying skills required for doing research, then engages them in research projects well before a final capstone course.
- Weissman should make greater use of the work-study program's ability to provide paid undergraduate research assistants to its faculty. A workshop on research for work-study undergraduates would help focus their interest; a workshop for faculty on hiring work-study students for research might increase participation.

#### *Coordinate and Enhance Interdisciplinary Programs*

Interdisciplinary programs make strategic and intellectual sense and help raise the profile of the Weismann School, as demonstrated by the existing minors in American Studies, Asian/Asian-American Studies, Environmental Sustainability, Global Studies, Film Studies, Jewish Studies, Religion and Culture, and Women's Studies. The Feit Seminars currently encourage faculty from different departments to collaborate, as do the Freshman Learning Communities, the Chase seminars, the Baruch College/Rubin Museum Collaboration, and the Eugene Lang fellowships. Weissman should continue to encourage the creation of collaborative research groups, centers, external collaborations (possibly modeled on the Rubin collaboration), and endowed programs. Such interdisciplinary programs might be the basis of new minors and new master's and certificate programs. The Weissman School should make these programs stronger, give them a higher profile, coordinate them with activities sponsored by Student Life (such as theme months), and invite donors to name the programs.

#### *Expand Graduate Programs*

The current successful graduate programs in Weissman are professionally oriented, but this orientation should not be a requirement for new programs. The school should provide resources for proposed liberal arts and sciences programs that are deemed viable. Attention should be paid to the new inter-school Arts Administration MA as it begins to enroll students; it might serve as a model for other graduate programs that would link Weissman, the Zicklin School of Business, and the School of Public Affairs. The Weissman Director of Graduate Programs should help identify potential programs and expand existing master's



programs, including certificate programs in appropriate disciplines, and executive education programs.

The Weissman School should consider prospective programs that take advantage of inter-school collaborations at Baruch. Possible subject areas such as international affairs, environmental sustainability (with contributions from the natural sciences, social sciences, humanities, design, business, and public policy), and immigration studies would seem to have great potential. The Weissman leadership should undertake a process to identify interested parties and convene a cross-school committee to discuss future collaborations and shared interests.

#### *Other Matters*

Weissman should seek to persuade CUNY to create an improved admissions process in which students interested in majoring in the liberal arts and sciences can apply directly to the School. Increasing the number of Weissman-bound students among both the incoming freshman and the incoming transfer populations would provide the faculty with a highly motivated cohort of students with whom to work.

In support of curricular development and to assist students in planning their careers, Weissman should support the creation of networking/mentoring among current Weissman students and alumni. Weissman should work with the Starr Career Development Center and the Alumni Association to create events and build relationships that help its students make smart postgraduate choices about careers and additional study.

#### **IV. DEFINING AND PUBLICIZING WEISSMAN'S IDENTITY**

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The Weissman School should proudly proclaim its identity in a brief phrase that reflects the diversity and strengths of its departments.

This Weissman identity will become a signature part of the School's strategy of communicating its excellence, both internally and to a range of external audiences, including alumni and alumni networks, donors and potential donors, potential partners in collaboration, current and prospective students and their families, high school counselors and teachers, current and prospective faculty and news organizations. The School should publicize its record of offering small classes and emphasizing personal attention to students. The Weissman School must make the larger public aware of its continued success in this area.

The Weissman School should also emphasize its proximity, geographically and structurally, to Baruch's prominent schools of business and public affairs, which provides students with bridge programs, access to excellent faculty, and resources in many areas outside of the arts and sciences.



The Baruch College strategic plan includes the goal of establishing “the Weissman School as a Destination Liberal Arts College.” The Weissman School must communicate in clear and compelling terms the value to be found by those who make Weissman their destination. This communication must take several forms and be carried out in several different areas:

- Recruit among high school students, teachers, counselors, and families.
- Recruit among community and junior colleges for transfer students.
- Promote and recruit for a growing number of Weissman graduate programs regionally, nationally, and internationally.
- Begin a professional communications campaign that includes a thorough reorganization of Weissman’s web presence around the new theme, incorporating video (or video-cum-animated) statements of each department’s contribution to the School’s excellence.
- Develop a professionally managed social media presence across various platforms, alert to and adaptive of emerging technologies.
- Advertise in traditional media.
- Create brochures, posters, and other marketing materials.

