

UNIVERSITY *of the* CUMBERLANDS

Strategic Plan
2020

Where there is no vision, the people perish.
– Book of Proverbs

*If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be.
Now put the foundations under them.*
– Henry David Thoreau

To the person who does not know where he wants to go there is no favorable wind.
– Seneca

There is nothing so useless as doing efficiently that which should not be done at all.
– Peter F. Drucker

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PREFACE

In January 2010, Dr. James Taylor, the chief operating officer of University of the Cumberlands in Williamsburg, Kentucky, asked the campus constituents if they would again review and revise a strategic plan for Cumberlands.

He had come to think that the 121-year-old institution, which began as Williamsburg Institute and later Cumberland College, had grown to be a lovely, small university that needs a purposeful action plan for Cumberlands' next decades.

University constituents accepted the assignment, and for the next twelve months conducted interviews; studied data, finances, and the facilities; and met regularly with an 11-person strategic planning committee composed of faculty, key executives, and deans.

This plan is the result.

UNIVERSITY OF THE CUMBERLANDS IN 2010

University of the Cumberland, chartered April 5, 1888, welcomed its first class in 1889, providing an opportunity for higher education to the children of the impoverished Appalachian Mountains. Over the past 121 years, Cumberland's field of service and influence has widened, but its primary service region continues to be southeastern Kentucky and eastern Tennessee. Moreover, the essence of the University's purpose has remained intact. Today the University attracts students from around the nation and world, many of whom enter college with strong academic credentials and social support systems. However, the University also continues to recruit first-generation college students and students from academically and economically underprivileged backgrounds.

Today, Cumberland is experiencing a stable undergraduate enrollment and a rapidly growing graduate enrollment. University of the Cumberland has an enrollment of 1,440 traditional full time undergraduates, 315 part time undergraduates, and a growing enrollment of 1,556 graduate students. This makes for a total enrollment of 3,311.

Williamsburg, Kentucky, the location of University of the Cumberland, is in the southern part of the mountains of eastern Kentucky. The campus is a place of natural beauty and healthful surroundings. There is almost no deferred maintenance on the stately colonial antebellum architecture seen throughout the campus buildings. It is truly a place of serene beauty and an architectural gem in the Appalachian Mountains.

The faculty is unusually devoted to teaching and nurturing the students. University of the Cumberland is showing promise of becoming one of the finer small universities in the Southeast. But Cumberland has three issues it must deal with: its growth, newness to graduate programs, and progression.

The decision to craft a strategic action plan to guide the University's next steps and future growth seems an evident necessity.

PRINCIPLES OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN

In addition to attempting to respond creatively to University of the Cumberland's three major issues, this strategic plan is mindful of eight important strategic principles.

1. A university should build on its existing strengths and trim its questionable elements. It should capitalize on its comparative advantages.
2. A school should honor its traditions and culture and seek to move forward with those in mind.
3. A university must innovate continually to take advantage of the changing demographic, technological, intellectual, and economic developments in society.
4. Planning should be cognizant of the competition of nearby and regional colleges and universities, especially their programs and pricing.
5. A private university should move forward in ways that are attractive to students, parents, alumni, and potential donors.
6. Strategy formulation should include wide consultation and idea solicitation, especially from key faculty, staff, and trustees.
7. The strategy should seek to provide a university with a distinctive niche among America's 3,900 colleges and universities, a special set of reasons to pay for study at its campus instead of others.
8. A strategy should be permeated by an alluring vision of what the university hopes to become, and can be, in the not-too distant future.

A VISION FOR UNIVERSITY OF THE CUMBERLANDS

Cumberlands' vision is to be a premier liberal arts university that encourages intellectual and spiritual growth, leadership, and service.

University of the Cumberlands will capitalize on its history, location, and close student and faculty bonds to become a forerunner institution, a distinctive kind of learning center, an independent pioneering 21st century university that is usually devoted to preparing young people for Appalachia's, America's, and the world's future.

To do so, Cumberlands will

1. Remain a relatively small university, with approximately 1,600 undergraduate students. Continue as a comprehensive, coeducational, primarily residential university with a small-college atmosphere.
2. Continue to grow the graduate and adult programs oriented toward emerging professional opportunities, each of which features superior teaching, applied learning, and experiences.
3. Be grounded in the liberal arts while continuing to develop delivery methods that work to improve student learning outcomes.
4. Create and sustain an environment for learning and professional development.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

To fulfill this vision of University of the Cumberlands as a distinctive kind of learning center, a 21st century university unusually devoted to preparing critical and creative thinkers who will serve and lead Appalachia, America, and the world in the future, the University needs to make strategic changes in five domains.

To do so, Cumberlands will

1. Attract, enroll, retain, and graduate even more highly competent undergraduates, graduates, and professional students.
2. Maintain and strengthen the University's academic programs.
3. Continue to recruit, develop, and retain a talented and diverse team of faculty and staff who achieve excellence in teaching, scholarship, and service.
4. Further enhance and develop outstanding facilities.
5. Practice stewardship to ensure resources are strong for present and future generations.

IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGIES

Priority One: *Attract, enroll, retain, and graduate even more highly competent undergraduates, graduates, and professional students.*

1. Develop an admissions recruiting plan, with a clear strategy and priorities to enhance even greater geographic diversity while maintaining its commitment to Appalachian students
2. Maintain its tradition of athletic excellence, while continuing to recruit superior student athletes and studying the feasibility of developing more athletic programs
3. Strengthen the advising program
4. Continue to make the tuition price competitive
5. Expand and upgrade recreational and intramural programming and services
6. Expand opportunities for student and family communications
7. Develop a comprehensive enrollment management plan
8. Improve student life, retention, and services
9. Deepen connections with former students or alumni
10. Develop a comprehensive communications plan to assist marketing and recruiting students at all levels

Priority Two: *Maintain and strengthen the University's academic programs*

1. Systematically review the General Education Curriculum
2. Ensure appropriate assessment procedures are routinely used in curricular planning to enhance student learning
3. Develop and implement a comprehensive graduation enhancement program in order to improve retention and graduation rates
4. Refine each department's course offerings to develop special strengths and graduate programs
5. Add, modify, and eliminate programs to implement the mission of the University and to meet the market demands for students and the region

Priority Three: *Continue to recruit, develop, and retain a talented and diverse team of faculty and staff who achieve excellence in teaching, scholarship, and service*

1. Improve compensation packages and employee benefits for faculty and staff as the University's finances allow
2. Promote, nurture, and reward excellence in teaching and service
3. Develop a comprehensive system for professional evaluation for faculty and staff
4. Provide programs for professional development and continuing education for faculty and staff
5. Encourage faculty to engage in scholarly activities
6. Create a first-rate teaching workshop to improve instructional skills and enhance the creative use of modern technology in the classroom

Priority Four: *Further enhance and develop outstanding facilities*

1. Develop a schedule for upgrading the climate control in needed areas
2. Survey, maintain, and improve interiors and exteriors of all buildings
3. Renovate current facilities and construct new ones to meet academic and institutional needs
4. Continue to upgrade technological infrastructure to meet academic and university needs

Priority Five: *Practice stewardship to ensure resources are strong for present and future generations*

1. Develop a campus-wide climate of fundraising and grand solicitation
2. Continue to build a professional and energetic development office
3. Continue to develop real estate holdings into income producing property
4. Seek endowed positions for faculty and staff
5. Maintain expert prudent investment of the University's endowment for maximum growth
6. Develop public relations to promote the University's special attributes and achievements, and its worthiness for investment

CONCLUSION

University of the Cumberland has enjoyed a storied past and looks forward to an exciting future, but it is at a significant and pivotal point. How can this historic, private Christian liberal-arts institution continue to rise as one of Appalachia's and America's vital contributors to the intellectual, artistic, and economic eminence of the nation?

This strategic plan suggests that University of the Cumberland can do so by designing itself to be a distinctive kind of learning center, a 21st century university unusually devoted to preparing critical and creative thinkers who will serve and lead Appalachia, America, and the world in the future. The University has already been moving in that direction. The students historically from Appalachia are now remarkably diverse geographically and intellectually. The faculty are devoted to great teaching and student growth. Each academic unit is distinct and innovative, preparing learners to think critically and creatively in pursuit of the "life-more-abundant" for both the individual and society. The University strives to prepare the students to be professional servant-leaders in their disciplines and communities, linking research with practice and knowledge with ethical decision-making abilities.

Now University of the Cumberland must move forward more intentionally. Therefore, this strategic action plan is the means with which to move forward. To deliver its initiatives, however, requires a major and persistent act of will by the faculty, trustees, alumni, and the president, vice presidents, deans, coaches, and staff. Also included are the interested friends of venturesome higher learning. As the entire University of the Cumberland's family works to implement this strategy, Cumberland will continue to enhance its reputation as a noted and different force in Appalachia's and America's sphere of higher education.

