

Allen University

STRATEGIC PLAN

2023-2028

“We Are, We Can, We Will”

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FACTOIDS 2023-2024

Faculty, 75% Terminal Degrees
Student Body, 26 States & 7 Nations
2023 Entering Freshman Class, 3.19gpa
Sponsored Athletics, Women 7, Men 5
Total assets, \$57,000,000
Universal Apple Campus
First Doctoral Degree

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE



Via aspirational planning, the University has made unimaginable progress across all its endeavors. New academic programs, academic programs at higher levels, new athletic teams, leading-edge technology, physical plant upgrades, and a stronger financial profile were areas of focus in past strategic plans and on the roster of current achievements. Faculty, staff, students, alumni, administrators, and the Board of Trustees played indispensable roles in the transformation.

The suite of wise sayings about failure creating the impetus for success is considerable. Charles Handy provided an insightful discussion on the Sigmoid Curve in “The Age of Paradox” regarding in-attentiveness and complacency born of attending in-route success. Simply put, growth whether rapid or slow, will reach a high point, then level out, continue for a time and decline. The ever-changing environment and depletion of original energy/ideas requires the launch of a new curve *before* reaching the apex of the current one. Via the 2023-2028 Strategic Plan, Allen University will launch a new upward curve fueled by the aspirations of its constituents.

Adding to the portfolio of graduate programs, making informed use of artificial intelligence, attending the sense of place and emotional well-being of the campus, and ensuring student success are within the aspirations that will be pursued under the heading “We Are, We Can, We Will.” We look forward to sharing our progress.

Sincerely,

Ernest McNealey, Ph.D.

Ernest McNealey
President and CEO

PLANNING AT ALLEN UNIVERSITY

The impetus for 2017 strategic planning was intentionally parochial and egalitarian rather than formulaic and consultant-driven. The hopes and aspirations of institutional constituencies were sought instead of holding multiple sessions to identify and prioritize strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Faculty, Staff, Students, Alumni, and Administrators were asked “What would you like Allen to have, to be doing, and to be recognized for five years from now that it is not today?” As the voluminous responses were received, analyzed, and categorized, progress was shared with the Board of Trustees. The 2017-2022 Strategic Plan, titled “Fueling the Resurgence”, began a transformational process that has involved constant review, evaluation, and change. At the beginning of each semester and at a leadership retreat each May, the Plan is reviewed, discussed, and updated as evaluations, and circumstances warrant. Within two years of implementation of the 2017 plan, a revised version titled “Powering the Imagination” was released, and in 2021 an evolved plan “The Power of Imagining” was published. While the structure of the plans has remained constant, areas of accomplishment have been removed, goals and objectives have been reframed, while others were moved to the operational plans of the administrative divisions.

Two documents are produced from strategic planning at the University, the Plan itself and an accompanying Implementation Plan. The nuts-and-bolts of achieving the articulated aspirations 1) tasks and activities, 2) responsible party(ies) or office(s), 3) timelines, and 4) budget implications are set out for each objective. These implementation strategies rollover into the operational plans of the institutional divisions. The level of specificity and ease of evaluation allow constant engagement and re-imagining, a living strategic plan.

Aspiration I – Growing and Expanding the Enrollment

“Build it and they will come” made famous in Phil Alden Robinson’s movie “Field of Dreams” is not applicable to enrollment at small universities. Earlier editions of the strategic plan focused on expanding athletic programs and increasing the number and variety of academic offerings. Success was achieved in both areas, however, enrollment at Allen has grown and contracted during the past three years, that notwithstanding the aspiration is to increase the enrollment to 1200 by Fall 2026. Experientially based planning and implementation within the context of higher education trends across the state and nation will be undertaken to achieve this aspiration.

Traditionally, about ninety percent of the students who have enrolled at Allen have been from the Southeast: South Carolina (40%); Georgia (20%); Florida (16%); Alabama (7%) and North Carolina (6%). All forty-six South Carolina counties are represented in the student body with the larger percentages hailing from Lexington County (19%) and Charleston County (11%). The population has averaged 97% African American, with 95% receiving Pell Grants, and 98% requiring some form of financial assistance.

According to the U.S. Department of Education (DOE), the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), and the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) undergraduate enrollment is projected to peak in 2025 and then decline due to lower birthrates during the Great Recession between 2007-2009. The southeast region is expected to have the highest growth in enrollments nationally. To contribute to enrollment growth, all forms of distance education, graduate education and student retention will contribute significantly.

To achieve its enrollment aspirations, the University will continue to expand the populations it serves focusing on three dimensions: region, race, and graduate education. Resources available through EAB, the College Board, Encoura, and other services will be

incorporated to deploy this strategy. A data-driven approach will be added to current recruitment planning to improve yields from already robust application and admit rates. Financial Aid will be reviewed to develop capabilities to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of processes. Scholarship programs and processes will also be reviewed. A Communication Plan for continual contact with prospective and accepted students will be developed and evaluated annually.

Retaining the students already enrolled will be critical to the short and mid-term financial health of the institution. Internally, the University will strengthen its data collection to understand factors related to attrition and to improve academic performance via a universal strategy of student engagement. Based on the data, retention strategies will be developed and implemented to assist with student persistence. Annual evaluations will be used to analyze program effectiveness.

Growing and Expanding the Enrollment

Goal I - The institution will enroll a student body that is diverse in geographic origin, race and ethnicity, and academic preparation.

Objective 1 : To develop and implement a recruitment plan that targets specific populations within designated geographical areas.

Objective 2: To develop/acquire and deploy human, electronic, and media capabilities that transform the efficiency and effectiveness of the financial aid/scholarship process.

Objective 3: To develop and implement a strategy to acquire a set of reliable feeder schools.

Objective 4: To develop and implement an activity-to-yield tracking system that will continually inform a “what, when, where” next recruitment strategy and process.

Goal II – The institution will develop an assessment to capture first-year student factors that bear on persistence and attrition.

Objective 1: To monitor and objectively capture the campus experiences that correlate with attrition and persistence.

Objective 2: To monitor the intersection of student variables and campus experience that correlate with persistence and attrition.

Objective 3: To correlate institutional data with academic and student support efforts that may impact/improve student persistence and attrition.

Goal III – The institution will have a data-driven retention program that increases the rate of student success and enhances enrollment.

Objective 1: To identify, deploy, and support personnel with the qualifications to acquire/collect and analyze data upon which effective retention strategies can be built.

Objective 2: To re-imagine and enhance governance and continuing ad hoc committees to, with the engagement of the administration, build and implement strategies that improve retention.

Objective 3: To create (and fill) a senior level position with retention as the major responsibility.

Goal IV – The Dickerson Green Theological Seminary will achieve a full-time equivalent enrollment of one-hundred students.

Objective 1: To repackage and promote the fully online Master of Divinity degree program.

Objective 2: To identify and build feeder relationships with regional institutions that offer undergraduate degrees in Religion/Philosophy that prepare students for graduate studies.

Objective 3: To develop and consistently deploy an instrument to assess choice and satisfaction variables of each cohort of students enrolled.

Objective 4: To facilitate and ensure that the Seminary plays an informed and active role in recruiting and retaining enrollment.

Aspiration II – Enhancing Educational Strength and Results

The University offers 25 distinct areas of study housed in the following units: the Dickerson-Green Theological Seminary, the Division of Arts and Humanities, the Division of Mathematics and Natural Sciences, and the Division of Business, Education and Social Sciences. Four degree programs are offered fully online (distance education). A stand-alone online division is in the early stage of ideation and development. A structure, policies, and procedures have been developed to achieve best practices as the number of programs grow.

Outcomes from the launch of the graduate seminary, and recurring student queries have prompted the institution to plan an incremental growth of graduate programs and a comparable structure. The Master of Business Administration and a Master of Environmental Science have

been submitted for accreditation approval, while a Master of Art in Church Music continues the drawing board.

Technological resources are a present strength of the University that will be deployed to achieve aspirations for the future. The institution's library digital/electronic resources are 53% greater than that of its peer institutions as set-out in the 2022 National Center for Education Statistics Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) Report. The library is the hub around which new approaches to digital teaching and learning are evolving. Each student is provided a subscription to Cengage, a platform that provides access to required digital textbooks and other related course materials. Graduate theological students are provided a subscription to VitalSource Books which offers digital textbooks and other course material. All students enrolled full-time in academic programs receive a MacBook and access to related software, training, and certifications.

The University's IT infrastructure includes a virtual server capable of allowing the institution to become a cloud source. In addition, the latest version of Office Productivity Suite (on and offline use) as well as Jenzabar, an Enterprise Resource Planning system, which includes a Learning Management System (e-Learning module), positions the University to enhance teaching and learning in a range of innovative ways.

The University has put in place a departmental review process that contains a self-study and external reviewers. Continuous improvement is an expected outcome of this program. A sharper focus will be placed on the results of the Allen Experience. The University will increasingly integrate academic initiatives and support strategies in ways to empower students to increase course completion, and thus retention. With ongoing refinements, first-year students will continue to experience all coursework in prescribed cohorts. The work of second-year students will focus on making informed decisions and exploring scholarly and scholarship opportunities. All students will experience a campus-wide mentoring-in-the-moment initiative

whereby faculty are purposefully friendly and attentive to students' needs thus providing unsurpassed personal attention to our students. Structures and strategies will be implemented to inspire and enable students to continue with graduate studies. Similarly, with applied disciplines, out-of-class experiences will be routinized such that students arrive at Commencement with clear intentional choices for which they are highly prepared.

Enhancing Educational Strength and Results

Goal I - The institution will offer an array of traditional and innovative academic programs that enhance its reputation and enrollment.

Objective 1: To increase the number of graduate degree programs such as a Master of Arts in Church Music and a Master of Science in Social Science.

Objective 2: To develop inventory and launch a stand-alone division of online instruction with the requisite administrative and support systems.

Objective 3: To obtain Association of Theological Schools accreditation for the Dickerson Green Theological Seminary.

Objective 4: To host academic conferences and symposia that explore and examine substantive issues in institutional disciplines.

Goal II - The institution will develop a culture of instructional excellence and reliability.

Objective 1: To enhance the curriculum and improve instruction in ways that will facilitate mastery in the use of technology across the disciplines.

Objective 2: To strengthen curricular and instructional activities that facilitate mastery of career-related communication skills.

Objective 3 : To implement a program for departmental self-studies with external reviews to continuously evaluate and improve performance.

Objective 4: To offer significant recognition and rewards for developing and implementing innovative approaches/strategies that enhance student learning and performance.

Goal III - The institution will foster a culture that intentionally moves students towards advanced degrees or the ever-changing workforce.

Objective 1: To implement a discipline-appropriate undergraduate thesis requirement as a requirement for graduation that includes an oral defense/presentation.

Objective 2: To improve instructional strategies and assessment methods that facilitate students' readiness for qualifying and placement exams.

Objective 3: To increase the number of work-study, internships, apprenticeships, laboratory, and studio work opportunities.

Goal IV- The Dickerson Green Theological Seminary will achieve levels of diversity that will strengthen its reputation and enrich the overall experience for all.

Objective 1: To identify and become a vendor (recruitment booth/table) at regular and recurring denominational conferences in South Carolina.

Objective 2: To repackage and re-present the fully online Master of Divinity degree program.

Objective 3: To specifically identify diversity of denomination, race, and gender as desirable attributes in hiring full-time and adjunct faculty.

Objective 4: To plan and implement an instructional strategy that facilitates full-time, on-campus, enrollment.

Aspiration III – Building Financial Strength

Over the past five-years, never before imagined success was achieved in soliciting contributions and building relationships around special initiatives and unique projects. While the number of donors increased across all sectors, none of the sectors provided sustaining or transformational funding.

Tuition and fees plus auxiliary enterprises total 54% of the University's income making it highly dependent on student-related revenue, and the students rely heavily on federal and state financial aid. The remaining 46% comes from grants and contracts, church related contributions, private gifts and grants, and other episodic sources. The present ebb-and-flow of student enrollment makes it critical to increase funding from non-student sources and expand into new areas such that student generated revenue will decline to 44% by the fall of 2028.

To achieve this aim, we will research and identify foundations, individuals, and corporations aligned with our aspirations, goals, and programs. Compelling grant proposals will be developed and submitted to targeted foundations that highlight present and emerging initiatives while cultivating strong relationships with foundation program officers. Given that individual

donors are responsible for more than seventy percent of philanthropy, a comprehensive major gifts campaign targeting alumni with capacity, affluent active members of the AME Church, and corporate leaders with personal wealth will be implemented. An advisory board has been approved by the Board of Trustees to facilitate this strategy.

Donor events and impact reports will be tailored to showcase the impact significant contributions from local givers and those across the country. Recognitions, incentives, and celebrations that have shown to be impactful will be explored to inform how potential donors are identified and maintained. Deepening and broadening the annual fund campaign will be executed not only to generate additional revenue but build a greater pool of high-capacity potential donors.

Though primarily a teaching institution, Allen will build a culture of research and grant writing to enhance its revenue. A reliable income from indirect costs, will be achieved by hiring and prompting existing STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) faculty to make use of user-friendly resources, renovated laboratories, and state-of-the art instrumentation to pursue activities in areas where constant calls for proposals exist. Incentives will be provided for faculty to establish Allen University as a regional hub for STEM education. Doing so will generate interest and collaboration with local industries and research institutions resulting in internships and research opportunities beneficial to students, faculty, and ultimately the institution.

The institution has launched for-profit entities that will be given the requisite staffing and strategic oversight to spur them towards the intended revenue generation. Internally, building an inventory of certificate programs and skill-building short courses to attract external paying customers has been placed on the agenda of the Division of Academic Affairs. Building capacity and performance in Institutional Advancement and Fiscal Affairs via adding staff and training existing staff will be critical to achieving and sustaining this aspiration.

Building Financial Strength

Goal I – The institution will have external funding from federal, foundations, individuals, and corporate sources to support the mission and scope of its programs and services.

Objective 1: To acquire grants and contracts from federal agencies with programs aimed at minority serving institutions and others the institution might qualify for.

Objective 2: To develop and implement separate plans for acquiring grants and contributions from foundations, individuals, and corporate sources.

Objective 3: To review, enhance and enforce standard University processes when submitting applications for acquiring and operating externally funded programs.

Objective 4: To facilitate and reward increased research and grant writing among faculty and staff.

Goal II – The institution will complete multiple major/capital campaigns critically important to institutional aspirations.

Objective 1: To develop and implement a robust and continuous campaign to acquire and maintain annual and endowed scholarships.

Objective 2: To plan and execute a government and foundation solicitation for campaign to raise \$3 million for the restoration / renovation of the Carver Theater.

Objective 3: To plan and execute a broad-based 10-million-dollar campaign to develop athletic facilities that spur constituent pride and support.

Goal III – The institution will have a portfolio of diverse non-student sources that provides 56% of its revenue.

Objective 1: To identify and pursue new revenue streams to include contracts, fees for services, rental of spaces, sale of products.

Objective 2: To develop and implement strategies and procedures to increase and normalize purchasing of university products and services.

Objective 3: To develop and create a sustainable market for a broad-based inventory of continuing education credits, and certificate programs.

Objective 4: To inspire, support, and facilitate development of an ongoing research enterprise that generates a meaningful and reliable level of indirect cost revenue.

Aspiration IV – Enhancing the Environment

The University's campus is comprised of 28 buildings (including classrooms, residence halls, student center, dining hall, auditorium, gymnasium, and administrative offices) which occupy 11.8-plus acres located one mile from downtown Columbia, South Carolina. The core campus is comprised of a historic district with the oldest building erected in the 1880s and the newest one in 2008. Moreover, the University owns a variety of other properties within the City and around the State.

A campus master plan was produced by GMK Associates, Inc. in 2013 and it received campus-based augmentations in 2015 and 2017. A new internally driven and framed master plan is currently being planned. Three significant projects are at the top of the priority list: 1) repurposing and upgrading Coppin Hall (a residence hall) to house programmatic, classroom, and office spaces; 2) restoring and re-launching the historic Carver Theater, and 3) building athletic facilities for outdoor and emerging sports.

The University is committed to an environment that meets the highest standards of aesthetics and functionality that can inspire all who engage within its spaces. A continuing ad hoc committee has been launched with the charge to study, monitor, report, and make recommendations to ensure quality experiences are afforded for students, faculty, staff, and visitors in internal and external campus spaces. The commitment to excellence extends beyond classrooms encompassing meticulously manicured grounds, lush lawns, a system of external lighting, and concrete pathways adorned with personalized donor bricks that tells a story of unity and shared support.

Allen has in place a well-designed facilities management system encompassing emergency maintenance, routine maintenance, preventive maintenance, and predictive maintenance. In the current climate where work and the nature of work are in flux, the institution will develop and

make operational a strategy to ensure an adequate workforce of tradesmen and hourly workers to maintain the facilities management system.

Beyond individual building improvements, the University has invested heavily in its technology infrastructure across the breadth of its properties, allowing continuous use as individuals move about. Within this context, the institution is exploring how it should attend the emergence of artificial intelligence not only in teaching and learning but in all its potential applications to work and play.

Strategies are being explored to develop and monetize existing properties and enter partnerships with profit making enterprises in doing so. Interwoven in these strategies will be monitoring, pursuing, and acquiring property (land and buildings) in the vicinity of the campus to allow for continuous growth. In addition to traditional programming, spaces will be needed to house university-related financial enterprises that are being developed.

Enhancing the Environment

Goal I – The institution will have buildings and grounds that are highly functional and aesthetically pleasing to its various publics.

Objective 1: To develop and deploy uniform signage for buildings, building directories, and building access.

Objective 2: To develop, disseminate, and enforce policies regarding the appearance of lobbies at main entrances.

Objective 3: To hire, train, and monitor an appropriate staff to execute a uniform grounds care plan for the entire campus.

Objective 4: To build a trades staff, an inventory, and vendor relationships to maintain, repair, and ensure a reasonable level of reliability of critical campus systems.

Goal II – The institution will have internal and external spaces that enhance the quality of the experiences of those who study, work, and visit here.

Objective 1: To establish and support a standing committee to curate artistic images of campus life and spaces to display in public places throughout the campus.

Objective 2: To establish and support a quality-of-life committee to monitor and make recommendations regarding the physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being of the campus.

Objective 3: To develop and make available digital and paper maps to enable visitors to locate the specific offices that brought them to the campus.

Goal III – The institution will have facilities and a footprint that maximizes the success of new programs and ventures.

Objective 1: To develop and gain Board approval for a strategy to leverage underutilized University property to develop a campus union, campus parking, and build athletic facilities.

Objective 2: To conceptualize and construct an athletic complex that in addition to hosting outdoors sports, serves as a revenue generating venue.

Objective 3: To explore and pursue strategies to develop and monetize existing properties such as that on Daufuskie Island.

Objective 4: To acquire nearby facilities to host new and emerging academic programs.

Goal IV – The institution will occupy a beneficial space in the emerging environment of artificial intelligence.

Objective 1: To name and charge a high-level committee to explore, define, and articulate to the campus an acceptable position and path for engaging artificial intelligence (AI) in the work, the study, and the play of the institution.

Objective 2: To engage an AI consultant to facilitate the work of the standing AI Committee and inform the global conversation on the campus.

Objective 3: To assign or create and fill a senior level position with administrative responsibility for AI activities across the campus.

Goal V – The institution will have an archive that chronicles its history through authentic documents and photographs.

Objective 1: To execute the necessary renovation and climatization of the space in the Flipper Library where historical materials are presently kept.

Objective 2: To implement a plan that identifies and curates current historical materials.

Objective 3: To develop a wish list of documents and epochal photograph that are needed to accurately inform an Allen University narrative.

Objective 4: To identify sources and take steps to acquire archival materials.

Objective 5: To prepare an AU history section with policies and processes for its use.

The Sum of Things

- Growing and Expanding the Enrollment
 - Enhancing Educational Strength and Results
 - Building Financial Strength
 - Enhancing the Environment

Strategic planning is part and parcel of the work of colleges and universities, but varies dramatically based on institutional mission, the process undertaken to produce the plan, and the ultimate purpose of the final document. The 2017-2022 plan addressed resurgence that inevitably evolved into transformation in subsequent plans. While staying true to the institution’s mission, it was expanded from offering baccalaureate to associates, masters, and doctoral degrees, some offered in hybrid formats and others fully online. The athletic program aspired to, is rapidly reaching all that could have been imaged and more.

The current plan, constructed on the framework and with building blocks of prior ones, is not only intended to achieve the aspirations set out, but to also create a culture and confidence such that because *we are*, *we can*, and because we can, *we will* continually start a new curve before reaching the apex of the current one. The overarching aspiration is that the “shining light on the hill – Allen University – will never again be covered by a bushel.” Achieving that end will serve the communities that have always been with and a part of the institution, the expanding student population that now enrolls, the faculty and staff that choose to work here, the financial and cultural health of Columbia (SC), and all who value progress as essential for the Greater Good.