



2021-2024 Strategic Plan



Preface

It is no longer business as usual for higher education in Western New York. The combination of demographic trends, ever-increasing competition, economic fluctuations, and, most recently, a devastating global pandemic, have created conditions that call for bold thinking and aggressive action. In this environment, Villa Maria College cannot hope to achieve long-term viability simply by tweaking its current way of doing things. It must do something that goes far beyond a “course correction” to achieve long term viability.

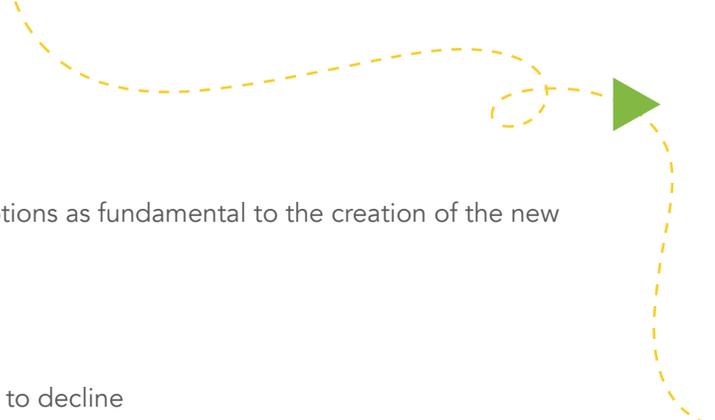
This strategic plan responds to the current moment by advancing innovative strategies that help ensure the College’s long-term viability. It moves beyond traditional thinking about internal improvements and outlines forward-thinking large-scale strategies for repositioning the College more solidly in the local higher education landscape.

Process

In September 2020, the President constructed the following timeline for the strategic planning process, which was maintained throughout the 2020-2021 academic year.

The President’s Extended Cabinet served as the Strategic Planning Committee. The timeline below was followed throughout the academic year:

- **August 2020 General College Meeting:** Campus is notified that planning is commencing
- **August 2020 President’s Extended Cabinet Meeting:** Discussion begins about how to organize planning
- **September 2020 Governance Committee Meeting:** Discussion ensues about Board expectations for the new strategic plan and about the Board’s involvement
- **September 2020 President’s Extended Cabinet Meeting:** Plans finalized for working groups and College involvement
- **October 2020 Board of Trustees Meeting:** Discussion occurs about planning and the Board’s involvement
- **October - December 2020:** College community is involved in planning exercises
- **October - December 2020 President’s Extended Cabinet Meetings:** planning sessions
- **December 2020 Board of Trustees Meeting:** President provides update on planning
- **January - March 2021:** New plan is drafted
- **February 2021 Board of Trustees Meeting:** President provides update on planning
- **March - April 2021:** College community is provided opportunities to offer feedback on the plan
- **April 2021 Board of Trustees Meeting:** Plan is presented to the Board of Trustees for feedback
- **April - June 2021:** Plan is revised
- **June 2021 Board of Trustees Meeting:** Final plan is presented to the Board of Trustees for approval



Key Assumptions

The President's Extended Cabinet identified the following assumptions as fundamental to the creation of the new strategic plan:

- Villa will continue to be a Catholic, Felician Franciscan college
 - The Felician Sisters' physical presence on campus will continue to decline
 - Villa will continue to be student-centered
 - Villa offers something other colleges do not
 - Villa will continue to enroll a large number of students who need a lot of support, and they are likely to need even more support in the coming years
 - Villa will continue to enroll a large number of students who struggle to pay
 - The post-COVID economy will look different from the pre-COVID economy
 - Villa's competition will continue to be aggressive
 - Demographic trends will continue to make enrollment challenging
 - Students will be skeptical of the value proposition of private colleges, and free college movements will gain momentum
 - Hiring and retaining high-quality faculty and staff will be challenging without more resources
 - The cost of education will continue to increase
 - Deferred maintenance will become even more pressing
 - Increasingly, partnerships will be key to helping Villa fulfill its mission
 - Not all local colleges will survive
 - Digital media arts will continue to be a key niche
 - Villa will continue to need to draw upon its nimbleness and flexibility
 - Tuition discount rates will rise
 - Villa will continue to need to find other revenue streams
 - Villa's brand recognition is not strong enough
 - Current programming alone is not bringing in enough students
 - There are policy, communication, and physical barriers to enrollment that could be eliminated
 - Villa needs the ability to collect and analyze more data
 - There are already enough colleges offering health science programs
 - The adult, nontraditional market will continue to grow
 - Students will expect a mix of in-person and online delivery
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SWOT Analysis

A subcommittee of the President's Extended Cabinet engaged the college community in producing a SWOT analysis. The following are the highlights:

Strengths:

- Committed/Dedicated Faculty & Staff
- Concern for Students
- Individual Attention (to students)

Opportunities:

- Academic Programs Tied to Market Demands
- Promote Existing Strong Academic Programs
- Collegiate Atmosphere/Student Engagement
- Online Learning

Weaknesses:

- Low Salaries
- Weak Finances
- Graduation, Retention, and Employment Rates
- Facility Issues (Age & Appearance)

Threats:

- Finances
- Competition
- Tuition Cost
- Low Enrollment

Goal Statement

The process of self-reflection led the President's Extended Cabinet to adopt the following statement as the overarching goal for the new strategic plan.

Goal Statement: Increase long-term viability using innovative strategies that align with the mission and vision of the College.

Key Terms:

VIABILITY

To ensure the College's long-term viability, the College must begin regularly generating operating surpluses that allow it to invest in strategic initiatives, address deferred maintenance, and increase compensation for faculty and staff members.

INNOVATIVE

As a result of longstanding trends exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, higher education as a whole is under enormous stress to change, and Villa Maria College must change to remain viable. This strategic plan pursues ambitious innovation that is at the cutting-edge of higher education practices, while also aiming for improvements that are new for Villa even if they are fairly more mainstream at other institutions.



MISSION AND VISION

As a ministry of the Our Lady of Hope Province of the Felician Sisters of North America, Villa Maria College remains committed to its mission and core values. The strategic plan is meant to put the College on the best course for ensuring that it can continue to serve the community and realize the Felician mission.

Mission Statement

Villa Maria College, founded by the Felician Sisters, provides students a rigorous and enriching educational experience. Offering academic programs with a broad core curriculum, the College transforms and empowers students to realize their intellectual, creative, professional, and spiritual potential. Inspired by a welcoming Catholic tradition and a dynamic Franciscan spirit, Villa Maria College offers individual attention and fosters compassion, justice, peace, respect for human dignity and a commitment to service.

Vision Statement

The Vision Statement, crafted during the Visionary Planning process which covers the years 2014-2024, remains central to this strategic plan. Although not as explicitly enumerated in this plan, student-centeredness remains essential to the strategies outlined below and to the overall direction of the plan.

Our vision is to be the premier student-centered college in Western New York, characterized by an unyielding commitment to serving the needs of individual learners, with:

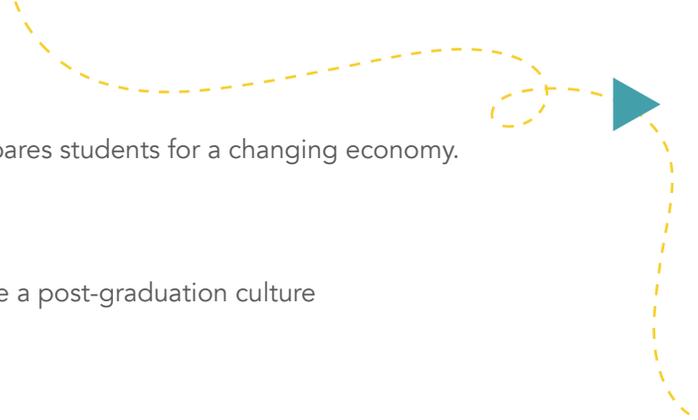
- Cutting edge pedagogy guiding and empowering students through individual pathways to academic success;
- Compassionate and caring faculty members who nurture emerging talent;
- Robust student life experiences fusing academics and student life into a vibrant whole;
- Opportunities for the personal development of life skills that help students realize their full potential as human beings;
- Prudent fiscal management and stewardship in support of a Felician Franciscan environment and student-centered atmosphere.

Innovative Strategies

Strategy 1: Provide innovative mission-driven programming and resources to inspire all college constituencies to live out our Felician Franciscan heritage and core values.

Tactics:

- 1.1.** Expand student campus ministry programming
- 1.2.** Offer more targeted Felician Franciscan resources to faculty, staff, and the Board of Trustees
- 1.3.** Cultivate partnerships with organizations to advance the mission and new strategic goals



Strategy 2: Develop innovative academic programming that prepares students for a changing economy.

Tactics:

- 2.1. Launch new academic programs
- 2.2. Significantly bolster career readiness programming and create a post-graduation culture
- 2.3. Pursue internal improvements for current academic programs
- 2.4. Develop a graduate program
- 2.5. Implement programming to serve nontraditional students
- 2.6. Continue to refine the curriculum through assessment

Strategy 3: Create innovative student support systems that address retention and persistence challenges.

Tactics:

- 3.1. Enhance embedded developmental education
- 3.2. Advance diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives
- 3.3. Update and improve policy, procedure, and technology to foster student success
- 3.4. Pursue partnerships focused on college transition
- 3.5. Refine whole-person student affairs engagement
- 3.6. Implement equitable access and inclusive education initiatives

Strategy 4: Deploy innovative initiatives that increase the College's enrollment and competitive position.

Tactics:

- 4.1. Strengthen brand awareness and college reputation
- 4.2. Increase the number of nontraditional and impact students
- 4.3. Evaluate and improve admissions and registration policies and procedures
- 4.4. Collaborate with third party to improve housing options for students
- 4.5. Invest in esports
- 4.6. Use athletics to build brand awareness and drive enrollment growth

Strategy 5: Ensure the innovative use and development of resources that strengthen finances

Tactics:

- 5.1. Leverage new strategic initiatives to increase grant awards
 - 5.2. Identify and cultivate new donors to increase revenue from major gifts
 - 5.3. Redevelop an alumni engagement program that supports a post-graduation culture of giving
 - 5.4. Reimagine signature events to augment brand awareness and engage potential donors
 - 5.5. Aggressively explore partnerships for facilities rentals and facilities management.
 - 5.6. Renovate the Dining Hall and other key campus spaces
 - 5.7. Improve analysis, distribution, and presentation of data to enhance decision-making processes
 - 5.8. Improve employee satisfaction and effectiveness
 - 5.9. Continue to strengthen the Board of Trustees' effectiveness and fundraising capacity
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