

Transforming Tomorrow:  
Our Students, Our University, Our World

A Strategic Plan  
for the University of Evansville

## **Identity**

The University of Evansville is an independent, academically selective, internationally committed University affiliated with the United Methodist Church that integrates distinctive liberal arts education and dynamic professional programs.

## **Vision**

To be an innovative institution of global reach and reputation whose students develop the knowledge and skills, vision and wisdom to lead and to serve.

## **Core Purpose**

To provide students with life transforming educational experiences that prepare them to engage the world as informed, ethical, and productive citizens.

## Introduction

The University of Evansville's strategic plan affirms our mission. Our students are educated broadly by a talented and dedicated faculty in a curriculum grounded in the liberal arts, ensuring broad exposure to the sciences, humanities, arts, and social sciences. Students have the opportunity to study in a variety of fields, from those traditionally associated with the liberal arts to various professional fields. They are challenged to develop international awareness and engagement. Moreover, their personal development is supported and stimulated by a rich array of co-curricular programs and activities. This mission is as relevant today as it was 157 years ago – perhaps more so, as our students prepare to navigate a dynamic and complex world.

Such a mission, in short, is one of *transformation*. Our students are transformed by their experience at the University, as they become better able to comprehend the world and their role in it. This intellectual and personal growth enables our graduates to become agents of transformation as they move into their local, regional, national, and international communities. A truly successful plan, of course, initiates yet another transformation – that is, of the institution itself. *Transforming Tomorrow: Our Students, Our University, Our World* thus aims to make the University an even more remarkable place than it is today and, as a consequence, enhance our ability to graduate students who will engage the world as informed, ethical, and productive citizens.

## Strategic Planning Process

In support of this transformational mission, the University has been intensely engaged in the development of a strategic plan that will shape its actions for the foreseeable future. Three principles guided the planning process: that it be inclusive, comprehensive, and transparent. To that end, beginning in the fall of 2010, nine Working Groups were formed to address the array of areas and issues relevant to University activity:

- Academic Program
- Connections
- Enrollment
- Faculty and Staff Development
- Financial Resources

- Institutional Identity
- International
- Social Responsibility
- Student Development

Working Group membership included faculty members (who constituted approximately one-half of the membership of each group), students, staff, administrators, and members of the Board of Trustees. Alumni and parents were represented on several of the Working Groups. Each Working Group was led by two co-chairs, one of whom is a member of the faculty. The groups met frequently to discuss issues relevant to their areas and prepare a list of strategic recommendations. These recommendations were then communicated to the Steering Committee, whose membership consisted of the two co-chairs from each Working Group, two members of the Board of Trustees, and the President of the University, who chaired the Steering Committee. All of these efforts were coordinated administratively by the University Registrar, Amy Brandebury, who was also a member of the Steering Committee. In total, more than 130 people contributed directly to the formation of the strategic plan. A website was created to share information about the strategic planning timeline and the progress of the Working Groups and Steering Committee. The website included, as well, a comments section that enabled those in the University community to share observations, questions, and suggestions.

## **Understanding the Higher Education Landscape**

Even as we are committed to the historical identity and mission of the University and celebrate its successes, we must be ready to confront the realities of a rapidly changing world whose contours we can only partly discern. Institutional success is thus grounded both in an ability to appreciate the nature of such changes, and to develop the institutional capacity to anticipate and adapt to them.

How will the higher educational landscape change in coming years? Our ability to forecast the future is imperfect, but several features of that landscape seem certain.

- **An institution’s “value proposition” will grow in importance as competition for students becomes more intense.**

Parents and prospective students must be assured of the value of a UE education as they seek high returns on their educational investments. This will require that we continue to enhance

the quality of the academic experience and demonstrate more effectively the outcomes produced by a UE education. Moreover, we must do a better job of communicating the excellence of a UE education.

- **Understanding and engaging the international environment will be recognized as a fundamental and critical component of a high quality academic experience.**

More opportunities for international exposure for our students, both on campus and off, must be integral to the UE experience. This exposure includes a process of discovery that is cultural, intellectual, and personal and must include opportunities for discussion and reflection.

- **The marketplace for students will evolve in the direction of increasing numbers of non-traditional students seeking non-traditional learning opportunities.**

The demography of student populations is changing. According to the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, though the total number of high school graduates in the United States will increase by about 2.5% between 2009-10 and 2020-21, high school graduates in the Midwest will decrease by about 5.6% during a comparable period (2008-09 to 2020-21).<sup>1</sup> Older students seeking new learning and professional opportunities will look to educational institutions to meet their needs. These institutions must recognize that new pedagogies appropriate to these non-traditional learners may need to be developed. This new reality will require more institutional agility and flexibility. We must be creative and stimulate and reward innovation.

- **Understanding and dealing with difference will grow in importance as America and its communities become even more diverse.**

Diversity is not simply a goal; it is our condition and we must nurture an environment in which our students, faculty, and staff appreciate the humanity and value of all people.

- **The importance of institutional sustainability will grow.**

As the price of energy increases and as our cognizance of the impact of our ecological footprint grows, UE must become more energy efficient and more responsible in its use of resources.

- **Technology capability will grow in importance as an instrument for pedagogical enrichment and institutional management.**

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<sup>1</sup> From Martin Van Der Werf and Grant Sabatier, "The College of 2020: Students," Chronicle Research Services (June 2009), 13. The report also notes significant changes in the racial and ethnic distribution of high school graduates during the next decade. From 2009-10 to 2021-22, the number of white non-Hispanic graduates will decline nationally by about 13% and black non-Hispanic graduates will decline by about 10%; the number of Hispanic and Asian/Pacific Islander graduates will increase significantly (by about 55% and 47%, respectively).

Faculty and students will require enhanced technology resources to support an education appropriate for the 21st century, and growing demand from non-traditional student populations will require such capability. We must increase our awareness and use of new technologies that will complement the academic experience.

- **Building and communicating strength will require securing substantial new resources.**

New initiatives in all arenas, as well as our ability to recruit and retain outstanding faculty and staff, will require that we strengthen our financial position through prudent management of limited resources. We must also identify new sources of support even as we steward effectively our relationships with those who have been and continue to be generous in their support of the University.

Our strategic plan follows naturally from these assumptions – indeed, the plan as a whole is a more fully developed expression of the impact of these assumptions on our preparation for the future.

## **Implementation**

The success of *Transforming Tomorrow: Our Students, Our University, Our World* will depend not only on the quality of its recommendations but on the extent to which the University is committed to its execution. To ensure that the strategic plan is implemented in an affirmative and effective fashion, a detailed and concrete implementation plan – built around each of the tactics detailed in this document – will be developed immediately following adoption of the strategic plan by the Board of Trustees. This implementation framework will identify the University person, committee, or group responsible for appropriate execution of each element of the plan. Moreover, the framework will include an expected time frame for implementation of each step and an estimate of cost.

A strategic plan is by its nature a compendium of commitments that must be regularly revisited and adjusted as circumstances dictate. Accordingly, the implementation process is not only an opportunity to hold ourselves accountable for execution of each aspect of the plan, but to revise and improve it in coming years. It may become clear, for example, that new initiatives ought to be developed to meet new needs or take advantage of unexpected opportunities. Similarly, it may become clear that steps included in the plan that seem appropriate at the present time are deemed no longer desirable at some future point. To ensure that this organic quality of the plan is recognized and embraced as we move forward with its implementation, regular assessments of the plan will be conducted and results of those assessments shared with the campus community.

## **Summary of Core Goals**

*Transforming Tomorrow: Our Students, Our University, Our World* is built around seven Core Goals central to the accomplishment of our overall institutional objectives. Each goal is supported by a series of Action Steps to be taken upon adoption of the plan by the Board of Trustees.

The University's Core Goals are:

- I. To sustain and enrich a curricular and co-curricular experience of exceptional quality and impact**
- II. To expand and enrich the University's international programs and engagement to achieve national prominence**
- III. To ensure a work environment that honors and values the contributions of all community members and their continuing professional growth**
- IV. To attract and retain a student body of high academic achievement and personal aspiration**
- V. To model and teach social responsibility in the local and global community**
- VI. To make the world better aware of the distinctive and transformative character of a UE education**
- VII. To secure the resources necessary to support the University's pursuit of excellence**

## **Core Goals and Action Steps**

### **I. To sustain and enrich a curricular and co-curricular experience of exceptional quality and impact**

**Academic excellence is the cornerstone of a great university; indeed, such excellence is central to UE's mission and purpose. A strategic plan should thus be measured significantly by the extent to which it stimulates and produces enrichment of the intellectual experience of its students. The foundational elements of the University's curriculum, such as the general education and first year programs, must establish a solid basis for more advanced study. The University must also be ready to consider modifications of the current curriculum to include new initiatives, improve existing programs, and identify ways to better serve students in a changing national and international context. Moreover, an exceptional curriculum is complemented by a co-curricular program that nurtures the creation of a strong and connected campus community. Such a community promotes and encourages personal transformation through a wide range of opportunities for self-discovery and intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and physical growth. Such opportunities foster short and long-term student satisfaction and affinity.**

#### **Action Steps:**

- a. Attract, retain, and support faculty teacher-scholars
- b. Develop a signature general education curriculum designed to support UE's mission of educating socially responsible global citizens, and to provide broad exposure to the liberal arts and sciences
- c. Identify opportunities for curricular enrichment and targeted enrollment growth
  - i. Develop new programs to meet student needs and enhance UE's mission
  - ii. Enroll to capacity programs with room for growth
  - iii. Expand programs with strong demand
  - iv. Expand graduate and adult education offerings
- d. Enhance the distinctiveness of foundational programs to establish a solid basis for more advanced study
  - i. Strengthen the first-year program
  - ii. Elevate the profile of the Honors Program
  - iii. Bolster the Major Discovery Program

- e. Expand and deepen an international presence in the curriculum
  - i. Develop an Asian Studies program
  - ii. Include an international dimension in general education program
  - iii. Enhance quality and distinctiveness in the study of foreign languages and cultures
- f. Consider the development of a “learning in retirement” program
- g. Create and implement the “Define Your Life” program to enable students to self-identify qualities and track progress toward competencies
- h. Increase opportunities for service and service learning
  - i. Create an inventory of service work available to students
  - ii. Support faculty –led Community-Based Learning courses
- i. Expand opportunities for experiential learning
- j. Increase curricular and co-curricular attention to social responsibility
- k. Enhance efforts to determine how effectively UE achieves stated educational objectives

## **II. To expand and enrich the University’s international programs and engagement to achieve national prominence**

**The major political, social, economic, and environmental issues of our times have complex international dimensions and require responses drawing on skills, knowledge, and experiences that transcend the physical borders of the United States. UE seeks to articulate an international vision and commitment providing significant experiences in and out of the traditional classroom that promote the development of informed, ethical, and productive citizens.**

### **Action Steps:**

- a. Protect, develop, and invest in the continuing success of the Harlaxton College program
- b. Strengthen the University’s commitment to international engagement
  - i. Enhance the effectiveness of international offices and programs through coordination and consolidation where appropriate
  - ii. Increase study abroad opportunities and strategic partnerships abroad
  - iii. Enhance student diversity by increasing the number of international students and number of countries represented in the student body
  - iv. Communicate the strength and distinctiveness of UE’s international programs

### **III. To ensure a work environment that honors and values the contributions of all community members and their continuing professional growth**

**Recruiting and retaining outstanding faculty, staff, and administrators is essential to the sustenance of an academic program and student experience of recognized excellence. A competitive compensation plan and the assurance of appropriate and equitable workloads for all employees will nurture and strengthen commitments to the University. UE must also affirm the value of the professional growth and development of all faculty, staff, and administrators, and ensure their representation in the institution's decision-making processes.**

#### **Action Steps:**

- a. Analyze benchmarking data relevant to salary and benefits to ensure that UE is able to recruit and retain talented faculty and staff
- b. Identify opportunities to ensure that compensation more effectively recognizes achievement for all employees
- c. Provide professional development and training to enhance the work quality of all employees
  - i. Assess the evaluation process for hourly and administrative employees
  - ii. Create new programs for professional development and mentoring, to include consideration of schedule flexibility in order for faculty and staff to take advantage of such opportunities
  - iii. Establish leadership development programs
- d. Assess workloads to ensure balance and equity for all employees
- e. Recognize and support more effectively faculty scholarship and artistic achievement
- f. Assess the allocation of human and financial resources to ensure that the needs of critical academic and administrative functions are met
- g. Ensure that staff, administrators, and faculty are represented in University decision-making processes
- h. Identify and implement strategies to increase access, representation, development, retention, and promotion of faculty, staff, and administrators of under-represented populations
- i. Review Board of Trustee committee structure to ensure effective execution of Board responsibilities

#### **IV. To attract and retain a student body of high academic achievement and personal aspiration**

**The University of Evansville seeks to enroll students, locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally, who are well prepared and positioned to grow academically and personally. This should include a commitment to measured and targeted growth in the student body. To do so, the University must enhance student recruitment efforts by more effective integration of all administrative and academic offices that contribute to the recruitment process, and provide sufficient resources for the Office of Enrollment Services to meet enrollment and revenue goals. The UE student body is enriched by the presence of a broad diversity of students, including those from typically under-represented populations and those with a wide range of co-curricular and extra-curricular interests. UE's athletics program must remain committed to excellence while maintaining well-defined standards for academic achievement and fiscal discipline.**

##### **Action Steps:**

- a. Enhance student recruitment and retention efforts
  - i. In addition to targeted regional, national, and international recruiting efforts, strengthen recruitment outreach to the local and Tri-state area (e.g., expand relationships with local high schools' high achieving students and their teachers)
  - ii. Provide sufficient resources for the Office of Enrollment Services to meet enrollment and revenue goals
  - iii. More effectively integrate recruitment and retention efforts across the Offices of Enrollment Services, Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, and Advancement
- b. Maintain and support a Division I athletics program that is consistent with the academic quality of the University, is committed to excellence, enriches the student experience, and enriches the Evansville community
  - i. Ensure that student-athletes meet appropriate University standards for admission and academic progress
  - ii. Ensure that clear standards for resource allocation and fiscal discipline are maintained
  - iii. Increase philanthropic support for the athletics program

- c. Identify and implement strategies to increase the access, representation, development, retention, and graduation of students of under-represented populations

## **V. To model and teach social responsibility in the local and global community**

**The University of Evansville is committed to cultivating a sense of social responsibility for all people at the institution. This commitment is manifest in our programs supporting diversity, service to the community, and environmental responsibility. The University seeks to implement and extend its diversity and service initiatives, and to determine more precisely our environmental impact. We must explore ways in which we might operate that are both more resource-efficient and responsible to the world around us.**

### **Action Steps:**

- a. Assess the perceptions of the campus and Evansville communities relative to diversity
- b. Develop a plan to enhance a climate of respect, understanding, and appreciation of difference, in order to increase representational diversity within the campus community
- c. Ensure vertical and horizontal responsibility and accountability amongst all faculty, staff, administrators, and boards for institutional diversity goals
- d. Affirm our commitment to supplier diversity
- e. Enhance the effectiveness of the Office of Diversity Initiatives and the integration of diversity services and efforts across campus
- f. Nurture long-term partnerships with service organizations in the Tri-State
- g. Assess the University's environmental impact and the extent to which we can be better engaged in conscientious environmental practice and education
- h. Develop a comprehensive plan for sustainability

## **VI. To make the world better aware of the distinctive and transformative character of a UE education**

**The reputation of the University is inextricably linked to how well its message is shared with various constituencies through personal interaction and use of**

**communications technologies. Conveying the excellence of UE’s programs and achievements will require a substantial commitment to effective and consistent marketing, which can be accomplished through development and implementation of an integrated, multi-media communications strategy. Especially important is campus-wide support for website development and maintenance at the department, office, and University levels. UE must also nurture lifelong relationships with its graduates, for alumni can serve as a vital resource for promoting the University’s message and supporting its programs.**

**Action Steps:**

- a. Develop and implement an effective integrated communication and marketing strategy
  - i. Create an office of integrated communications, to include a Cabinet-level director position with marketing expertise, to ensure that all areas of campus provide a consistent and engaging message using electronic, print, and other media
  - ii. Enhance website support for all offices and departments
  - iii. Leverage the reputation of programs of widely-recognized excellence
  - iv. Celebrate publically student and faculty service activities
  - v. Enhance communication of institutional data on student outcomes
- b. Grow alumni affinity
  - i. Develop a “recruit to alumni” plan to maintain lifelong connections to the University
  - ii. Increase visibility and opportunities for UE connections in key regional cities
  - iii. Expand ongoing rituals that help to establish strong and enduring alumni connections to the University, to include identification of appropriate spaces within which those rituals will take place
  - iv. Enhance opportunities for lifelong learning for UE alumni
  - v. Expand professional development resources for students and alumni
  - vi. Extend the reach of the worldwide UE alumni network to become a more tangible asset to students and alumni

## **VII. To secure the resources necessary to support the University's pursuit of excellence**

**To achieve the goals outlined in this strategic plan and to maintain the quality of existing programs, significant demands will be placed on the resources available to the University. UE must continue to develop philanthropic relationships with those who have been generous in the past, but it is critical as well that new funding sources are identified. This will require an increased commitment to fundraising, improved capability to identify and secure grant support, and exploration of third-party relationships for revenue-producing projects. We must allocate and use more effectively currently available resources. We must also assess our uses of technology and develop a plan for strategic use of technology resources. Moreover, the University must undertake a comprehensive update of its facilities master plan to determine how best to address existing needs and identify new facilities essential to our growth as an academic institution of recognized quality.**

### **Action Steps:**

- a. Pursue fundraising, grant opportunities, and other strategies for increasing University financial resources
  - i. Identify large projects for project-specific campaigns
  - ii. Begin planning for the next capital campaign
  - iii. Consider the use of third-party investors to fund revenue-producing projects (e.g., residence hall facilities)
  - iv. Increase alumni participation
  - v. Enhance our capability to identify and secure grant support (e.g., creating a grant support office)
  - vi. To enhance faculty resources, seek support for new professorships (e.g., Asian Studies, entrepreneurship, etc.)
- b. Enhance current and identify new funding sources
  - i. Ensure disciplined management of the financial aid budget to increase net revenue
  - ii. Undertake targeted enrollment growth
  - iii. Increase the percentage of students living on campus
- c. Direct available resources to achieve the greatest value and return

- i. Develop and implement a robust and comprehensive financial modeling and reporting protocol
  - ii. Build a target margin into the budget for funding strategic initiatives
  - iii. Create a mechanism to ensure the effective allocation of resources for academic and non-academic programs
  - iv. Consider consolidation of back office functions with other universities and increased use of group purchasing organizations
- d. Develop a plan for the strategic use of technology
- e. Update the existing master facilities plan to include enhancement of facilities and learning environments that reflect the high quality of the UE education
  - i. Address the needs for renovation of existing housing and consider additional housing in conjunction with enrollment increases
  - ii. Assess the value of an improved athletic practice facility and fitness center that supports intercollegiate athletics, academic programs, and campus fitness
  - iii. Assess the need for enhanced common spaces (e.g., library, academic buildings)
  - iv. Assess the value of a performing arts center
  - v. Assess the value of a renovated and expanded Neu Chapel
  - vi. Prioritize deferred maintenance needs