

“ To be a **brilliant** college that transforms people’s lives and makes an **outstanding** contribution to the economic, social and cultural **life** of Boston and the surrounding areas. ”

STRATEGIC PLAN

2011 - 2014

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INTRODUCTION TO THE PLAN



AMANDA MOSEK

PRINCIPAL

This strategic plan sets out the direction of travel for Boston College for the next three years. Colleges have an important role to play in helping to secure economic recovery, both nationally and locally and in helping to realise the Government's vision of the 'Big Society'. Boston College is committed to working towards these objectives. It plays an important role in the life of the town and makes a significant contribution to the local economy in a number of ways. Offering in excess of 400 courses, it has over 10,000 students over the age of 14 and it employs over 500 staff. It works closely with local businesses to help meet their skills needs and it has established a reputation as being at the forefront of new developments. It makes a major contribution to community cohesion and is wholly committed to the principles of equality and diversity. It is a successful college that transforms people's lives and it has aspirations to become even better. Finally, Boston College is a values driven organisation where people really matter.

The College's strategic direction has been determined by the governing body and this plan has been developed with input from learners, staff and key local stakeholders. It is an important document which signals our future direction but it is not fixed in stone. It is anticipated that it will be amended every year to ensure that the college remains responsive to changes in its operating environment. Each area of the College will develop a business plan based on the six key strategic priorities so that everyone is contributing towards its future growth and success.

Mission

A learning organisation raising aspirations and meeting the skills needs of individuals, communities and employers through high quality education and training.

Vision

“ To be a **brilliant** college that transforms people's lives and makes an **outstanding** contribution to the economic, social and cultural **life** of Boston and the surrounding areas. ”



Values

Boston College is an inclusive organisation that is based on the following values:

- > Ensuring that the needs of learners drive everything we do
- > Taking a proactive approach to promoting equality of opportunity and celebrating diversity
- > Striving to release potential and raise aspirations of all
- > Creating a culture where high quality teaching and learning are paramount
- > Striving for excellence through continuous improvement
- > Insisting on high standards of behaviour and professionalism in staff and students
- > Maintaining high standards of customer service for internal and external clients
- > Creating and maintaining effective teamwork at all levels
- > Creating an environment where everyone feels safe
- > Fostering a culture of respect, openness, honesty, challenge and trust
- > Promoting innovation and celebrating success
- > Ensuring effective communication
- > Praising and rewarding whenever appropriate
- > Ensuring value for money

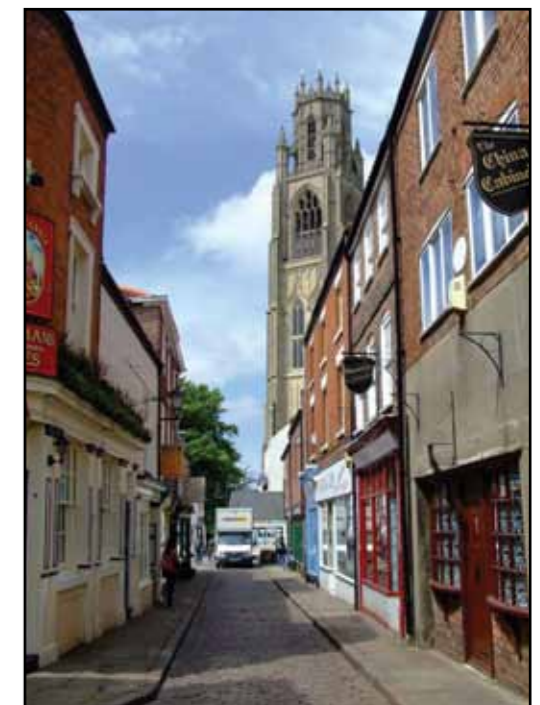
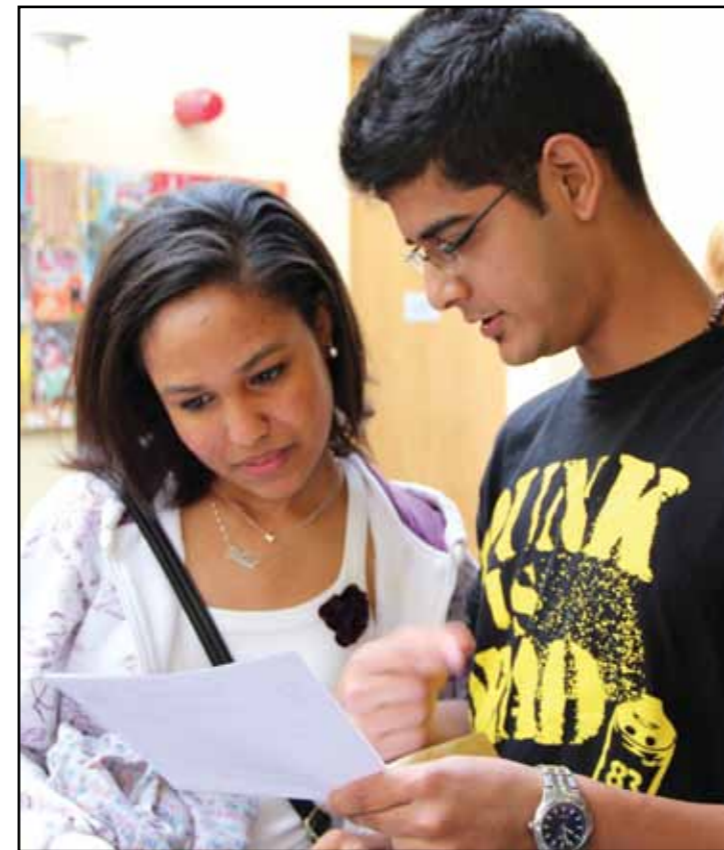
“ Ensuring that the needs of learners drive everything we do ”

National policy context

The Coalition Government is committed to the twin goals of sustained economic growth and an inclusive society with opportunity for everyone. It has continued to pursue an agenda of reform with a major emphasis on the requirement to make cost savings. The Further Education sector has inevitably been affected by these priorities and the next few years will be extremely challenging for all colleges. A number of key changes in direction have been signalled and 2011 has seen the publication of the Higher Education White Paper, the Wolf Report and the introduction of a new Education Bill. All of these present opportunities for the sector and the College will need to ensure that it is well positioned to take maximum advantage of any potential opportunity.

The Wolf Report and Government response

The Wolf Report was published in March 2011 and is an important milestone because it sets the framework for Government policy. Wolf emphasised that much of what has gone wrong with education over recent years is as a direct result of central Government's constant re-design, re-regulation and re-organisation of 14-19 education. The report was welcomed by Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Education and the Government response which was published in May 2011 accepted all the report's recommendations albeit with some modifications. Key recommendations that have the potential to impact on the College include the commitment to introduce broad programmes of study for 16-19 year olds with the intention to change the 16-18 funding system. The Government accepted the need to remove some of the low level vocational qualifications that schools have been offering young people and they will no longer count towards school attainment tables. There is also an intention to review the barriers that colleges face in enrolling 14 year old learners. This is a potential opportunity for the College and is likely to be welcomed by many young people and their parents who know that they would benefit from learning within a college environment. The potential threat, however, would be that increasing numbers of 14-16 year olds in college could alter the culture. There will be a strong emphasis on the need for every young person to have GCSE Maths and English but with a promise that the Department will look at other qualifications which are equally suitable. College lecturers with qualified status will be able to teach in schools on the same basis as qualified school teachers.



“...an inclusive society with opportunity for everyone.”



The Education Bill 2011

The Education Bill is currently making its way through Parliament. It seeks to implement the legislative proposals in the Department for Education's schools White Paper, 'The Importance of Teaching' and its overall purpose is to create an education system that delivers high standards for young people. It also incorporates measures from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills relating to skills and the reform of Higher Education funding and is therefore a very wide ranging bill. Key changes that will impact on the Further Education sector include the abolition of the Young People's Learning Agency which will be replaced by the Education Funding Agency. There will be greater freedom from regulatory burdens and the ending of the disparity of funding between schools and colleges. The age of participation will be raised so that by 2013 young people will have to stay in some form of education or training until the age of 17, rising to age 18 in 2015. Colleges will be well placed to accept these additional young people who are likely to be attracted to a practical vocational offer. Outstanding colleges will be exempt from routine future inspections and changes to inspection will be introduced to focus on the four core areas of achievement, teaching, leadership and management, and behaviour and safety.

The Government's Plan for Growth

The Government's economic policy objective is to achieve strong, sustainable and balanced growth that is more evenly shared across the country and between industries. In November 2010 the Growth Review was launched by the Chancellor and Business Secretary. As part of this, a thorough assessment of policy that is holding back growth of investment and hiring by business is being undertaken, both by looking at cross-economy issues and through considering the challenges faced by particular sectors. It is a long-term programme that is intended to make the UK the best place to start, finance and grow a business and to create a more educated and skilled workforce that is the most flexible in Europe. One of their specific aims is to focus on the rural economy, looking at the constraints, opportunities and risks impacting on economic growth in rural areas in an attempt to rebalance the economy. The final report is expected in Autumn 2011.

Higher Education White Paper

The Higher Education White Paper was published in July 2011 and offers encouraging news for colleges. It should be remembered that as Higher Education funding has been cut over the last two years, universities have pulled back from their partnerships with colleges. They have ended collaborative relationships, wanting to keep the funding and student numbers for themselves. Boston College was affected directly in this way when Lincoln University decided to end the partnership with the College. However the White Paper is supportive of Further Education colleges undertaking more Higher Education provision and is intending to simplify procedures for new organisations to achieve awarding powers. In addition to this, 20,000 places will be available for courses priced below £7,500 based on a competitive bidding process. All colleges will be eligible to bid into this.

These changes provide some possibility that the College will be able to grow its Higher Education provision in the next two years. This will enable more people to access Higher Education without having to travel vast distances and should prove an attractive option to both younger and older students.

New Challenges, New Chances: next steps in implementing the Further Education reform programme.

BIS published this consultation document in August 2011 which builds on Skills for Sustainable Growth issued in November 2010. It continues to promote the themes of bureaucracy reduction, the intention that more individuals and employers should pay for learning and the promotion of high quality teaching and learning within the sector.

“The College will be able to grow its Higher Education provision in the next two years.”

Changes to funding

Finance will be a challenge over the next three years and it will very much be a case of 'more for less' with 25% less adult funding available by 2014/15. Colleges will receive a single adult budget which will fund all of their adult provision including that delivered to employers, unless this is delivered on a full cost basis. More individuals will be expected to contribute towards the cost of learning, as will employers. Loans will be available for students wishing to study for level 3 qualifications. The Government has stated that people would have to be in receipt of active benefits in order to qualify for tuition fee remission. Those who are on inactive benefits such as Income Support would no longer qualify for help with fees. This has been a source of great controversy over recent months as it has been estimated that 25% of adults studying in Further Education colleges are on inactive benefits. These adults are unlikely to be able to afford to pay fees which is bad news on a personal level for these individuals and bad news for colleges as they are likely to see a reduction in enrolments. As a result the Government has announced that this change in policy will be delayed for a year. For this year only people on inactive benefits will qualify for tuition fee remission so long as they are actively seeking to enter the employment market. If colleges do not deliver their allocations, money will be clawed back so it will be essential that targets are met. There will be a big focus on supporting unemployed people back into work and the introduction of job outcome funding payments.

Apprenticeships continue to be a major government priority and more money will be available to fund these at all levels. It will be important to secure more employers if the College is to stand any chance of meeting its targets.

In terms of 16-18 funding, cuts are also being made but in many cases 16-18 allocations are better than had originally been indicated. Transitional protection is in place until 2013/14. The Government has reduced the size of programmes that institutions are able to deliver via a reduced SLN per learner per year cap. There has been a 74% reduction in entitlement funding which means that colleges will have to review the amount of enrichment they offer to 16-18 year olds and consider other innovative ways of delivering tutorial provision. It will be important that the College meets its 16-18 target as future growth is predicated on this happening. The possibility of clawback within the 16-18 budget is also a possibility in the future. Further changes to 16-18 funding are on the horizon which will offer colleges the opportunity to assemble programmes more designed to fully meet learners' needs rather than simply being qualification based.

In addition to the above, the Educational Maintenance Allowance is to be replaced with a new bursary system. In reality this will mean considerably less money for most individual students which is likely to lead to hardship and may well mean that some students are no longer able to afford to come to College. The Association of Colleges has fought hard to try to reverse this decision and has been partly successful in forcing the Government to retract some of its plans.

Another issue that will impact on 16-18 year old students is the rising cost of transport. The Local Authority has reduced the amount of travel subsidy they offer to young people and have introduced arbitrary boundaries which require young people to go to a particular college even though it may not offer the course that they wish to enrol on.

“...to assemble programmes more designed to fully meet learners' needs rather than simply being qualification based.”



It will be essential that the College continues to seek alternative sources of income and needs to adopt an entrepreneurial and adaptable approach. The need to become a highly efficient organisation will continue. We must ensure that all college systems, processes and structures are fit for purpose. We must adopt a business like approach to our planning and monitoring and we must ensure that we remain agile and responsive and able to take prompt action and change direction quickly if needed. The College is a member of the Federation of Lincolnshire Colleges and of the Central Education Partnership. Both of these networks are investigating the shared services agenda and the College is already benefitting from savings as a result.

The College attracts students from Europe and further afield. Numbers have declined in recent years and competition has become tougher. Nevertheless this is a market that the college will continue to be active in.

Local policy context

The College mainly serves the borough of Boston and the districts of South Holland and East Lindsey, though its geographical reach is wider than this. There are high levels of deprivation and rural poverty. The College is the third most rural in the county which poses a number of challenges to its work.

Lincolnshire was less affected by the economic downturn than many other parts of the country and the unemployment rate has remained below both the regional and national rates throughout 2010 and 2011. In June 2011, there were 1401 unemployed people in receipt of Job Seeker's Allowance and in Spalding and Holbeach, there were 1414 people. Increasingly, the level of youth unemployment is causing concern with Boston having one of the highest rates in the county. The county has specific challenges in relation to graduate opportunities and many young graduates choose to move to other parts of the country once they are qualified.

The level of worklessness is 12%, on a par with the regional and national levels. There is an element of Benefit dependency in some areas and a key challenge continues to be raising aspirations to work. Lincolnshire is regarded as being a low skilled and low wage economy and has growing numbers of retired people. Job opportunities have become increasingly more part-time and temporary with fewer full-time jobs available. Job creation is required in places where need is greatest, Boston and the East Coast are included in this assessment. Boston has had a significant increase in skilled and semi-skilled migrant workers from Central and Eastern Europe. Generally the number of migrant workers moving to the UK has begun to fall in the last year but numbers have continued to increase in Boston. The College recognises that this is a matter of concern for some of the indigenous population but also appreciates the significant contribution that the migrant population makes to the local economy. Notably Boston has one of the lowest number of shop vacancies in the county. The College is committed to working towards community cohesion.

“The College is committed to working towards community cohesion.”

Low aspiration, low skill and qualification levels continue to be a problem in the area. The number of people with NVQ4 or above in Boston is 7.4% against a Lincolnshire figure of 21% which is in itself low. There is a need for more high level skills opportunities. Estimates suggest that if the county was able to up-skill an additional 3% of the working age population to level 3 or higher by 2015 this would add an additional £300 million to the value of the county economy. Access to Broadband internet is a problem in some areas of the county. According to a local economic snapshot survey conducted in January 2011 by the Lincolnshire and Rutland Employment and Skills Board, the key areas of skills shortages reported by employers are technical, practical and job-specific skills, management skills, IT skills, office administration skills and foreign language skills.

The county is in the bottom five performing areas in the country in terms of gross value added and some aspects of the economy, such as its rurality, low population density and traditional industries have not changed for many years. Business sparsity is an issue. 85% of businesses employ 10 or less people and less than 1% have more than 200 employees. The number of inward investment enquiries recorded for Lincolnshire is down by nearly 50% compared with two years ago.



“Government's ambition... '1 in 5' 16-19 year olds in apprenticeships by 2020.”

Meeting local needs

The College has always worked closely with local schools and has delivered high quality programmes to learners aged 14-16. Numbers have reduced over recent years and this trend is likely to continue. This is partly because schools have less money to spend and many have set up their own vocational provision in school. Many schools are becoming academies which means that they have the freedom to set up 6th forms if they wish to do so. Competition for 16-18 year old learners will be intense not just from schools but from other training providers. Changes within the Local Authority will mean the demise of Connexions. Schools will be expected to deliver their own impartial advice and guidance.

Young people's achievement at level 2 is high but is then not replicated at level 3. Within this, there is a substantial underachieving group of young people aged 16. There are high numbers of young people between the ages of 16 and 18 starting but not completing courses. Numbers of 16 year olds in jobs without training are also high. The number of young people in apprenticeships is lower than ideal and means that the county is not on track to meet the Government's ambition on '1 in 5' 16-19 year olds in apprenticeships by 2020.

Lincolnshire is one of the most important counties for Agricultural and Horticultural Production and Food Processing is very important. Other important local sectors include Health & Social Care, Retail, Tourism, Manufacturing, Construction and Public Administration and Education. The Third Sector is also important to the county and includes 25,000 volunteers who make a vital contribution within the community. The Lincolnshire and Rutland Employment and Skills Board produced an employment and skills plan in July 2010 and they identified a number of priorities for the economy. These included the need to increase participation, retention and achievement of young people in education and work-based learning and the importance of ensuring high quality employment and skills development to overcome worklessness. They recognised the need to increase the demand for skills amongst employers, especially Small and Medium sized Enterprises and to develop new openings for local graduates and highly qualified professionals who out-commute.

“ ...increase participation, retention and achievement of young people in education and work-based learning...” ”



Strategic priorities for 2011-14

Strategic aim 1: Delivering excellence

- 1.1 We will work to become an outstanding college
- 1.2 We will continue to improve our success rates to well above national averages
- 1.3 We will aim to deliver learning programmes of the highest quality that are responsive to local and regional priorities and needs
- 1.4 We will ensure the highest standards of teaching and learning
- 1.5 We will improve progression into employment, Higher Education or further training
- 1.6 We will improve the numbers of high grades that our learners achieve and increase our value added
- 1.7 We will provide excellent customer service throughout the college to both internal and external customers
- 1.8 We will ensure that learners and employers rate our services very highly

“ We will aim to deliver learning programmes of the highest quality that are responsive to local and regional priorities and needs. ”

Strategic aim 2: Building a reputation for innovation

- 2.1 We will provide an innovative curriculum that meets the needs of young people and adults
- 2.2 We will develop new learning opportunities that offer flexible learning with starting points throughout the academic year
- 2.3 We will become a major centre for the delivery of apprenticeships
- 2.4 We will aim to grow our Higher Education provision, taking advantage of the deregulated environment that is on the horizon
- 2.5 We will embrace the use of new technologies and continue to develop our VLE and improve our website
- 2.6 We will become a sustainable and environmentally friendly organisation
- 2.7 We will continue to invest in our estate and resources so that our facilities are of the highest quality
- 2.8 We will remain entrepreneurial, agile and responsive, able to take advantage of opportunities that arise to grow and expand
- 2.9 We will continue to develop new international markets

Strategic aim 3: Improving economic prosperity of our area

- 3.1 We will play a key role in the life of South Lincolnshire and the wider region, working with key stakeholders to improve the local economy
- 3.2 We will continue to develop our South Lincolnshire College brand
- 3.3 We will help to close the skills gap by working closely with local employers
- 3.4 We will provide consultancy support and high quality training solutions that will enable local industry to grow and develop
- 3.5 We will work closely with Job Centre Plus to provide support to the unemployed
- 3.6 We will support community events in the local area
- 3.7 We will work closely with schools and other agencies to provide appropriate progression opportunities for young people aged 14 and above
- 3.8 We will support networks for the development of enterprise
- 3.9 We will continue to develop effective and high quality partnerships to ensure that local needs are met

Strategic aim 4: Promoting equality, diversity and inclusion

- 4.1 We will ensure that a commitment to equality and diversity is pro-actively embraced throughout the college
- 4.2 We will adopt a zero tolerance approach to discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
- 4.3 We will continue to narrow gaps in success rates between different groups of learners
- 4.4 We will promote equality and diversity in our teaching and learning
- 4.5 We will work to encourage learners and staff from under-represented groups to study and work at the College
- 4.6 We will ensure that all our learners, staff and governors receive high quality equality and diversity training
- 4.7 We will actively celebrate equality and diversity
- 4.8 We will remove barriers that prevent participation ensuring that everyone has the same opportunities to achieve their full potential
- 4.9 We will create an environment in which the discussion of diversity can facilitate greater understanding and tolerance
- 4.10 We will work hard to improve community cohesion

“ We will actively celebrate equality and diversity ”

Strategic aim 5: Putting people first

- 5.1 We will listen to our learners and prioritise their needs
- 5.2 We will have high expectations of our staff and governors
- 5.3 We will raise aspirations and increase participation
- 5.4 We will provide learners with bespoke, effective and timely support to maximise their chances of success
- 5.5 We will maintain outstanding practice with regard to safeguarding and health and safety
- 5.6 We will invest in, develop and value our staff and governors
- 5.7 We will improve levels of staff satisfaction and become a brilliant place to work
- 5.8 We will become an employer of choice in the region
- 5.9 We will encourage staff to contribute ideas to improve the college
- 5.10 We will celebrate the success of our learners and our staff

“ We will provide learners with bespoke, effective and timely support to maximise their chances of success ”

Strategic priority 6: High levels of efficiency and responsiveness

- 6.1 We will maintain a financially robust college
- 6.2 We will meet all of our key targets
- 6.3 We will increase the College's income from non-core, external funding streams
- 6.4 We will ensure that we operate efficiently and effectively and we will manage risk carefully
- 6.5 We will adopt a business model approach to planning
- 6.6 We will review our processes regularly to ensure that they are fit for purpose and customer focused
- 6.7 We will agree and achieve clear quality standards in all areas of our work
- 6.8 We will ensure an integrated systems approach to all our work
- 6.9 We will have a dashboard of key performance monitors
- 6.10 We will introduce quarterly performance monitoring in all areas of the college

“ We will review our processes regularly to ensure that they are fit for purpose and customer focused ”





INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

boston:college

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