

Cynthia Milton's Vision Statement – June 2016

Dear Colleagues,

The present document represents a collaborative effort by several members of the first two “classes” of the College (2014 and 2015) in particular coming out of our conversations held at the General Annual Meeting in Victoria, 2015, and building upon the projects launched by Alidad Amirfazli (President) and Laura Loewen (Secretary). It serves also as my vision statement for my nomination for the position of President of the College of New Scholars for 2016-2018.

In the next two years as President of the College, I would like us to focus on formulating our vision of the College, on our mandate, and on the role that the College might play in Canadian society. I would also like us to develop certain strategies and practices that would facilitate dialogue among our members as well as provide channels for outreach beyond the College. We have many exciting projects already underway and we will continue to develop them. However, as a first step I'd like to take the opportunity for the next General Assembly (in Kingston) for us to develop our vision for the college.

Briefly described, I enthusiastically embrace the intellectual capital and the transdisciplinarity offered by the College, one that cuts across the traditional divisions of sciences, social sciences, arts and the humanities as well as across the diverse linguistic and cultural map of Canadian institutions of higher learning. I see the College as a unique institution that is able to respond to the challenges of today through broad creativity and innovation. For me, this is both the mandate of the College and also the vision expressed by many at the members of the College.

RSC-SRC College “Learning as a Common Social Good”

The Royal Society of Canada's College of New Scholars, Artists and Scientists strives to provide guidance to Canadian social growth by promoting scholastic discourse on issues relevant to Canadians.

What is the College?

The College, presently consisting of 137 Members, is a handpicked selection of top mid-career scholars and artists in Canada by Fellows of the Royal Society of Canada. College Members have already received recognition in their fields for excellence and serve as ambassadors of their fields. We have gender parity and linguistic and cultural diversity. Researchers in the humanities, scientists, artists and social scientists of the College strive to overcome disciplinary and academic boundaries in the common pursuit of knowledge. Standing outside the university, and beyond the confines of disciplines, we embrace inter- and trans-disciplinary scholarship and are all bound together in an understanding of learning as a common social good. We seek to participate at various levels, through engagement with government, through our communities and through our schools from K-12 and beyond.

Who are we?

One of Canada's greatest resources is our education system. We are the product of a generous social democracy, most of us having received our public post-secondary education in Canada. Many of us continued on to pursue graduate studies in Canada, and others returned to build their academic careers in Canadian institutions. Our combined academic skills and diverse social and cultural engagements are a product and a reflection of Canada.

The College serves to give back to the society that has nurtured, educated and continues to support our pursuit of knowledge. We believe that knowledge of our past, that art combined with research-based practices, that the research methods and findings of the sciences, social sciences and humanities have the potential to untangle and to offer possible tools for the resolution of our present era's key challenges as well the building of knowledge for future generations.

Few are the scholars who choose to delve deep into thought without a desire to impart it. We believe there is a larger social good to knowledge. We will speak with government and the Canadian public about fresh water systems, alternative energies, creative and arts-based practices, tax havens, comparative proportional representation, extractive industries and local populations, conflict resolution, reconciliation, public health, human rights, computer-assisted learning, literacy and the imagination, and a long list of other topics that occupy our working days.

Immediate Aim: Building our Vision of the College

We are still a young organization. As we build and form the College on solid footing for years to come, we start with three immediate projects, discussed in the General Annual Meeting in Victoria in 2015 (and to be developed in future sessions). Several other ideas and initiatives are also underway (see Appendix 1).

1. *Mandate and Role of the College* – We need to think through our collective vision of the college, as stated above. Most likely this will draw upon our unique structure of interdisciplinarity, gender equity and cultural diversity.
2. *Communication across the College* – We need to develop the means to facilitate collaboration among College members as well as public outreach.
3. *Engaging with Government*. We wish to launch a dialogue with members of our municipal, provincial and federal governments, not only to make our expertise available but also to engage with government on the importance broad learning in the Twenty-First Century. We hope promote a caring, solid and knowledgeable Canada domestically and this spirit of Canada is expressed abroad.

Appendix 1: Initiatives and Ideas

In the AGM in Victoria 2015, we began to develop a series of steps for immediate and long-term strategies and projects, followed by smaller meetings in Ottawa. The following is based on some of the conversations of the working groups and themes raised that we may wish to develop within our strategic plan. I have tried to indicate here those members who raised these topics.

Governance of College – Reem Bahdi has agreed to work on our governance framework and by-laws.

Language – The College should introduce the practice of “whispers” to assist Anglophones to understand French interventions. Also, until more diverse language practices become standard in our working groups, we should attempt to have several interventions in French (that not be about language) per breakout session.

Engaging with Government – We can work with members from the RSC to figure out best practices for engaging government. Part of this will also employ innovative technology strategies. (Karin Hinzer and Alice Aiken)

Media – A working group started to map out how we could best engage with media, proposing ideas such as regular columns in newspapers that invite College members to briefly describe their research and its importance in our society (“Descending the Ivory Tower: Learning as a Common Good” similar to the group Research to Reality). In May 2016 the RSC held a media-training workshop in Ottawa. We would like to offer more such workshops. (Joanna Quinn, Catherine Ratelle and Catherine Connelly)

Interdisciplinarity – A team (headed by Steven Cook) is addressing the College’s unique role as an interdisciplinary organization. They are exploring the theoretical perspectives and methodological tools available as well as the limits of and challenges to interdisciplinarity. Yet, while we ourselves are very interdisciplinary and see the knowledge benefits of this approach, we are also aware of the difficulty our graduate students face in our still-disciplinary based professions. (Erin Manning)

The “Crunch” as Mid-Career Scholars – We are an organization composed of successful mid-career scholars. We are very busy, many over-extended, and some with young families. What are some of the means we can address and ease this crunch and participate actively within the College?

Research Nodes – Interdisciplinary thematic nodes that bring together College members who work on questions in common for discussion on-line throughout the year and in the AGM. Examples of such notes are *Climate Change for the Public* (Hans Larsson), *The Sound of Human Dignity* (Laura Loewen, Reem Bahdi, and Sally Bick), *The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (Carrie Bourassa), *College STEAM* (Alidad Amirfazli), *Networked Human* (Isabel Pedersen), the *Refugee Project* (Elke Winter and Sepali Guruge) and *Conflict and Human Rights* (Joanna Quinn and Fuyuki Kurasawa).

Universities are expanding but academia is shrinking – How can we address the challenges in our university environments? (Elke Winter)

International programme – On February 5, 2016, the College held a meeting in Ottawa to report back on equivalent organizations abroad, such as the Global Youth Academy, as a part of building international linkages for the College (Alidad Amirfazli).

Challenges of Canadian Communities – We seek to reach out to diverse Canadian communities through local forums and to engage issues that speak to specific challenges and concerns.

Education as Life-Long Learning – This project seeks to pair College members (such as mechanical engineer with an artist) who will speak with local schools and groups about the work they do.

Branding – This is related to our foundational document, but also perhaps thinking through a “motto” that captures our collective vision. Sylvie Lamoureux spoke about “une imaginaire collective.”

Funding – Is it necessary and what kinds of funding? Some members spoke that we might partner with government for funding; others had expressed turning to business and industry; others had expressed a wish to remain outside the quest for seeking more funding, but rather focus on the intellectual capital already present in our College.

Internal Promotion and Learning – “Whispering across the academies” the ABCs of humanities, arts, social sciences and sciences among our members.

Website Development – Continue to work on platforms and website that would facilitate public awareness of our activities, but as well to facilitate communication among our members’ projects, such as the research nodes and community outreach projects.

These are just some of the initiatives and ideas launched in the 2015 AGM. In our next annual meeting in Kingston, I would like for us to develop them further as we build our collective vision of the College’s mandate in Canadian society, one that reinforces and exercises knowledge as a social good.