

# Fostering Foresight and Faithfulness

## A Strategic Plan for Ouachita Baptist University

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### **Introduction**

In 2011, Ouachita Baptist University celebrated its 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary and successfully achieved reaffirmed regional accreditation. The convergence of these milestones prompted an intensive examination of our institutional history and identity, our current challenges within the higher education community, and our potential for growth and service in the future. One of the goals for this period of self-study and reflection was the development of an organic strategic plan that would both guide us into the future and anchor us to our historic mission as a Christian liberal arts university.

The strategic plan that follows emerged from Ouachita's recent self-study process through a series of drafts reflecting input and feedback from administration, faculty, staff, students, and trustees. Ouachita's Vision, Mission, and Values ground this effort to identify goals, initiatives, and strategies that, though realistic, require creativity, collaboration, and diligence. While acknowledging the many ways in which Ouachita continues to fulfill its mission, the plan provides a means to chart our course for the future. The Planning Committee will use this document and subsequent revisions to coordinate institutional resources and plans in light of changing conditions to accomplish effectively Ouachita's mission.

### **Foundational Goals**

Goal 1: Advance Excellence in Teaching and Learning

Goal 2: Enhance Student Life Experiences

Goal 3: Strengthen Human, Physical, and Financial Resources

Goal 4: Foster Internal and External Communication

### **Foundational Goals, Initiatives, and Strategies**

Goal 1: Advance Excellence in Teaching and Learning

- Initiative 1: Support teaching effectiveness through enhanced learning environments and pedagogical resources.
  - Strategy 1: Provide professional development opportunities for faculty to explore and adopt high-impact pedagogical approaches.

- Strategy 2: Create a technology innovation grant program to support testing and development of new technological resources to enhance learning.
- Strategy 3: Expand orientation and training opportunities, led by key faculty and IT staff, to support effective use of technology in teaching and learning.
- Strategy 4: Develop plans to address space, service, and electronic access needs of the library with an eye toward a signature campus center that interweaves library, student life, digital access, scholarship, public forum and academic enrichment.
- Strategy 5: Develop plans and a timeline for systematically upgrading classroom appearance, equipment, and instructional technology for each academic school
- Strategy 6: Create a structure to support campus-wide efforts to enhance teaching effectiveness, including but not limited to the use of instructional technology.
  
- Initiative 2: Promote student success and academic engagement.
  - Strategy 1: Create a Student Success Center to consolidate academic services such as tutoring, the Academic Skills Development Program, testing (ACT/GRE), career services, and academic counseling.
  - Strategy 2: Strengthen the Carl Goodson Honors Program to enhance the educational experience of our strongest students.
  - Strategy 3: Develop a process for identifying and mentoring high-achieving students to seek admission to top-level graduate programs and to apply for prestigious regional and national awards and fellowships.
  - Strategy 4: Provide ongoing funding to support undergraduate research, including travel to scholarly meetings for presentations.
  
- Initiative 3: Refocus academic programs to blend effectively the liberal arts, professional education, and experiential learning.
  - Strategy 1: Review and revise the general education program to provide a compelling blend of the traditional liberal arts, the majors, and experiential learning.
  - Strategy 2: Review all degree programs with the aim of enhancing experiential learning through activities such as undergraduate research, creative performance, service learning, internships, and international study opportunities.
  - Strategy 3: Evaluate and strengthen pre-professional programs through curricular modifications, enhanced partnerships, and aggressive marketing.
  
- Initiative 4: Target new opportunities for growth consistent with our vision, mission, and values
  - Strategy 1: Create a fund to provide seed money for new academic ventures designed to generate revenue and become self-sustaining (e.g., an online degree program, a new major or minor, etc.).

- Strategy 2: Design a new interdisciplinary degree program in ecological and economic sustainability, drawing on our traditions of regional studies, environmental research, and On the Ouachita.
- Strategy 3: Encourage the development of new academic programs that fit the university mission, address a documented demand, and contain costs by using existing resources or by establishing effective partnerships.
- Initiative 5: Consistent with the university's mission, vision, and values, work toward building a more diverse community and cultivating the appreciation of diversity among students, faculty, and staff.
  - Strategy 1: Expand curricular opportunities within the CORE and the majors, as appropriate, to foster understanding and appreciation of diversity.
  - Strategy 2: Explore and expand study and travel opportunities for students and faculty, both internationally and within the U.S.
  - Strategy 3: Examine and modify, as appropriate, our recruiting and hiring procedures with the aim of increasing minorities and women faculty and staff.
  - Strategy 4: Explore and adopt meaningful ways to celebrate ethnic diversity and strengthen intercultural community on campus.

## Goal 2: Enhance Student Life Experiences

- Initiative 1: Invest in programs that develop student leadership.
  - Strategy 1: Establish funding for a leadership training retreat each semester and enhancements to the existing Leadership Summit.
  - Strategy 2: Develop an Emerging Leaders program with the purpose of identifying prospective student leaders in the first semester on campus, with the objective of facilitating personal growth and a commitment to serving others and the university through leadership opportunities.
- Initiative 2: Renovate and expand student life and residential facilities based on enrollment growth.
  - Strategy 1: Assess the functionality, size, and aesthetics of student life facilities, housing facilities, athletic facilities, and recreational sports fields, in order to create a short-term, intermediate-term, and long-term facility needs plan.
  - Strategy 2: Develop a student life endowment to provide future budget supplementation of the activities on campus and in the community.
- Initiative 3: Build the outdoor recreation program into a regional showcase.
  - Strategy 1: Within five years, combine the part-time director of recreational sports and part-time director of outdoor recreation positions into a single role, recruiting a

masters-prepared individual to lead the program with the goal of positively affecting student recruitment and retention.

- Strategy 2: After surveying outstanding programs at other institutions, set benchmarks for student participation levels in a broad range of outdoor activities.
- Strategy 3: Utilize significant existing faculty expertise to connect the curricular with the co-curricular, enhancing the educational value of the outdoor recreation program, and exploring possible academic credit opportunities for faculty-led experiences.

### Goal 3: Advance Human, Physical, and Financial Resources

- Initiative 1: Build financial flexibility to respond to environmental conditions and institutional needs.
  - Strategy 1: Reduce reliance on borrowing by generating annual operating surpluses of \$300,000-500,000.
  - Strategy 2: Reduce discount rate to 50% or below by 2013-14 academic year and maintain at that level.
  - Strategy 3: Raise endowed scholarship funding to 15% of total institutional aid by 2013 and to 30% by 2018.
  - Strategy 4: Continue developing multiyear operating budgets using three revenue scenarios: expected revenue, lower revenue, and higher revenue.
  
- Initiative 2: Develop a fair, equitable and improving compensation plan for all faculty and staff.
  - Strategy 1: Implement a compensation improvement plan to ensure continued progress toward benchmarks.
  - Strategy 2: Explore a compensation plan for faculty and staff tied to annual performance evaluations.
  
- Initiative 3: Plan for funding goals and initiatives of the strategic plan
  - Strategy 1: Establish an incentive funding pool to encourage development of strategic planning initiatives.
  - Strategy 2: Create an annual operating budget allocation to fund ongoing needs of new initiatives.
  - Strategy 3: Establish development goals to fund major facilities needs identified in the plan.
  - Strategy 4: Create an annual operating budget allocation to fund minor facilities improvements.

#### Goal 4: Foster Internal and External Communication

- Initiative 1: Establish and implement a systematic review of programs across campus.
  - Strategy 1: Implement seven-year campus-wide program review.
  - Strategy 2: Review staffing needs to coordinate the university's institutional research and accreditation initiatives.
  
- Initiative 2: Improve the quality and timeliness of information flow to support decision-making.
  - Strategy 1: Continue to evaluate and enhance internal communication strategies and resources.
  - Strategy 2: Document and catalog existing institutional databases containing common information.
  - Strategy 3: Strengthen data reporting and security policies related to institutional decision-making.
  
- Initiative 3: Examine available technologies to improve connectivity.
  - Strategy 1: Enhance Internet connection and improve bandwidth.
  - Strategy 2: Explore need and facilities for video conferencing and other external connections.
  
- Initiative 4: Enhance external communication strategies, including expanding social networking.
  - Strategy 1: Develop a comprehensive university marketing plan.
  - Strategy 2: Document current social networking and website activity, determining needs and priorities.
  - Strategy 3: Review staffing levels to adequately maintain marketing, web, and social networking development and support.