

Augustana Forward: an addendum to Augustana 2020

Finalized January 26, 2020

Augustana 2020, adopted by the Augustana College Board of Trustees in 2014, is a student-centered plan, focusing on four strategic directions. While much of the plan has been accomplished, the four strategic directions are still relevant. The board has determined to extend the plan by two and a half years, until summer of 2022. With the demographic cliff looming, now is not the time to become defensive. Now is the time to be confident and bold.

The following objectives, which have presented themselves more clearly in recent years, should guide the next steps in fully implementing Augustana Forward and give the campus time to reflect on the next strategic plan process (anticipated to start in fall of 2021).

Augustana Forward has the following objectives:

- **First, prepare Augustana for growth through 2025.** Because of demographic shifts and intense price competition, Augustana has not been able to increase its net price per student at the rate of inflation since the Great Recession. With the demographic cliff looming, it is likely that price competition will continue and that Augustana's net price per student will remain relatively stagnant. Nonetheless, the costs associated with maintaining our favorable student/faculty ratio and providing our students with the services they deserve will continue to increase at or beyond the rate of inflation. In order to move forward, Augustana will seek to increase our student count, as necessary, to provide the funds necessary for continued excellence. If enrollment does not increase, the college's choices are: a) to cut expenses through program reductions and closures (as there are no other large areas of possible expense reduction), or b) reposition the college by lowering its admissions profile to admit less qualified students who can pay more.

The exact amount of the growth and areas for growth will be determined as opportunities arise and are fully vetted. The growth should come both from increased enrollment of first-year and transfer students, and will be sustained by increased retention. To be sure, growth comes with additional costs. We must cultivate the mindset of efficient growth, meaning additional revenue must more than support cost, providing a margin for investment in continued excellence across Augustana.

- **Second, maintain Augustana's distinction as a best college value.** Augustana has maintained robust enrollment because of its position as a best value school. This distinction recognizes three factors: 1) Augustana's strong reputation, 2) Augustana's strong outcomes, including retention rates, graduation rates, employment rates and starting salaries, and 3) Augustana's net cost to families after financial aid. Among our competitors, Augustana is the most modestly priced high-quality college with such strong outcomes. This distinction is why we have been able to avoid the 5% to 30% enrollment declines suffered by many of our private school competitors. As we approach the demographic cliff, it is important for Augustana to retain this market distinction.



- **Third, further strengthen and leverage high levels of faculty/staff, Board of Trustees, alumni and student engagement.** It is imperative that the college remain nimble in implementing programs that will strengthen it to meet the demographic challenges ahead. Augustana's ability to be nimble will require the efforts of all at Augustana. It is more important than ever that faculty, staff and administration be highly engaged in providing for the sustainability of the college. Highly engaged faculty and staff are the key to ensuring a student body with high levels of belonging, retention and satisfaction.

The paragraphs following the four platforms are from the original version of Augustana 2020, but the actions following each are new to Augustana Forward.

1. Enhanced Preparation, to ensure students have distinguished career and graduate school successes. We will develop new relationships and resources so all students will have the knowledge, confidence and specific tools to connect their education with immediate goals after graduation and changing goals throughout their lives. Our graduates will find professions that honor their aspirations and investment, and vocations through which they will effect positive change in the world.

- a) By 2022, 80% of the graduating class will have completed 80% of the Viking Scorecard.
- b) By summer 2020, establish a Chicago Advisory Council of alumni to connect with employers in Chicago. Develop other ways to better engage alumni in assisting students find internship and jobs in other areas of the country.
- c) For the class of 2021 achieve goal of a 98% acceptance rate for applicants to graduate/ professional schools, with an 85% acceptance rate to their first or second school of choice. Achieve a 98% full-time employment rate for those seeking jobs in positions requiring a college degree (or materially advantaged by a college degree) six months after graduation.
- d) Ensure students have opportunities to reflect on vocation, or a purpose-driven life, through programming developed by the Presidential Center for Faith and Learning.
- e) Review effectiveness of CORE by May 31, 2020, to ensure all areas work together to support students in their personal, career and professional development from their first day on campus until post-graduation.

2. Integrated Experiences, to facilitate transformative learning. We reaffirm our focus as a residential liberal arts college that provides a values-laden, intentionally designed holistic education, and we will expand the impact of this integrated living and learning experience for all our students. The curriculum and co-curricular experiences will take full advantage of our comprehensive learning resources as a residential campus in the 21st century.

- a) Add well-being as a core community principle and develop programming to support this competency.
- b) Develop programs for student well-being—physical, mental, spiritual, relational—and healthy communities.

- c) Develop an integrated, college-wide approach to bring retention to the target level of 90%.
- d) Advance a more environmentally sustainable Augustana by implementing practices and educational programming to reduce our environmental impact as individuals and as a college community.

3. Affordability and Value, to increase access and expand opportunities. This strategic plan will expand our reach to provide more students an Augustana education. By 2020, Augustana College will offer this high-quality education to an academically qualified student body drawn from across the nation and around the world. We will improve our value by addressing affordability as we advance student-learning outcomes through greater success on campus and after graduation.

- a) Advance an ecosystem for innovation including A-FITT 2.0 (Augustana Future Initiatives Think Tank) and grant programs for initiatives to support excellence and financial sustainability.
- b) Effectively implement a regional reputation for academic programs in wellness and innovation in health care.
- c) Implement the Enrollment Enhancement plan adopted by the cabinet.
- d) By the summer of 2020, implement articulation agreements that enable the college to increase transfer students by 50%.
- e) By the end of FY 2020, raise \$125 million in commitments for the Augustana NOW campaign.
- f) Continue to review expenses, with assistance from a third-party consultant, to ensure that expenditures best support mission while bending the cost increase curve.
- g) Move from a culture of total financial reward for our employees to a culture of total well-being.

4. Diversity and Inclusion, to ensure that Augustana is welcoming to all, and all graduates are prepared for a diverse and changing world. Being a diverse and inclusive community, welcoming to all, is central to the college's mission, reflects a core community principle of inclusion, and advances the identified learning outcome of developing students' intercultural competence. We will ensure inclusion at all levels of the college, student body, faculty, staff, administration and the Board of Trustees. Augustana will work to achieve equity in the student experience with the goal that students of all backgrounds can achieve high levels of learning, graduation and success.

- a) Increase the number of employees of color to better reflect the composition of our student body.
- b) Significantly shrink the gaps in retention and graduation for our students of historically excluded and currently underrepresented groups; improve participation in high-impact learning experiences to levels experienced by students in the historically normed population.
- c) Implement the other goals of the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion strategic plans.