

CONTEXT AND OVERVIEW

In 1985 Calvin College adopted its Comprehensive Plan for Integrating North American Ethnic Minority Persons and Their Interests into Every Facet of Calvin's Institutional Life. For nearly twenty years, this Comprehensive Plan has served as one of the college's principal road maps toward the goal, in the authors' words, of a “genuinely multicultural Christian academic community.”

Over time that goal has become both broader and, in some respects, more elusive. Calvin's growing leadership as a center of Christian higher education has brought it into ever-closer relationship with academic and community partners around the world, thereby multiplying opportunities for intercultural and multicultural engagement on a global scale. At the same time it is clear that a commitment to racial justice and reconciliation cannot be pursued in isolation from other justice issues, and the college has invested considerable effort to address concerns such as gender equity and the accommodation of persons with disabilities. Within North American society, meanwhile, racial categories once regarded as self-evident have begun to blur, while a steady influx of new migrants and refugee groups has created additional layers of diversity in an already multi-ethnic and multicultural society. Calvin's supporting denomination, the Christian Reformed Church, once ethnically homogeneous, now includes members from a colorful array of linguistic, cultural, and ethnic traditions. The Reformed confessional community of which it is a part includes denominations in all parts of the

world, a majority of them in the Southern Hemisphere and several of them substantially larger than the CRC itself. Calvin's student body now represents an equally colorful array of communities and traditions from throughout North America as well as over 30 countries around the globe. The college's core curriculum now identifies cross-cultural engagement as an integral component of a liberal arts education, and hundreds of students avail themselves of overseas study opportunities each year. For the Comprehensive Plan to be truly comprehensive, it must take account of the increasingly global nature of Calvin's commitments as well as the increasing diversity of identities and experiences represented by "North American ethnic minority persons." It must also take account of the diversity of attitudes regarding priorities in the pursuit of racial justice. And it must be sensitive to possible points of intersection as well as points of tension with other demands for justice and community.

If the context for the Comprehensive Plan has grown more complex, the goals themselves remain elusive. Despite continuing efforts, both institutional and individual, it is evident that major elements of the original plan remain unrealized in whole or in part. To be sure, there has been significant progress in a number of areas. Programming initiatives, both on-campus and community-based, have increased exponentially, and recent retention rates for ethnic minority students resemble those for the student body at large. Even so, it is clear that the college will fall far short of achieving one of the principal targets of the 1985 plan—namely, that persons of color should constitute 15 percent of the faculty, staff, and student body by 2003-2004. Faculty and students of color, whether North American or international, continue to report that they encounter significant cultural and communication barriers to full participation in the Calvin community. If Calvin is serious in its intention to become "a more effective agent of God's *shalom* in its educational partnerships, both at home and abroad," as the current (2002-2007) Strategic Plan insists, then much work clearly remains to be done. The pursuit of *shalom* calls not only for concerted efforts to promote racial reconciliation and Christian community but also for deliberate measures to identify and address practices, structures, and attitudes, both institutional and personal, that may

militate against those efforts. It calls not only for a reassessment of existing goals but also for an evaluation of reasons that those goals are not being met.

All of these factors make a review and revision of the original Comprehensive Plan both timely and necessary. One preliminary review can be found in the 1998 volume *The One in the Many: Christian Identity in a Multicultural World* (ed. Thomas R. Thompson, University Press of America). In 1999, the Calvin Anti-Racism Team (CART) was formed to augment the work of the Multicultural Affairs Committee and to participate in a wider denominational effort to address racism. This team submitted a report in September of 1999 that the Multicultural Affairs Committee commended to the Faculty Senate. In response, the Planning and Priorities Committee created a task force to review the Comprehensive Plan. That group concluded, among other things, that the plan would be strengthened by a more explicitly antiracist orientation, a deeper sense of urgency and commitment, and more effective accountability mechanisms (“Becoming an Anti-Racist Institution: A Faculty/Staff Review of Calvin College's Comprehensive Plan,” 2000). In light of these suggestions, the Planning and Priorities Committee appointed a new task force in 2001 and charged it with rewriting the Comprehensive Plan. This proposed revision is the result.

The aim of “Comprehensive Plan II” is not so much to replace the original plan as it is to expand and re-cast it based on the insights and experiences of the last fifteen years. It begins, like its predecessor, with an extended statement of vision that reflects on the relationship between the declared goal of multicultural community and Calvin's basic institutional mission, notably as articulated in *An Expanded Statement of the Mission of Calvin College: Vision, Purpose, Commitment* (1992), as well as in the detailed anti-racism analyses that have been conducted by the college since the late 1990s.

Three interlocking themes that emerge from this analysis provide the strategic framework for a reformulated plan. The first theme, multicultural citizenship, emphasizes the importance of expanding cross-cultural experiences and cultivating intercultural sensitivities if we are to become effective agents of renewal in a “global village.” The second theme, anti-racism and

accountability, emphasizes the need for a continuing effort to identify the sin of racism and its effects-institutional no less than personal-at Calvin College, and the attendant need to make structural changes that will promote greater accountability and enable us to escape and avoid the traps of institutional racism. The third theme, reconciliation and restoration, testifies to the positive vision of shalom toward which we as a Christian academic community aspire and which we seek to model in our institutional practice.

After a brief review of existing policies and structures that continue to provide a foundation upon which to build an anti-racist, reconciling, and restoring Christian community, reformulated goals and strategies are set out within each of the major areas of action identified in the original plan. Each set of goals and strategies also specifies the particular administrators and committees to be assigned operational responsibility for ensuring that the goal in question is achieved. These recommendations are designed to complement and extend existing policies and structures, with the aim of transforming Calvin into a college that is always vigilant in recognizing racism, always conscientious in promoting reconciliation, and always active in the work of restoring healthy multicultural community.