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A Comprehensive Internationalization Analysis of Marlboro College

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A COMPREHENSIVE INTERNATIONALIZATION ANALYSIS OF MARLBORO COLLEGE

A COMPREHENSIVE INTERNATIONALIZATION ANALYSIS OF MARLBORO
COLLEGE

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PIM 74

A capstone paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master of Arts in
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Abstract

For institutions of higher education, addressing and assessing global competence has become a priority in recent years. Colleges and universities across the United States and around the world are increasingly preparing students to be responsible and effective global citizens by creating and implementing comprehensive internationalization plans. One popular framework has been created by the American Council on Education, whose target areas include articulated institutional commitment; administrative leadership, structure, and staffing; curriculum, co-curriculum, and learning outcomes; faculty policies and practices; student mobility; and collaboration and partnerships (American Council on Education, 2012). Universities have used this framework to assess their campuses' current initiatives and to create an articulated plan for achieving and measuring outcomes.

Marlboro College, a small four-year liberal arts school in southern Vermont, currently does not have a formal comprehensive internationalization strategy. However, services for international students, mobility opportunities for faculty, staff, and students, and funding opportunities for international initiatives all exist to some degree at Marlboro College. This capstone draws together these international offerings and will discuss the strengths and shortcomings in the current model, analyze newly evolving efforts in the college's strategy to internationalize, and propose new strategies that will further Marlboro's efforts to brand itself as a globally-minded and diverse community. By fully analyzing Marlboro's current offerings, highlighting the diverse faculty, and identifying key improvements, the college's administrators and new president will be able to put a comprehensive plan into action.

Introduction

Located in the rolling hills of southeastern Vermont, Marlboro College is a small liberal arts school with a unique approach to learning. The small community of less than 200 students works closely with their faculty and staff to create individually designed coursework and a graduation portfolio, called the Plan of Concentration. The mission of the college is to

teach students to think clearly and to learn independently through engagement in a structured program of liberal studies. Students are expected to develop a command of concise and correct English and to strive for academic excellence informed by intellectual and artistic creativity; they are encouraged to acquire a passion for learning, discerning judgment and a global perspective. The college promotes independence by requiring students to participate in the planning of their own programs of study and to act responsibly within a self-governing community (Marlboro College, para. 1, 2016m).

In July 2015, Marlboro College hired a new president, Kevin F. F. Quigley, who holds a strong commitment to international service and increased international competencies for Marlboro's student body (Marlboro College, 2016l). As the former Peace Corps Director in Thailand and President of the National Peace Corps Association, President Quigley brings extensive international experience and connections to the college. Although the college mentions a global perspective as part of their mission statement, Marlboro has not previously thought systematically or comprehensively about an internationalization plan. When I began my position as Director of International Services in August 2015, soon after President Quigley's arrival, I immediately noticed the lack of articulated commitment to internationalization. International student recruitment, services for international students, mobility opportunities for faculty, staff,

and students, and internal and external funding for international initiatives all exist to some degree at Marlboro. However, this capstone aims to pull together these international offerings and will discuss the strengths and shortcomings in the current model. I will also discuss newly evolving efforts in the college's strategy to internationalize, and propose new strategies that will further Marlboro's efforts to brand itself as a globally-minded and diverse community. I believe that by fully analyzing Marlboro's current offerings, highlighting our diverse faculty, and identifying key improvements, the college's administrators and new president will be able to put their vision into action.

Literature Review

Trends in Internationalization

As interest in internationalization has grown on campuses in the last 20 years, so too has research on these trends increased. Kehm and Teichler (2007) note that there has been a significant increase in the number of articles written about international components of education in scholarly higher education journals. Additionally, Kehm and Teichler note that the line between International Studies and other fields is becoming unclear, as "issues of internationalisation are viewed as more complex and more intertwined with other issues; research on internationalisation of higher education is bound to draw from research of a broad range of disciplines and thematic areas" (2007, p. 263). This integration is viewed by Kehm and Teichler (2007) as an indicator that students are learning to apply their studies in a particular field such as biology, literature, or business in a way that ensures their intercultural competency in a globalized workforce. However, Kehm and Teichler also note that this fuzziness decreases the ability for clearly defined data to emerge on the subject (2007).

Funding is another major topic in internationalization. Many institutions generate funds through program fees, though nearly all universities also rely on external funding sources such as alumni, non-alumni donors, and governmental initiatives (Kehm and Teichler, 2007). Some campuses, such as the University of Texas and Georgia State University, use general student fees to fund study abroad scholarships (Brustein, 2007). Furthermore, as Green and Ferguson (2011) point out, federal, state, and local budget cuts in higher education have drastically affected resources for internationalization, and small colleges like Marlboro feel the financial pressure in all aspects of their academic and extracurricular programming. McAllister-Grande (2012) mentions that funds formerly earmarked for international initiatives are often redirected elsewhere. One area that is feeling such pressure is foreign language.

Perhaps surprisingly to some international educators, the role of foreign language has decreased significantly in recent years (Brustein, 2007; Kehm and Teichler, 2007; Puntney, 2012). Brustein (2007) argues that part of the decline in foreign language offerings may be because of budget restraints. However, the positive aspects of language study are well researched. According to Kehm and Teichler (2007) foreign language study has positive effects on intercultural competencies whether tied to study abroad or simply domestic studies. Puntney (2012) offers that because foreign language instruction is so intimately intertwined with an international education, it must be included in all international curricula.

Faculty and student mobility is a trend that many scholars have reported upon (American Council on Education, 2012; Brustein, 2007; Kehm and Teichler, 2007). Many schools, including Central Connecticut State College, Kennesaw State University, New Mexico State University, Northern Virginia Community College, and Portland State University have surveyed faculty regarding mobility to analyze the schools' international activities and determine the

schools' level of internationalization (American Council on Education, 2012). Michigan State University has gone so far as to consider international contributions as a requisite for promotion and tenure (Brustein, 2007). The Inter-Association Network on Campus Internationalization has found that faculty members who serve as Fulbright Scholars abroad return to their home campuses and “internationalize curricula, promote study abroad, attract foreign students and faculty, and enhance the global engagement of their communities” (n.d., para. 2). Technology plays an interesting role in mobility, argues Green, Eckel, & Barblan (2002). Access to institutions around the globe are no longer limited to physical travel, as students can enroll in prestigious universities' classes without ever leaving their home campus (Green, Eckel, & Barblan, 2002).

Assessing Global Competence

For institutions of higher education, addressing and assessing global competence is an increasing concern. In a world of intense globalization and increased interdependency, students need the skills to face “rapidly shifting economic, political, and national security realities and challenges” (Brustein, 2007, p. 382). The American Council on Education (2012) contends that it is a principal duty of schools to equip students with the necessary tools to be productive and responsible citizens, and that “graduates must possess intercultural skills and competencies to be successful in this globalized world” (p. 3). Barnard College, Duke University, Kalamazoo College, and Juniata College have all incorporated global competency into their mission statements (American Council on Education, 2016).

Campuses are increasingly preparing students for these roles, although some studies show that a hole in the methodology lies in the lack of career development and career counseling at universities (Puntney, 2012). As Kehm and Teichler (2007) and Puntney (2012) claim,

mission statements of most higher education institutions contain an international dimension. However, as Puntney (2012) points out, only a fraction of universities have defined learning outcomes or required courses pertaining to international or multicultural studies. As will be discussed later on, this observation rings very true for Marlboro College, which uses the language of “global perspective” in its mission statement and yet has no global perspective requirement nor any defined learning outcomes relating to intercultural competencies.

Successful Case Studies

Colleges across the United States are successfully implementing plans to address internationalization strategies on their campuses, including Beloit College, Seton Hall, St. Catherine University, Princeton University, Valparaiso University, and a plethora of others (The American Council on Education, 2016). The American Council on Education defines Internationalization as “the efforts of institutions to meet this imperative [of creating responsible citizens] by incorporating global perspectives into teaching, learning, and research; building international and intercultural competence among students, faculty, and staff; and establishing relationships and collaborations with people and institutions abroad” (2012, p. 3). Furthermore, the American Council on Education’s Center for Internationalization and Global Engagement (CIGE) defines Comprehensive Internationalization as the “strategic, coordinated process that seeks to align and integrate international policies, programs, and initiatives, and positions colleges and universities as more globally oriented and internationally connected” (p. 3). In order to implement these goals, CIGE has created a model for Comprehensive Internationalization, which includes the following: articulated institutional commitment; administrative leadership, structure, and staffing; curriculum, co-curriculum, and learning outcomes; faculty policies and

practices; student mobility; and collaboration and partnerships (American Council on Education, 2012).

Universities have used this framework to assess their campuses' current initiatives and create an articulated plan for achieving and measuring outcomes. Central Connecticut State University, for example, built "promot[ing] global awareness and respect for diversity" into both their institutional goals and their campus-wide Strategic Plan (p. 3, 2010). Other crucial pieces that have promoted success on CCSU's campus have been support from their president, a six-credit international course requirement for graduation, a foreign language requirement, and administrative and financial support for the many multicultural centers on campus (Central Connecticut State University, 2010).

The University of North Carolina- Greensboro (2011) used ACE's framework to determine the strengths in their current internationalization efforts, and proposed student competencies based upon their findings. The University of Pittsburgh has designed majors to be discipline-focused-- typical of most colleges-- but also has a Global Studies certificate to supplement student learning, so that they are globally competent critical thinkers. Rather than majoring only in international studies, the program ties global competency to a student's chosen degree field (Brustein, 2007). This system has been used as a model for schools who hope to infuse global competencies across all degree fields. Other schools approach internationalization by hiring a robust faculty. Michigan State University, for instance, has requisites of faculty regarding international contributions (Brustein, 2007).

For some institutions of higher education-- Marlboro College included-- faculty support is a crucial component to the success of internationalization efforts on campus, including support for student study abroad programs, faculty mobility, an infusion of global perspective into the

curriculum, and strategic planning. For example, Pelton (2012) outlined the following ways that Elon University faculty are “integrally involved in Elon’s global engagement” (p. 38): faculty members on the Study Abroad Committee; faculty engagement in the international office, including a Faculty-in-Residence who develops materials and supports other faculty who lead course-embedded trips; faculty participation and leadership in short-term programs abroad; faculty mobility to Elon’s international campuses; professional development opportunities abroad; infusing a positive atmosphere about study abroad into on-campus curriculum; site visits by faculty to programs abroad; incentives to teach an international course for freshmen; and funds to bring international or intercultural guest lectures to campus (Pelton, 2012).

Background of Marlboro College

Institutional Context

Describing itself as “radically traditional,” Marlboro College is a unique learning community in many ways. Students do not complete Majors; instead they explore a breadth of topics in their first two years and then work in depth on a Plan of Concentration during their junior and senior years. Students, professors, and administrators are all on first-name bases with one another, and students receive a tremendous amount of support in their research from faculty. Founded in 1946 by a World War II veteran, Marlboro strived from the beginning to be a school “where students were not just participants but active contributors to the academic and community life of campus” (Marlboro College, 2016o).

As a private institution, most of the college’s revenue comes from student tuition fees, 45% in total (Marlboro College, 2015b). Additionally, 31% comes in the form of donor gifts, 9% comes from interest in the college’s endowment, 9% comes from room and board, 5% comes from rental income, and 1% comes from other miscellaneous sources (Marlboro College, 2015b).

Donor gifts totaled \$6.2 million for the 2015 fiscal year, and “revealed a diverse donor base with a broad philanthropic impact on the Marlboro community” (Marlboro College, p. 9, 2015b). Of that \$6.2 million, \$1.7 million went directly towards the college annual budget, \$1 million was contributed to the college’s endowment, and \$3.5 million went towards specific projects. For the Office of International Services, nearly its entire budget comes from a large multi-year grant from the Christian A. Johnson Endeavor Foundation. The Endeavor grant, which is specifically aimed at promoting internationalization, provides “for a more proactive center for global studies and funding several faculty-led trips abroad” and “has resulted in beneficial summer internship and research opportunities for several students with international interests” (Marlboro College, 2012).

Academic Programs

As mentioned, Marlboro College students do not complete Majors, and as such the overall academic portfolio is quite varied. However, the college offers courses in the following areas: American Studies, Anthropology, Art History, Asian Studies, Astronomy, Biochemistry, Biology, Ceramics, Chemistry, Classics, Computer Science, Cultural History, Dance, Development Studies, Drama, Economics, Environmental Studies, Film/Video Studies, Gender Studies, History, Languages (French, Spanish, Chinese, Latin, Greek, and Arabic), Liberal Studies, Literature, Mathematics, Music, Painting, Philosophy, Photography, Physics, Politics, Psychology, Religion, Sculpture, Sociology, Theater, Visual Arts, and Writing (Marlboro College, 2016b). Whatever the degree field, students are expected to be strong writers and communicators, and one of Marlboro’s few requirements is the Clear Writing Requirement, “a benchmark that involves submitting a portfolio of clear and concise writing samples for approval by the faculty” (Marlboro College, para 1, 2016d). In completing the Clear Writing

Requirement--which must be done in the first three semesters or the student is asked to leave and may re-admitted under the condition that they work on their writing elsewhere-- students are prepared to begin work on their Plan of Concentration. Preliminary and then final Plan applications are two further benchmarks for students as they move toward graduation.

As the academic progression continues, students must also uphold the following educational ideals of Marlboro College: independent and responsible learning, clarity in communications, imagination and participation in inquiry and research, thoughtful and fair analysis, grit, cultural perspective, citizenship, health in life and work, and ethical courage (Marlboro College, 2016a). An ambitious list, certainly, yet also shows the high standard to which the faculty and staff hold the students. Of the 120 credits needed for graduation, 50 of them must be designated as Plan credits (Marlboro College, 2016c).

An international component can be thread through any of the degree fields offered at Marlboro, however; the World Studies Program is the only degree track with explicit international ties and a required international travel component. The World Studies Program is discussed further in the presentation of current programs in international education, below. Through imbedded course programs, summer opportunities, and full semesters abroad, nearly 35% of Marlboro students take part in some sort of international experience before graduation.

A major strength that lies in Marlboro's academic model is the individual attention and close partnership that students attain with their faculty. Upper level students often rely on tutorials, one-on-one courses that they design with faculty input, so that they are able to delve deep into a subject that is not otherwise taught on campus. An economics student who also studies Arabic, for example, is currently taking a tutorial on post-Arab Spring Economic Policy in Tunisia, and a religious studies student created a tutorial about the history of modern Korean

Buddhism. Such specialized courses make Marlboro academics very appealing to many students. However, Marlboro's small size also creates limitations in general resources and faculty diversity of subject knowledge. A student hoping to study engineering, business, or medicine would be poorly suited for Marlboro.

Student and Faculty Breakdown

Marlboro is very small and therefore creates a tight-knit yet thriving community feel. The student body during the 2015-2016 school year hovered around 183 students. The smallest class in recent memory, the college usually strives to have an average of 225-250 students. The Admissions team is optimistic about current retention, however, as the school did not lose a single member of the incoming freshman class in Fall 2015. This year's student body comes from 19 states and four countries.

The total number of instructional faculty is 50, 39 full-time and 11 part-time members (Marlboro College, 2015a). Marlboro's faculty totals 25 men and 25 women. Included in this number is 12 international faculty and 39 of whom have doctorates or other terminal degrees (Marlboro College, 2015a). Eight further faculty members have master's degrees, and only three faculty members' highest degree is a bachelor's (Marlboro College, 2015a). This faculty brings "knowledge gained from extensive research, travel, and practical experience, as well as schooling at the world's top institutions" (Marlboro College, para. 1, 2016t). Marlboro does not have academic departments in a true sense; instead, faculty members belong to one of the four areas of Arts, Humanities, Natural Sciences, and Social Sciences (Marlboro College, 2016b).

Stakeholder Analysis

A thorough introduction to Marlboro College's programming, faculty, and student base, as described above, is crucial before beginning the analysis of its stakeholders in regards to

internationalization, because truly understanding the unique culture of Marlboro College takes time and investment in the community. To an outsider, Marlboro College may seem like a mystery in many ways. A mere microcosm in the grand scheme of four-year liberal arts colleges, this tiny school with no majors, no specific degree requirements, and decidedly limited resources somehow creates flourishing and independent learners who are prepared for life after college in ways that my undergraduate university-- a school of nearly 50,000-- never could. Independence is fiercely protected and fought for at Marlboro, and as such if a visitor asked any student, faculty, or staff member, each person would give a different answer to the question of what makes Marlboro unique. As such, all stakeholders also hold internationalization to varying levels of importance.

A Year of Renaissance

The administration, along with the Admissions and Marketing department, have recently felt this identity crisis and have begun a “Renaissance Year,” a year of intense introspection and research among the administration, faculty, and students to better understand the college’s strengths, with the goal of better articulating Marlboro’s brand to prospective students and the outside world. The three broad goals of the Renaissance are marketing and branding, curriculum, and quality of student life (Faculty/staff person A, personal communication, September 30, 2015). The renaissance project also hopes for staff departments to analyze their current workflow and question what could be done differently, more effectively, or more simply (Faculty/staff person B, personal communication, October 24, 2015). Students have been asked to promote Marlboro in their home towns and high schools. The faculty is currently working to restructure class period blocks and build clearer benchmarks for students moving through their academics.

Most impressively, Admissions created a Renaissance Scholarship, available to one student from every state in the country, which is a four-year, full-tuition scholarship to those students who embody the ideals of community service, leadership, innovation, and perseverance (Marlboro College, 2016n). An idea born out of the Admissions team in an effort to increase incoming class numbers, the Renaissance Scholars will also help reinforce the ideals of the school in its student body. This idea of renaissance is introduced because the following stakeholders; faculty, staff, students, and the board of trustees, are all deeply entrenched in conversations, focus groups, committee meetings, and research around this idea.

Internationalizing the campus has been a part of the conversation, which will be described further below, but it is important to understand that stakeholder priorities are centered fully on these renaissance ideas and not creating time to develop a comprehensive internationalization plan for the college.

Faculty

The faculty has spent perhaps the most time engaged in renaissance research and discussion, and as such have been the least responsive to a survey regarding international initiatives on campus. The survey included questions regarding international themes within the curriculum, opportunities for faculty to engage in international research or other related professional development, and the faculty's thoughts about how well the college supports international students and faculty. The survey was sent out via email to the faculty listserv as a Survey Monkey questionnaire. The listserv is Marlboro's most reliable way to communicate with all faculty members. 14 faculty members completed the survey. Of these participants, nine reported that they offer a class designated as meeting the "global perspective" criteria. Only one participant said they do not offer such a class, and four reported that they did not know if any of

their classes were earmarked as global perspective classes. As will be detailed further in the discussion of current and evolving strategies, below, Marlboro College's course catalog has a special globe icon next to classes that denotes a global perspective course; however, no parameters exist for classes to receive such a designation. It is not surprising, therefore, that many faculty members do not know if their courses are in fact considered as such.

Eight of the 14 faculty members currently work with students who have had, or will have, an international experience incorporated into Plan work. 10 of the 14 faculty members have received money through Marlboro College to engage in international or cross-cultural research. Responses returned very mixed results regarding the extent to which Marlboro College supports faculty hoping to engage in international research as well as to what extent Marlboro fosters diverse perspectives on campus. However, 10 of the 14 faculty members believe that Marlboro could improve the way it markets itself as a college that prepares students to be globally competent citizens. Furthermore, five of these participants believe that Marlboro does not adequately prepare students for the global workplace. See Appendix A for full survey questions, results, and methodology.

As seen from the survey results, faculty have mixed perspectives about internationalization. Some survey participants feel positively about Marlboro's current state; including one participant who said "the number of classes and the extent of faculty experience outside the country contribute to a robust amount of multicultural perspectives" (faculty participant A). Another participant mentioned that "funding is easily available for Marlboro College faculty wishing to travel abroad with students or conduct professional research projects abroad" (faculty participant B). However, others believe there is room for improvements, offering comments such as "we would like to think we are a place supportive of different

cultures, but we are a community that takes social positions that would make it difficult for individuals from some cultures to feel comfortable” (faculty participant C). A fourth participant said that “the marketing is very much about students being globally competent citizens [but] the school doesn't live up to the marketing” (faculty participant D).

Staff

Marlboro College employs approximately 40 staff and administrative members, in a very wide spectrum of roles and responsibilities. In the Marlboro College staff handbook, it states that the College “expect[s] that [staff’s] expertise will contribute to the education of inquiring, thinking young people who become engaged citizens of the college and the world” (Marlboro College, para. 2, 2016k). The higher administration, specifically the Dean of Faculty, Dean of Academic Advising, Director of the Library, Registrar and Assistant Dean of Institutional Research, Dean of Students, Director of Non-Degree Programs, and Dean of Admissions work closely together to collaborate on all aspects of the college and to create a safe, efficient, robust learning community. This group, collectively, holds nearly all key administrative offices and most of the senior administrators at Marlboro College. For the purposes of this research, a focus group was held with the above listed staff to discuss general international perspectives on campus, support for international students, and the role of staff in internationalization.

The group had many key insights, and had similar sentiments as the faculty stakeholders. Information literacy, one participant offered, is a big hurdle for international students, and an introduction to educational technology needs to be emphasized more, perhaps bringing the subject into orientation better. In a similar vein, another participant suggested that Marlboro needs a two-part preparation training. International students should be oriented in a systematic way to the academic atmosphere of the college, including the ideas of respect, empathy, and

becoming being critical thinkers. Do not tell the students when they arrive, a participant said, that they will “figure it out” and instead, prepare them for Marlboro College’s unique faculty-student relationships, as well as academic and social culture. Additionally, faculty and staff must also have intercultural communication training so that they may best work with all sorts of diverse students. Another participant suggested a checklist of sorts to circulate to faculty and staff to help give some background of the culture of the international students who are studying here.

Other small but crucial nods to international pursuits, offered participant in the focus group, could be initiatives such as adding a prayer room to campus, making a concerted effort to ask international students for book recommendations for the library collection, and adding snacks to the campus store that are from the countries of the international students. This way, students will have a few comfort foods, and the greater community sees and learns about the new food, and therefore a bit more about that culture. Another suggestion included incorporating more international menus into the dining hall rotation.

Many participants suggested that more international programming and events on campus would be a welcome change. One participant suggested that if Marlboro makes such programming frequent and not a rarity, the better Marlboro can cultivate and integrate learning about and celebrating diversity into the general atmosphere of the college. Perhaps one of the most powerful articulations of the group was that overall, Marlboro is not prepared to accept diverse students. One participant described Marlboro as having a “lack of appreciation of what students bring to the table” (staff participant A). This sentiment holds true, said the participant, for both international students as well as other domestic students. Marlboro has this notion that students should acclimate to us, rather than us accommodating them. One possible solution,

according to a participant, is to cultivate a community that is not as homogenous as it currently is, and to allow self-expression and celebration together, rather than apart.

Also illuminating, the staff agreed that Marlboro generally does not fully prepare its students for success in a globalized workplace. The renaissance scholars are diverse, and so this kind of programming will not just be helpful for international students, but for all students on campus. Further suggestions and analysis for improvement are outlined in the discussion of current and evolving strategies, below.

Students

Marlboro College students, as discussed above, are diverse in their academic interests and backgrounds, and very few follow the same path to graduation. As such, it is also difficult to get robust numbers for any kind of event, lecture, or activity that happens on campus. It is very common, unfortunately, for no students to show up for an event hosted by Residential Life or a talk hosted by a guest lecturer. For the purposes of this research, I planned a student focus group to hear student voices regarding current international options for students, support for international students, and general campus opinion of global perspectives. After advertising the event in the Town Crier--an email listserv and a reliable way to communicate with the entire student body--as well as posting to the Marlboro College student Facebook page and talking to students about the event, no one came to the focus group. As such, for the purposes of this paper, student stakeholder analysis will be broadly considered based on conversations that I have had with the student body.

A strong suit of the Marlboro student body is that they make their voices heard, both in celebration or protest of a college policy. For instance, as will be described later, Marlboro offers summer grants for students to travel abroad in the summer. The fund covers approximately six

students a summer, and over 20 students applied for the funds. A small number for many schools, certainly, but when judged against normal participation rates at Marlboro, this interest in international summer opportunities helps gauge general interest in wider campus internationalization. Additionally, as mentioned earlier, about one third of Marlboro students complete some kind of international travel as part of their academics before graduation, an impressive statistic for a small school with no articulated internationalization strategy. Finally, of the 49 students who graduated in May 2015, 24 of them had an international experience, nearly 50% of the class (Faculty/staff person C, personal communication, November 13, 2015).

Another strong set of voices comes from the current international students on campus. Based on my conversations, these stakeholders are rightly the most invested in seeing improvements to the general atmosphere on campus and specific support services. High on the list include better services during the Spring Break recess when campus is closed, better transportation on and off the hill, more activities and trips to nearby destinations, and a more thorough orientation for international students.

Board of Trustees

The board of trustees is made up of 23 people who, collectively, are the governing body of Marlboro College, and oversee all academic, strategic, and financial planning. According to Marlboro College's website (2016s), seven of the 23 members have explicit international experience in their biographies, two were born outside of the United States, two are persons of color, 12 are men, and 11 are women. For the purposes of this research, the stakeholder analysis of the board of trustees will be delimited to publicly accessible information.

In July of 2010, the Task Force for the Future, a collective group of trustees, faculty, staff, and alumni, laid out 11 recommendations which the greater board then adopted (Marlboro

College, 2016p). None of these 11 recommendations mentioned international, global, or diversity initiatives. On February 1, 2014, the Board endorsed a four-pronged strategic plan for Marlboro. These 2014 goals and objectives were recently discussed at a Marlboro College Town Meeting day, in the context that very little had been done to progress the ideas laid out in the document. At the meeting, the community was discussing a specific objective, one that charged the college to “embody the values of sustainability, frugality and environmental stewardship found in Vermont culture” (Marlboro College, 2016f, p. 7).

As this particular objective was not being met, I became curious as to what other objectives were listed in the document. The fourth objective promised to “promote engagement in Marlboro College’s community governance and participation in the region and the larger world,” with the sub-objective of “increas[ing] global engagement through global perspective courses, study abroad, faculty-led trips, international visitors, and community engagement” (Marlboro College, 2016f, pp. 9-10). Unfortunately, no specific parameters or committee charges to oversee outcomes exist in the document. Although the board has a written sentiment lauding internationalization on campus, I was saddened that I found out about such a sentiment by happenstance. I will discuss how I believe to best utilize and oversee this written charge in the analysis below.

Internationalization Analysis

Presentation of Current Programs in International Education

As noted in the introduction, no formal comprehensive internationalization strategy is currently in existence at Marlboro College. However, services for international students, mobility opportunities for faculty, staff, and students, and funding opportunities for international initiatives all exist to some degree at Marlboro College. In order to present Marlboro’s current

strategy, the following sections follow the target areas outlined by the American Council on Education's Center for Internationalization and Global Engagement (CIGE), which were also discussed in the review of literature.

Articulated institutional commitment. The CIGE states that internationalization should be articulated in mission statements as well as through strategic planning, that a committee should oversee such plans, and that goals and outcomes should be properly assessed (American Council on Education, 2016). A global perspective is mentioned in Marlboro College's mission statement, but no institution-wide strategic plan exists through explicit internationalization plans. Marlboro does not have an explicit steering committee, but does have the Committee for World Studies (CfWS), a group comprised of faculty members in each of the discipline areas, the Director of International Services, and two student representatives. It is the task of the committee to:

consider a broad range of policies governing international and intercultural study opportunities and initiatives that foster global perspectives across the curriculum. The committee works to ensure community-wide discussion on international programs, serves as an advocate for internationalization of the curriculum, and provides guidance on international academic programs... The committee works with the administrative staff on implementation of policy. (Marlboro College, section on Faculty Committees, 2016j).

The CfWS currently meets weekly to discuss relevant happenings on campus. During the 2015/2016 school year, the CfWS has held numerous events such as an international opportunities workshop at Open House day, an educational event in the classrooms of Marlboro Elementary School, panel discussions with North African scholars, North African and Chinese themed community dinner nights, international movie nights, and other smaller events. The

CfWS also awarded about \$30,000 in grant money to support international experiences for student and faculty research.

Administrative leadership, structure, and staffing. The senior leadership is verbally committed to internationalization and President Quigley has been engaged with this topic since his inauguration. In fact, the entire inauguration week was built around the theme of international service. The Office of International Services is charged with coordinating international opportunities on campus. The current office oversees outgoing study abroad students and incoming international students, provides funding and assists with faculty-led trips and other international travel programs, coordinates multicultural events on campus, and oversees other internationalization efforts. As a one-person office with very limited resources, each of the above-listed activities lacks the attention they deserve.

Faculty policies and practices. According to CIGE, policies regarding tenure and other hiring should include international criteria (American Council on Education, 2016). International experiences or background are considered de facto in the faculty hiring process; however, no such codes exist in the Marlboro College Handbook. Marlboro faculty do have opportunities to further international research through professional development funds and other grants. One such grant allows for “the close collaboration between Marlboro students and faculty by awarding annual grants to support research, fieldwork and/or the acquisition of materials used for collaborative study” (Marlboro College, para. 8, 2016i). This grant has, in recent years, funded faculty research in Nepal, Puerto Rico, and the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, as well as many domestic destinations.

Marlboro College is also currently in negotiations with Charles University in Prague to secure a faculty exchange amongst the Social Science faculty, which will further increase faculty

support for study abroad programs, particularly exchange semesters with our three European counterparts. More support is currently needed to get faculty to convince students of the merits of studying outside of the context of Marlboro and strengthen the international office's presence across campus. Further recommendations for increased faculty support are given in the discussion of current and evolving strategies, below.

Curriculum, co-curriculum, and learning objectives. As described in the background, Marlboro does not have any core study requirements, and as such has no requirements regarding foreign language, regional studies, or global competencies. Individual faculty may stress the need for a global perspective to varying degrees. The World Studies Program, the only explicitly international curriculum at Marlboro, is an academic track that has been in existence for 30 years and is designed to “ help motivated students acquire the cultural framework, practical skills, intellectual tools, and methods necessary to analyze global developments against the backdrop of history, in the light of differing values and traditions” (Marlboro College, para. 1, 2016r). The facets of the program include a 6-8 month internship abroad, a graduate level class at SIT Graduate Institute, proficiency in a second language, and a few other core courses that put their studies into a historical and cultural context.

Student mobility. In addition to the World Studies Program, semester-long study abroad programs, short-term trips, and summer opportunities are all available for students. Marlboro College allows for the transfer of all credits from study abroad from any institution, provided they have completed a consortium agreement form. This administrative formality ensures that the credits will be accepted by the registrar. There are no explicitly named programs, because the registrar accepts credit from all programs.

Every year, Marlboro offers a course in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) and as part of the certification process, takes the whole class to Costa Rica for two weeks. This embedded trip component is offered at a highly-discounted rate, as the TESOL class itself is offered at no additional cost to students; they are only responsible for the travel, accommodations, and food arrangements. According to a faculty member, the TESOL course has run for the last four years and has had between seven and 14 students each year (Faculty/staff member D, personal communication, January 19, 2016). Additionally, the Gannett Global Learning Initiative, a donor-funded grant, provides aid for an international trip every year as part of a course. Interested faculty members apply for the funds during the prior school year, and decisions are made by the Committee for World Studies on the parameters of enhanced student learning on and off campus, feasibility and sensible budget, and the professional development of faculty. Subsequent cost-offset for students is 50% of the trip. In the Spring of 2016, the six students from the Dance and World Cultures class will travel to Senegal for drumming and dance intensive workshops. Last year 12 students in a Buddhist Religion course traveled to Nepal. Prior trips have included travel to Germany, Cuba, Turkey, and Cambodia.

Furthermore, students are eligible to apply for extensive grant money to engage in international internships, intensive language study, or other international experiences during the summer break. Marlboro College provides approximately \$25,000 every year to fund international opportunities. In summer 2015, for example, a junior traveled to Japan to study Zen Buddhism at a temple and through volunteering in a rural area, and another rising senior student studied Portuguese in Brazil (Marlboro College, 2015b).

Marlboro College has the great fortune to work with three universities in Europe who have very established international exchange programs; the Bratislava International School for

Liberal Arts (BISLA) in Slovakia, Charles University in the Czech Republic, and Leuphana University in Germany. Marlboro College has held signed agreements with BISLA since 2011, Charles since 2014, and Leuphana since 2016. All three schools send exchange students to Marlboro each semester to study. Marlboro also has a partnership with Heilongjiang University in China, who also sends students to Marlboro, often for an entire academic year. Marlboro College only very occasionally sends its students abroad to study at these partner institutes. The Office of International Services believes low student participation numbers are due to several factors. First, Marlboro has not made a commitment to create a curricular funnel to promote Europe. Additionally, the independent nature of Plan work often encourages students to form individual itineraries or to study in a destination less established. Additional strategies regarding increased student mobility are discussed below.

Germany. The International Office at Leuphana University offers a Language and Orientation Program for international exchange students that includes intensive German language courses at all levels. Several Marlboro students currently study German, although this program is open to all students, regardless of language ability. Leuphana also has many courses in English and it is not necessary to take coursework in German. Upon arrival, a Leuphana student, called a “buddy,” serves as a contact person for a new international student, in particular during the first few days and weeks after his or her arrival in Lüneburg. The buddy picks up the new student at the airport or train station, takes the student to the accommodation, and helps them to feel at home at the new place of residence and study. The International Office organizes a pre-sessional orientation program for exchange students, which aims at preparing exchange students for studying and living in Lüneburg.

Slovakia. BISLA offers a very similar vibe to Marlboro College. BISLA's tight-knit community and small class sizes feel similar to the small campus community in Vermont. Courses at BISLA are very specialized and focus on Political Science, with concentrations in either International Relations, Central European Studies, or Political Thought. The international office supports exchange students through the visa process, securing housing, enrolling in courses, and orientation upon arrival. Bratislava is very centrally located within Europe on the Danube River, with easy access to cities such as Vienna, Budapest, and other world class cities to the north, south, east, and west

Czech Republic. Charles University's international office guides Marlboro students through their application process, obtaining a Czech visa, and all other pre-arrival preparations. Members of the International Student Club meet incoming students during the Orientation Week and guide them around not only through the necessary academic arrangements but also run a buddy program, excursions, and other social events. Charles offers Czech language classes at various levels, from Beginners to Intermediate. Although in a geographically similar location to Bratislava, Prague provides Marlboro students with a unique option to study at a large research institution with access to incredible library facilities and world-class faculty members. Ongoing support for international students includes pre-arrival support with visas, a letter from a previous international student welcoming them and describing tips/tricks, support on campus as needed.

Marlboro College also requires that all students on short-term or semester-long programs attend pre-departure orientation sessions. Additionally, World Studies Program students complete a semester long re-entry program, which aims to unite the senior cohort, share experiences, prepares them for live after Marlboro, and requires them to do outreach discussions with the greater Marlboro community.

Considerations of Current and Potential Funding Sources

Funding is perhaps the highlight of Marlboro's current internationalization efforts. As mentioned, the Endeavor Foundation funds international recruiting trips for the admissions team, an international trip every year for an entire class and two faculty, international internships, language immersion, or other opportunities in the summer, as well as the Director of International Services's salary.

For students who participate in a semester at one of Marlboro's partner universities in Prague, Luneburg, or Bratislava, tuition is paid to the home institution, and the student is only responsible for room, board, and other student fees. This particular exchange benefits students in ways that other study abroad programs do not, because the student maintains full institutional and federal aid. Heilongjiang University in China also receives Marlboro students for language study at a reduced cost. In the summer of 2016, three Marlboro students will travel to Heilongjiang for immersion classes. The course itself is free of charge; the students are only responsible for room, board, and other expenses. Tuition retention agreements with these partner universities make it possible for even students with the most need to study abroad. Marlboro currently meets full financial need for its students and has additional funds set aside to help students undertake foreign language study and research projects during the academic year.

Regarding potential funding sources, The Office of International Services recently responded to a Request for Proposals from The Office of Global Educational Programs of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, U.S. Department of State, administered by Partners of the Americas. This grant, if awarded, will provide \$50,000 of support to 17 institutions of higher education with new or emerging study abroad offices, with the goal of building capacity, creating or strengthening new partnerships, and ultimately increasing the amount of students who

study abroad. Marlboro College applied in the hopes of strengthening relationships with the three European universities which whom Marlboro has exchange agreements. Discussion of this evolving strategy is discussed further below.

Conclusions

Discussion of Current and Evolving Strategies

Moves toward a comprehensive strategy plan. The American Council on Education (2016) has a wealth of online resources and models for universities to follow when creating or evolving strategies, as listed in the literature review and in the breakdown of current international education programs above. I am recommending that Marlboro College carefully follow the CIGE's guidelines to create, support, and assess a comprehensive internationalization strategy. Most importantly, this idea includes integrating internationalization into a campus-wide strategic plan, perhaps part of larger Renaissance Year discussions; increasing financial support to the Office of International Services; and creating more faculty initiatives for supporting international opportunities for students.

The Committee for World Studies (CfWS), described above, is the logical body that could take on strategic planning and implementation. The CfWS is already tasked, on paper, with steering such efforts and could also house a place for additional stakeholders to come together for focus groups or other discussions. The CfWS could also create surveys to determine further priorities of stakeholders and communicate with the Renaissance coordinators in order to streamline any current discussions that may be pertinent to any future internationalization initiative. One such discussion could be surrounding student learning outcomes. The Renaissance Committee is currently contemplating the possibility of requiring the assessment of certain competencies during a sophomore and junior review. An internationally-focused competency

could be incorporated into such discussions. The CfWS would also work closely with the Committee on Faculty to instigate research into general education requirements. I believe a good place to start would be examining the “global perspective” criteria for courses. Currently in the course catalog, courses that meet Marlboro’s global perspective criteria are highlighted with a small globe icon. However, no record that I could find, including when talking with long-standing colleagues, lists what specifically that global perspective criteria are, who implemented it, or why. It is advised to first determine specific criteria regarding the distinction and then make motions to require at least one such class for all students prior to graduation.

As also mentioned above, I believe increased faculty support of international initiatives is crucial for the success of any plan. The CfWS could serve as a tremendous help in this capacity. Since the CfWS is comprised of faculty members from each discipline area, I hope to utilize these ambassadors to disseminate information to their fellow faculty. During the 2016/2017 school year, I also plan to have an increased presence at academic workshops such as the Plan preparation meeting, attend faculty advising hours, and host study abroad information workshops for both faculty and students.

Setting wide internationalization strategies and priorities could encourage an even stronger commitment from the college to support an expanded Office of International Services through the continued funding of a Program Coordinator, who would help support the Director of International Services in advising international and study abroad students, planning multicultural and international activities and events on and off campus, and assisting in administrative tasks. Marlboro has a strong relationship with nearby SIT Graduate Institute, a leader in developing international educators and intercultural communicators. Graduate students at SIT must complete a practicum in their field, and the Program Coordinator position will be

filled each year by such a student. The Director of International Services currently works closely with the Career Center and International Education professors at SIT to promote each other's events on campus and coordinate joint workshops. In early March, the Director of International Services attended SIT's Career Fair and talked with many current graduate students interested in the position. The Program Coordinator position will begin in August 2016.

One of the largest projects that the Program Coordinator will be crucial in implementing is that of increased international student support services. The faculty survey responses and staff focus group for this capstone generated a wealth of insightful suggestions, comments, and ideas and I hope to implement critical changes in the coming years. Such changes include adding more foreign-language fiction and research journals to the library's collection, holding post-graduation preparedness workshops at the Career and Life Path Center, re-structure orientation, and increase the amount of intercultural programming on campus. Additionally, preparations have already begun for Hygge Hosts, Marlboro College's "buddy" system for international students. "Hygge" is a untranslatable Danish word, that in essence means inviting a sense of coziness or contentedness with friends and family.

Although students will be living on-campus, my hope is for these international students to have a connection with a local family in order to get a sense for life "off the hill." Hygge hosts will invite student to dinner at their home a few times a semester, offer to take student on a local excursion or take part in a family activity, such as hiking Mt. Monadnock, snowboarding for a day at Mt Snow, strolling through Brattleboro's Gallery Walk, or going to a high school football game, and hosting students if needed for a short holiday such as Thanksgiving or President's Day.

A final policy that is in need of improvement is that of international student recruitment. The Admissions office does not currently have a strategic plan or specific priority to increase the number of international student applicants and subsequent enrollees. Marlboro College is a part of Colleges that Change Lives (CTCL), a consortium of unique schools that holds international recruitment fairs each year in Latin America and in Asia. Marlboro College has attended the Latin America tour for the last two years. I recommend continuing this recruitment activity, as well as expanding into the Asian markets. Marlboro currently has several Korean students and receives exchange students from China each year. Asia seems like a logical place to market Marlboro's unique campus. For a school that struggles with increasing overall student numbers, international students could provide a welcome boost in enrollment for Marlboro.

Evolving plans to increase participation with European partners. Marlboro's current relationships with their three European partners in Germany, Czech Republic, and Slovakia, include receiving exchange students to Marlboro each semester. However, Marlboro has not sent any Marlboro College students to Europe to study at these partner schools. The World Studies Program, which until very recently has accounted for nearly all study abroad students, promotes research in the developing world and has historically had difficulty sending students to Europe because of work visa restrictions. Additionally, Marlboro has not made a commitment to create a curricular funnel to promote Europe as a study abroad destination to our students, nor does Marlboro have the resources to promote the programs or conduct visits necessary to strengthen our existing partnerships.

As such, the faculty Director of the World Studies Program, with assistance from the Director of International Services, has created a four-credit course called "Topics in Contemporary Europe" (TCE), which will support European studies both here at home and

encourage students to continue their research in the Czech Republic, Germany, or Slovakia. We anticipate a total of 12 students will enroll in Fall 2016's TCE course. Of these 12 students, we hope to convert five participants into a study abroad cohort during the Fall of 2017.

The hope for TCE is that the focus of the class will shift from year to year to reflect emerging issues in European culture and politics. In the fall of 2016, the class will focus on the current refugee crisis sweeping the Middle East and Europe. This iteration of the class will be co-taught by an expert in Middle-Eastern politics and a scholar of European history. Future versions of the class might draw on our faculty in economics, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, and visual arts.

The class will cultivate interest in our exchange partners in several ways. First, students will be exploring current and evolving issues. Readings and discussions will be designed to support further study in Europe and possible fieldwork. Charles University in Prague, for example, has one of the premier Economics faculties in Europe, and Leuphana University in Lüneberg has excellent educational pedagogy classes that Marlboro students currently do not have access to. The class will also incorporate exchange students from Leuphana, BISLA and Charles University as guest lecturers, providing valuable European vantage points on the refugee crisis and Europe's response. This exposure will deepen students' understanding of the complexity of the issues involved while also stimulating their interest in the exchange students' home institutions. Additionally, Marlboro has recently experienced a number of transitions among the faculty, including the retirement of the two most senior members who focused on European history and culture. The new TCE course would reinvigorate this field of study and draw students interested in foreign affairs back to this vital area of the world.

As the Fall semester draws to a close, I will continue to support the TCE cohort in promoting the possibility of studying abroad. TCE students will continue their preparation by taking tutorials in, for example, German fiscal policy or Czech site-specific sculpture. As TCE gains traction, it will not only create a steady flow of students to Marlboro's partners, foster interdisciplinary approaches to political issues, and bring Europe back into focus in the curriculum; but it will also make the discussion of current events much more pervasive at Marlboro and support wider internationalization efforts across campus.

Final Conclusions

Research on the importance of cultivating international perspectives in higher education has shown the need for colleges and universities to create comprehensive strategy plans for their campuses. Across the United States and around the world, colleges are increasingly adding language that supports such initiatives to their mission statements, have conducted research about their own campuses' strengths and weaknesses, and set specific outcomes relating to improved student competencies, increased mobility, and adequate funding. In my capstone, I hope to have articulated the merits of the work of others and drawn upon that knowledge for Marlboro's behalf. I believe this research is just the first step in moving towards a comprehensive internationalization plan for Marlboro College.

Further research is needed to more fully analyze all stakeholders involved, and more preparation and partnership amongst the Marlboro community is needed in order to implement a plan. Specifically, I hope to work closely with the Admissions team to help support them as they begin to prioritize international student recruitment, and determine what steps are best for Marlboro's small team to accomplish the best goals for the campus. Additionally, I also hope to work more closely with the new Dean of Students, who just began in January 2016 and who has

taken up a charge to better support diversity on campus. I believe that through the continued support of the Dean of Faculty, along with the Dean of Admissions and Dean of Students, we can make tremendous strides in endorsing and implementing an action plan that will propel Marlboro College to become a leader in internationalization at small liberal arts schools.

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Appendix A- Language for Focus groups and surveys

Language for verbal consent: administrator focus group

You are invited to participate in a focus group facilitated by the Director of International Services, Maggie Strassman, as part of an effort to gather information regarding international initiatives and perspectives on campus. Maggie's research is being done as part of her capstone project for her masters degree at the SIT Graduate Institute under her advisor, Lynee Connelly. You will be able to reach Lynee if you have any questions about Maggie's research at lynee.connelly@sit.edu. Your voice today will be part of a comprehensive internationalization plan for Marlboro College. The focus group will take approximately 1 hour. You are welcome to leave the conversation at any point, for any reason. Maggie will be taking notes, but not attributing any comments to the specific commenter unless you grant explicit verbal permission, and the identity of the participants will remain anonymous in the final report. No identifiable information will be passed to faculty, staff, or any other Marlboro community member. You are free to ask questions at any point in the conversation. Inducement will not be offered. Do you all accept this statement and wish to participate? (verbal yeses or head nods). If you prefer not to be part of the focus group after hearing the above information, you are welcome to leave the focus group now, or at any point.

Questions for Administrator Focus Group

- In what ways does Marlboro College currently support (or not) international students?
- In what ways does Marlboro College currently support (or not) international perspectives on campus?

A COMPREHENSIVE INTERNATIONALIZATION ANALYSIS OF MARLBORO COLLEGE

- In what ways does Marlboro College currently support faculty or students hoping to engage in multicultural studies or research?
- How well does Marlboro College currently market itself as an institution that prepares students for success in a globalized workplace?
- What are some of the priorities of staff here at Marlboro?

Invitation for Student Focus Group

Hello, all- The Office of International Services wants to hear YOUR voice about how to improve our campus! We are looking for students to take part in a focus group, 4-5pm on Monday, February 29th in the World Studies Lounge. If you would like to join the conversation about improving student support services here on campus, increasing connections with a global community, and preparing for life after Marlboro, please RSVP to Maggie (mstrassman@marlboro.edu) by Thursday, February 25th. All discussions will remain voluntary and subjects who share information will remain non-identifiable in final reports.

Language for verbal consent: student focus group

You are invited to participate in a focus group facilitated by the Director of International Services, Maggie Strassman, as part of an effort to gather information regarding international initiatives and perspectives on campus. Maggie's research is being done as part of her capstone project for her masters degree at the SIT Graduate Institute under her advisor, Lynee Connelly. You will be able to reach Lynee if you have any questions about Maggie's research at lynee.connelly@sit.edu. Your student voice today will be part of a comprehensive internationalization plan for Marlboro College. The focus group will take approximately 1 hour.

A COMPREHENSIVE INTERNATIONALIZATION ANALYSIS OF MARLBORO COLLEGE

You are welcome to leave the conversation at any point, for any reason. Maggie will be taking notes, but not attributing any comments to the specific commenter, and the identity of the participants will remain anonymous in the final report. No identifiable information will be passed to faculty, staff, or any other Marlboro community member. No answers given will jeopardize your status as a student in any way. You are free to ask questions at any point in the conversation. Inducement will not be offered. Do you all accept this statement and wish to participate? (verbal yeses or head nods). If you prefer not to be part of the focus group after hearing the above information, you are welcome to leave the focus group now, or at any point.

Questions for Student Focus Group

- In what ways does Marlboro College currently support (or not) international and multicultural students here on campus?
- In what ways does Marlboro College currently support (or not) international and multicultural perspectives on campus?
- In what ways does Marlboro College currently support students hoping to engage in multicultural studies or research?
- How well does Marlboro College currently market itself as an institution that prepares students for success in a globalized workplace?
- What are some of the priorities of students here at Marlboro?

Invitation for Faculty Survey

Hello, faculty! As many of you know, Maggie Strassman is writing an internationalization plan for Marlboro as part of her graduate degree. She would like you as faculty members to respond

to a quick survey regarding internationalization on campus. All results will remain anonymous. Please click the link to the Survey Monkey survey here. Thank you for your help!

Questions for Faculty Survey

- Do any of your classes currently meet the “global perspective” criteria? (yes or no multi choice)
 - If yes, how many of your classes meet the criteria? (blank short answer field)
- Do you currently have a Plan student who has had, or who will have, an international experience as part of their Plan work? (yes or no multi choice)
- Have you ever received money from Marlboro in order to engage in international, cross-cultural, or multicultural research (with or without students)? (yes or no multi choice)
- In what ways does Marlboro College currently support (or not) international and multicultural students and faculty here on campus? (blank long answer field)
- In what ways does Marlboro College currently support (or not) international and multicultural perspectives on campus? (blank long answer field)
- In what ways does Marlboro College currently support faculty hoping to engage in multicultural studies or research? (blank long answer field)
- How well does Marlboro College currently market itself as an institution that prepares students for success in a globalized workplace? (blank long answer field)
- What are some of your main priorities as a faculty member here at Marlboro? (blank long answer field)