



Coleg Gŵyr Abertawe
Gower College Swansea

STRATEGIC PLAN

2020 – 2024

Leading the way in education and training



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Coleg Gŵyr Abertawe Gower College Swansea



Welcome

It is now 10 years since Gower College Swansea was incorporated as the first of the new larger transformed further education colleges in Wales and the College has already achieved a great deal during that time.

However, particularly with the challenges and experiences of the past year, we know there will be many further challenges ahead of us and, there is a commitment from the Board of Governors, as well as our College managers, lecturers, tutors and support staff to tackling these challenges head on for the benefit of our learners, employers and the communities we serve.

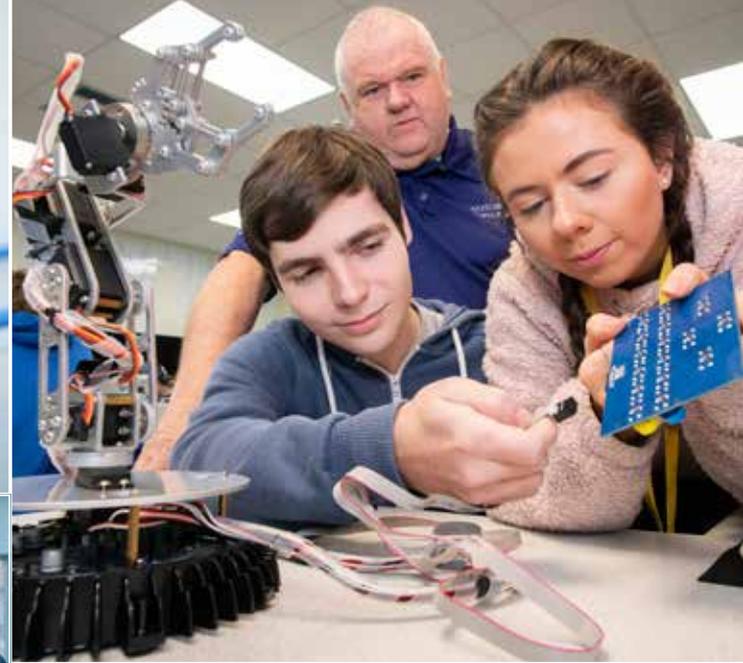
To achieve this, we have over the past year, in consultation with our staff, students and stakeholders, put together this strategic plan, which sets out our key priorities and how we will achieve them.

At the core of this plan is our continued commitment to not only putting our learners first and at the heart of all our decisions, but to provide the highest quality of education and training. This commitment is a real passion for us and we know that, by doing this, we can also be a driver of economic development and social justice.

Some may think that four years is a long time, but we are excited and ambitious about what we can achieve during this important next step. We thank you for taking the time to read this and look forward to working with you to achieve our aims.

Meirion Howells
Chair of the Corporation

Mark Jones
Principal



Introduction

Gower College Swansea is a large further education college with over 4,500 full time and 8,000 part time learners – including 3,000 apprentices – from across Swansea and neighbouring counties studying each year.

Today, the College operates from seven locations across Swansea, including campuses at Tycoch and Gorseinon and is one of the largest employers in the region with over 1,000 staff with an annual turnover of just under £50m.

The College works within a very mixed economy of providers of post 16 education and training. Of the 14 secondary schools in Swansea, seven have sixth forms and whilst there is a competitive environment for post 16 learners, no fewer than 60% of Year 11 pupils will progress to us.

Within Swansea, there are two universities, with whom the College works closely – Swansea University and the University of Wales Trinity Saint David and also two neighbouring further education colleges, both of whom have campuses based within Swansea.

The success and reputation of the College has to date, been built on

- (i) The **high quality of teaching and learning** including our high profile A Level provision based on our Gorseinon Campus. Over 1,500 students study here (the largest A Level cohort in Wales) choosing from over 40 different A Level subjects.
- (ii) **Our positive and proactive approach** to working with employers which has allowed us in recent years to not only significantly increase our apprenticeship provision, but to lead on programmes such as our £16.8m European funded Skills for Industry 2 programme.

Context

At the time of writing, we have a conservative government in Westminster, who now have a green light to progress with Brexit and back in Wales, we have a labour government with the next assembly elections now only six months away.

With key priorities including the implementation of a new 3-16 curriculum and a reformed post compulsory education and training sector, the impact of all of this change is currently unclear.

The same lack of clarity also applies to future funding. Not just in terms of the quantum (£), but also in areas such as Work Based Learning, where the College has to compete against other providers to be awarded a new contract. All of these uncertainties make it increasingly difficult for the College to prepare any accurate medium or long term plans, resulting in us becoming more reactive than proactive.

Then there are the additional challenges arising from the Covid-19 pandemic that we have all become accustomed to. These include the development of new online teaching and materials (the blended approach) and the need for a greater focus on health, safety and wellbeing.



In addition, there are the social challenges of an aging population, where working lives are getting longer and jobs are changing rapidly.

In Swansea, there is planned to be a demographic increase in the number of 16-18 year olds in the next four to five years, which may well be of benefit to the College.

We also have the further challenge of working in a highly competitive market. Schools can add new vocational courses to their curriculum, which compete with ours, and some universities are increasingly offering more foundation level options, as well as more unconditional offers, both of which target students who may otherwise have decided to study with us.

When put together, all of these point towards an increasingly unclear, but competitive future. It is therefore important that the College sets out its own clear priorities and a path to achieving them, which is as independent as possible of government support.

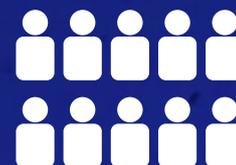
Clearly, if such support is then available i.e. through the new PCET framework, then this could act as further momentum to achieve the priorities set out.



A Level
results constantly

10%

above the Welsh average



10 students per year on average
are given offers from

Oxbridge colleges

24/26



excellent or good
judgements in the
most recent Estyn
inspection

Steady increase
in the number
**international
students**



Strategy and achievements

In the past four years, the College has looked to build its excellent reputation for the delivery of high quality education and training by working with partners to grow its programmes across existing and new areas.

The quality of the College's education and training remains high. At the College's most recent Estyn inspection (February 2018), no fewer than 24 out of the 26 judgements were excellent or good.

Our A Level results remain outstanding. The percentage of A*-C grades awarded, constantly 10% above the Welsh average and, in this past year, no fewer than 12 students have been presented offers from Oxbridge universities.

Our vocational results are now also reaching a similar standard. We are particularly delighted that no fewer than five College students were named in the UK squad for the 2021 World Skills Competition in Shanghai.

We are also proud of the outcomes achieved by our higher education students and the framework completions achieved by our apprentices, which are in line with national benchmarks and also continuing to improve.

This performance has underpinned a period of significant growth for the College, where full time numbers have shown a steady increase, as have the numbers of international students studying (mainly A Levels) at the College.



Ysgol Fusnes Plas Sgeti
Sketty Hall Business School

Recent **growth** in the number of **Apprenticeships**



£6m
funding



YOUR
COLLEGE

YOUR
FUTURE

YOUR
GUARANTEE

Working with our partner schools last year, we welcomed over 50 groups of 14-16 pupils for one or two days a week and this year, we introduced new full time junior apprenticeship programmes.

The College's relatively recent growth in the number of apprenticeships has been an incredible story. From 250 in 2016 to now almost 3,000 every year and in addition to working with well-known employers across Wales, we also reach out into England, working with companies such as Honda and Specsavers.

With the introduction of our new University Centre at our Tycoch Campus and in partnership with a range of universities, we have also been able to grow our Level 4 and 5 provision and introduce a full BA undergraduate programme.

By working with Welsh Government, Swansea Council and the Welsh European Funding Office, we have been able to secure over £6m of funding to support a suite of new employability programmes, Better Jobs, Better Futures.

In addition, we have been able to develop our sector leading Gower College Swansea Guarantee, which ensures all of our full time students have suitable progression opportunities on completion of their course.

All of the above has in turn underpinned the College's growth from £36m in 2015/16 to £49m in 2019/20 and has helped us to overcome ongoing squeezes in government funding by reducing our reliance on our main grant from 72% to under 50%.

This has allowed us to continue to invest in the College's infrastructure, including new teaching and social space at the Gorseinon Campus and a redevelopment at the Tycoch Campus which includes a bespoke University Centre. We have also been able to progress plans to refurbish Sketty Hall into a new Business School.

Throughout this period, College students and staff have been regular winners of major UK and national awards and we were particularly pleased that the College has been shortlisted for the title of UK College of the Year in the FE Awards in both 2016 and 2020.

PROPOSED

Mission statement

Gower College Swansea is respected and valued for delivering the highest quality of education and training that inspires and supports all of our learners to achieve their full potential.

PROPOSED

Vision statement

Leading the way in education and training for all learners, employers and the communities that we serve.

PROPOSED

Core values

The delivery of the College's Mission, Vision and strategic directions will be underpinned by the strong positive culture that exists within the College and which has the following core values at its heart.

Integrity
We are learner centred, honest and open.

One team
We collaborate, respect each other and contribute to team goals.

Self improving
We are forward thinking, innovative and take ownership.

Sustainable
We take a long term view, environmentally, financially and socially.

Can do
We are positive, inclusive, flexible and proactive.

Strategic directions

We have identified a small number of core strategic directions and associated aims that will support the College in delivering our Mission and Values that are easily understood.

These five strategic directions are:



A focus on our learners and our communities



A top performer



A leader in the sector



An employer of choice



A sustainable organisation



STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1

A focus on our learners and our communities

Today, the range of learners attending the College is vast.

As well as our full time A Level and vocational students, there are 14-16 year old school pupils, students studying higher education and adults of all ages engaged in the variety of courses we offer.

Through our strong employer partnerships, we work with and train countless numbers of apprentices and employees and at our Employment Hub in the city centre, we are working with over 1,000 unemployed adults.

Our commitment is to support all of these learners in enhancing their knowledge and skills to help them to progress to further learning, to a career or progress within their current job, or simply to develop their skills to transform their lives in a positive way.

But the demands of our learners are ever increasing and therefore, we need to be constantly ahead of the game. By working with key partners (including schools, universities, employers and government), we are developing new curriculum and pathways through face to face and online delivery to support changing demands.

By linking these programmes together, we can produce a range of clear pathways that allows the learner to not only achieve everything that they want to achieve, but to support their continued learning throughout their life.



STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2

A top performer

A focus on our learners and ensuring they achieve their full potential through the highest quality of education and training is our driving principle.

We will continue to do this through our culture of self-awareness, reflection and self-improvement, underpinned by the setting of robust targets and the effective measurement and management of them. Our learners deserve nothing less if we are to help them to realise their aims and ambitions.

We also aim to be a top performer in all other areas of the College's business. Our strong financial performance is key. By continuing to reduce our reliance on our recurrent grant and by delivering a good level of surplus, this then allows us to invest in staff, equipment and facilities.

We believe in the power of education and the strength of our partners and with this in mind, will look to share our own best practice, whilst continuing to learn from others.

We will also continue to celebrate the many achievements of our students and staff by putting them forward for local and national awards and using their stories as the springboard and motivation for other students following closely behind.



STRATEGIC DIRECTION 3

A leader in the sector

We want our College to be a leader, not a follower.

We will continue to work with a wide range of strong and effective partnerships with schools, other colleges, universities, employers and stakeholders as their partner of choice in supporting them to achieve their aims and ambitions, whilst at the same time, achieving ours.

Our most important relationship will be with Welsh Government ministers and senior officers, where we will be positive and proactive in looking to support key priorities. These include the new 3-16 curriculum, the development of the reform of a post compulsory education and training sector and the further development of the role of the Regional Skills Partnership – all of which are underpinned by the ground breaking Future Generations Act.

At the same time, we will look to support cross-cutting themes. These include the need to increase digital competences, the increase in Welsh medium provision, the roll out of the Additional Learning Needs Act and the development of further higher level provision that will support economic regeneration.

But being a leader isn't just about what you do, it's also about how you do it. Therefore, our commitment is for the College to continue to develop our digital footprint and resources so learners have greater flexibility in how and where they study. This will also mean that we can tailor our programmes even more to meet the needs of our learners.



STRATEGIC DIRECTION 4

An employer of choice

We firmly believe our staff are our greatest resource and therefore, they need to be treated as such, so they can provide the inspirational, dynamic and passionate teaching and support that our learners need and so we can also recruit the best staff to join our teams.

To do this, we will continue to invest in our staff, providing training and support which will allow them not only to develop their skills to meet the challenges of working in an excellent College, but also in encouraging their innovation and problem solving skills.

Indeed, we recognise that the ability of our staff to adapt and change in an ever changing sector is probably one of the keys to our continued success.

We will also focus extensively on their wellbeing to ensure they are not only fit and healthy to undertake their demanding roles, but they are also strong and resilient to deal with the challenges we face, not just in the College, but in everyday life.

We will ensure our staff have access to the best equipment and facilities to support them in their role. We will continue to increase in all of these areas, including the development of a number of key capital projects beginning with the Sketty Hall Business School.



STRATEGIC DIRECTION 5

A sustainable organisation

Our aim is by looking ahead, we will be better prepared to meet the future needs of our learners and College. We will invest strategically to ensure we are as well placed as possible to achieve this.

But the word sustainability has another meaning and here too, we have a role to play in not only planning, but becoming as environmentally friendly as possible. We will do this through our choice of teaching materials, our design and use of buildings and our commitment to being carbon neutral.

With the future leaders of our society currently studying within the College, we owe it to them and they would expect nothing less of us.

Golden threads

As part of the College's preparation for this strategic plan, we identified a number of golden threads which are priorities for us. These underpin all of our operations and the achievement of each of our strategic directions.

Lifelong learning

Providing opportunities for learning throughout life.

Quality

Delivering the best outcomes in teaching and learning.

Employability

A focus on the long term progression and employment opportunities for all our students.

Value for money

The best use of limited financial resources.

Digital

An increasing use of technology in the development and delivery of teaching and learning.

Wellbeing

A focus on our student and staff health and wellbeing.

Key performance indicators

1

A focus on our learners and our communities

- Increased enrolment numbers in FE and HE.
- Increased share of the post year 11 cohort.
- Increased progression rates.

3

A leader in the sector

- Increase in Welsh Medium provision.
- Successful roll out of the Additional Learning Needs Act.

2

A top performer

- All judgements – in external inspections – to be good or excellent.
- Success rates to be in the top quartile.
- FE learner satisfaction results to be in the top quartile.
- Forecast surplus (EBITDA) to be in the top quartile.
- Percentage reliance on recurrent grant to be in the bottom quartile.
- Continued investment in the College's estate and infrastructure.
- College staff and students to be winners of national awards.

4

An employer of choice

- Staff satisfaction rates to be in the top quartile.
- Good numbers of strong applications for key roles.

5

A sustainable organisation

- To retain our Green Dragon status.
- To progress towards a position of being carbon neutral.



Have your say

We welcome your comments and views on our plan.

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www.gcs.ac.uk/strategic-plan-2020-2024

