

GRATZ COLLEGE

Proposed Strategic Plan – 2022-2025

Building from its legacy and consistent with its Mission, Gratz College has developed the following strategy to guide it in the next three years.

THE RICH LEGACY OF GRATZ COLLEGE

Founded in Philadelphia in 1895, Gratz College is renowned as the longest standing, independent, and non-denominational college for Jewish studies in North America. Addressing evolving needs in the Jewish and other communities it has served, Gratz College has focused its efforts on the training of educators and communal professionals. Over the last quarter century, Gratz has expanded its offerings to provide principally graduate-level degrees and credentials. Currently, there are approximately 350 students enrolled in Gratz's for-credit programs. An early provider of online education, Gratz offers fully online degrees and has enrolled students from 43 states throughout the United States and nearly a dozen foreign countries. Accredited by the Middle States Commission for Higher Education, Gratz is proud that, from its establishment, it has accepted women and men on an equal basis throughout its programs.

Building on this legacy, today Gratz continues to innovate in education, taking advantage of today's technology to offer programs and classes in person and around the world. Currently, Gratz is the only institution offering a Ph.D. in Holocaust and Genocide Studies through fully online study. The College also offers an Ed.D. and various master's degrees and certificates through asynchronous distance learning. Most of the College's for-credit students are employed adults seeking to advance in their chosen fields by enrolling in Gratz courses while continuing employment. In addition to these offerings, Gratz presents numerous and varied ongoing non-credit educational opportunities for young and older adults.

THE GRATZ COLLEGE MISSION

Mindful of its legacy and the needs of the present and future, Gratz is guided by this mission:

Gratz College advances both education and applied Jewish wisdom for the benefit of a diverse student population, the Jewish community, and all people. The College achieves this mission

through accredited degree programs, scholarship, and public engagement.

RECENT GROWTH OF ONLINE DELIVERY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Gratz has seen tremendous success and reception of its virtual learning programs over the past decades. More recently, higher education in general has witnessed a significant increase in the implementation of online educational modalities. This is likely due in significant part to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Continued distance learning at the undergraduate and graduate levels generally likely implicates conditions, forces, and challenges that may not be as relevant to Gratz's specialized graduate programs. This is because, as mentioned, Gratz's for-credit students are predominantly adults already working in their chosen careers. Indicative of this, 78% of the for-credit student body are part-time learners.

GRATZ COLLEGE – CURRENTLY AND GOING FORWARD

While many of Gratz's programs are well regarded in content and well received in the market, Gratz's goal is to continue to improve the quality of its various programs and increase the public's awareness of and access to those programs. Financially, the College is chiefly tuition funded with auxiliary financial support from its endowment and institutional fundraising. Some of the College's programs appear currently to be underutilized. Depending on evaluation of their centrality to the College's mission, their capacity to enhance the College's financial security, and future utilization prospects in each instance, these programs may warrant expansion, or their capacity might be better utilized by redeployment.

For more than 30 years under its lease, Gratz College has occupied and invested substantial sums in its present premises in Melrose Park, Pennsylvania. During that period the Gratz offerings and programming have changed dramatically. With those changes have come new and differing space and facilities needs. Current Gratz operations require only about 20% of the facilities available in the building.

Gratz operates in two principal substantive fields: for-credit academic programs and non-credit programs for its Jewish and general communities. To do so, Gratz has infrastructure and facilities capacities, as well as financial and broader institutional concerns. Not a static entity, Gratz faces multiple needs in each of these four aspects, requiring it to pursue different paths at the same

time going forward. This Plan provides a strategic approach to these varied paths — ongoing evaluation of current operations, continued growth and improvement, and as needed, change.

THE PLAN

This Plan addresses both advancement of the substantive purpose reflected in Gratz College’s Mission and the practical considerations needed for successful achievement of Gratz’s goals. Management will implement and fulfill this Plan within the next three years, by the end of fiscal year 2025 (or earlier as stated).

FOR-CREDIT ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

Gratz will continue to enhance the quality and accessibility of its online, asynchronous learning approach to graduate-level education. The College intends to be accurately perceived as among the best providers of such education in the fields it serves.

To this end, each existing academic program will undergo review and evaluation. The evaluation will consider various goals, including:

- improving the quality of each program;
- increasing over-all enrollment in current programs to maximize effective utilization of existing capacity;
- potentially offering new programs, as to both substantive field and format, such as micro-credentials; and
- enhancing students’ experiences, including desired supportive services.

The evaluation will consider various organizational structures, such as a center model, for effective and efficient operation and management of the College’s programs, as well as potentially expanding delivery modalities, such as partnerships with other institutions.

The College will formulate and implement a standardized process for evaluating potential new programs and their feasibility.

The existing Gratz online technical infrastructure is not optimal to achieving the College’s qualitative educational goal and thus likely requires a major upgrade. Gratz will achieve a level of technology and related staffing that puts

it in the top tier of comparable online providers of educational programs. Similarly, Gratz will expand the supportive services currently available to its for-credit students.

The bachelor's degree completion program has already been evaluated and determined to require resources that are better devoted to graduate-level programs that are at the core of Gratz's for-credit education. Accordingly, the undergraduate completion program will be terminated with appropriate work-out provisions for students currently enrolled in the program.

NON-CREDIT EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

Non-credit educational programs for adults will be expanded in content, distribution channels, and geographic reach. Expansion of these programs will further various goals, among which are:

- providing learning for its own sake — *Torah lishma* — for adults seeking to expand their knowledge and understanding without regard for credits and credentials;
- expanding, through synchronous and asynchronous online modalities, Gratz's geographic reach, especially to communities that may not have sufficient local capacity to provide comparable programs on their own; and
- encouraging participants' identification with and developing loyalty as supporters of and donors to Gratz College.

By June 30, 2023, Gratz will evaluate and decide the future of the Gratz Academy program, including whether it is to be continued.

STRENGTHENING ONGOING INSTITUTIONAL VIABILITY

Gratz will continue the recently commenced process for strengthening its institutional viability and independence. The goal of this process is to broaden Gratz's financial resources beyond its current reliance primarily upon tuition revenues. A key component of this process is expansion of the awareness of and appreciation for the uniqueness of Gratz College in order to increase its donor base and funding from outside the Philadelphia area and beyond its small but highly loyal donor pool. As part of this process, Gratz's institutional advancement efforts are migrating from a focus on fundraising events to a diversified "portfolio" approach to engagement with supporters.

This new strategy includes an annual campaign model emphasizing donations for unrestricted uses. Similarly, the endowment will be increased to strengthen Gratz's capacity to offer specialized programs and provide financial support to students.

FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS

Gratz is in active discussion with its landlord concerning possible revisions to its lease. The following, however, is premised upon the current lease terms.

Certain immediate facility needs related to Gratz's online technology have been identified and will be resolved by December 31, 2022.

Under its lease, Gratz may remain in the current premises until 2035. Yet, there are circumstances in which the lease could, without Gratz's consent, be terminated significantly earlier. Accordingly, Gratz will by June 30, 2023, formulate a contingency plan on how Gratz could relocate to new premises within the advance notice period the lease requires in connection with such an early termination.

Apart from such involuntary termination of the lease, however, it is advantageous for Gratz to remain as long as possible in the current facility. Accordingly, by June 30, 2023, Gratz will formulate an overall facility usage plan for Gratz's continued use of the current facility (including by sublease to other appropriate subtenants). As part of that plan, Gratz will by August 31, 2024, exercise its option to renew the lease through August 31, 2035. The usage plan will also identify and prioritize renovations to the existing building to enhance accessibility and security and to accommodate anticipated technology needs.

To enhance the quality and accessibility of its online, asynchronous-learning and other education modalities, Gratz will actively review and improve its technological capacities, including hardware, software, and required staffing. Existing cyber security protocols will be periodically evaluated and upgraded as necessary. In addition, to improve the security and management of sensitive records, Gratz will digitize historical academic and administrative records and securely destroy hard copies of these.

The library collection is a major component of Gratz. Because of specialized collections within it, not all items are yet catalogued. Gratz will complete an inventory and evaluation of its current collection. Gratz will also consider downsizing or other dispositions of its important collections (*e.g.*, rare books)

while maintaining or enhancing the entire collection's accessibility for students, staff, and the public.

THE STRATEGIC PLANNING TEAM

The Strategic Planning Committee, through whose efforts this Plan has been formulated, included Dr. Honour Moore and David Weinstein, co-chairs, David Brawer, Donna Guerin, Naomi Housman, Scott Minkoff, Dr. Philip Moore, and Dr. Ruth Sandberg, and *ex officio* members Kathy Elias and Rabbi Dr. Zev Eleff. In addition, the members of the task forces that provided significant focused input included Mindy Blechman, Brenda Bray, Thomas Cipriano, Lori Cohen, Dr. Joseph Davis, Dr. Paul Finkelman, Ross Holgado, Jade Jackman, Jonathan Levin, Sharon Liebhaber, Dodi Klimoff, Dave Malter, Jonathan Mandell, Dr. Zippy Schorr, Melissa Shusterman, Ben Stein, Sheila Stevens, Rabbi Dr. Lance Sussman, Trisha Swed, Dr. Saul Wachs, Jonathan Wallace, and Dr. R. Owen Williams. Others in the broad Gratz community—including faculty, staff, governors, students, and adult learning participants—provided input through their participation in town hall discussions. Arielle Nakdimon served as project manager.