

## Ohio Wesleyan University Strategic Plan 2009-2020

Ohio Wesleyan University has an extraordinary opportunity for advancement as one of America's premier liberal arts colleges. This opportunity is grounded in a vision for 21<sup>st</sup> century liberal education that enriches the life-changing education offered to OWU students. Fulfillment of this vision requires a significant investment, including intellectual capital and innovative curricular and co-curricular initiatives by the OWU faculty and staff, and philanthropic capital by alumni and friends who share an appreciation for OWU and aspirations for its future. This document provides a roadmap for fulfilling the vision and invites investors to participate in bringing the vision to life.

Building on a heritage of academic strength with a commitment to the liberal arts grounded in "practical idealism," Ohio Wesleyan University will enhance its position as a national exemplar of liberal education. The faculty of Ohio Wesleyan University is augmenting the curriculum to ensure that each student has the opportunity to complement the rigor of the OWU classroom with a series of engaged learning experiences beyond the walls of the classroom and the borders of the campus. This curricular enhancement will encourage students to move from theory to practice and will give particular emphasis to substantially increased opportunities for international exposure as part of an OWU education. These experiences will be accomplished through a series of curricular innovations, including new courses, seminars, tutorials, and individually designed experiences that connect theory and practice. Additionally, an equally robust array of co-curricular innovations, including a new commitment to learning communities in residential life and increased off-campus service learning, will ensure that students gain the full benefit of an education that blends the classroom and the world, the curricular and the co-curricular, the theoretical and the practical. Through this process, OWU embraces its historic commitment to *Education for Leadership and Service* by dedicating itself anew to a transformational educational experience that prepares a new generation of leaders for an increasingly complex and interdependent world.

Ohio Wesleyan University will fulfill this vision with initiatives that strengthen the academic program, enhance student growth and development, increase enrollment of the most able students, develop campus facilities, and build a resource base to secure OWU's place of leadership for the future. The University has set specific objectives and concrete action steps against which it will measure progress in the fulfillment of this vision.

### **ACADEMIC PROGRAM**

Students choose Ohio Wesleyan University because of the quality of its academic program and the value of its educational experience. Our fundamental liberal arts orientation is enhanced by our distinctive commitment to helping students prepare for the professions and for multifaceted careers within various disciplines and by our emphasis on civic engagement through outreach, internships, and service learning. The OWU

faculty is committed to a model of teaching and learning that extends beyond formal classroom instruction—one that places at its heart a vital role for mentorship and advising, as well as student life, athletics, and other co-curricular activities. Enhancing the OWU academic program through investment in the curriculum and the faculty will strengthen our ability to attract the best, most diverse student body and prepare the most talented graduates for leadership in the future.

*A New OWU Curricular Plan.* Ohio Wesleyan University will develop, implement, and secure resources for a bold student learning initiative that blends theory and practice, provides every student with significant international exposure and engagement, and requires each student to complete a series of engaged learning experiences that complement the traditional liberal arts and prepare OWU graduates for leadership in all sectors of 21<sup>st</sup>-century society. Faculty members and OWU administrators will serve as mentors and guides for students in a range of activities such as internships and apprenticeships, volunteer service, study travel, study abroad, undergraduate research, leadership development, and artistic experiences. Some opportunities will be fulfilled on or near the campus during the academic term; others will take place far away from the campus during breaks or during a term away. Some will be fulfilled in groups, while others will be individual endeavors. Some will be fulfilled as part of courses in the curriculum; others will offer opportunities beyond the curriculum. Funds will be available through a competitive grant process to support students and faculty in imagining and creating the most robust possible experiences. The plan will require a substantial investment in advising and support for students and in resources that create innovative and productive opportunities for engaged learning at OWU.

Specific objectives include:

- Enhance curriculum to require every student to complete a series of engaged learning experiences that blend theory and practice
- Enhance the international dimension of our curriculum, including international study-travel experiences, so that every student is introduced to global issues and international perspectives
- Revitalize and strengthen the Sagan Colloquium
- Develop endowment to fully fund the new OWU curricular plan
- Develop a home for the OWU Plan
- Educate students in the use of current technologies as a part of their development as learners and thinkers

*The Faculty.* Fulfillment of the New OWU curricular plan requires increasing the size of our faculty in order to reduce the size of classes and to enhance opportunities for tutorials, seminars, directed readings, independent studies, and mentoring for individual, engaged learning experiences. In addition, we will increase resources available for faculty professional development and scholarly work. We will focus growth of the faculty in departments where class sections are large and where there is significant instruction by part-time and adjunct faculty. We will be especially interested in providing professional development and adding faculty positions in ways that increase opportunities

for students to connect theory and practice and in ways that enhance international opportunities for our students.

Specific objectives include:

- Improve student:faculty ratio
- Increase the number of tenured and tenure-track faculty positions to 155
- Increase support of faculty professional development and scholarly activity
- Increase support of departments and programs, with particular focus on supplies, equipment, technology, library resources, and student participation in professional conferences
- Ensure that faculty compensation increases accordingly as the OWU competitive position advances and the University achieves a new peer set
- Increase the number of classes in sections of fewer than 20 students

*Academic Facilities.* Ohio Wesleyan University has substantial needs in its academic facilities. OWU will invest in academic facilities to create state-of-the-art venues for instruction, including creating more space for seminars and group work, and bringing academic technology into classrooms across the campus.

Specific objectives include:

- Renovate and reopen Merrick Hall, perhaps as home of the New OWU curricular plan
- Renovate and make University Hall fully accessible
- Devote resources to other academic venues, specifically Phillips Hall, Chappellear Drama Center, and Sanborn Hall, to create better teaching spaces
- Install appropriate, current technology in every teaching venue on campus

## **STUDENT GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT**

The academic program is complemented by co-curricular programs that contribute to the education of the whole person and prepare OWU graduates for leadership in their professional lives and satisfaction in their personal lives. We will substantially enhance our investment in these programs and their prominence in the OWU experience. Additionally, we will invest in programs that create a vigorous, close-knit community and foster learning in all aspects of life at OWU. Collectively, these initiatives will increase students' success, assist them in discovering their passions, and help them achieve their aspirations. An important by-product of these initiatives will be a substantial increase in retention and graduation rates.

*Residential Life.* Ohio Wesleyan understands that residential facilities and the common experience of residential life are essential components of the educational experience and of building community at OWU. We will invest significantly in residential life, both in facilities and in programming, to enhance the development of our students as whole persons and to build a close-knit community on our campus.

Specific objectives include:

- Increase on-campus residency to nearly 100 percent
- Develop and implement in all residential facilities a philosophy of learning communities that invite exploration of a variety of common interests
- Enhance Greek life with clear understandings and expectations of mission, program, and accountability
- Develop a full range of progressively independent living opportunities for OWU students, including traditional residence halls, small living units and Greek houses, small learning communities in existing facilities, construction of apartments and town houses for upper-level students, and possible acquisition of neighboring property to serve as campus-based, independent housing
- Resource and staff key support services for students in all aspects of a residential campus, leading to a lively sense of community on campus

*Transitions.* We will develop programs that assist students in their transition to Ohio Wesleyan University and in their academic and social development in ways that connect them more strongly with the OWU community. These transition experiences will provide early opportunities for students to connect theory and practice and for students to begin developing plans for meaningful off-campus learning later in their OWU experience.

Specific objectives include:

- Enhance new student orientation and extend orientation through first semester
- Enhance first-year residential experience
- Improve freshman-to-sophomore retention
- Increase faculty involvement in orientation and the first-year experience

*Community and Tradition.* Ohio Wesleyan University has a proud heritage that is rich in traditions. These traditions, combined with intentional programming, create a dynamic campus community where students, faculty, and staff share a common mission that engages the life of the mind, enriches interaction among members of the community, and leads to meaningful engagement and service in the world beyond the campus. The University seeks to create a more close-knit campus community.

Specific objectives include:

- Create annual signature events that bring together the entire OWU community
- Develop high-profile lectures and event series that attract speakers and events of wide interest to the entire campus
- Provide resources to encourage faculty and staff to host informal gatherings of students in venues outside the traditional academic setting
- Develop initiatives that build on the longstanding presence of a strong community of international students on campus

*Engagement and Discernment.* Recognizing our commitment to an education that cultivates leadership set in the context of values, we will create greater opportunities for students to develop leadership and organizational skills, to take on responsibilities in student organizations, to engage in constructive community dialogue, and to discern their vocational directions, their spiritual journeys, and their political commitments in life.

Specific objectives include:

- Increase leadership development programs for students through WCSA, Greek life, student organizations, and mentoring opportunities with campus administrators and off-campus leaders
- Continue the program initiated by the Lilly Endowment by funding a vocations initiative and enhancing programs in volunteer service in the Chaplain's Office
- Achieve classification by the Carnegie Foundation as an "Institution of Community Engagement"
- Work with the faculty and the Provost's office to support development of courses that include service learning and/or internships

*Health and Well-Being.* Our educational mission includes encouraging all members of the OWU community to develop healthy lifestyles, including physical disciplines and ongoing participation in wellness programs. We will develop services and programming that promote the physical and mental well-being of students.

Specific objectives include:

- Develop an atmosphere of safety and well-being for all members of the OWU community
- Construct a recreation center on the residential campus
- Resource and expand FitOWU
- Develop a full recreation and wellness program
- Continue and enrich the strong tradition of intercollegiate athletics at OWU
- Create a culture of responsibility that challenges students to address public health concerns, such as diet/obesity, the danger of tobacco, and excessive use of alcohol
- Resource and staff intramural, recreational and club programs

*Advising.* Academic advisors support students through one-on-one counseling and by referring students to professional staff who specialize in addressing particular student needs. New OWU curricular plan will require a substantial investment in advising. Faculty and administrators will assist students in tailoring individual experiences that allow them to connect theory and practice, both on campus and beyond.

Specific objectives include:

- Provide ongoing training and professional development for advisors
- Create a peer advising system
- Create closer links between academic advisors and student affairs professionals
- Develop technology as an important tool in advising

## **ENROLLMENT**

The intellectual vitality of the Ohio Wesleyan University campus is shaped by the faculty and staff, the curriculum, and the preparation of students who choose to enroll at Ohio Wesleyan. With the benefit of bold new initiatives that connect theory and practice, substantially increase the opportunity for international experiences, and enhance campus

life, we will increase the academic profile of OWU students. We will maintain our historic commitment to providing access to an affordable education for all qualified students and to building a student body that reflects the full diversity of the larger society from which our students come and in which our graduates will live and work. We will improve retention and increase the percentage of OWU students who ultimately complete a degree.

*New Student Profile.* The development of the new OWU curricular plan and a thriving co-curricular program, including the creation of a dynamic sense of community at OWU, will improve our ability to attract the best students and increase the intellectual vitality of the campus.

Specific objectives include:

- Maintain stable on-campus enrollment of 1,850 students
- Increase academic profile by elevating mean SAT scores
- Increase academic profile by enrolling more domestic students from top 10 percent of their graduating class

*Diversity, Access, and Affordability.* A diverse faculty, staff, and student body create a dynamic atmosphere for learning on a university campus. Ohio Wesleyan University is particularly interested in a student body that includes racial, ethnic, national, and socioeconomic diversity. We also seek to provide an atmosphere that is welcoming and affirming of all students, faculty, and staff. To achieve this diversity, Ohio Wesleyan University implements programs that ensure accessibility and affordability for all academically qualified students. Further, OWU implements programs designed to attract a diverse workforce reflective of the larger world in which we live.

Specific objectives include:

- Increase enrollment of domestic students of color
- Maintain an international enrollment equal to 10 percent of total enrollment
- Meet the full need of Pell-eligible students by 2014
- Increase grant funding for middle-income students
- Create competitive grants to provide financial assistance for students in off-campus programs
- Create hiring processes and personnel and benefit policies that build an intentionally diverse workforce

*Student Success and Satisfaction.* Ohio Wesleyan University believes that every student who is admitted to the University has earned the opportunity to complete an OWU education and receive an OWU diploma. We will establish initiatives to improve student satisfaction and success and to increase the percentage of OWU students who complete their OWU degrees.

Specific objectives include:

- Increase freshman-to-sophomore retention
- Increase four-year and six-year graduation rates

## FACILITIES

The campus of Ohio Wesleyan University is our laboratory for learning. The campus and its facilities create and contribute to the sense of campus community. The facilities provide the context for our teaching and learning. We affirm that facilities on our campus should support and promote premier programming; make an impact on the hearts and in the minds of visitors, alumni, students, parents, faculty and staff; and stand the test of time. We will make significant investment in our campus facilities and grounds in order to enhance our educational experience, create greater opportunity for seminars and tutorials, provide space for on-campus engaged learning, and foster a vibrant, close-knit community.

We affirm the following guiding principles related to facilities planning:

- Preservation, restoration and reuse of our existing, historically significant facilities should be favored over new construction
- All facilities decisions should consider functionality, aesthetics, economics, environmental concerns, operational efficiency, and technology
- OWU should adhere to a core set of architectural standards that will build our identity across the entire campus
- Facilities funding should be distributed in such a way that balances the needs of all constituencies over time and supports the Strategic Plan
- Facilities preventative maintenance and repairs should happen in a timely and minimally disruptive fashion
- OWU must prioritize funding for facilities maintenance, repair, and replacement in a formal and systematic fashion that includes input from all constituencies

Specific facilities objectives include:

- Utilize the campus master plan as a continuing guide for facilities and grounds improvement
- Give priority to the identification and maintenance of “marquee facilities,” including those structures and features of the campus that have a significant role in our identity and public image
- Renew residential campus with renovation of residence halls; renovation, and in some cases, replacement of small living units; expansion of lifestyle opportunities with addition of town house and/or apartment living on campus; renovation of Greek houses; and reallocation of vacant Greek houses for other residential opportunities
- Provide a recreational facility on residential campus
- Enhance Hamilton-Williams Campus Center to support community building and increase student use of the facility
- Address academic facilities, as listed in the section on Academic Program
- Construct a new arena and field house
- Conduct a strategic assessment of campus perimeter and develop and implement a plan for purchase of perimeter property with long-term value for the University
- Develop and implement a plan to address accessibility of OWU campus

*Creating a Sustainable Campus.* Ohio Wesleyan University seeks to be a leader in higher education with its commitment to environmental sustainability, in keeping with its mission to offer an education grounded in a set of values.

Specific objectives include:

- Give particular attention to issues of sustainability in construction and renovation projects, including making a deliberate effort to achieve LEED certification
- Develop programs on campus reflecting best practices of sustainability and environmental sensitivity

## **RESOURCES**

Ohio Wesleyan University must align its resource base with its strategic objectives, particularly through the development of programs that allow students to connect theory and practice; the enhancement of facilities that offer more individualized, engaged, and small group learning; and the renewal of residential facilities in ways that create greater community on the OWU campus. This requires significant capital infusion into the OWU endowment and into the OWU campus, and it requires increasing net tuition revenue. These efforts will be enhanced by increasing engagement of key constituencies whose support is critical to fulfillment of this plan and, perhaps most importantly, by investing in our employees who devote their lives to Ohio Wesleyan University and whose work with our students ultimately leads to the realization of these aspirations.

*Human Resources.* The people who devote their professional lives to Ohio Wesleyan University are the institution's most treasured resource. OWU seeks to attract the most highly qualified employees, retain the highly qualified individuals we have attracted, and develop employee satisfaction and morale that improve performance and create a sense of positive community spirit. To this end, we will ensure that our employees are compensated fairly, receive the training and tools necessary to be successful employees, and find satisfaction and fulfillment in their work.

Specific objectives include:

- Develop a human resource function based on best practices while recognizing our unique needs, including employee handbooks
- Develop a proven, efficient and transparent process for allocating and reallocating staff positions as needs and resources change
- Develop appropriate benchmarks for compensation and compensate employees in all classifications appropriately in relation to their responsibility and performance
- Increase resources for professional development for faculty and administrators and provide ongoing training for staff
- Develop an employee wellness program
- Develop resources and activities to intentionally build community among OWU employees, to recognize outstanding performance among all classifications of employees, and to celebrate professional accomplishments and personal milestones of our employees

*Constituencies.* Ohio Wesleyan University benefits from the support of key constituencies who value the University and share its aspirations. We will intentionally address our relationships with and our support from each of these constituencies, with new focus on parents of current and former students, community partners, and regional and national charitable foundations.

Specific objectives include:

- Develop a full parent relations program, including opportunities for parent engagement in the mission of OWU and substantially increased philanthropic support from parents
- Develop a community relations program that engages civic leadership in the OWU vision and that increases philanthropic support from Delaware and central Ohio
- Engage regional and national philanthropic foundations that have not supported OWU in recent years
- Enhance communication with on-campus constituencies and within the OWU extended family

*Technology.* Technology is a critical resource with the capacity to support teaching and learning as well as all administrative operations. We will become an institution that embraces the best use of technology in the classroom and in our administrative work.

Specific objectives include:

- Provide appropriate, current technology in all teaching venues
- Implement the latest and most appropriate administrative software to support administrative efficiency
- Provide adequate training for faculty and staff in the use of technology
- Develop a centralized plan for ongoing renewal of hardware and software
- Cultivate IT leadership to provide vision and direction for the future of technology at OWU
- Establish an IT governance structure to serve as a link between university leadership and the campus community on technology issues

*Endowment.* The long-term financial strength of OWU and the ability to deliver on the promise of an innovative, life-changing liberal arts education requires significant growth in the University's endowment. This endowment, when managed prudently and allocated strategically, will provide the resources necessary to educate a new generation of leaders.

Specific objectives include:

- Increase endowment to \$350 million, with particular attention to new faculty positions, unfunded financial aid, plant adaptation and renewal, the New OWU curricular plan, and faculty development
- Continue strong management of endowment with focus on long-term growth and reduction of spending rate, including quasi-endowment, to five percent

*Net Tuition Revenue.* The implementation of a bold curricular and co-curricular initiative, complemented by investment in the campus and its infrastructure, greatly enhances the

value of an Ohio Wesleyan University education and positions the University to strengthen its resource base by increasing net tuition revenue.

## **CONCLUSION**

Ohio Wesleyan University affirms that a liberal arts education provides the singular best path to thoughtful, engaged, moral leadership in the increasingly complex global society of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This education, grounded in the classical disciplines and complemented by multiple and varied opportunities for engagement with the world, equips students with the skills needed for lifelong learning and prepares them to be adaptable and innovative leaders in a future we cannot fully imagine today.

We believe that an education that blends theory and practice, thought and action, inquiry and engagement, and the campus and the world has the power to transform the lives of our students. We further believe that these students, equipped with this education, will have a powerful impact on the world in which they will live and work. We believe that Ohio Wesleyan has the opportunity, through the bold initiative and audacious aspirations reflected in this document, to set a new standard for a life-changing, liberal arts education and, in the process, to transform the University itself. It is to this high purpose that we devote ourselves and this vision for the future of Ohio Wesleyan University.