



Campus Community Update of Strategic Planning Initiative

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November 17, 2020

Progress on the development of **Messiah University's** first strategic plan is on pace for trustee approval and implementation by May 2021 despite all of the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. In collaboration with the educational consulting firm, Credo, a strategy planning leadership team with [broad campus representation](#) began preparing themselves last spring by studying Joanne Soliday's book: *Surviving to Thriving: A Planning Framework for Leaders of Private Colleges and Universities*. The team then spent three half-days this summer on a zoom retreat during which time we:

- reviewed the nine attributes of thriving universities
- evaluated how well Messiah University is performing in each
- familiarized ourselves with *The Balanced Scorecard* and *Strategy Maps* planning tools
- created consensus around strategic priorities we believed would have the greatest impact on the campus

By the end of the retreat, we had drafted descriptions of four potential themes that seemed to capture the strengths of Messiah University to build upon, as well as some performance gaps that we thought should be addressed moving forward. The potential themes were: *Distinctive Pedagogy, University Rising, Sustainable Future and Transformative Connections*.

After the leadership retreat, zoom meetings with the extended Messiah community and the board of trustees were held on September 4 and October 15 respectively to solicit input on the draft themes and to offer opportunity for our community and trustees to recommend potential strategic initiatives. The results of these brainstorming sessions were compiled, synthesized and analyzed by Credo and subsequently shared with planning leaders at a day-long Planning Team Meeting #1 held on November 5. The

community data can be accessed [here](#). After further team discussion, the *Distinctive Pedagogy* theme was changed to *Distinctive Teaching and Learning*.

We are now poised to begin the next stage of the strategic planning process designed to further deepen community engagement and advance a shared vision and specific initiatives. In early December, President Phipps will be working with a subgroup of the strategic planning team to draft a shared vision statement rooted in the concept of learning for life (as addressed in the presidential 2019 and 2020 State of the College/University addresses) and further define themes for the strategic planning leadership team to review prior to the appointment of individual theme teams. A theme team for each of the proposed themes will be constituted from members of the university community and co-chaired by two planning team leaders. Each team will be introduced to the strategy map planning tool, guided through the community and board data sets, and asked to recommend initiatives and key performance indicators for their specific theme. These recommendations will be reviewed in the spring at Planning Team Meeting 2. At that time, planning leaders will ensure that the strategic initiatives align with the important goals of the plan. The strategic planning leadership team will also prioritize a set of initiatives – complete with description, success metrics, responsible leaders, budgets, and timeframes – for recommendation to the President. The President and Provost will be leading a process seeking feedback and final community affirmation in April.

Finally, some of the most gratifying feedback from the community and trustees were strong words of encouragement to be sure that the strengths of Messiah University’s educational programs – Christian faith formation, academic rigor and vocation preparation – were highlighted in the new strategic plan. There are at least two ways that these and other hallmarks of a Messiah education will be integrated into the strategic plan. First, as we “tell the story” of the strategic plan, we will make it apparent that the plan emanates from our mission “to educate men and women toward maturity of intellect, character and Christian faith in preparation for lives of service, leadership and reconciliation in church and society,” our shared values and our shared vision, with a statement coming to the campus community for affirmation. Second, we expect that the distinctives of a Messiah education will be embedded in the initiatives recommended to and approved by the board of trustees.