

MIND HEART PLACE

ELEVATING MIND, HEART, AND PLACE

**The Strategic Plan for
the University of the South**

2024-2030



The University of the South moves confidently into the coming decades based on a renewed educational approach that draws on our past and looks to the future. Our strategic plan builds upon a rich liberal arts and theological education tradition that explores enduring questions of humanity infused with practical engagement that prepares our graduates for lives of integrity, service, and leadership. At the University of the South, education has never been just about the pursuit of abstract knowledge; it has long sought to prepare students to be engaged citizens who meet society's needs. Such an educational model requires that students be outfitted with the knowledge, skills, and powers of discernment needed to address the challenges they will face in the world and the moral character to take on such responsibilities.



In keeping with its educational mission and tradition, the University of the South has developed this strategic plan with a clear focus on students. To that end, two underlying objectives animate our strategic plan:

- *providing a comprehensive curricular offering that will sustain our attractiveness to a larger number of high-caliber students; and,*
- *preparing students for lives of service and leadership so they will become active citizens contributing to democracy at home and the resolution of challenges around the world.*

Achieving these twin goals will elevate our standing in the increasingly competitive landscape of higher education.



STRATEGIC PILLARS



MIND refers to our desire to renew and develop our curricula in the College of Arts and Sciences and School of Theology to ensure we are preparing our students with the requisite knowledge and skills to find rewarding work that also serves others.

HEART refers to our commitment to the holistic formation of students. The University's Purpose Statement calls on us to develop the "whole person," and this idea has long animated the institution's approach to education.

PLACE refers to both our physical location on 13,000 acres perched atop the Cumberland Plateau and the people who live in the community of Sewanee and surrounding areas.



PRIMARY GOALS

GOAL 1:

Renew and Enhance the Curriculum

GOAL 2:

Enhance Student Formation and Leadership Development

GOAL 3:

Make the University and its Domain a Model of Inclusive Community and Environmental Stewardship

GOAL 4:

Enhance University Buildings and Grounds

GOAL 5:

Grow the Endowment and Generate New Sources of Revenue





RENEW AND ENHANCE THE CURRICULUM

Strategies

1. Develop and Implement a First-Year Experience for All Students

First-year programming has long been recognized by the [American Association of Colleges and Universities](#) as one of the most consequential high-impact practices (HIP) that colleges can adopt in their efforts to attract and retain students. Aimed specifically at newly arrived students, the First-Year Experience has the greatest potential of any HIP to develop a sense of belonging among the first-year class and relationships with participating faculty and staff.

2. Promote High-Impact Practices Across the Curriculum

The University of the South stands out from larger colleges and universities because of its tightly connected community, with both students and a significant portion of faculty and staff living on or near campus. In the close academic community, students are introduced to high-impact practices that help them to utilize knowledge learned in classrooms in pragmatic settings, deepening problem-solving skills. To live up to this ideal and take full advantage of our strategic position, the University will support efforts and initiatives that bring students, faculty, staff, and community partners together on shared intellectual, creative, and/or academic exploration.

3. Create a Center for Project-Based Learning and Action

To fulfill its vision of preparing students to become informed, self-aware, and participatory citizens for our democracy and servant-leaders for the world, the University must provide opportunities to connect classroom experiences with experiential learning. Many faculty at the University of the South engage students in high-impact, project-based learning and research that provides opportunities for students to build multiple disciplinary perspectives and tools and integrate curricular and co-curricular experiences.

This interdisciplinary, engaged inquiry is essential for our graduates' ability to navigate the world and address its multifaceted cultural, economic, social, political, and environmental challenges.

4. Expand Data Analytics and Digital Humanities Across the Curriculum

Technology, data, and artificial intelligence are becoming increasingly important in our academic and everyday lives. In this new landscape, students need to think critically and creatively in a world transformed by data and technology. At the same time, training in data analytics and expertise in digital technologies are becoming increasingly valuable skills for college graduates entering the workforce and are a [major point of emphasis in recent University](#) initiatives. Ability to use data analysis and digital forms of communication are critical for addressing global problems and becoming active citizens in a democracy.

5. Expand Business Offerings

Evidence shows high demand for business education from prospective students and their families. While we know that liberal arts education provides students with a solid foundation for many career paths, the uncertainty of the current and future job market has led students and their families to seek out opportunities for gaining business skills and knowledge while at Sewanee. This can be seen in the popularity of Sewanee's business minor, in which currently 25% of both the senior and junior classes enroll. Furthermore, the success of the Carey Fellowship program in converting applicants to enrolled students indicates that our efforts to draw more students to campus by investing in business programming can be successful.

ENHANCE STUDENT FORMATION AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Strategies

1. Foster a Relationship-Rich Student Experience

Students need avenues to build community and ensure well-being throughout their entire academic career. Such endeavors foster holistic student development and recognize the inherent dignity of the whole person as befits a premier liberal arts college and an Episcopal university. A relationship-rich environment with a constellation of touchpoints and avenues creates a sense of belonging for students and impacts their retention, success, and degree attainment. These are also key ways in which we help students' self-discovery around identity and culture, urge their exploration of purpose and vocation, foster their active citizenship, and prepare students for success within and beyond their time at the University of the South.

2. Strengthening Student Formation and Leadership Development

As an Episcopal university, the University of the South is "concerned with the common good and the contribution of the individual to it,"¹ which calls on the University to prepare students to address the world's greatest challenges and to be engaged citizens in a democratic society. Thus, as part of their liberal arts and theological educational experiences at the University of the South, students have many opportunities in and out of the classroom to find their purpose as they explore paths for their future and their engagement in the world. Leadership skills require engagement with people from a wide array of backgrounds and identities, so leadership development necessitates learning to communicate across diverse interests and perspectives and contributing to the reconciliation of those differences. The University will help students to connect their many and varied opportunities that inform student formation and leadership from the first through the final year.

3. Reinforce the Value of an Episcopal Heritage and Identity that Is Open, Generous, and Thoughtful; Invested in Supporting Communities of Spiritual Practice; Works to Advance Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; and Strives to Be a Force for Global Justice

The University of the South is distinctive among higher education institutions as one created and governed by the Episcopal Church, which presents opportunities to contribute to students' ethical formation and action. It includes a residential School of Theology; a strong University chaplaincy; and many bishops, clergy, and lay leaders who serve on its governing boards. The University will develop a shared understanding of how the Episcopal Church adds value to the experiences of the diverse individuals who make up this institution and how the University serves as a resource to the Church.



¹ Colleges and Universities of the Anglican Communion (CUAC), "Identity and Character Declaration,"

<https://cuac.anglicancommunion.org/identity-and-character-declaration.aspx>.



MAKE THE UNIVERSITY AND ITS DOMAIN A MODEL OF INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

Strategies

1. Activate Research and Academic Use of the Outer Domain

Humanity requires solutions to global environmental challenges. Tomorrow's leaders need to be prepared to step up at this critical moment to innovate solutions and rectify environmental injustice, which disproportionately affects some racial and lower-income groups. As part of its work to cultivate engaged global citizens, the institution fosters diverse partnerships across our community and beyond to support students in their development as environmental leaders and professionals. Academic engagement on the outer Domain and surrounding communities will provide entry points to understand environmental challenges; foster student relations with faculty, staff, and community partners; explore historical and contemporary environmental injustice; and cultivate a sense of responsibility for stewarding the environment.

2. Promote Vibrant, Sustainable and Inclusive Village Development

Making Sewanee a vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable community with more affordable housing options, safe transportation networks, and improved amenities will help attract prospective students and employees, even those who choose not to live in Sewanee. Such an approach to Village development will facilitate connections between the study of sustainability and our lived community. Purposeful development of the Village will foster the relationships that



students have with faculty, staff, and community mentors, which are a hallmark of student education at the University of the South.

3. Model Sustainable Operations

One of the world's greatest challenges is climate change. Students and global citizens are particularly concerned about climate change and how to mitigate it. The University of the South with its natural forest and excellent environmental studies program is particularly well-situated to model and train students in environmental sustainability.

4. Implement a Domain Across the Curriculum Initiative

One of the touchstone experiences for University of the South students is their interaction with the natural environment, history, and communities of Sewanee and neighboring counties. The University will expand opportunities to deepen student engagement with coursework, research, and extra-curricular activities that connect students to this place, affectionately known as the Domain, along with its people. The Domain enriches the educational experience by offering students extraordinary opportunities to enjoy the natural beauty of the plateau, learn experientially about stewardship of resources and the natural world, and help build inclusive and just communities, all of which contribute to the holistic formation of students as global citizens and environmental leaders.

ENHANCE UNIVERSITY BUILDING AND GROUNDS

Strategies

1. Complete a New Campus Master Plan

A campus master plan is essential for decision-making about the extraordinary buildings, grounds, and Domain of the University. While some new or renovated facility projects are in motion, many questions remain about other facilities, and an overall prioritization of projects must be completed to determine the best use of future resources.

2. Improve Residential Life Facilities

An important consideration of prospective students is the quality of residence halls on campus. Residence halls are much more than a place to live; they are sites of social connection and co-curricular activities

that foster community. Physical improvements to the University's residence halls will attract prospective students and increase overall student satisfaction with life on campus. As a result, admission and retention will improve.

3. Enhance and Expand Athletic Facilities

More than 30% of the University's undergraduate population play varsity sports, and athletics contributes in significant ways to student leadership, character formation, healthy lifestyles, and friendships. Quality athletic facilities are a major consideration of prospective student-athletes in their decision on where to enroll in college. While some of Sewanee's athletics facilities are among the best in NCAA Division III, others lag seriously behind even schools in our athletic conference.



GROW THE ENDOWMENT AND GENERATE NEW SOURCES OF REVENUE

Strategies

1. Initiate Fundraising Campaigns to Grow the Endowment

Sewanee’s endowment is respectable but falls well short of our competitor institutions, especially those that meet the full financial need of their students. In order to generate greater earnings and provide better funding for scholarships and financial aid; faculty support including compensation, professional development, and scholarship; strategic program development; and operational needs, the University must initiate an ambitious fundraising campaign centered on endowment growth.

2. Generate New Net-Positive Revenue

The tuition-reliant model of funding private collegiate education is obsolete. While donor support helps close the gap in operational costs and endowment earnings provide additional revenue, Sewanee must, like most private colleges and universities, explore and develop net-positive revenue-generating activities. Such activities might utilize current and new assets associated with auxiliary services, summer programs, conference services, facility utilization, property management and development, and other potential sources.





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THE UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTH

