



Thrive

Assumption University 2024-2034

Introduction

Amid economic headwinds and pressure to deliver near-term return on investment, many liberal arts institutions are making stark choices: either to retreat into the enduring ideas that help form students for meaningful lives or to jettison those in favor of technical career preparation alone. Yet either of those options, in isolation, is doomed to fail. Meaningful lives include rewarding work. And institutions that focus on technical preparation without integrating enduring ideas into it prepare students only until the inevitable and rapid moment when technology or the employment market changes.

Assumption University's next decade—a decade of growth and possibility—will be defined by our rejection of that choice and our belief that an education that speaks to everyone should be accessible to everyone.

Drawing on the wisdom of both faith and reason, this education seeks the development of each member of its diverse community as whole persons made in the image of God. Precisely because the education we offer engages the enduring questions of the human experience—questions that persist across economic or technological changes—the career preparation students also receive here is permanently relevant as well. Because we define our Catholic identity in terms of the nature of the education we offer, one that blends the immediate and the enduring, our graduates can think and adapt. They have grit and lack entitlement.

Any institution can prepare students for their first jobs. Any graduate program can deliver a professional credential. Assumption graduates are ready for their second, third, and fourth careers—for the jobs that do not yet exist and for the jobs we know all of us will always have: citizens and friends, partners and parents, lifelong exemplars of curiosity and wonder and enduring ambassadors for gratitude and truth.

In our next decade, Assumption University will become a premier institution with national reach, not merely *a* Catholic university but a particular *type* of Catholic university—one in diminishing supply but, because it speaks to enduring human needs, persistent demand. We will become known as a Catholic university that defines its Catholic identity in terms of the education we offer—an education that welcomes and speaks to all who seek to pursue truth in the company

of friends. It is animated by a particular tradition of inquiry while speaking to people of all backgrounds and beliefs.

Many institutions are reacting to the pressures they face differently, by chasing the latest trends and becoming more like one another. The result is to erase anything that makes Catholic liberal education distinctive and convert it to a commodity instead, one anyone can offer and no one can distinguish. Those institutions will fall because they will compete on price and short-term outcomes alone. *Thrive* instead places a stake in the ground that both embraces the enduring education we offer and nimbly adapts to changing student, economic, and social needs.

In sum: Assumption University chooses growth by distinction rather than extinction by emulation. We choose to stand. We choose to rise. We choose to thrive.

The Assumption Commitment: Education, Preparation, Access

Universities are not the only ones forcing a false choice between liberal education and career preparation. Many political, economic, and social leaders are too. Politically, the left and right have arrived at an unintentional consensus whose essential premise is this: The privileged few get the luxury of thinking about the true, good, and beautiful. Everyone else gets shunted as quickly as possible into the workplace. The result is that the kind of education we offer is under siege. This plan plants a stake in the ground for it.

The problem with the choice between humanizing and professional education isn't simply that the choice is false, though it is: The most enduring career skills are integrated with enduring ideas, which is why Assumption ranks in the 94th percentile of all colleges nationwide in lifetime return on investment.

The real problem is that the choice is unjust. It assumes an economy divided between the privileged few who dream and the many who produce. That is an economy that will fail because it will consist of people who can execute tasks efficiently but not innovators who can see possibilities differently.

More important, this is a profound issue of social justice. There are high school graduates from privileged backgrounds who live and work meaningfully and successfully on the basis of workforce credentials or technical education. There are also young people with fewer financial means who yearn to ask the enduring questions of human life. The education Assumption offers should be available to anyone who seeks it and is qualified to succeed. And within a decade, every student who graduates from our campus will have both a broad and humanizing education *and* at least one professional credential.

Our commitment to access is anchored in the nature of our education. Because every human person is made in the image of God and therefore has access to truth through reason expressed in language, every human person should have access to an education that pursues truth. Access also arises from deep in Assumption's roots as an institution founded to educate immigrants, and it is the essential Assumption difference: the place where a commitment to Catholic liberal education, career preparation, and access meet.

In the next 10 years, that is a space we will define, expand, and claim for our own on the basis of three visions. First, we will *infuse* the entire campus community with a shared vision of what it means to provide a Catholic liberal education in the Assumptionist tradition—in the classroom and beyond. Second, we will *focus* every decision we make on what is ultimately best for students rather than what is easiest institutionally. Finally, we will break the cycle of crisis and *grow*—building enrollment, our brand, and our endowment to create a sustainable, robust institution.

As a result, for the next decade and beyond, Assumption University will thrive.

A Note on Boldness

This Strategic Plan outlines a visionary roadmap for the institution, anchored in our steadfast commitment to providing a distinctively Assumptionist Catholic liberal education to all those who seek it. Embracing a dynamic and forward-thinking approach, *Thrive* charts a course for excellence, equipping our community to thrive despite the challenges facing higher education generally and Catholic liberal education specifically.

This plan is bold because our future as an institution demands boldness; we *need* bold thinking, ambitious goals, and measurable action items to succeed. We think that the boldest aspects of this plan are:

- Putting a stake in the ground that indicates confidence in and devotion to Catholic liberal education at a time when it is under siege and many institutions are abandoning it;
- Break the cycle of financial crisis and achieve sustainable financial health;
- Dramatically transforming the paradigm of philanthropy at Assumption to include external partners;
- Integration of the Foundations Program across the entire undergraduate experience;
- Supporting a mission- and market-aligned slate of undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs that diversify revenue streams;
- Distinguish ourselves by building a national reputation for civic friendship and a culture of inquiry rooted in intellectual courage and humility;
- Fundamentally jolting campus culture by basing decisions on what is good for the student rather than easiest for the institution; and
- At a time when the political, economic, and social conversation is treating the liberal arts as a luxury for the privileged, making a social-justice commitment that anyone who seeks an Assumption education and is qualified to succeed should have access to one.

The three Visions of *Thrive* further articulate this bold plan, with associated goals and action items to allow us to measure progress and track our implementation goals in the years to come.

Measuring Success: Metrics, Benchmarks, and Five-Year Check-in

To implement *Thrive* successfully and accountably, the Administration will regularly measure and evaluate metrics and progress towards the goals and action items for each of the three Visions of the Strategic Plan. We will establish “implementation teams” for each goal within each Vision that will encourage cross-divisional work, accountability, and measurable progress.

As we implement the initiatives set forth in this Plan update, we will systematically track and evaluate our progress. To that end, we have developed a series of action steps to follow and metrics against which we will track our progress. The metrics, listed below as “Action Items”, are both objective and quantifiable, and will allow us to evaluate ourselves internally and to provide meaningful comparisons to our peer institutions.

Vision I: INFUSE

- **Objective: We will INFUSE the University with a Common Understanding of our Assumptionist Educational Mission.**
- **Vision Highlights:**
 - **We will define our Catholic identity in educational terms that draw on Catholic suppositions of the human person that speak universally;**
 - **We will leverage the full potential of the Foundations Program to emphasize the distinctiveness of an Assumption education;**
 - **We will launch a Center for Civic Friendship that will garner national attention;**
 - **We will sustain a culture dedicated to student happiness, well-being, safety, and joy; and**
 - **We will free students to study what they love by offering a professional experience or credential to every undergraduate student, regardless of its direct relation to their program of study.**

Members of the Assumption community have always shared a commitment to mission, but it has meant different things to different people. As a result, what should be the joyful, animating purpose that unites us has become divisive instead. By understanding mission in educational terms and infusing that into every aspect of the University’s work, we can move forward together.

As a result of this plan, Assumption University’s unwavering commitment to the enduring principles of Catholic and Assumptionist education will infuse, enrich, and enliven each academic program across the University’s undergraduate and graduate schools. This education will equip students to pursue the truth for its own sake and to flourish in their professional and vocational lives. Committed to the complementarity of faith and reason and a shared understanding of truth, Assumption’s defining educational mission will animate all its academic programs. As the University’s essential, unifying undergraduate academic program, the Foundations Program initiates students and faculty to the lifelong pursuit of truth in the company of friends. Each undergraduate school within the University, in dialogue with the Foundations Program, houses signature programs that illuminate the distinctiveness of an Assumption education across all

academic disciplines. Encompassing all dimensions of University life, an Assumption education will engage reflection on and discovery of what we hold in common as persons amidst our genuine diversity. This educational mission will inspire and shape the University's full slate of graduate and pre-professional offerings, forming graduates identifiably marked by their Assumption education.

Vision I Goals and Action Items:

- *Goal 1:* We will cultivate and leverage a cohesive understanding of our identity as a Catholic institution with an educational mission.
 - *Goal 1.1:* We will empower all aspects of campus life to embody our educational mission in their distinct way.
 - *Action Item 1.1.1:* The Provost and the Director of the D'Amour Center for Teaching Excellence will facilitate educational sessions on Assumption's fundamental educational mission for the enrollment management, University advancement, athletics, and student affairs teams. The Provost will enlist the help of a Provost Fellow to continue this education and training [Year 1; Annually].
- *Goal 2:* We will be known for the Foundations Program.
 - *Goal 2.1:* All constituents will be empowered to speak the Foundations dialect and convey the aims of Foundations and our signature/distinctive educational programs to prospective and current students. The Foundation's Program will play an important role in the admissions, marketing, student affairs, athletics, advancement, and academic life of the University. The marketing and enrollment management teams will make the Foundations Program a selling point of the institution.
 - *Action Item 2.1.1:* We will prioritize the Foundations Program to support curriculum development, faculty needs, each School's signature/distinctive programs, and ongoing professional development workshops [Year 1; Annually].
 - *Action Item 2.1.2:* We will establish an annual four-part "D'Amour Lecture Series" and a lecture series for alumni, which will each hold four lectures each academic year on four, different set themes [Year 2; Annually].
 - *Action Item 2.1.3:* Student Affairs will incorporate the Foundations Program into its programming for incoming students (i.e., Orientation) [Year 2; Annually].
 - *Action Item 2.1.4:* We will institute an endowed Fortin/Gonthier Foundations Chair position [Year 3].
 - *Action Item 2.1.5:* Foundations Program signature forum courses will be delivered in an inter-disciplinary, team-taught manner [Year 4; Annually].
 - *Action Item 2.1.6:* We will establish a Foundations Post-Doctoral Program in collaboration with faculty [Year 7].

- *Goal 2.2:* The Foundations Program will be the identifiable, unifying feature for the undergraduate Schools.
 - *Action Item 2.2.1:* The Foundations Implementation Committee will develop and perform an assessment and evaluation of the Foundations Program; evaluation of the Foundations Program will continue annually [Year 1; Annually].
 - *Action Item 2.2.2:* The Provost and Deans will work to facilitate faculty orientation, training, and continued discussion about Foundations Program implementation and permeation across all schools and disciplines [Year 2; Annually].
 - *Action Item 2.2.3:* We will conduct student focus groups to understand what students learn and take away from the Foundations Program [Year 2; Annually].
- *Goal 2.3:* We will assess all academic programs of study based on the extent to which they actively draw on the Foundations Program.
 - *Action Item 2.3.1:* We will develop an Office of Assessment and Program Review that will work with faculty to ensure compliance with our NECHE assessment obligations. One criteria of assessment will be the extent to which programs of study are in active dialogue with the Foundations Program [Year 6; Annually].
- *Goal 2.4:* Each school will identify and develop signature and distinctive educational programs and their own tactical implementation plan.
 - *Action Item 2.4.1:* Each School will develop a strategic plan that is informed by and reflects the University's strategic plan [Year 2].
 - *Action Item 2.4.2:* We will establish a Fortin/Gonthier Core Texts & Enduring Questions department [Year 3].
 - *Action Item 2.4.3:* Academic administration and faculty will investigate a degree in—and center for—communications that is innovative and multi-disciplinary [Year 3].
 - *Action Item 2.4.4:* Each School will identify and develop signature and distinctive educational programs and articulate how each program ties into the Foundations Program [Year 3; Annually].
 - Academic administration and faculty will investigate programs and degrees, including:
 - A major in Law, Ethics, and Constitutional Studies [Year 3].
 - A Ph.D. in nursing [Year 7].
 - *Action Item 2.4.5:* We will use market data, along with collaboration with faculty, to evaluate and develop potential new undergraduate academic programs [Year 3; Annually].
- *Goal 3:* We will prioritize faculty and staff morale.
 - *Goal 3.1:* We will prioritize excellent teaching by relying on tenure-track and tenured faculty and, where appropriate, professors of practice.

- *Action Item 3.1.1:* We will decrease our reliance on adjunct faculty in specific academic programs and disciplines and emphasize teaching excellence [Year 1; Annually].
 - *Action Item 3.1.2:* We will support interdisciplinary and interdepartmental synergies in academic programs and course offerings through stipends, grants, and professional development opportunities [Year 2; Annually].
 - *Goal 3.2:* We will hire, retain, and support faculty and staff representing diversity of people and points of view.
 - *Action Item 3.2.1:* We will prioritize the recruitment of diverse people and points of view [Year 2; Annually].
 - *Action Item 3.2.2:* We will use data and survey tools to ascertain the particular support needs of faculty and staff representing diverse points of view. [Year 2; Annually].
 - *Goal 3.3:* We will value, reward, and support faculty and staff as vital members of our educational community, including by compensating them competitively and fairly.
 - *Action Item 3.3.1:* We will assign staff to support faculty with grant writing and associated compliance [Years 3; Annually].
 - *Action Item 3.3.2:* We will recognize the contributions of our faculty and staff by increasing our institutional compensation percentile from 16th percentile to at least 32nd percentile [Year 3-7].
 - *Goal 3.4:* We will emphasize the educational mission and the Foundations Program in undergraduate hiring and tenure decisions.
 - *Action Item 3.4.1:* Every tenured faculty, adjunct faculty, and professor of practice applicant will address how their discipline fits into and relates to the Foundations Program during the interview process, third year review, and tenure and promotion evaluations [Year 1; Annually].
- *Goal 4:* We will determine the sustainability and success of our international academic programs.
 - *Action Item 4.1:* We will evaluate the benefits and costs associated with the University's Rome Campus [Year 1].
 - *Action Item 4.2:* We will prioritize program-specific study abroad experiences [Year 5].
- *Goal 5:* We will prepare our students for lives of meaning.
 - *Goal 5.1:* We will prepare our students for lives of meaningful work and vocation.
 - *Action Item 5.1.1:* All undergraduate students will have the option to graduate with a professional opportunity or credential in an area of their choosing, regardless of whether it is directly related to their major program of study [Year 3; Annually].

- *Goal 5.2:* We will improve mentoring, tutoring, scheduling, and advising to maximize the academic experience for our students.
 - *Goal 5.2.1:* We will improve the caliber of our career development initiatives.
 - *Action Item 5.2.2:* We will investigate the merits and drawbacks of a four course (four credits per course) schedule for undergraduate students [Year 1].
 - *Action Item 5.2.3:* We will evaluate existing mentoring, tutoring, and other academic support programs across University divisions and streamline processes, avoid duplication, and reward success [Year 2].
 - *Action Item 5.2.4:* We will implement changes to existing academic advising processes to ensure that students are properly and adequately advised on the Foundations Program, their major-specific requirements, and other opportunities and areas of interest, in addition to developing relationships with members of the faculty [Year 3].
 - *Action Item 5.2.5:* We will offer experiential transcripts to allow undergraduate students to capture and articulate their internship and career preparedness to graduate schools and employers [Year 3].
- *Goal 6:* We will integrate our graduate students into the life of the University.
 - *Action Item 6.1:* We will adjust the hours of campus service providers (i.e., health services) to accommodate graduate students [Year 2].
 - *Action Item 6.2:* We will organize and sponsor programming and campus events geared towards and inclusive of our graduate students [Year 2; Annually].
 - *Action Item 6.3:* We will establish a Graduate Student Government Association [Year 2].
- *Goal 7:* We will develop new graduate and professional programs for which there is market demand, mission alignment, and a compelling reason for prospective students to choose Assumption University over competitor programs.
 - *Goal 7.1:* We will reevaluate the entire graduate portfolio and build a slate of programs focused not on commoditized spaces but rather on the ways in which we can demonstrate the value of obtaining a graduate degree or certificate from Assumption University.
 - *Action Item 7.1.4:* The School of Graduate Studies will develop four new certificate programs in two years and two additional graduate degree programs within five years. The School will articulate how each program ties into the institution's distinctive educational mission [Year 5].
 - *Action Item 7.1.5:* We will explore the feasibility of distinctive Law, Ethics, and Constitutional Studies ("LEX")-related studies and degree programs on a post-baccalaureate level [Year 8].

- *Goal 8:* We will expand opportunities for the Assumptionist community to be involved and present in the educational life of the University.
 - *Goal 8.1:* We will enlist the help and support of the Assumptionist religious community to enable students to grow in their faith by allowing them to reflect on and consider fundamental questions of Truth, which will lead students to questions of the truth in Christ.
 - *Action Item 8.1.1:* We will incorporate campus ministry, including articulation of opportunities for Catholic and ecumenical worship, into the undergraduate first-year orientation program [Year 1; Annually].
 - *Action Item 8.1.2:* We will articulate and live out our mission as an institution of Catholic liberal education—an education that speaks universally and that, by seeking truth, draws us closer to God, no matter who we are or what we believe [Year 2; Annually].
 - *Action Item 8.1.3:* We will enhance our community’s understanding of the University’s founding religious order and the enduring lessons of D’Alzon and the Assumptionists through living history initiatives, archival work with the library and other research institutes on campus, and through campus-wide events [Year 4; Annually].
 - *Action Item 8.1.4:* We will increase opportunities for University participation in mission-driven service immersion and missionary opportunities [Year 4; Annually].
 - *Goal 8.2:* We will facilitate participation in the Church’s sacramental life to any interested member of our community.
 - *Action Item 8.2.1:* We will provide opportunities for Catholic members of the University community to receive the sacraments and engage in the practice and development of their Catholic faith [Year 1; Annually].
- *Goal 9:* We will become known as a national model for civic friendship and a culture of inquiry rooted in intellectual courage and humility.
 - *Action Item 9.1.1:* We will establish and fund “The Disputed Questions Forum” [Year 1].
 - *Action Item 9.1.2:* We will sponsor and promote academic programming centered on open debate (Example: Reflection & Judgment: Thinking about the Israel-Hamas War) [Year 1; Annually].
 - *Action Item 9.1.3:* We will hold “Teaching Disputed Questions Workshops” each summer for faculty teaching in the Foundations Program [Year 2; Annually].

- *Action Item 9.1.4:* We will host “Teaching Disputed Questions” hybrid workshops for college and University educators [Year 4; Annually].
- *Action Item 9.1.5:* We will host “Teaching Disputed Questions” hybrid workshops for high school teachers [Year 6; Annually].
- *Action Item 9.1.6:* We will create and launch a Center for Civic Friendship on our campus [Year 7].

Vision II: FOCUS

- **Objective: We will make all decisions based on what is ultimately best for the student rather than what is easiest for the institution.**
- **Vision Highlights:**
 - **We will undergo a cultural jolt in how we think about our work in service of students;**
 - **We will promote a culture of wellness, happiness, safety, and joy among students; and**
 - **We will recruit, cultivate, and support graduates who are known for their grit and determination.**

Especially in periods of real or perceived crisis, any large organization faces the self-destructive temptation of focusing on itself rather than those it serves. Instead, Assumption will make an institutional commitment that every decision—from how we welcome students to how they pay their bills to how classes are scheduled—will be based on what serves the ultimate good of the student. “Ultimate” indicates that we are not a typical customer-service organization that simply asks and delivers what students want. We have a responsibility to work with them to ascertain what truly serves them. That entails involving them in important decisions and challenging ourselves in every decision we make.

Vision II Goals:

- *Goal 1:* We will make all decisions based on what is ultimately best for the student--and what cultivates joy amongst the student body--rather than what is easiest for the institution.
 - *Goal 1.1:* We will establish a shared understanding of what a student-centric mentality entails across all divisions and departments.
 - *Action Item 1.1.1:* We will actively solicit and empower student voices and perspectives in decision-making across the University, including on committees, in policy development and implementation, and in strategic conversations about the University’s future [Year 1, Annually].
 - *Action Item 1.1.2:* We will use survey and data-driven methods to monitor and understand student satisfaction [Year 1; Annually].

- *Action Item 1.1.3:* We will evaluate and analyze the benefits and risks of Artificial Intelligence in higher education. [Year 2; Annually].
 - *Goal 1.2:* We will allocate University resources based on what improves the student experience and cultivates joy amongst students.
 - *Action Item 1.2.1:* We will implement work-day patterns and rhythms that serve and promote students' needs and best operational practices for our entire community of students, including undergraduate, graduate, residential, and commuters [Year 2; Annually].
 - *Action Item 1.2.2:* We will prioritize recruiting staff that think strategically and ensure that our hiring and staffing practices across campus divisions prioritize strategic decision-making and high-touch student engagement [Year 2; Annually].
 - *Action Item 1.2.3:* We will offer programming and campus events, such as an off-campus shuttle, a pub/lounge, and other programming initiatives that focus on building connections and restoring vibrancy and fun to campus life [Year 2; Annually].
 - *Goal 1.3:* We will make it easier for our students to engage in “the business of being a student.”
 - *Action Item 1.3.1:* We will establish a “one-stop shop,” staffed by employees trained to solve problems across divisions, for students and families who have questions about payment, financial aid, and related business processes [Year 1].
 - *Action Item 1.3.2:* We will simplify onboarding and clearance process for new and returning students [Year 1].
- *Goal 2:* We will foster positive relationships between all University constituencies and promote a culture of respect and meaningful interaction between all members of the University community.
 - *Goal 2.1:* We will create an inclusive learning environment that embraces diversity of people and points of view.
 - *Action Item 2.1.1:* We will recruit and retain faculty and staff who value diversity of people and points of view [Year 2; Annually].
 - *Action Item 2.1.2:* We will develop and implement programming and pathways to promote multicultural awareness [Year 2; Annually].
 - *Action Item 2.1.3:* We will administer Climate Surveys every three years and other data and assessment tools, such as national surveys, on an annual basis and will use those tools to improve policies and practices for the best interests of students [Year 3; Annually].
- *Goal 3:* We will revise, and scale existing programs, processes, and structures to promote student happiness, safety, success, wellness, and retention.

- *Goal 3.1:* We will establish a holistic, collaborative, and innovative approach to mental health and wellbeing that involves all divisions.
 - *Action Item 3.1.1:* We will ensure adequate staffing for counseling and health education [Year 2].
 - *Action Item 3.1.2:* We will provide in-person and virtual Title IX and ADA compliance training and educational programming to faculty, staff, and students on an annual basis [Year 1; Annually].
 - *Action Item 3.1.3:* We will hire an independent Title IX Coordinator who will report to the General Counsel and Vice President for Strategy to promote a culture of support, well-being, and accountability [Year 2].
 - *Action Item 3.1.4:* We will hire two additional full-time staff members dedicated to student accessibility and ADA compliance initiatives [Year 5].
- *Goal 3.2:* We will develop systems and allocate resources that recognize the importance of athletics to student and campus life.
 - *Action Item 3.2.1:* We will increase attendance at athletic events through targeted outreach to the University community, including alumni [Year 1; Annually].
 - *Action Item 3.2.2:* We will stay ahead of emerging trends in collegiate athletics across all NCAA divisions [Year 1; Annually].
 - *Action Item 3.2.3:* We will allocate University resources towards ensuring that athletics staff, including coaches, are educated on the mission of the University for the betterment of our student-athletes [Year 1; Annually].
 - *Action Item 3.2.4:* We will ensure that our athletics staff includes adequate numbers of personal trainers and other medical and training personnel to promote safety [Year 2].
 - *Action Item 3.2.5:* We will provide equitable access to quality athletic facilities [Year 2].
- *Goal 4:* We will continually revise our strategic goals relating to the campus master plan, striving to improve the scope and condition of our buildings and facilities in service of the student experience.
 - *Goal 4.1:* We will invest in our physical plant and renovate existing structures and facilities, including building a new residence hall.
 - *Action Item 4.1.1:* We will determine the renovation needs, and potential next steps, for Nault, Young, and Hanrahan Residence Halls [Year 1].
 - *Action Item 4.1.2:* We will assess and develop an annual progress plan for ADA-compliant building entrances and residential offerings for our student population, with ongoing assessment of

- campuswide ADA compliance within the physical plant [Year 2; Annually].
- *Action Item 4.1.3:* We will build at least one new residence hall [Year 8].
- *Goal 5:* We will seek and cultivate the qualities of grit and determination in our prospective and enrolled students.
 - *Action Item 5.1:* Enrollment management will work with faculty and other divisions to develop specific tools for evaluating an applicant's propensity to grow and succeed as a student at the University [Year 1; Annually].

Vision III: GROW

- **OBJECTIVE:** By growing our enrollment, brand, partnerships, and philanthropy, we will place the University on vibrant financial footing and ensure any qualified student who seeks an Assumption education can access it.
- **Vision Highlights:**
 - We will grow our undergraduate, graduate, and professional certificate enrollments to at least 3,000 students;
 - We will break the cycle of crisis by shifting significant portions of discount to philanthropy;
 - We will provide access to our distinctive education to all those who seek it; and
 - We will replenish and expand our endowment.

We will break the cycle of survival and replace it with a mentality of growth. That requires growing undergraduate and graduate enrollment, establishing a strong and recognized brand that reflects what is distinctive and valuable about an Assumption education, replenishing our endowment, and growing philanthropy. We will expand access to an Assumption education by working with external corporate, community, and philanthropic partners who recognize its value.

Vision III Goals and Action Items:

- *Goal 1:* We will grow and expand total enrollment to at least 3,000 students.
 - *Goal 1.1:* We will expand enrollment from 1650 to 1845 undergraduate students and from 347 to 420 graduate students within 18 months and 2135 undergraduate students and 500 graduate students by 2028.
 - *Goal 1.2:* We will expand enrollment from 1650 to 2400 undergraduate and from 347 to 800 graduate students by 2034.
 - *Action Item 1.2.1:* We will increase applications from approximately 5200 applications in FY2024 to 5850 in FY2029 [Year 2].
 - *Action Item 1.2.2:* We will increase undergrad retention from 82% to 88% by year 3 and 90% by year 7 [Year 3, Year 7].

- *Action Item 1.2.3:* We will increase yield from 12% to 15% by FY2028 [Year 4].
- *Action Item 1.2.4:* We will increase enrollment of transfer students by 50% over 5 years, from 40 transfer students in FY2024 to 60 students in FY2029 by improving internal application review and credit transfer processes, establishing high-value partnerships with two-year schools, and by targeting transfers from other 4-year institutions [Year 5; Annually].
- *Action Item 1.2.5:* We will prioritize efforts to recruit students from Catholic secondary schools and from diverse geographical and socioeconomic areas to provide equitable access to an Assumption education [Year 2; Annually].
- *Action Item 1.2.6:* We will prioritize efforts to recruit students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds [Year 2; Annually].
- *Action Item 1.2.7:* We will assess the educational and economic advantages and opportunities associated with increased international recruitment [Year 2; Annually].
- *Action Item 1.2.8:* We will assess opportunities to recruit veterans and prospective Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) members [Year 2, Annually].
- *Goal 1.3:* We will build understanding among key audiences about the universal relevance of Catholic Liberal Education.
 - *Action Item 1.3.1:* We will create a research tool to assess and measure understanding of Catholic liberal education on an annual basis across students, faculty, staff, parents, and alumni [Year 1].
 - *Action Item 1.3.2:* We will make Assumption's understanding and conception of Catholic liberal education central to our brand and enrollment marketing campaigns [Year 1; Annually].
- *Goal 1.4:* We will increase market share beyond New England.
 - *Action Item 1.4.1:* We will increase the number of domestic enrollments beyond New England, New York, and New Jersey from 20 students in FY2024 (roughly 4% of the class) to 42 students (7%) in FY2029 and 50 students in FY2032 (8%) [Year 5].
- *Goal 1.5:* We will adapt our marketing approaches through research, strategy, message testing, campaign implementation, analysis, and refinement.
 - *Action Item 1.5.1:* We will identify, refine, and implement strategic marketing efforts aimed at attracting and retaining prospective students [Year 1].
- *Goal 1.6:* We will build, scale, and deploy a strategic marketing plan aimed at growing awareness and understanding of the Assumption brand.

- *Action Item 1.6.1:* We will deploy brand implementation efforts, including launching a cross-functional marketing group to involve all campus divisions [Year 1].
 - *Action Item 1.6.2:* We will build a robust, integrated in-house marketing team that will support our enrollment goals, support our philanthropy goals, and reduce our reliance on third-party vendors [Year 2].
 - *Action Item 1.6.3:* We will conduct an analysis of our brand's strengths and weaknesses and assess next steps for implementation [Year 5].
 - *Action Item 1.6.4:* We will conduct an analysis and evaluation of our website and solicit feedback from the University community and externally to perform any necessary revamp or overhaul of the website and its contents [Year 6; Annually].
- *Goal 1.7:* We will increase our campus residency rate.
 - *Action Item 1.7.1:* We will determine on-campus housing options for graduate students [Year 1].
 - *Action Item 1.7.2:* We will increase undergraduate residency from 77% to 80% in FY2025 and 82.5% in FY2028 [Year 6].
- *Goal 1.8:* We will take a proactive approach to competitive threats and opportunities, such as free community college and 90 credit degrees. [Year 3]
 - *Action Item 1.8.1:* We will research regional threats and prioritize the quality of the AU education in our analysis of opportunities and for innovation. [Year 3].
- *Goal 2:* We will create a new paradigm for philanthropy, cultivating donors inside and outside of our alumni network, to ensure that an Assumption education is accessible to all qualified students who seek it.
 - *Goal 2.1:* We will embark on a fundraising campaign to raise at least \$100 million by 2034, with specific emphasis on access and replenishment of the University's endowment.
 - *Action Item 2.1.1:* We will conduct feasibility studies and campaigns for capital, endowment, and annual use gifts and funds [Year 2].
 - *2.1.1.1:* We will increase annual current-use (restricted and unrestricted) gifts from \$1.2 million to \$2.2 million annually [Annually, Years 2-10].
 - *2.1.1.2:* We will raise at least \$3 million in capital and endowment gifts during non-campaign years [Years 2-5; Annually].
 - *Action Item 2.1.3:* We will increase the advancement staff with the hiring of front-line fundraisers to address alumni engagement, major gift, annual giving, planned giving, and corporate and foundation giving opportunities, with a goal to increase annual fundraising from

\$1.2 million to \$5.7 million in 18 months and \$9.95 million by 2028 [Year 1].

- *Action Item 2.1.4:* We will incorporate artificial intelligence to generate and organize information about our donors to include their giving history and capacity with the goal to increase our fundraising efforts [Year 3].
- *Goal 2.2:* We will offer at least one externally funded scholarship to every Assumption student who needs financial assistance to complete their undergraduate degree.
 - *Action Item 2.2.1:* We will introduce the Access AU Scholarship Program, adding fifty per year [Year 1; Annually].
 - *Action Item 2.2.2:* We will use funds raised for both current use and endowed scholarships to replace institutional aid, reducing the institution's discount rate [Year 1].
- *Goal 2.3:* We will prioritize and increase alumni engagement and philanthropy.
 - *Action Item 2.3.1:* We will expand our regional and local alumni events by 150%, growing from 6 events to 15 local and regional events to 30 high-quality, educational alumni events per year [Year 1; Annually].
 - *Action Item 2.3.2:* We will conduct research into alumni messaging strategies and implement those strategies [Year 2].
 - *Action Item 2.3.3:* We will relaunch the Alumni Association and the Alumni Board of Directors [Year 2].
 - *Action Item 2.3.4:* We will increase alumni participation in campus events, including speaking invitations in classes and at events, collaboration with the Career Services & Internship Center, and through mentorship opportunities with Aspire, Sophia, and other campus initiatives [Year 2; Annually].
 - *Action Item 2.3.5:* We will increase our President's Council membership from 250 to 400 members, including 100 new associate members [Year 3].
 - *Action Item 2.3.6:* We will increase alumni giving to 20% by 2028 by using a strategy that focuses on also increasing alumni engagement and participation through events, personal visits (on-campus and regional), and education opportunities to reconnect alumni with the University [Year 4].
- *Goal 2.4:* We will treat our students as "alumni-in-residence" and promote a culture of philanthropy and engagement.
 - *Action Item 2.4.1:* University Advancement and Student Affairs will closely collaborate to increase the visibility of University Advancement efforts on campus and to connect students with alumni [Year 2; Annually].

- *Action Item 2.4.2:* We will promote engagement with students to develop a culture of philanthropy in terms of students' time, talent, and treasure [Year 2; Annually].
 - *Action Item 2.4.3:* University Advancement will re-invigorate the student Ambassador Program to encourage engagement between current students and our alumni [Year 2; Annually].
- *Goal 3:* We will diversify our revenue streams beyond traditional, undergraduate day-school tuition, with an eye to sustainability, strategic partnerships, facilities rental opportunities, advancement initiatives, and innovative degree and certificate programs across the University.
 - *Goal 3.1:* We will prioritize graduate and professional development programs and opportunities that are mission- and market-driven and serve the interests of the University and its corporate partners.
 - *Action Item 3.1.1:* We will conduct market research in the areas of graduate and professional development education in an effort to identify and develop new programs and course offerings, including custom certificate and training programs for businesses and K-12 institutions [Year 2].
 - *Action Item 3.1.2:* We will use targeted marketing efforts to increase awareness of our graduate programs and professional development opportunities [Year 2; Annually].
 - *Action Item 3.1.3:* We will launch a marketing campaign to attract corporate partners in Worcester, Central Massachusetts, and New England more broadly [Year 3; Annually].

A Concluding Note on Culture

Thrive is Assumption's first ten-year rather than nearer-term strategic plan. That is deliberate: To become what Assumption can be, we must break the cycle of short-term thinking.

For years, whether enrollments were up or down, Assumption has operated in crisis mode. The result has been a corrosive, risk-averse mentality rooted in a culture of "no." *Thrive* calls us to replace it with a culture of thoughtful risk, shared ambitions, and an impulse to think in terms of what is possible rather than what is not. We do not aim simply to survive. Assumption will thrive. We will embrace bold dreams and, equally important, achieve them by holding one another accountable. Institutions are differentiated not only by the content of their strategic plans but also by whether they actually implement them. We will. *Thrive* delineates a bold vision achieved by specific goals and detailed, measurable, timebound tactics.

That cultural shift means our first response to any idea should be: "How do we get to yes?" That doesn't mean the answer to any question is always "yes." Some ideas won't work, nor can we prioritize them all. But we must empower one another to dream. We must therefore build a culture in which our impulse is to make things happen. If something seems impossible, we need to imagine how to make it possible. If it actually is impossible, we need to ask how the dream can

be achieved differently. And if the ultimate answer is “we can’t do that,” that should be at the end of an enthusiastic conversation that encourages innovation and collaboration, not the first reflex. That starts at the top and must pervade every aspect of the University.

To thrive, we must shatter the mentality of surviving year by year and embrace a culture of thriving for a decade and beyond. None of us has all the answers, but together we can make Assumption University a nationally known and sought after institution that is committed to Catholic liberal education, career preparation, and a socially just commitment to access. That requires a continued renewal of the ethic of shared governance and cross-divisional collaboration. It demands that we follow processes without being suffocated by hierarchy. In other words, thriving demands that—in our daily work with one another—we act like what we aspire to be: an educational community animated by the educational virtues of courage, generosity, and humility, one in which we can all teach and learn from one another.

Perhaps most important, we must approach this decade of rebuilding and growth with the disposition that it deserves and demands: joy. Education is hard and often exhausting work. But it is also exhilarating. The bold visions that *Thrive* calls us to realize by 2034 will require a great deal of each of us. But it is a work of joy—the deepest rejoicing, the kind that comes from a shared pursuit in the company of friends.