

STRATEGIC PLAN 2020: Ever Ancient, Ever New



REFOUNDING ASSUMPTION



PRESIDENT'S WELCOME STATEMENT

"Ever Ancient, Ever New."

Refounding Assumption, 2020-2025



Assumption University's new strategic plan, *"Ever Ancient, Ever New,"* embodies an ambitious vision for the institution. This courageous and innovative plan, which reflects the collective ideas of the community, charts a direction for the University that remains firm in its commitment to its mission, but unlike previous plans, seeks to take full advantage of the opportunities for institutions with a long and storied history such as Assumption. In this plan, we are conscious of challenging external factors and the significant impact the coronavirus has had, and will continue to have, on higher education, requiring an openness to operating in new ways without sacrificing what makes us who we are.

An institution sponsored by the Augustinians of Assumption, the new strategic plan is inspired by the vision of St. Augustine of Hippo and his journey of self-discovery, a rich inspiration for us in our mission to educate the whole person. Upon completing his journey of restless reflection, Augustine discovered what he was seeking all along, "Late have I loved you, beauty ever ancient, ever new!" (*Confessions*, Book X) Similar to the journey taken by Augustine, Assumption has embarked upon its own journey of exploration since its founding in 1904. Since then, at critical moments in this journey, Assumption had the foresight and courage to "refound" itself. Today we are on the threshold of another moment of refounding, recognizing that while much has changed educationally, physically and structurally, the fundamental principles of our mission remain.

This plan paves the way for the future of Assumption, for a refounding that is in continuity with its past and its rich heritage. By refounding in a way that is in continuity with its past, an institution keeps its soul and its direction. It remains distinctive, set apart from institutions lacking a sure sense of identity. This plan is about being distinctive, about planning for a future for Assumption that is open to a new way of being who we are, a way that integrates the past with the present and points to a vibrant and strong future for the university. This has characterized our history as an institution that is *"Ever Ancient, Ever New."*



Francesco C. Cesareo, Ph.D.

Francesco C. Cesareo
President

VISION STATEMENT

Assumption University will become Worcester's premier institution of higher learning and among the most revered Catholic universities in the Northeast. To accomplish this goal, Assumption recognizes that, while much has changed educationally, physically, and structurally, the fundamental principles of our mission endure. Now a University comprised of five separate schools, Assumption will continue its evolution as a competitive and more selective institution. It will be known for its strong commitment to its mission; its solid academic reputation that rests on a classical liberal arts curriculum rooted in the Catholic, Augustinian, and Assumptionist traditions; its strong professional programs shaped by its mission; and faculty who are recognized as teachers, scholars, and mentors. Drawing on the enduring vision of its founders, the Augustinians of the Assumption, the University will emphasize excellence in all dimensions of the student experience through an integrated approach that allows students to discover the importance of ideas, the beauty of learning, and a vocation that will give meaning to their lives.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The lessons of the past inform a promising, exciting future for Assumption University.

Following the release of *Foundations for Excellence*, the institution's first strategic plan in 2008, Assumption achieved virtually all of its outlined goals. We then created a new blueprint, *Light the Way: Building on Foundations of Excellence*, a strategic plan designed to guide Assumption's future growth in academic programs, enhanced student experiences, and state-of-the-art campus facilities like the Tsotsis Family Academic Center and Health Sciences building, our second groundbreaking project between 2017 to 2020.

While we have accomplished many goals included in *Light the Way*, we realize this is not a time for rest. We now work to maintain our momentum amid the challenges of the pandemic and other external factors impacting higher education.

Despite the many challenges, this is an exciting and momentous time to be a member of the Assumption community. We are currently celebrating the Commonwealth's decision to grant us an official designation of university status in recognition of our comprehensive undergraduate and graduate academic offerings. In 2020, we also restructured the institution into five separate schools to continue serving our community effectively, with purpose and pride, as the future beckons.

Here, we present our newest, most innovative, and most forward-looking strategic plan to date. *Ever Ancient, Ever New: Refounding Assumption, 2020-2025*, reflects the collective ideas of our community and charts a direction for a strong, vibrant Assumption University that is solidly grounded in our history, tradition, and mission.

THE NEW STRATEGIC PLAN IS DRIVEN BY FIVE SPECIFIC FOCUS AREAS:

1. Assumption University will strengthen the articulation, integration, and engagement of our shared educational mission across every area of the University.
2. Assumption University will foster a culture of student success to promote student satisfaction and engagement.
3. Assumption University will foster innovation and excellence in academic and student programs.
4. Assumption University will enhance enrollment through strategic recruitment reflective of mission and market conditions.
5. Assumption University will ensure the financial sustainability of the institution through careful stewardship of assets and the growth/diversification of revenue streams.



FOCUS AREA 1

Strengthen the articulation, integration, and engagement of our shared educational mission across every area of the University.

Assumption's mission has guided and inspired the institution as a whole, as well as each member of our community, as we make strategic decisions and carry out our work. To thrive and remain relevant, a great institution must respond to the needs of the present moment, but also seek to shape that moment out of the strength and genius that lie at the source of its *raison d'être*. Consequently, the goal of this focus area is to form its members to know, understand and embrace the mission with enthusiasm, so that it enhances and enriches the work done in every area of the University.

FOCUS AREA 1: STRATEGIC GOALS

1. Deepen among students, faculty, staff, administration, and Trustees a shared understanding of the educational mission that guides and inspires our work at Assumption.
2. Increase the extent to which our mission is clearly understood and energetically pursued by members of the campus community.
3. Better serve Catholic members of the community, as well as those from other faith traditions, to deepen or rediscover the gift of their faith.
4. Clearly and effectively communicate the mission to internal and external audiences.



FOCUS AREA 2

Foster a culture of student success to promote student satisfaction and engagement

Some institutions define student success simply as educational attainment, higher incomes after graduation, and greater job satisfaction. At Assumption, student success is mission-critical and defined by much more than these quantifiable outcomes. We gauge the success of our students by how well prepared they are to accomplish their spiritual, academic, personal, and professional goals. Student success emphasizes life-long learning and reflection, and is tied to the discovery of and commitment to values as their guide.

As demographics evolve, we recognize the need for a web of support in which the entire campus community effectively engages students. In such an environment, decisions are made within a lens and context of the whole person. Assumption will continue to enhance its commitment to a student-centered approach, and the University will consciously work to implement institutional policies and structures that eliminate barriers and facilitate success. When faculty, staff, and administrators work in harmony to improve the student experience, student success is supported through connection and a sense of belonging. Students benefit when campus mentors across the community provide guidance as students are discovering their unique strengths and gifts. All stakeholders collectively serve students by helping them discover their vocations, and by recognizing milestones such as identifying their academic passions; selecting majors; searching for internships to explore potential careers; exploring their faith; and developing their leadership skills, musical and artistic talents, or athletic strengths. This is all done with the goal of enlivening their ability to bring forth their best selves, or, as St. Augustine states, "To become what they are not yet," so they may contribute to the wider world beyond campus. Ultimately, our intent is that Assumption students will be successful in discovering their vocations and find and pursue lives of meaning and purpose in their work and service.

FOCUS AREA 2: STRATEGIC GOALS

1. Establish a foundation that prepares students for their collegiate experience.
 2. Enhance the delivery of student services.
 3. Develop and strengthen strategies for increasing student persistence.
 4. Improve facilities to support student satisfaction and student engagement.
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At Assumption, student success is mission-critical...



FOCUS AREA 3

Foster Innovation and Excellence in Academic and Student Programs.

The purpose of an Assumption education is to forever transform students' lives. The academic experience is rooted in the tradition of Catholic liberal education, which provides all students with a foundation in both classic and contemporary topics, texts, and habits of mind. It continues by integrating these values into academic programs that prepare students for both professions and meaningful lives. The co-curricular and extracurricular experiences support and bolster these values, further transforming student lives through service, community, friendship, and leadership development. This plan strengthens our longstanding commitments both inside and beyond the classroom while weaving these experiences, once largely separate, together. We seek to learn from the disruptive experiences of external opportunities, such as the pandemic and shifting demographics, which have forced us to reimagine remote learning and community-building in new ways. This reimagining can be an important part of our future, while continuing to enliven the distinctive and unchanging values of an Assumption education. The result will be a seamless, four-year experience encompassing the classroom, campus, and community. Its object, in the Augustinian tradition, is self-discovery and the formation of the whole person.

FOCUS AREA 3: STRATEGIC GOALS

1. Academic and co-curricular life will be coordinated and harmonized through a common educational goal.
2. Academic programs will be driven and inspired by mission and the needs of today's world.
3. Deliver academic programs through options that provide a high-quality educational product that is responsive to market norms and learning modality preferences, optimizes student success, and strengthens Assumption's financial position.
4. Co-curricular and extracurricular programs will be driven and inspired by mission and the educational needs of our students.



FOCUS AREA 4

Enhance enrollment through strategic recruitment reflective of mission and market conditions.

Higher education is awash with disruptive forces. From the growing role of online education to increasingly divergent views of the value of a college degree, there is rising variability in opinions of what higher education should look like and accomplish. After decades of expansion, the number of traditional age college students will plateau and be followed by a sharp decline in the latter half of this decade. Students who will begin their college journey in the coming years will include higher proportions of first-generation college students who will reflect greater racial and ethnic diversity, adding to the richness of campus community and the student experience at Assumption. Moreover, the recent changes to NACAC's Code of Ethics and Professional Practices (CEPP), which resulted from an investigation by the Antitrust Division of the United States Department of Justice, promise to increase the range and intensity of competitive practices, such as the awarding of financial aid, in the recruitment of students. This, of course, is not the first time that higher education – or Assumption – has witnessed and thrived amid market changes. As with prior instances, the elements of this focus area are designed to serve as a springboard for adaptation that will enable Assumption to fulfill its educational mission amid an evolving context. With an increased reliance on data and analysis, and an emphasis on targeted enrollment growth, the elements in this focus area are rooted in an adherence to strategic enrollment management. These elements are aimed at building on Assumption's recent successes in creating new academic programs, building new facilities, and shifting to a University structure and status to better form future leaders who will use their gifts, talent, and knowledge obtained at Assumption in the service of others.



FOCUS AREA 4: STRATEGIC GOALS

1. Establish a culture of using data and analysis to guide enrollment strategy and decision-making.
2. Grow undergraduate demand for Assumption among traditional-age students.
3. Diversify Assumption's total enrollment revenue composition.

**Current and
proposed future
programs will
enhance the student
experience...**



FOCUS AREA 5

Ensure the financial sustainability of the institution through careful stewardship of assets and the growth and diversification of revenue streams.

The transition to a University structure offers the opportunity to utilize business models that promote revenue generation and strategically allocate resources that will allow for Assumption's continued sustainability. Current and proposed future programs will enhance the student experience while financially benefiting the institution. Greater flexibility in the business models will be designed to take advantage of market opportunities and align expenses with future revenue streams. There will be a continued emphasis on strengthening Assumption University's financial position, built on the base of more than 40 consecutive years of operating surpluses, to address known and future challenges that may emerge as the institution continues to demonstrate a 116-year history of adapting, enduring, and thriving.

FOCUS AREA 5: STRATEGIC GOALS

1. Explore different financial/budget models reflecting the University structure with multiple schools.
2. Build a reputation as an institution of choice to attract highly qualified faculty, staff, and administrators.
3. Determine strategic infrastructure needs in support of the overall experience of students.
4. Assess fundraising operations and future needs for the next comprehensive capital campaign.
5. Improve Operational Efficiencies.





ABOUT ASSUMPTION UNIVERSITY

Assumption University, founded in 1904 by the Augustinians of the Assumption, is New England's premier university for high-quality education, integrating career preparation and education of the whole person, drawing upon the best in the rich and centuries-long tradition of Catholic higher education. Assumption, located in Worcester, Massachusetts, seeks to provide students with a transformative education that forms graduates who possess critical intelligence, thoughtful citizenship, and compassionate service. The University offers 34 majors and 49 minors in the liberal arts, sciences, business, nursing and professional studies; as well as master's and continuing education degrees and professional certificate programs. For more information about Assumption University, please visit www.assumption.edu.