

METHODIST UNIVERSITY STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

METHODIST UNIVERSITY MISSION

Methodist University, historically supported by the North Carolina Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, owes its origin and values to the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. The University is committed to an ecumenical spirit, respects diversity, and recognizes the dignity and worth of all human beings. The University's programs are based on the conviction that a liberally-educated person is sensitive to the needs and rights of others. Methodist affirms the importance of intellectual values and ethical principles such as truth, virtue, justice, and love. The University community seeks to develop whole persons who will contribute substantially and creatively to the professions and to civic life. Therefore, Methodist provides opportunities for spiritual, academic, and social growth, to the end that students may acquire enlightened minds and responsible spirits, as well as a continuing thirst for knowledge.

The purpose of the University is to provide an undergraduate and graduate education firmly grounded in the liberal arts tradition that nurtures moral values and ethical decision making; to provide distinctive professional and graduate programs that complement the undergraduate programs; to provide educational and cultural services and resources to the community; and to prepare students for a variety of careers and educational pursuits.

INTRODUCTION TO THE STRATEGIC INITIATIVES AND ROADMAPS FOR SUCCESS

In 2019, MU welcomed a new president, Dr. Stanley T. Wearden, who engaged the MU community in developing and articulating the following ongoing strategic initiatives to position Methodist University as a thriving university now and into the future:

1. **Build a Comprehensive Framework to Advance Student Success** with a focus on continuous improvement in student retention, persistence, graduation rates and the overall student experience.
2. **Extend the MU Reach** by expanding online programs, community college articulations, and military and community partnerships.
3. **Embed Career Readiness and Civic Engagement in Curriculum and Campus Life** by providing intentional connections between academic and career advising, expanding of on-campus and off-campus internships and professional experiences, creating coursework and research opportunities connected to the wider community, and mentoring to guide students in exploration of personal and professional vocation.
4. **Commit to Belonging and Engagement** by building a campus culture that embraces and celebrates all members of the MU community and creates policies and practices to uphold these values.
5. **Increase Endowment in Support of Student Scholarships** to create self-perpetuating funding to support students seeking a Methodist University education.
6. **Partner with Cape Fear Valley Health to Create a School of Medicine** focused on educating a diverse population of expertly trained medical doctors attentive to the needs of rural and underserved populations, and becoming a national leader in interprofessional, team-based medical education.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE PLANNING PROCESS

Having led two previous institutions through comprehensive 5-year strategic planning processes (an academic plan at the first and a full strategic plan at the second) and having been charged with implementation of the plan at the second institution, Dr. Wearden has had ample opportunity to assess this approach to planning. The president has come to see that the traditional 5-year planning approach is no longer suitable to the current higher education environment. Higher education is in a highly dynamic period of rapid changes in both the external and internal environments. A strategic planning process for our current time needs to be much more nimble and responsive.

Consequently, Methodist University has adopted an approach that outlines a discrete set of strategic initiatives with goals that should be achievable in a two- to 3-year period and with ongoing iterations to create continual improvement. These initiatives are highly focused and can be adjusted, adapted and even changed quickly in response to environmental pressures. All Methodist University's strategic initiatives are focused on meeting the challenges of the current and future higher education landscape and on fostering a thriving university with an unwavering focus on student success. To facilitate this process, Methodist University has recruited new hires and promoted existing personnel with expertise and vision in academic affairs, university advancement, information technology, engagement and belonging, student support services, counseling services, health and medical sciences, transfer student services and other domains.

Methodist University also has undertaken several campus-wide change initiatives as part of the university's effort to implement the strategic initiatives:

- Moving the Needle on Retention and Student Persistence, a full campus project involving participation in research (ACE), development workshop for middle-management and success initiative leaders; five success initiative teams with participation of more than 75 faculty and staff from across campus units. This is a comprehensive approach to address all

aspects of the university that have an impact on metrics such as retention rate, persistence rate, and graduate rate – all of which are direct measures of student success.

- Partnership across Academic Affairs with six community colleges in the region, and with Fort Liberty (formerly Fort Bragg, the largest U.S. military base and a nearby neighbor of the university), focused on development of online and transfer initiatives that will serve the needs of a broader and often older array of students than the traditional college-age in-person learners. We will continue to serve our traditional demographic with commitment and creative resolve, but the thriving university of the future must redefine its market and adapt its mission accordingly.
- Collaboration with faculty on development of a comprehensive shared governance structure and the first-ever Methodist University Faculty Senate. A university with an ambitious change agenda must ensure a clear and responsive structure for shared governance. Change, to be effective, must be accompanied by thoughtful, listening-focused communication.
- Partnership with Cape Fear Valley Health, the region's largest hospital system, providing a facility, and providing comprehensive clinic education opportunities for a Methodist University school of medicine, which currently holds applicant status with the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME) and hopes to have its first class of students in 2026.

These change initiatives are consonant with the university mission statement and Methodist University's six strategic initiatives, all of which also are natural outgrowths of pillars of 2015-2020 strategic plan, with necessary modifications to address the current higher education context and the university's vision for the future.

METHODIST UNIVERSITY FRAMEWORK FOR KEY DECISIONS

To assist in planning and implementation of strategic initiatives, Methodist University has adopted the following decisional framework. The purpose of these initiatives is to bring focus to all aspects of university planning and decision making, when weighing investments and courses of action, and ensuring alignment with the strategic initiatives. Before any commitment or recommitment of university resources, we must, as a university community be able to provide evidence-supported and convincing answers to these questions:

1. Does it support the University's mission and vision for the future?
2. Does it drive revenue?
3. Is it additive to the endowment?
4. Does it support student success?
5. Is it critical for health, safety, and compliance?

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE ONE:

BUILD A COMPREHENSIVE FRAMEWORK TO ADVANCE STUDENT SUCCESS

Goal 1.1 Assess Programs and Services and Create Roadmaps for Adoption of Contemporary, Strategic Approaches to Student Success

Goal 1.2 Analyze, Disaggregate, Track, and Disseminate Student Data on Retention, Persistence, and Graduation

Goal 1.3 Refine Organizational Structure to Promote Sustainability, Integration, and Intentional Alignment of Student Success and MU Strategic Initiatives

Goal 1.4 Foster Campus-wide Culture of Ownership and Accountability for Student Success

Goal 1.5 Recruit to Retain

Goal 1.6 Ensure Current and Relevant Programs with Clear Paths to Degree

Goal 1.7 Develop Comprehensive Approach to Student Well-being

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE TWO:

EXTEND THE MU REACH

Goal 2.1 Develop Robust Fully Online Degree and Certificate Programs

Goal 2.2 Extend Outreach to and Create Meaningful, Supportive Connections with the Military Community

Goal 2.3 Foster and Deepen Community College Partnerships and Articulations

Goal 2.4 Improve Transfer Student Enrollment and Success

Goal 2.5 Build Community Partnerships and Curricular Connections

Goal 2.6 Integrate Methodist University Mission across Campus and Initiatives

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE THREE:

EMBED CAREER READINESS AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN CURRICULUM AND CAMPUS LIFE

Goal 3.1 Integrate Academic and Career Advising

Goal 3.2 Implement Academic Plans, Career Readiness/Vocation Plans for All Students

Goal 3.3 Create faculty-student mentoring program focusing on vocational discernment and understanding of personal and professional purpose

Goal 3.4 Provide Internships/Experiential Learning Opportunities for All Students

Goal 3.5 Increase student awareness of and participation in undergraduate research opportunities

Goal 3.6 Expand high quality faculty-led education abroad learning experiences

Goal 3.7 Connect Classrooms to Community Partners as Sites of Meaningful Civic Engagement

Goal 3.8 Develop Robust On-Campus Internship Program and Professional Experience in Meaningful Campus Employment Program

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE FOUR:

COMMIT TO BELONGING AND ENGAGEMENT

Goal 4.1 Launch President's Task Force on to Hear from All Students

Goal 4.2 Hire for Engagement, Community, and Belonging Cabinet-level Position

Goal 4.3 Engage All-campus Equity and Inclusion Training and Development

Goal 4.4 Ensure Policies and Practices the Support All Students, Faculty, and Staff

Goal 4.5 Create Ongoing, Sustainable Campus Engagement and Belonging Plan

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE FIVE:

INCREASE ENDOWMENT IN SUPPORT OF STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS

Goal 5.1: Analyze Methodist University Local and Regional Financial Impact

Goal 5.2: Launch Capital Campaign in Support of Student Scholarships

Goal 5.3 Establish Data-Informed Scholarship Strategy

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE SIX:

PARTNER WITH CAPE FEAR VALLEY HEALTH TO CREATE A SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

Goal 6.1 Establish School of Medicine Mission, Vision, and Goals Focused on Educating a Diverse Population of Expertly Trained Medical Doctors Attentive to the Needs of Rural and Underserved Populations, and Becoming A National Leader in Interprofessional, Team-Based Medical Education

Action 6.11 Create Partnership Agreement with Cape Fear Valley Health

Goal 6.12 Achieve LCME accreditation.